

Agnes von Kurowsky  
*Letters to Ernest Hemingway*

## INTRODUCTION BY HENRY S. VILLARD



The many letters that Agnes wrote to Ernest Hemingway represent only one side of a correspondence that at times maintained the heady pace of nearly a letter a day, sometimes two on the same date. Then, after a three-year hiatus, there is one final communication, marking *finis* to the wartime episode. The collection is revealing in the affection displayed by Agnes toward a wounded nineteen-year-old driver of a Red Cross ambulance. The terms of endearment with which the letters abound stand out in sharp contradiction to her effort later in life to minimize the relationship and dismiss it as a mere flirtation.

It has always been assumed that the relationship was more fervent on his part than on hers, that while she reciprocated his sentiments it was by no means clear that she had fallen in love to the same headlong extent as he had. Indeed, without the corroboration provided by the diary and letters, it might be difficult to gauge the degree to which she had singled out Ernie from the other patients in Milan for her special attention. The letters, however, give ample evidence of her concern and devotion. Compared with the diary's relative restraint in chronicling the daily doings at the hospital, the letters pour out a veritable torrent of loving solicitude.

Besides the difference in tone and content, the letters provide another contrast to the diary. Whereas Agnes is writing in the journal for herself alone, jotting down thoughts she would not disclose to another person, in the letters she is opening her heart on paper: "I really never thought I could write what I feel so plainly & openly. . . . Once written you can't take back what you have said." Spontaneous, unaffected, caring, these are letters such as any young woman of that particular period in history might write to her sweetheart. They should be taken for neither more nor less.

It is a pity that we do not have the letters that Hemingway wrote in return. One can only assume that at the very least they matched the sentiments she expressed in hers. Late in her life she confessed that she had given Hemingway's letters to Domenico Caracciolo, her new love once Ernest had left for the States, and that he had burned them.<sup>1</sup> As a result, none of the Hemingway side of the correspondence is known to exist, not even the three epistles that Agnes, in the letter she wrote to me in 1962, said were given to her by Mary Hemingway.

[Sept. 25, 1918]<sup>2</sup>

Kid, My Kid,<sup>3</sup>

I've just been in your room, & talk about chairs that whisper! That whole room haunted me so that I could not stay in it. So I just removed ye biscotti [biscuits] & other refuse, & in the A.M. will move the empties into Mr. Lewis' room as I hear Miss De Long is going to clean your house while you are away. My, but I wish you'd been here tonight cause I got ripping mad at Mac, & I wanted a shoulder to weep tears of anger on. You know, she would never let me come up in the daytime & fix anything for her patients.

Well she took a mean advantage of me, & came up & made a hot lemonade for Lt. Lewis, & when I remonstrated reminding her that she'd never allow me to do it in the day—she just said he had asked Miss De Long for it, so I walked out. Then she came out & said I

could take it in to him & I said "Thank you, Mac. I'd rather not." She was so nice to me the rest of the evening that I think she was sorry, but it hurt me. It's such a little thing to lose one's temper over, but, it was so darned unfair!

Back to us—most important topic—if its anything like as cheerful an evening where you are as it is here you must be enjoying yourself. Cavie stayed up & we played 500 with Mr. Allen & Mr. Rochefort until the latter dropped out in favor of Miss Fisher. Then Lt. Mitlis came in & the game soon broke up as she & Mac escorted him down to the beau parlor below.

I wish you'd seen Edward. He was too funny playing with Cavie, who is not a scientific expert at the game, which he plays with his heart & soul in the cards & mathematical precision. She says "Now the joker is highest, isn't it? And the 2 knaves come next? What a pity I haven't any of those!" And she had just bid 7 on Diamonds. He remarked she'd do alright if she'd only use her head. Cruel youth.

It's a wonderful night for a big bowl of minestrone & I have enough here for two. Too bad I must eat all alone.

