

The NURSE'S STORY

By ADELE BLENEAU

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Lieutenant F. added enthusiastically as he finished his story. "Oh, he only did his duty," the Englishman replied calmly.

Another second and the fuse would be lighted. I dreaded to see it, and either feeling that or remembering the urgent need of our hurrying on, Lieutenant F. said, "Well, we must go."

The men shook hands, and Lieutenant F. said: "Goodbye. Is there anything more that I can do for you?"

"Yes, if you will leave this note at the headquarters at C. I will be obliged." He wrote a line or two, handed it to Lieutenant F., and we were off again.

"Those English are fine fellows," he said. "The Germans at first despised them, and I confess we French didn't begin to appreciate them at their full value until in the retreat from Mons."

When it was all over he thanked the doctor, the operating nurse and myself and said as they carried him out: "When I get home, if anybody speaks to me about the glory of war I am going to be blanked rude to them, you may be sure."

I was so tired when I got to bed I was asleep in ten minutes, although for the last hour I had heard the dull booming of artillery.

The next morning while the matron was taking me around the wards explaining my duties a message came asking her to come at once to the colonel's office. She left me to go through the German ward and do whatever was found necessary. That ward was in a wing of the monastery that had been used for a dining room. Lighted on three sides, it was admirably adapted for its present purpose, but because the German officers objected to sharing their quarters with their men it had been divided about the middle by four huge carved oak doors, and while they were beautiful in themselves, they made the room far less airy.

I went at once to see the patient of the night before. He was resting comfortably—in fact, so much so that he insisted on keeping me to read me an extract from an article written by Maximilian Harden, the famous editor of the *Zukunft*.

"His style is," he said, "so terse and epigrammatic that he has been called the German Tacitus." The article explained that there was too much chatter about the shortage of food, potato famine, but said the truth was it simply was a campaign intended to arouse the hatred of England. The article was headed "Eat Your Pigs or Four Flies Will Eat You" and went on:

"In the brains of even the serious people in Germany there has grown a crazy theory that the German standard of living has depreciated. Everywhere lectures, appeals, instructions, warnings, about our food. Eat K-K bread; never scorn dry crusts. Cook your potatoes in their skins. Collect your kitchen refuse. No flour on Sunday. Female busbodies with a crane for a nose. Tell us what a delightful mouthful you can make from the eye and tail of a herring.

"Eat your mess yourself, you chat-box!" All this twaddle injures Germany. We are in no danger of famine. This frebrand was merely meant to inflame hatred against our enemy, England."

And then Harden proceeds to draw a picture of the real state of things. He says:

"Hundreds of thousands of women live more lavishly than in peace times. For then the husband drank or gambled. Now he is with the colors and sends home the pay he cannot use. Landlords and creditors may wait for their money. Societies, clubs and private people open their purses. What's for dinner? Roast goose, apple pastry, dined asparagus, fresh fish, chocolate and cake.

"Then away goes the woman to the stores, bargain hunting, looks in at the fortune teller's on the way. After this a visit to the cinema and sees 'Her Last Dance,' 'The Guardian Spirit of the Submarines,' 'The Latest War Films.' This is not an uncommon woman's day."

The officer enjoyed it immensely. Evidently it expressed his own sentiments.

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There I found half a dozen of the staff, including an inspector general of hospitals, who had just arrived, discussing the inadequacy of the first aid stations.

The worried inspector said he found that in our service there was no fire, no brandy, no aspirin, no morphine and often very little dressings; that we depended too often on simply getting

ways nice and reasonable, but the officers!" And she threw up her hands.

A few moments later she led the way up the three flights of worn stone stairs to the little room that had been assigned to me.

"I felt you would prefer being alone, even though the room is so tiny, and with all its disadvantages—only," she added, smiling as we surveyed it. "If we get too crowded you must be prepared to share even this."

I assured her I was nappy and grateful to be allowed to serve no matter what the conditions.

My bath finished, I was leisurely combing my hair when a message came that I was wanted in Colonel S.'s office at once. Hastily putting on my uniform and cap, I went down. A German officer had just been brought in from the front with an ugly wound in the thigh, and his condition was serious. They had already got him warmed, his circulation restored. The examination disclosed a large infected wound with several inches of the bone torn away. The medic major was endeavoring to persuade the man that an amputation wasn't necessary, that he could replace the bone by a long steel plate screwed to the remaining bone.

