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The NURSE'S STORY

BY ADELE BLENEAU

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CHAPTER II.

Captain Frazer.

HE boat was crowded and there were many interesting persons on board—at least, in-
teresting to me, as, for the
first part, they were people with
mission. Some were on diplo-
matic errands, others were crossing
because of contracts arising out of the
war. There were also many nurses
and doctors, but far the greater num-
ber of the men were reservists, both
of the ranks and officers, hurrying to
join their colors.

Every morning at 10 o'clock a Dr.
Fraser was taking out a full hospital
bag and equipment, gave lectures to
his staff. As soon as I heard this I
explained to him my situation and my
desire to fit myself to be of better use,
and he cordially invited me to attend
the lectures.

Miss Curtis had placed me in the
care of a charming American woman
who had lived for twenty years in
England, but in spite of a very calm
ship, she managed somehow to be sick
most of the way over, and I saw very
little of her.

Naturally I was in no mood for form-
ing new acquaintances, so that these
each morning helped me greatly
to banish the past and to keep my
mind fixed on the future.

I spent the afternoons reading or do-
ing in my chair, lulled by the gliding
water waves and the soft swish of the
rudder against the steamer's sides.

Dr. Fr. and his wife were unfail-
ingly kind and often sat with me for
hours. One day we were together on
deck when a tall athletic young man
passed.

"That's an Indian officer," said the
doctor, as he strode by.

"Who is it?" asked his wife.

"Oh, I don't know which particular
he is," he replied, smiling. "It's
the type; I would know it any-
where—tall, lean, bronzed, good look-
ing, a certain unconscious air of com-
mand, and a military bearing."

"He does look an Englishman, but I
am not prepared to grant all the rest,"
she replied.

The subject dropped, and a day or so
passed with no further allusion to it.
I had then late one afternoon as we
were walking we met this same Eng-
lishman again.

"Oh, by the way," Mrs. T. said,
speaking to her husband, "you were
right, dear. He is an English officer—
Captain Ian Frazer—coming home from
India. He was out of the harbor from
Okeham when war was declared and
did not come on this way."

"You seem to know his history pre-
tremely," he laughed.

"Oh—Celeste, of course!" and turn-
ing to me she said:

"My maid is a perfect ferret. I
sometimes think as a maid she has a
nose of good timber—that the secret
service should have."

"Oh, they are all like that!" the doc-
tor said. "Most of the gossip of a ship
comes first and last through such
sources." After a moment's reflection
he exclaimed: "Oh, that's the chap
they were telling me about in the
smoking room this morning! He has
been on duty at the Khyber pass!"

"Khyber pass?" That was the last
point of civilization that father and
his party would have passed through
before going into Afghanistan. Poor
father! He had to give up that long
dreamed of trip to come to us.

He had told me so many stories of
that picturesque spot I began to be
keenly interested in the conversation.

You know, Myrtle, the doctor said
I was always so glad to hear him
use her quaint name—the Khyber
pass rides is one of the crack regi-
ments of India, and its officers are
chosen from the unmarried fellows of
all the Indian army. It takes courage
and initiative plus to make good there,
and it is considered a great honor to
be given that post. It was of that regi-
ment that the present crown prince of
Germany, when in India several years
ago, wished to be made honorable col-
onel."

"And was he?" I asked quickly.

"No, I believe Sir George Ruse Ke-
pel was elected."

"Why, I wonder, was he not given
it?" asked his wife.

"Well, my dear, you will have to ask
Captain Frazer. I am sure he could
tell you. It does not follow that he
will. Still, you could ask," he added
good humoredly.

faced and trembling below.

I was rather shaken by this revela-
tion of misery, and after thanking the
Englishman for his presence of mind,
and being congratulated by him in
turn, I went at once to my cabin.

Next morning Captain Frazer told
me the man's story. He was an Aus-
trian nobleman who had had an unfor-
tunate love affair in the United States
and had determined to return to his
native land. Then the war had come,
and with it knowledge of the misfor-
tunes of his own country and, more
particularly, of his own family. Hard-
ly knowing what he did, the man had
taken the steamer, without realizing
until after the boat sailed that he must
inevitably be interned when he reach-
ed England. This last misfortune had
temporarily unbalanced his reason,
and the scene on the deck in which I
had assisted was the result. Captain
Frazer assured me that he was much
calmer now, and that the doctor felt
certain he would not repeat his at-
tempt of the night before.

His story finished, he bowed cour-
teously and left me. I did not see
him again until we had landed at Liv-
erpool.