This P.M. I met Signors Walker & Maxwell. Great was the confusion but I pretended not to observe. Then Mr. Walker in broken tones apologized for the dreadful slip he made & I told him it was [not clear] & all forgotten.<sup>4</sup>

Well, if I write anymore I'll be in water marks as the paper not in the signal pattern is too lonely & lugubrious for words. The weather shore am helpin out the feeling.

Don't forget to come back to me, Boy O.M. [of mine]—cause I miss you most awfully.

Now, it's your turn and the test is on—so "on with the dance, let joy be unrefused."

"Yours till the War Ends"  
(From love-letters of a Rookie)  
Aggie

(This is a dreadful hour to write, as it's all I can do to keep from being sentimental.)

[sic] we will edit a new & richly embellished edition de luxe of a letter to the 3 original Campfire Girls—of Sec. 4—the ones that wrote us that pretty little letter with the aboriginal drawings of wild bird, & all. So instructive! Dear, dear, how times & manners have changed since I was a girl!

Your poco idiot—(but, yet—yours—so you can't kick.) Von—(otherwise know as Ag—Aggie—Agony—Artless—Curiosity—Vonny—

Agnes—Kid—Mrs. Kid  
and a few others.)

[Oct. 15, 1918]<sup>12</sup>

Dearest Kid:

My fountain pen is dry—the only dry thing in the coach—as there is a cute little leak in the roof—but I feel like talking to someone, & of course, the chief Someone is you—so I'll talk to you—with a pencil.

It's funny to feel that I'm going away from you when all along I was picturing how it would feel when you went away from me. We've just left Piacenza, and while the train is not exactly making great speed, still it is shaking from side to side in a most disconcerting way for one desirous of making pencil-talks. Across from me is the couple you saw—the Signora certainly has the fever & I wish I knew if it would be resented if I offered medicine & advice. Hubby seems to be taking very good care of her, tho' has her all wrapped up in his coat & hands her a cough drop from time to time. Perhaps that's why I like to imagine that you are here, offering me these little attentions, & putting my cape around me, etc.

I think if they hadn't been here I would have had a couple more Italian officer friends, from certain observations of my own—but niente—niente [no, no].

I've read your letter, of course, & I liked it so much—but do you think you should have given me your good luck, dear boy? Suppose you go back to the Front while I'm here, & have it not to guard you. But maybe you'll have a chance to come to Florence while I'm here—so I shan't worry any more than I have to. I only hope you can make out this raggedy writing—all the more promising for me if you cannot, as you have been so good as to admire my usual penmanship. I'm eating some choc—as a stimulant to my spirits. You know Miss De Long said I was the first one who had gone away cheerfully, so I must keep up the rep—even if it is camouflage of the first order—& you do hate camouflage so much.

I hope by this time you & Mac are closer than ever. I'm so sorry you—well, never mind I refuse to “bawl you out” by letter.

*Oh Sunny Italy.* Anyhow, when you get this you'll know I've arrived O.K. In my own mind my safe arrival is yet a disputed question as I don't know enough to even know where they put the names of their stations—on the roof, I guess, as I've looked all over & haven't seen any.

This is the most incoherent epistle I ever penned, being as I have to stop from time to time & meditate, & then lose my train of thought. But I hope you won't object to the confusion.

I'm so much sorrier for you than for me. I'm going to a new place to work—& you are left behind in the same spot—with nothing to occupy you. Dear Kid. Soon after I stopped writing I was informed by the couple across the way that I did not get to Florence until 11.15. Picture my dismay! Lucky I brought along that choc. Of course the train was late, & it is now 1.15 A.M. I wish you could see the grand apartment I am housed in for the night. It's 3 times the size of the library at the hospital where you & I were last night. I have counted 18 chairs, 5 stools & a settee, all gold & brocade. The walls are hung in red brocade & all the hangings are the same. Some room! I feel quite lost, but, am quite ready now to sleep. So buono notte, my beamish boy.

This pen is the worst yet. Hope you won't be disagreeably surprised at the untidiness of my scrawl. Oh yes, I forgot to say Capt.

