

The NURSE'S STORY



BY ADELE BLENEAU

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PROLOGUE.

"I got my copy in the hospitals and camps of France and England," says Adele Bleneau (Mrs. Walter Horton Schoellkopf of Buffalo), the author of "The Nurse's Story." In the relation of a delightful romance there are introduced thrilling incidents of the great war in Europe. It is plain that the author has been on the battlefield, right close to the firing line.

She started for Europe at the outbreak of hostilities. After telling of the rush of soldiers from England and France she grips the reader with her intimacy of the conditions as they exist in the great European conflagration.

Her descriptions of the field hospitals, of the wounded soldiers of the different warring countries as they are brought in, of exciting motor rides from one battlefield to another, all go to hold the interest throughout. The author had influential friends in the armies abroad who helped her gather the material for her story.

It is no exaggeration to state that no novel of the war yet written gives a better idea of actual conditions at the front than "The Nurse's Story."

CHAPTER I.

Come at Once.

ONE May evening after sunset father, mademoiselle and I were having supper out of doors under a great magnolia tree when a motorcar came racing up the drive. Major Howell, our neighbor, who owned one of the most beautiful places in Louisiana, drove the car himself and was obviously much excited. He explained immediately that a party of guests from the north was staying with him, and among them was a celebrated surgeon, who had suddenly been taken ill. By rare good fortune father was at home, so that a moment later the two men disappeared down the drive. It is strange how, for no apparent reason, certain scenes remain vividly in the memory, and I distinctly recall the feeling of expectancy with which I watched my father's departure.

Twenty minutes later, for the place was only a mile away, the car came dashing back, and the driver handed me a hastily scribbled note from father asking me to bring his operating case and come immediately. Without losing a moment and hastily gathering up the instruments, I was off. As we sped up the drive father came running down the broad stone steps to meet me. Taking both my hands in his, he said gravely:

"Adele, my patient, Dr. Curtis, is a very distinguished surgeon. His loss would be a great one to humanity. He has an attack of acute appendicitis and must be operated on at once. Do you feel equal to helping me?"

Perhaps I felt father's reputation was at stake; perhaps there was no time for an attack of nerves. In any event I said to him in a tone which must have carried conviction:

"Don't be afraid, father, I'll try not to fail you."

As we entered Dr. Curtis' room a moment later he called out, "Doctor, it has just occurred to me that you must have at your house an operating room!"

"I have, of course," father interrupted, divining his thoughts, "but, Dr. Curtis, you know as well as I how dangerous it is to move a patient under such circumstances."

"Oh, yes, I know all about that," he broke in with an attempt at a laugh. "But I am the patient in this case, and I prefer to take my chances in an antiseptic operating room, even though I have to be shaken up a bit to get there."

Seeing no approving response in father's face, Dr. Curtis went on with the rare smile which many people say is half his assets. "Unless you mind the nuisance of an incontinent guest for the next week or two, I insist on going to your house."

Time was too valuable to waste in an argument, and Dr. Curtis was soon ready for the very short journey to his house. In exactly forty-five min-

utes from the time Major Howell first came up the drive, Dr. Curtis was on the operating table. At his own request father gave him the new method of anesthesia—scopolamine.

The operation was a simple one, with only slight adhesions and no complications and was, as such things go, speedily over.

The next day two nurses came up from New Orleans. Except for the perfunctory taking of temperature there was very little for them to do.

At Dr. Curtis' request I passed many hours of the day in his room. He seemed never tired of hearing my "Cajun" stories, as the peasant tales of Louisiana are called, and laughed at my little anecdotes of how Jean Baptiste would say: "Voisin, you see my sow, push him home slow for me, yes."

On other days we read French or German. He found constant amusement in my south German accent, for that was the kind mademoiselle had taught me.

Dr. Curtis' wife and family were not until his convalescence notified of his operation. But a sister—a giant, severe-looking but kindly woman—had come a few days after his illness. However, we had seen very little of her, as she had taken on herself the task of hurriedly converting the blacks to a higher state of civilization.

Dr. Curtis had not been curious as to who or what we were, but his sister was the type that knows the genealogy of all the people in her particular circle and soon evinced a desire to add to her knowledge the history of the whole country round about, beginning, of course, with ourselves. She had asked often rather veiled questions as to how we, especially father, happened to be living in such an out of the way place. Evidently not being satisfied with the replies, she said quite frankly to him one day:

"Dr. Bleneau, how is it that I find a man of your superior attainments buried alive in a place like this?"