While we sat waiting for the exam-
iner I heard Captain Frazer, not far
away, speak a few words to his
valet—a man who looked as if he
might be prematurely old, but who to-
day was so beaming with happiness
that he seemed rejuvenated.

At something he said Captain Fra-
zer laughed and replied, "Oh, you are
generally right, Shipman." In a tone
of such friendliness that I felt he
must be an old family servant. Then
Captain Frazer turned around sudden-
ly, came over to me and said pleas-
antly:

"Can I do anything for you?"

"No; thanks," I answered warmly,
for I was sincerely grateful for this
little friendliness that I felt he
must be an old family servant. Then
Captain Frazer turned around sudden-
ly, came over to me and said pleas-
antly:

"Goodby! Perhaps we shall meet
again. The world is small." I think
it must have been Adam who said
that. He added, with a subtle twin-
kle lighting up his eyes.

I replied, smiling, "Anyway, Cain
knew better."

He laughed, lifted his hat and was
gone.

My eyes were still following him
when I heard a voice say: "Goodby,
mildred! Goodby, mildred!" I turned
and saw the old valet, bareheaded,
bowing and smiling in reply to a
friendly nod from a lady in a waiting
limousine. He seemed suddenly to re-
member himself and as he did spoke
with a little chuckle to a maid stand-
ing near:

"I said to my gentleman last night
as he was dressing, 'I look to see your
mother at the dock tomorrow, sir.'
Nonsense, Shipman," he said. But I
saw all the same that he was hoping
it himself. It's been four years since
we went out to India. Four years in
a long while, especially in war times,"
he added soberly.

We had brought over with us, by Dr.
Curtis' advice, numerous trunks con-
taining all kinds of things necessary
for a field hospital, so our stay at the
customs was rather long. Shipman in-
sisted on remaining and closing the
last trunk. "It's the captain's orders,
miss." And Shipman had served too
long with a soldier to allow anything
to swerve him.

We left the station at 9 o'clock and
rode down to London in the lovely
misty sunshine, going through the soft
rolling hills, wet with dew and over-
hung with violet shadows. I found
myself drawn with a peculiar in-
describable affection for this emerald
world. Had my ancestors been Eng-
lish I might have explained the pull at
my heartstrings in that way; but be-
ing French I gave it up and aban-
doned myself to watching the hills, the
black faced sheep and the picturesque
cottages until we reached London.

Some one has said, "After all, since
life is a fragment of the brain, based up
notions of things are far more impres-
sive often than the actuality." London
to the untitled means a fanfare
of names, a swirl of memories, vast
reputations, history, poetry, noble
ideals, recollections of great deeds.

We were leaving for Paris the next
morning, so mademoiselle and I spent
the afternoon buying various articles
that Dr. T. had suggested, as his re-

port from France was that most hos-
pital supplies were falling. We re-
turned to our hotel late and tired, but
mademoiselle insisted we go down to
dine. I think she thought I needed
the change. But it wasn't a gay ex-
perience. The dining room was almost
deserted. There were not more than
a half dozen tables occupied.

Sitting next to us was a party of
four—a mother, father and son, the
fourth being a young English girl who,
I felt instinctively, was not of the same
family. She was tall and slender, with
a lovely white and pink coloring, such
as I had never seen before. It made
her appear to me as unreal as Undine
and as beautiful. Masses of shining
blond hair framed her face. She fas-
cinated me, and unconsciously my eyes
turned again and again to that table.

The young man was a soldier. I was
beginning already to know the type.
Tall, clean cut, he looked the scion of
a long race.

Their conversation had the familiar-
ity of a devoted family and was un-
interesting to the outsider. We soon
knew that the young soldier was going
on the morrow to the front and that
the lovely girl was his fiancée. The
others talked a good deal, but the
young girl said little. It was as if she
did not trust herself. Her great wide
blue eyes were awfully ever, even for
a moment, taken from the young offi-
cer. Once I heard her say something
about "the great danger," at which the
young man leaned toward her, and
there was in his voice a note I had
never heard. He spoke with deep con-
viction. I shall never forget his words:

"You must remember, dear, individ-
uals cannot count. We are writing a
new page of history. Future gener-
ations cannot be allowed to read of the
decline of the British empire and at-
tribute it to us. We live our little
lives and die, and to some are given
the chance of proving themselves men,
and to others no chance comes. What-
ever our individual faults, virtues or
qualities may be, it matters not, but
when we are up against big things we
must forget individuals and act as one
great British unit, united and fearless.