*Letters to Ernest Hemingway*

Aikin met me, & I am to go to the hospital tomorrow at 9 A.M. My love I miss you dreadfully.

Yours—Agnes

I'll have another look at your picture ere I retire.

Oct. 16, 1918<sup>13</sup>

My Spanish Mick—

This A.M. I mailed you the peroration of yesterday & last night just before Capt. Aikin brought me here in the car. As I am to go on night duty tonight, & I have the whole P.M. and not feeling sleepy, will dig into my piles of back correspondence. I was invited to go to the town, we are a little ways out, but it looked stormy again, & I had an old headache & wanted to write you—3 good convincing reasons. As I'm on night duty I'll have other opportunities & in fact it quite pleases me as, if on day duty, I'd be only able to see the town by night. This will only be while my patient is so sick, of course, & Capt. Aikin says he is going to keep me for awhile to look after the 7 or 8 other members of his staff who are sick with the "Floo"—so I'll be here for a while anyhow. This is all encouraging in case you get a permission with your 3 old pals. If you don't—it is rather discouraging, I fear, but anyhow, you said you couldn't stand seeing me around all day as you did for days, so it is probably for the best, anyhow. So be cheerful, old Kid of mine, & just remember missing you quite as much as you will miss me tho' maybe not quite as wildly.

When I saw that couple on the train yesterday I kept wishing I had you alongside of me, so I could put my head on that nice place—you know—the hollow place for my face—& go to sleep with your arm around me.

Miss Jessup—the only Amer. R.C. nurse here in Firenze, told me today about 2 aviators who were at the Hotel this week. They gave

Oct. 17, 1918

Ernie, my dearest—<sup>16</sup>

That was such a nice letter I got today—& unexpected, too, as I didn't think I could possibly hear before tomorrow. I'll tell you one reason I liked it so much. I guess every girl likes to have some man tell her how nice she is, & how he can't do without her. Anyway—I am but human, & when you say these things I love it, & can't help but believe you. So don't be afraid I'll get tired of you. I haven't really started to worry yet over your forgetting to love me as you do now, but sometimes I do think of the possibility & I don't enjoy my thoughts at all.

Dear heart, don't go around looking so doleful. I like best to remember you as you so often were in the A.M.—smiling & bubbling over with real joy—& I always prefer to picture you with your famous grin. So don't spoil my picture & wear a long, tearful expression these days & write as often as you can afford the stamps, as I shall chiefly exist on what I get in the mail. I am very much disheartened about my patient tonight. 3 learned & pompous medicos held a consultation over him this evening but, we don't know yet what they decided. I only know that he is so restless & nervous that he is not able to sleep—& slept none last night—that & the spitting up blood are what I am worrying about.

So maybe I'll be back before you think. Tonight is clear for a change. It rained today just about the time I wanted to explore the town, so I stayed in bed instead. Here the night nurse is on duty from 7 P.M. until 8 A.M. Queer arrangement, isn't it? But I should worry, it isn't forever.

I've read your letter of today 3 times, & here goes for another look at it. To think I would ever become so foolish! You know you are rather wonderful yourself—you are so splendid & fresh-looking, & have such cheerful ways—except at off times, of which we will not speak. And then you have such good ideas in all the things that count. And, of course, you know you can write, so I do not have to tell you that. Take you all in all you're about the nicest man I know, or ever will know.

*Letters to Ernest Hemingway*

I feel terribly desolate—away off here far from you & my friends, & I haven't even discovered any Bellia's to help me pass the time.

I am not in an American Red Cross Hosp. so just address me c/o Amer. Red Cross—and I'll get it O.K.

Good luck, my dearest—and don't forget me, nor that I love you.

Ag

Oct 19—[1918]

Dearest Mr. Kid,<sup>17</sup>

I'm sadly cheated—I got no letter from you yesterday, and I suddenly felt quite lost. Maybe today I'll get two. Anyhow, I'll try to keep cheerful until I know if I am to hear from you today—or not.