Father hesitated a moment and then, suddenly remembering an urgent engagement, smilingly excused himself, saying that mademoiselle, who had been not only his governess and mine, but was a distant relative as well, would gladly tell her the family history. Mademoiselle, like many older persons, lived largely in the past and was delighted to relive it all again. I had never heard her begin, as it were, from the beginning, so I settled myself to listen with almost as great eagerness as did Miss Curtis. Mademoiselle began:

"Dr. Bleneau's father was an officer in the army of Napoleon III. He entered the service against the wishes of



At Dr. Curtis' Request I Passed Many Hours of the Day in His Room.

his entire family, who were the staunchest of royalists. By way of explanation and to give it circulation, his mother told her dearest friend, in confidence, of course, that the wiles and smiles of a woman were the cause of his 'disloyalty.'

"The woman" was one of the lovely ladies in waiting of the thrice lovely Empress Eugenie herself, and for her the young officer sacrificed family, position and friends. He fought brilliantly on many fields and received due honor and promotion, but when the war was over and the emperor's cause lost he found himself with little else than the devotion of the woman

for whom he had sacrificed so much. But he always felt this devotion ample reward, and well he might," she mused, "considering the happiness of their after lives. They were married at once, and he took up with characteristic energy the study of medicine at L'Ecole de Medecine, in Paris. His family, refusing to be reconciled to his marriage, led them to come to Louisiana. The young wife had brought him an unusually large dot for those days, and, as they both loved the country, it came about that they bought this plantation.

"The young people were happy here, but not even their absorbing affection could entirely safeguard their paradise from sorrow, for their first two children died soon after birth, and when a third was expected our Dr. Bleneau's father, whether from sentiment or a superstitious dread of a third loss, determined that the next child should be born at home, for France to them was still home.

"It was there, in the Yonne district, that their son was born. A year later we came back to Louisiana. When the boy was old enough for school he was sent to France, where he proved himself not only a brilliant pupil, but the possessor of many innate noble qualities. His father had elaborate plans for his future, but at twenty-two, a few days after finishing his studies, the boy started his family by marrying a beautiful Creole, the daughter of a well known French banker of New Orleans. They had met on a steamer when he was returning from France from his last vacation, and she, being young and romantic, and he young and ardent, they eloped a few days after his graduation and were married by special license in London. They had known there would be great obstacles to their marriage, for her family were of Huguenot stock, and his devout Roman Catholics. And indeed neither her father nor any of her people ever forgave her.

"The young people came home to Louisiana, where they were welcomed by his family with the warmest affection. But the father, with new world ideas, insisted that his son take up some profession, and after due consideration the young man decided to pursue in his turn the profession of medicine.

"To this end the young couple returned to Paris. A year later in an apartment overlooking the park in the Boulevard St. Germain, Adele was born. But in giving Adele life the young mother paid for it with her own. Here mademoiselle hurried on, and I knew the tears were very near. "It is the regret of my life and Adele's that she never knew her beautiful mother, but in looking at Adele I am often struck by the resemblance she has to her mother. She has the same limpid brown eyes, and masses of waving copper hair and the peculiar jasmine-like whiteness of skin, but her mouth is more sensitive, per—mademoiselle stopped short and looked at Miss Curtis in a peculiar way for an instant.

Mademoiselle, nodding her head, after a moment, said emphatically, "I quite understand, my dear. Go on."

"Dr. Bleneau was beside himself with grief at his young wife's death. She was the absorbing passion of his life, and I believe she is as much a real presence to him today as she was on the day she died so many years ago. In these circumstances he was, of course, unable to settle down to the monotony of life here and clearly realized that his only salvation lay in work. Even several years later, when his course was finished, he was still in no condition mentally or physically to take up the grind here, and when he was urged by a former schoolmate to join an exploring expedition in Africa for the French government he did so and continued that kind of work for many years.

"However, unless he were in the Andes of Tibet or on the heights of the Alps, Christmas time always found him with us. Both his parents were secretly very proud of their brilliant, daring son. Adele had always worshipped him. Life for her between his visits was a gray expanse of waiting.