The German not speaking French very well had been unable to understand the proposed treatment, I explained it to him, but he did not like the idea; he felt sure the plates would break loose, the screws come out and that in the end he would die with violent sepsis, brought on by the presence of such a foreign substitute in his body.

After much persuasion, however, he consented. The thing that finally seemed to clinch the matter was that with two legs he could still ride. The idea of a one legged man on horseback seemed to horrify him.

He was given spinal anaesthesia and was very interested in being able to read and talk during the operation. When it was all over he thanked the doctor, the operating nurse and myself and said as they carried him out: "When I get home, if anybody speaks to me about the glory of war I am going to be blanked rude to them, you may be sure."

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CHAPTER V.
Field Hospital 15.

While I drank a cup of tea the matron talked to me of the work. I felt instinctively that she would be friends. She was business-like, kindly and had a quick understanding. She was especially pleased that I could interpret for them. No one in the hospital spoke German, and now and then, she explained, they had rather different experiences with their German patients. "Not so much the man," she added. "They are all

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CHAPTER VI.
Hinges of Destiny.

ALL day they had been bringing men in from the front, wounded, dirty and dying; all day I had smelled that peculiar, indescribable odor which I had learned so well to know in these last few weeks and which an eternity will not serve to efface from my memory.

Many of the men, although terribly wounded, had been so exhausted that to awaken them was impossible. We had not tried; we had let them sleep. A wound that has been without care for a few hours can go one or two hours longer without attention, for nothing that man has invented or science discovered can take the place of sleep during the last twenty-four hours, and one by one they had been washed, their wounds dressed and then put to bed.

I was so tired that I dumbly wondered whether I should succumb, as the men from the front, overwhelmed with care, had done. I was surprised to find he was an Englishman. We had started to undress him when he roused up and said:

"Where is my captain? They have left him—I know they have. They thought he was dead or dying, and they have left him out in the cold and the dark. Do not touch me. I am going to find him." And before we could stop him he had jumped up, struggled to his feet and was halfway down the ward. We were after him like a flash and in a minute after him he had disappeared.

"What is it, my man?" Something in his calm, cool manner implied authority, and this is the story the soldier vehemently poured forth:

"I am a lieutenant in the 81st regiment. This morning at 3 o'clock we were awakened by a night attack. An incessant artillery fire began, and shells came thick on top of one another. First they were quite close to us, then next to us, then upon us, and with that there came that hideous stinging sound of the bullets. Short red flames burst out. The searchlight threw its terrible pale gleam across the horizon, and the screaming shrapnel fell like hail on the ground around us.

Everywhere was the ceaseless crack of the rifle, the bursting of shells and the roar of high explosives. Far away somewhere up the line came the clatter of the machine guns getting into action. My God! Our Indians fought like devils, but we were surrounded. Those who were able jumped to the parapet and fought on until the end. The last thing I remember during the bayonet charge that followed was hearing a German officer call out to my captain, 'Englishmen, surrender!'

Seizing a rifle to encourage his men, I heard above the din of battle his cool cry: 'Surrender, be damned!' As he said this he fell. I reached out to catch him, and then I know no more until I found myself here. Now I must go back there to find him. I know just where he is. It cannot be far."

I thought, as he was talking, it must have been just the moment that French cavalry appeared on the scene within the hill and the German fell back, otherwise he and his beloved captain would be lying on the battlefield, in the enemy's lines or, by rare good luck, in the enemy's hospital. The boy was not badly wounded, and the doctor decided to let him go out with the bandage and search for his captain.

It was a moonlight night, and as this young subaltern, accompanied by the surgeon, went down the gravelled walk through the garden I followed them. The last I saw of him was as he swung himself into a waiting motor with several of the stretcher bearers and was off toward the battlefield where they had fought so desperately only a few hours before.

I felt wildly excited. Something of that strange thrill, terrible and tragic, that had been ever present within me since I had first begun nursing and that had flashed through the course of the blessing of getting used to things again seized me. There is something within us, and stronger than our wills, which adapts us to every circumstance so quickly that we sometimes resent the adaptation. I had found that one cannot continue to be surprised or glad or even sorry above a certain level. War is like lead and a certain amount of the effect of which shrill an audience only about three minutes. I had grown to believe that I had seen so much of the hideous and ghastly that comes into every nurse's life at a receiving hospital that my capacity for great excitement had been exhausted. But out there alone under the calm bright moon, the air heavy with perfume of garden flowers, something of it all stirred and quickened me to its very depths. I forgot that my limbs ached with fatigue, forgot how ardently I had been longing for bed, and stood there wistfully gazing down the road, as if expecting some dear one.