Yesterday, I went into Florence. I was told to take a tram in, but, I says to myself, it will be much more sporting if I walk in, & then I'm not nearly so apt to lose myself. So I followed the car tracks until they got too complex for me, & then, I just turned this way & then that—and came out at the Duomo as nice as you please. Then I found some fascinating looking buildings, & felt so ignorant because I didn't know what they were. Lots of statuary in front of some. Florence is certainly the most interesting place I've seen so far—it gives you the impression of antiquity & Middle Ages right away. I do wish I could remember all I have read about it. Next time I go in I shall purchase a guide book & learn something—there's so much to see. And I'm told the Pitti Palace is open, tho' the Uffizi [Uffizi] Gallery is not. You know these by hearsay as well as I do, I daresay. I kept thinking yesterday as I rambled how wonderful it would be to have you here with me to help me find my way about, & explore. I walked & walked & finally found a place where I got some very good milk chocolate—a factory—like your Talmone in Turino. But, alas, when I was "stanco" & would take the tram home I didn't know where I should take it. After asking a few questions & getting unintelligible answers, I found the right track & my car dashed by me, so I proceeded to plod my



Nov. 3, 1918

Dearest Mr. Kid—<sup>48</sup>

Now there you go a-worryin' over me for absolutely niente. I got your letter tonight, & hasten to reassure you as to my good health. I'm really feeling quite fit again, & am quite proud to think I didn't fall sick in this place. As a matter of fact, they fully expected me to, I believe, but, I fooled 'em, I did. It was a funny thing but, a week or so ago Jessup & I were talking over the possibilities of our taking the Flu, & we both requested that the other take us straight to Milan if we did fall sick. But, we reckoned without the people here. They rather resented outside nurses being sent for Mr. Hough, but they'd be incensed if we tried to move either Jessup or Mr. Hough to Milan. Now, tonight, Miss Sheldon, the directress of the Hospital is down with the Flu, complicated with liver troubles, thus making 5 special patients for me, now.

I'm afraid when Capt. Aikin gets back there's going to be a rumpus, as both Jessup & Mr. Hough are rather wrought up over the way I am taken for granted as a part of the Hosp. But, as for me, I am not killing myself with work, & so I don't mind helping them out, as long as my own A.R.C. patients aren't neglected and I can certainly always keep peace as long as I think it better—& more profitable.

Such excitement today among the Italians over the news that Trieste is taken. I look forward now to seeing Mr. Hough's newspapers arrive in the mornings, and it seems wonderful to be alive in such stirring times, doesn't it? I thank my stars' wish every day that I came over, & won't be one of those who will say after it is all over—"Well, I didn't get a chance to do what I wanted, & thought I'd never be able to stand foreign service, so I just stayed home, & did private nursing." I know several like that & they sure are coming money.

But I can't say anything because you are just the same as I, only more so, Kid dear. Tell me something about that Publicity Dept. job. Will you be in Rome all the time, or travelling around through Italy? I guess you don't trust me much, as you are unwilling to place the old Atlantic between us, & I can't very well blame you, seeing what I did

to the Doctor. Well, Ernie my darlin', some day you'll believe in me just as firmly as I now hold my faith in you.

Dear, Milan begins to look further & further away, & just when I want most to be there—when you are sick. Please hurry up & get your interior dept. in good running order again, or I'll be sure Mac & Cavie are not taking the proper care of you, & I'll be worried—dreadfully. Maybe, someday, I'll be where you can't shake me when you need a nurse.

Goodnight—sweetheart

As ever—

Your Mrs. Kid

Nov. 4, 1918

Kid, dear,

I fully intended getting up early & going into Florence this afternoon, but, only woke up at 3.30 with a bad headache & found it was cloudy besides, so I changed my mind. And the soldiers are so happy over the taking of Trento, & all, that they have been singing up at the other Hospital for a couple of hours, now, while the Victrola has been going at this one. The effect is not conducive to repose, so I'll just write to you now, & then it will get mailed this evening & probably get to you a day ahead of the usual time.