Some will live, and many will die, but
count not the loss. It is better far to
go out with honor than survive with
shame."

As he was speaking I watched the
faces of his hearers. There came into
the eyes of his mother an expression
almost exalted—it even flickered in the
great, soft eyes of the girl, but only
a moment, and then there fell over
them a heavy, dull curtain of pain.

Her expression hurt me, and I looked
away, for I had a premonition of hap-
piness foredoomed to sorrow—that this
hopeless expression had come to stay.

The mother probably felt just as
deeply, but she had—fortitude—a mask
that was never raised. Only the eyes
of God, I was to learn, are permitted
to see naked an Englishwoman's soul.

CHAPTER III.

Ominous Signs of War.

WAS oppressed—this was the
beginning of war—I was be-
ginning to see its face, and its
face was ominous. Mademoi-
selle, who knew my every mood, some-
times before I was conscious of it my-
self, realized the shadow on my spirit
and suggested we have coffee upstairs.

Two men, one a soldier in kilts, en-
tered the dining room and stopped at
our neighbors' table. As we passed I
heard the Scot say to the older man
with him, "Father, this is Captain—
of the—"

I did not hear the reg-
iment.

Months after, under conditions
which had I known at the moment
would have frozen the blood in my
veins, I was to learn the name of his
regiment and all that it stood for.

The next day we started for Bou-
logne. We arrived in a pouring rain.
Finding we had hours to wait for our
train, I decided to look up a Miss Rus-
sell, a Canadian, who had for several
years been Dr. Curtis' operating and
office nurse in New York and had vol-
unteered at the beginning of the war.
When I doubtfully asked a porter at
the station if he knew where base hos-
pital 13 was he replied laconically:

"It's next door." And so it was.

The shed over the tracks had been
hurriedly converted into a great re-
ceiving hospital. When I asked for
Miss Russell the orderly at the door
looked at me suspiciously and asked if

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I had a permit. As I was about to re-
ply in the negative a tall, slender wo-
man with soft, pretty gray eyes, dress-
ed in a straight coat and sailor hat,
came toward me. Something in her
manner made me feel she could help.

She asked, smiling:

"Is there something I can do for
you?"

I explained who I was and my mis-
sion.

"Why, certainly you can see Miss
Russell. I'll send for her, and, too, I
want you to see our hospital. It's
crude, but effective. We sometimes
handle a thousand men a day. You
will be interested, I know."

She waited until Miss Russell came,
and after showing me "the store,"
which she explained was her part of
the work, she said goodby. It was
Lady Algy Lenox, the head of the hos-
pital, herself. Miss Russell laughed at
"her part of the work." "It's all her
work," she declared. "Lady Algy
hasn't been back to England since the
hospital opened, months ago. She is
the first one here in the morning and
the last one to leave at night. Dozens
of times each day she goes through the
wards, and she knows the men's
names, wounds and histories."

Later the head surgeon told me that
in getting the men straight from the
battlefield as they did, treating them
and putting them directly on the
channel boats undoubtedly saved thou-
sands of lives.

While I was there an ambulance
train from the front came in, and the
surgeon permitted me to see the men
brought in. It consisted of car after
car of wounded and dying. The mud
was caked on their clothes, in their
hair and in their wounds, until, in some
instances, they could knock it off in
lumps. An aseptic wound did not ex-
ist. Many had received first aid, but
often they came as they had been
picked up, straight from the battle
field.

As I was leaving, Miss Russell came
running out and asked if I would go
for a moment into a small ward where
a German boy was very excited about
something, they couldn't make out
quite what I went to find he was

raving about "suffragettes." He had
been warned by his mother in a letter
that there were suffragettes acting as
nurses in the different hospitals and
that when they got the chance they
gouged out the wounded prisoners'
eyes. He felt sure he had been put in
that small room with another German,
who happened to be unconscious, for
that purpose. He was only a lad, not
more than eighteen, from the Polish
frontier, simple and ignorant. Happ-
ily for his peace, I was able to cen-
sure him of the utter absurdity of it
all.

Not only all the men in Boulogne
were wearing khaki, but women so
clad were acting as military chauffeurs.
Often I was puzzled to decide whether
they were young boys or women. Un-
der the caps and in their smart mili-
tary coats they looked like fresh faced
lads. While waiting for the train I
saw one of them change a tire. With
no help she did it in just seven min-
utes. True, it was a demountable
rim, but that was good work. It in-
terested me particularly, as even with
a chauffeur to help me I had never been
able to accomplish it in less than six
and a half.

(Continued next week.)

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