I do not know how long I stood there, but I suddenly became conscious of a fast approaching motor. In a second it was at the gate, and I heard a car that sounded strangely familiar. It was the little lieutenant, supporting in his arms his captain. I remember faintly thinking that war revived one's faith again in miracles.

"Quick, nurse!" he said to me. "I won't believe he is dead, although I can't find any pulse."

He was carried into the hospital and immediately into the outer rooms where the stretcher bearers, who had the strong lights were switched on. For a moment I was dazzled, half blinded by their brilliancy, and it was only after I had unbuttoned his uniform and bared his breast, that all might be ready for the hypodermic of ether and camphorated oil that Dr. Souchon generally gave, that I saw his face.

I recognized the white and finely chiseled face of Captain Frazer, the Englishman who had helped me rescue the Austrian officer that night on the Lustan.

The doctor's quick and businesslike voice brought me abruptly back to earth.

"A serious abdominal wound with internal hemorrhage," he was saying as he made a hasty examination in which to look at the celebratory general. "This is the kind of case," he continued, "about which one might say the person must have a mission to fulfill, as by all the laws of nature this man ought to have been dead hours ago."

In the confusion of the moment we had all forgotten the indomitable courage of the boyish lieutenant, and it was only when we heard a third and something fall limply to the floor that we remembered him. He had fainted. An orderly and a doctor picked him up and carried him out, while I remained to help Dr. Souchon with the operation.

"He is so nearly done for, nurse," said the doctor, "and it is just a question of a few weeks' care and patience—patience," he repeated, with sincere tenderness in his voice, for the wounded man had been with him during many campaigns in Africa and Madagascar.

It was getting late when he left the room and he had many kilometers to go, but he insisted on walking through the hospital saying a word to each of the men there, alluding to them as "mes braves petits soldats." In one of the beds there was a Scotchman. The general spoke to him and said, "You are one of the men that Germans call 'Lewenweiber.'" (Ladies from hell). Quick as a flash the Scot answered: "That's a great compliment, sir. It shows that they think we fight like devils." At which the general laughed good humoredly.

For the last few days I had been doing extra work in the German prisoner ward. Some way they came to know that I was from America, which was not eager to chat with me—fact, so eager that it was only with difficulty I prevented it interfering

with my work. About thirty-five years old—a non-commissioned officer of the landwehr who had risen to a lieutenantcy. He did not look at all like a typical German officer, nor were his mental processes that of this class. Of course his patriotism did not permit him to harbor any doubt of his country's ultimate success, but neither did he hide his desire for an early peace.

"You know," he said to us as we changed his dressings and gave him his treatment, "Germany does not aspire to reduce France to vassalage, and when the orderly said something about Alsace-Lorraine he answered that there might be some sort of an exchange arranged—France take back Alsace-Lorraine and Germany receive compensation in colonies. We are so misunderstood." He repeated coming on. "Germany did not want war now—now or at any time—but realized when she saw France's three years' military service in full swing and when Russia had built her endless system of strategic railroads, with the help of French money, that Germany would be between the upper and nether millstones."

CHAPTER VII.
Captain Frazer's Delirium.

A T the first moment possible I hurried upstairs to see how Captain Frazer was getting on. For days his temperature had been running high, and he was constantly delirious. Now and then he would utter words and disconnected sentences that made no sense at all, but often he talked for hours, relating experiences after experience, sometimes with a clearness and sanity that were uncanny. When I entered the room he was in the midst of such a dissertation.

"We all have our pet aversion in action, old man, haven't we?" he said. "Now, there is Cecil Loring, who hates the thing that makes the least noise. You know we all used to laugh at him as he bobbed every bullet! And then there was Shane-Lister—he was devilishly shaken by high explosives. Just the other day Barry said to me: 'Tan, my boy, you remember that day when we were talking to the observation officer standing on a haystack and the moment after we left it a shell struck it? That was a close call. Things like that go to my head.' And then in action when the bullets are singing and all hell seems let loose he insists that he feels drunk—as drunk as if he had been at it all night. It may be a form of funk, he says, but it's truth. Why, I am laughing all the time at myself, exhilarated, I feel as if I were treading on air, but—and here Captain Frazer dropped his voice in a most confidential manner and looked up at me with burning eyes—"as for me, I do not mind telling you when he is all over I have that sickening dropping sensation—you know as if you were made of lead and were sinking down. And then is when I like my tea. Who's making tea? Give me a cup—no, I mean mugful!"