One of the Italian nurses was so excited she couldn't work, & had to go home. But, I can hardly blame her, as her home is in the captured district. Can you realize that the war is coming to an end? I can't.

I am told I have another patient tonight—a British soldier with the Flu, & Miss Sheldon, the Diretrice [*diretrice*: directress] is quite ill, & had to have morphine today, so I may be too busy to write you tonight.

She is a very nice lady, but likes lots of attention. Also, I'm told Miss Jessup is better. I'm doing my derndest to "cure 'em Kid," 'cause

December 1, 1918<sup>59</sup>

My own dear Kid—

I was sure I felt too sleepy to write a letter tonight, but, I knew I must brace up & tear off one to my mother & I might as well stick pins in myself to keep awake, so I can send you at least a line to say I'm still your Kid. And thank you for the pictures of you & of me, which I got today—4 letters from Padova & I took them over to the ward—with several others from the States—and had such a good time reading them all—& yours last—that the patients all said that I must have been reading a letter from my “fellow” to wear such a broad grin as I did.

You certainly are the champion love-letter writer, old furnace man, and I sure do admire to read them, Mr. Hemings-way.

Dearie me, how nice that trip to Madeira sounds—but, I'm afraid you'd never want to go & be somebody worth while. Those places do get in one's blood, & remove all the pep & “go” and I'd hate like everything to see you minus ambition, dear lad. You certainly have changed since I first saw you. I often wonder whether I've done you harm or good, but, whatever it is I am responsible, so I must stick by you.

I sometimes wish we could marry over here, but, since that is so foolish I must try & not think of it. But, I'm really afraid to face the doctor, & tell him I don't care for him & never will. I'm trying to let it die out of itself.

So glad you've gotten some money, but, don't do anything so foolish like buying the Duomo, & don't let anybody sell you a nice little fat Italian wife for that money. See if you can save it, Kid, to celebrate with when you hit Nuevo York. And whaddayoumean by saying I'm broke. Here I am here in the cold—far far from temptation, & nothing to buy, so I'll probably come back to Milan with the same money I took & then some—which will be nice for Christmas.

One of the soldiers was nice enough to develop one of my films for me, & I believe another one is printing them tonight, so in my next I may send you the films, & let you have some good prints made,

night & got lost, & didn't get in until 11.45 P.M. & was reported, & I spoke to the Captain about him, so he feels that I am responsible for his getting off without anything being said about it, & I can't make him believe anything else.

Pause of 1 1/2 hours while I served afternoon tea. Some service, it was—tea in glasses—on a tray with a can of sweetened condensed milk, & those Red Cross crackers. The other nurse followed me with the milk & crackers, & we stirred all the milk into the tea with the same spoon.

When I first came there were 3 glasses in the whole ward. I don't know why I tell you so much of what I do here, because I don't really think you are terribly interested in people you will never see.

Since your letter the other day, when you spoke of possibly coming up here to see me,<sup>64</sup> I keep looking out of the window & every now & then I jump because I think I see a familiar stalwart figure in a good-looking English uniform & overseas cap with a cane. It's a mighty queer thing, & I've been sadly disappointed several times.

I'm sure I don't know how long I'll be here, now, because, a case of spinal meningitis was discovered yesterday & it may mean a serious epidemic if we have any more. I have no case of it in my ward, but, if there are any more they will probably quarantine the whole place. Don't get scared of me, now, 'cause I seem to bear a charmed life, & even the Floo doesn't harm me.

If you were only here to take some walks with me—it would be great, because the whole country is full of interesting things & very attractive.

Oh, Kid, I wish I could look ahead & see how Fate is going to treat us. I've got such a lot of patient faith in the old girl I'm sure she won't throw me down. As to the medico, I am at a loss. He hasn't answered the letter I wrote about the Capitano [Serena] yet, so I am still at sea. But I think my neglect of him will do the trick as well as anything I could say—& not quite as cruel as hard cold facts on paper. That's one reason why I don't want to go home this winter, as Time will teach me much.