"Two years ago the health of Adele's grandfather began to fail, and, realizing his approaching end, he sent for his son. He came at once. Dr. Bleneau had been planning a trip to India and into Afghanistan with the Duke of—, but he immediately canceled all his ar-

rangements and devoted himself to making the last days of his father as peaceful as possible. After a pause she added: "And that is how Dr. Bleneau came to live with us. Since then he has carried on, with Adele's constant assistance, the large charity work among the blacks for which his father had been so beloved.

"It was natural in our seclusion that our lives should center around the work done by the men of the house. During the years when other girls learned golf, tennis, dancing and such things Adele has been measuring out medicines, taking temperatures and acting generally as office nurse to her grandfather and later to her father.

"I can well understand your surprise at finding here in the lonely woods of Louisiana a man of such wide culture and varied experience as Dr. Bleneau. There was a little smile, and then mademoiselle smiled sadly and said, with a sigh, "That is our history."

Without a word Miss Curtis came over and kissed me, and as she did so I felt two hot tears on my cheek.

One day, nearly three weeks after the operation, I was delighted to find Dr. Curtis in the drawing room. He slowly rose as I came in and, seeing my look of astonishment, said laughingly:

"As a matter of fact, my dear, I might have been down a day or two earlier, only I didn't half try. I was having an ideal rest, lying there in your pretty, fresh children's room, looking out onto the broad Mississippi and thoroughly enjoying the company of yourself and your father—your especially, Bleneau," and he turned to father, laughing, "you who have lived more stories than most people could invent."

A few days later, as I put my hand out to open the door of father's office, I heard my name and, without thinking, paused to listen. Dr. Curtis was speaking:

"Bleneau, old man, whether you realize it or not, you are devotedly selfish to keep that charming girl buried alive here."

He paused, and then, as father did not answer, went on: "I don't believe you appreciate what a jewel the girl is. In my whole experience, which is a pretty wide one, I have never known a girl with more real culture than Adele, and physically—why, man alive, she's a beauty!"

At this I suddenly became conscious of the fact that I was listening to a conversation not intended for my ears. With the blood burning my cheeks I turned away for a moment or two to regain my self-possession, then I knocked and entered. Father came at once to me and took me gently in his arms. He looked down into my eyes for a moment before he spoke:

"Adele, dear, Dr. Curtis has been telling me that I am a selfish brute to keep you buried alive in this out of the way place and has asked me to let you go north with them for a visit."

"But, father!" I interrupted. "My dear, I have felt what he says for a long time, but partly because I have been so busy, partly because I have not cared to face it, I have put the thing off, hoping always that we would soon visit France together, and so we shall in the autumn. I will come for you, and we'll go on that long cherished journey. But now I should be far more unhappy to have you stay than I should be, dear, to have you go." Here he broke off and more in his usual tone added, "The main thing is for you and mademoiselle to be packed and ready to leave with Dr. Curtis and his sister on Saturday."

So I went to New York and enjoyed it as only a young girl from the country can enjoy her first sight of a big fascinating city. Nothing was left undone that could give me pleasure, and I shall never forget those days. But the visit was a short one. I had been there scarcely two weeks when Dr. Curtis called me into his office. I went to him, a little anxious at the gravity of his tone and still more anxious when he put me in his big easy chair and took my hands tenderly in his.

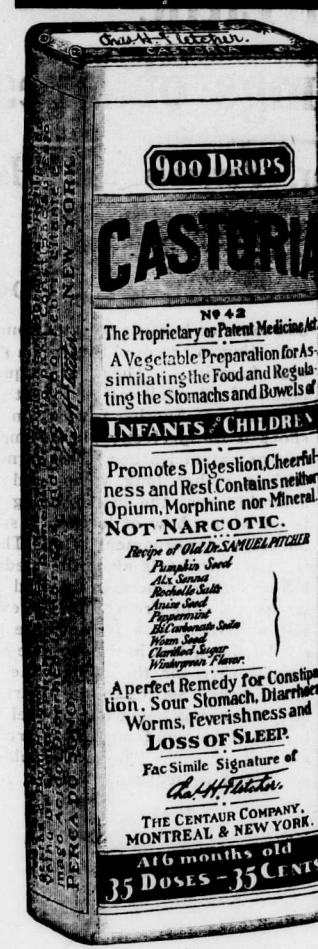
"If you were not a brave girl," he said, "I should scarcely know how to tell you, Adele, but tell you I must, dear. Your father is very ill with fever, and you must go to him at once."