Sitting up suddenly he called out: "Put out that lamp, you fool; the smoke will give the alarm. Use a candle." Then he laughed, that peculiar, disagreeable laugh of the delirious, as he said, "By Jove, that is an ingenious idea!" and he began talking about vaseline and jam jars. His speech became unintelligible, and it was not until long after he had fallen asleep that the men used vaseline tins and empty jam jars filled with lumps of ham fat and a rifle rag as an improvised stove on which to make their tea.

"When he became unusually excited I had to sit there by the hour, day or night, and hold his hand. The warmness of mine or something dropping sensation that passes from one being to another seemed to calm him until finally he would drift off to sleep. Today I sat beside him and, speaking in a low voice, tried to quiet him. He drifted off to sleep, but only for a few minutes; then he began talking about his own regiment—the Lodhiana Sikhs, with one of the best records both for bravery and loyalty, of any of the distinguished regiments of the Indian army. This was a dangerous subject for him, as he was extremely proud of his men and invariably began to fight over some of the fierce battles in which they had been engaged. Talking his temperature and finding it very high, I decided to give him an ergy, alcohol sponge. An hour later, as the chill purple folds of night shut down, he fell asleep.

This had been going on for some weeks now. He had grown weaker, of course, every day and less able to withstand the ravages of fever. When the doctor came to see how he was he shook his head gravely and said: "Unless we can keep that fever down for the next twenty-four hours our man is done for."

All day I had given him alcohol sponges as often as I dared, and we had kept the saline solution going every hour, but I was becoming frightened, and when Dr. Souchon came in the evening I asked him to leave me some nitro-glycerin.

"And wouldn't you come as often as possible tonight, doctor?" I pleaded, for I realized this was the crisis and that we had only a fighting chance to win.

"I will come as often as I can," he answered, "but wounded are arriving constantly. I hear an ambulance now," and he turned to go at the door, he said, "And I may be obliged to have you!"

"Oh, please, doctor," I interrupted beseechingly, "don't send for me! I must be here tonight!"

"I will do the best I can," he replied and turned on his heel and ran down the stairs. (To be Continued)

CHAPTER VIII.
The German Ward.

I had been thinking of the man who had been brought in from the front with an ugly wound in the thigh, and his condition was serious. They had already got him warmed, his circulation restored. The examination disclosed a large infected wound with several inches of the bone torn away. The medic major was endeavoring to persuade the man that an amputation wasn't necessary, that he could replace the bone by a long steel plate screwed to the remaining bone.

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The next morning while the matron was taking me around the wards explaining my duties a message came asking her to come at once to the colonel's office. She left me to go through the German ward and do whatever was found necessary. That ward was in a wing of the monastery that had been used for a dining room. Lighted on three sides, it was admirably adapted for its present purpose, but because the German officers objected to sharing their quarters with their men it had been divided about the middle by four huge carved oak doors, and while they were beautiful in themselves, they made the room far less airy.

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"His style is," he said, "so terse and epigrammatic that he has been called the German Tacitus." The article explained that there was too much chatter about the shortage of food, potato famine, but said the truth was it simply was a campaign intended to arouse the hatred of England. The article was headed "Eat Your Pigs or Four Flies Will Eat You" and went on:

"In the brains of even the serious people in Germany there has grown a crazy theory that the German standard of living has depreciated. Everywhere lectures, appeals, instructions, warnings, about our food. Eat K-K bread; never scorn dry crusts. Cook your potatoes in their skins. Collect your kitchen refuse. No flour on Sunday. Female busbodies with a crane for a nose. Tell us what a delightful mouthful you can make from the eye and tail of a herring.

"Eat your mess yourself, you chat-box!" All this twaddle injures Germany. We are in no danger of famine. This frebrand was merely meant to inflame hatred against our enemy, England."

And then Harden proceeds to draw a picture of the real state of things. He says:

CHAPTER IX.
The German Ward.

I had been thinking of the man who had been brought in from the front with an ugly wound in the thigh, and his condition was serious. They had already got him warmed, his circulation restored. The examination disclosed a large infected wound with several inches of the bone torn away. The medic major was endeavoring to persuade the man that an amputation wasn't necessary, that he could replace the bone by a long