I fear by that time nobody will be enfolding me on the dock, as

you will probably be at your country seat recuperating from this "dreadful war."

[unsigned]

Tues. night  
Dec. 10, 1918

Honey, Kid—<sup>65</sup>

I've just had my 1st chance to look at the letters you left me last night<sup>66</sup>—& I see you say you've only had 2 letters from me since I left. That doesn't seem possible as I've written a good many. Why I wrote & mailed two before I left Padova. It doesn't seem like a reality at all, that you were here yesterday. In fact, it already seems like a long time since I last saw you. And I wonder when you will get back to Milan, & just what sort of a reception you'll have there.

I began this last night—the 10th but was unable to keep on writing, as Miss Hummel<sup>67</sup> had to go on night duty at 12—& as she rooms with me, I had to put my light out so she could sleep for awhile. So here it is Wed. P.M. & I should be taking the 3 o'clock temps.

I had good news this A.M. The sergeant in charge of the building said they were hoping to close up my ward by Sat. if I could get the men all well enough by that time. Miss Shaw was here yesterday & was very nice to me. She said, our pay was raised, & we could get the extra 10 per since Sept. when we went home. Also to let her know when we wanted to go home, any month after January being open. So, all things being considered—I'm going to ask for 1st of March—as that will get me home in the Spring—& I won't have to go home with Gumshoe. Then she also said we would have to sail from Italy—not allowed to go thru France, which is a bitter disappointment as I'd hoped to get back to Paris for a few days anyhow. Do you think we'll be able to get over again some day? If so, I shan't worry about seeing everything now.

Dec. 21, 1918<sup>79</sup>

Dear old Cuss—

I'm getting pretty regular these days, don't you think? I got a letter from you addressed to Padova & dated the 11—just 10 days in coming. So I guess it comes quicker by the Treviso & F. H. 331 route.

So you are really going—can't hardly realize it, but, I think you are doing right. Only, Kid, dear, is it necessary to forego your vacation with Bill? Somehow, I think your family will advise you take at least a month's vacation in the wilds you are so fond of. Now as for my news—Miss Shaw was just here, & said Cavie was beseeching her to send me up the line to work with her at some forlorn little ruined place where she is setting up a little Hosp. & dispensary.<sup>80</sup> It sounds awfully interesting, & will be a good experience for me, & it is just temporary, so I am rather glad. As long as you are not in Italy, what diff. does it make where I go—& of course, it is much better for me to be working & not having too much time for brooding, & introspection.

I'm afraid we are a mad pair, but, I rather like being mad, when I have such good company.

However, Miss Shaw says I am to go back to Milan to collect my things before they close up the house there, after Christmas some time when I am no longer needed here.

This has been mighty interesting, but, I am beginning to feel that my usefulness is about over here. Miss De Graw has been wonderful to me, & seems to feel sorry at the prospect of my leaving her to go to Cavie, and that always gives one a nice satisfactory feeling.

And I hear Miss De Long is going to Rome—which means that I will be able to see Rome some day. So now there's only Naples & Sicily left that I want to see—after Rome. I'm certainly a mighty lucky girl—'cause I've had a great variety of experience in the short while I've been over.

I have my Ardito knife now. One of the men—an ex-patient, heard me say I wanted it—& he sent it on to me from Treviso. Wasn't that nice? But, they've all been pretty nice to work for, & I've had a good time.

For Xmas they are planning a great entertainment and fine eats.

Tonight Miss De Graw & I are planning to make lemon pies for tomorrow.

I think I'll have to stop writing for a few days, now, or your mail will surely miss you. Goodnight, dear,

your own Kid—  
Aggie

Dec. 31 [1918]—and then some.