The rest of the day I spent in wondering why I had ever left him. This was in July, 1914, and on my way from New York to New Orleans Germany declared war on France. I had hoped that father might not hear of it, but this, I suppose, was too much to expect, and I reached his side only to find that his whole heart and soul were bound up in the hope of being well again, that he might volunteer for field work in the service of his beloved country. During the weeks that followed, both in his delicious and lucid moments, his constant cry was that he might be permitted to help France, and, for all my anxiety, the fervor of his burning love for his country fired my blood. In the end his poor fever-racked soul went to join the fighting men of older generations—I cannot write of it even now.

My grandmother had died some years before, and I had never known my mother's family. All her near relatives had been dead many years, and so my father's death left me practically alone in the world and as purposeless as a rudderless ship.

After his death I sat day after day in a kind of torpor, bereft of power to think or act. It was my first deep sorrow, and it found me unprepared and defenseless.

Then one night I was sitting alone in his study, for mademoiselle had gone to bed, going over again in a kind of helpless self-torture the thousand little kindnesses and tricks of personality that made my father so dear to me.



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me. I turned my face in my hands for a moment, and as I did so my father spoke to me. I heard his words as clearly as though he stood beside me.

"Although you are only a woman," he said, "and cannot fight with the brave men who are giving their lives for France, there is still something you can do."

I sat silent for a long time, filled with awe and yet with a kind of comfort, puzzling over what he meant. Then after a time I understood, and I went to bed that night happier than I had been since his death, for at last I had a purpose.

The next day I wrote to Dr. Curtis, who had gone out among the first Americans to establish a hospital near the fighting line. It was a poor little letter, but I knew it carried an appeal that would bring me my desire.

The letter must have caught one of the few fast boats crossing at that time, for within two weeks I received a cable from Dr. Curtis telling me that he could not have me with him, but that, as a nurse and a Frenchwoman, I should have a place in one of the military hospitals.

The cable ended with the words, "Come at once; you are needed." So it was that I in my turn set out in search of the unknown, to do my part in the great struggle that is still, as I write, staggering humanity and in which I found so much tragedy and so much happiness.

(Continued next week.)

FARM LABORERS WANTED.

The Western Provinces of Canada have experienced an acute shortage of Farm Laborers for Spring Seeding and Summer work this year.

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Historic

Being Levelled to Men Want

To the youth of the land looking about for service to his Empire with trench life, to the harden of the northland, of the w farms, of the mills, to th is crying out for some fe tary service where he m fruits of his strength in of his country, there has great opportunity to p highest type of military s new Forestry Battalion, which has just been autho Lieut.-Col. W. R. Smyth Algoma, with the right t the whole area from t boundary of Ontario as Pacific Coast, will, wit touch responsive chords riotism of thousands of and possibly the most fact will be the one whi vent all applicants from on for this service. Judg rate at which applicatio ing into the recruiting de the province and to the l at Ottawa, it will be a c if a man is to catch a p non-combatant unit.

There appears to be a dom and independence of service which is app hardy class of citizen, at original intention of Col to take on only bushm mill workers, and experie men, the demand has nov been from young farm from soldiers from othe and from different types that it has been decid qualifications broader in others may catch a p ranks.

While, owing to the spe zation of this battalion, do not include fighting, i seems to be due rather that the men will get a ta lumbering, and that ma who enlist will be able their regular trade, with of wearing the khaki, and ingly not be called up some new business. F lumbermen and teamste directly from the woods into the 238th Battalion y they will be able to do quired of them just a though they had been their lives.

The first duty of the reaching England, will b 234th Forestry Battalion engaged in cutting dow of Windsor to supply r for its hundred and one the Front. While ther little less glory attach of national service, it doubt, just as essential to of the Allies as is the li the trenches. Perhaps y deder where the men lines, who are under fi supply of rough lumber trenches and the dug-o they must take refuge heavy fire of the enemy get it from the forests t ain and Southern Fran be the particular work Forestry Battalion to be plied. Though the 238 are intended for immed September or early Octo sor Forest, they may e upon to cross into Sou to cut down the timbe wherever they go it is an that they will be doing greatest services to the I any equal number of m be called upon to perfor them, there could be no t there could be no dug-o ways of France and Be fall into disrepair, there timber props to permit ance of coal-mining; in s cessful termination of be greatly handicapped, layed for many years. I that the work of th though carried out quiet out ostentation, is esse

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