Dear Boy:

This is the hardest letter I ever tried to write anyone and goodness knows I don't usually have much trouble slipping you a few lines. But—if I'm doleful you'll cause the boat to sink—and if I'm troppo [too] cheerful you'll blow up in your very characteristic style and get the old boat all full of smoke, thereby causing consternation among those of an elderly order. So the only solution I can find, is a happy medium (if you know what that is) and I shall endeavor to dispense cheer & yet give the impression of subdued spirits. Does that sound too jovial, Kid? 'Cause if you don't like it, of course I must take it back & converse in a very ordinary & commonplace manner.

I'm in hopes that when you are really at last started on your return trip that everything will begin to look ten times brighter, and you'll find that little things that have looked very big will resume their normal proportions. And how envious we all are of your arrival in N.Y. My, but, it will be pretty good to see the old town again. I don't think I've seen any place yet that comes up to it for living in, that is. Imagine living in Venice all the time & going down cellar in the dark, missing your step & falling into the canal. Or your clothes getting moldy from the dampness. And all that sort of thing.

Capt. Moore was teasing me today about my fondness for Italian officers. Brooks was praising up the British, but, I said, "Well, we all come back to a perfectly good American just the same." Of course, my

*Letters to Ernest Hemingway*

I'm feeling very cattiva [wicked] tonight, so goodnight, Kid, & don't do anything rash, but, have a good time.

Afft,  
Aggie<sup>87</sup>

March 7, 1919

Ernie, dear boy,

I am writing this late at night after a long think by myself, & I am afraid it is going to hurt you, but, I'm sure it won't harm you permanently.

For quite awhile before you left, I was trying to convince myself it was a real love-affair, because, we always seemed to disagree, & then arguments always wore me out so that I finally gave in to keep you from doing something desparate.

Now, after a couple of months away from you, I know that I am still very fond of you, but, it is more as a mother than as a sweetheart. It's alright to say I'm a Kid, but, I'm not, & I'm getting less & less so every day.

So, Kid (still Kid to me, & always will be) can you forgive me some day for unwittingly deceiving you? You know I'm not really bad, & don't mean to do wrong, & now I realize it was my fault in the beginning that you cared for me, & regret it from the bottom of my heart. But, I am now & always will be too old, & that's the truth, & I can't get away from the fact that you're just a boy—a kid.

I somehow feel that some day I'll have reason to be proud of you, but, dear boy, I can't wait for that day, & it is wrong to hurry a career.

I tried hard to make you understand a bit of what I was thinking on that trip from Padua to Milan, but, you acted like a spoiled child, & I couldn't keep on hurting you. Now, I only have the courage because I'm far away.

Then—& believe me when I say this is sudden for me, too—I expect to be married soon.<sup>88</sup> And I hope & pray that after you have



thought things out, you'll be able to forgive me & start a wonderful career & show what a man you really are.

Ever admiringly & fondly  
Your friend,  
Aggie

Dec. 22, 1922

Dear Kid—

Well, when your voice from the past reached me—after I recovered from the surprise, I never was more pleased over anything in my life. You know there has always been a little bitterness over the way our comradeship ended, especially since I got back & Mac<sup>89</sup> read me the very biting letter you wrote her about me. (The mean part of that was that she had already read it to “the Doc”—whom you may recall hearing of in those dim days.)

Anyhow, I always knew that it would turn out right in the end, & that you would realize it was the best way, as I'm positive you must believe, now that you have Hadley.<sup>90</sup> Think of what an antique I am at the present writing, and my ghost should simply burst on the spot, leaving only a little smoke that will evaporate.

Oh, gosh, there's so much to tell you I can't tell where to start. The past 3 years have certainly been full of interest for me. I don't think Life (Capital) will ever be tame if I have anything to say about it.

In the first place—to dig up the ruins—I came back from Italy—a sadder but a wiser girl—feeling that I'd like to break something & preferably somebody, & life wasn't really worth living. I was ruined for America, & when the poor Doc—much fatter—ambled around I was as nasty as possible, tho' he stuck fast until I sailed the 2nd time, when he promptly married, & now is struggling along & has a young son.

I worked in Miss Shaw's Tuberculosis Social Service Department for 6 months, & then went home for a visit, and came back to