# Sister Anne! Sister Anne!

by

Gertrude Arnold

T25
395
Bm

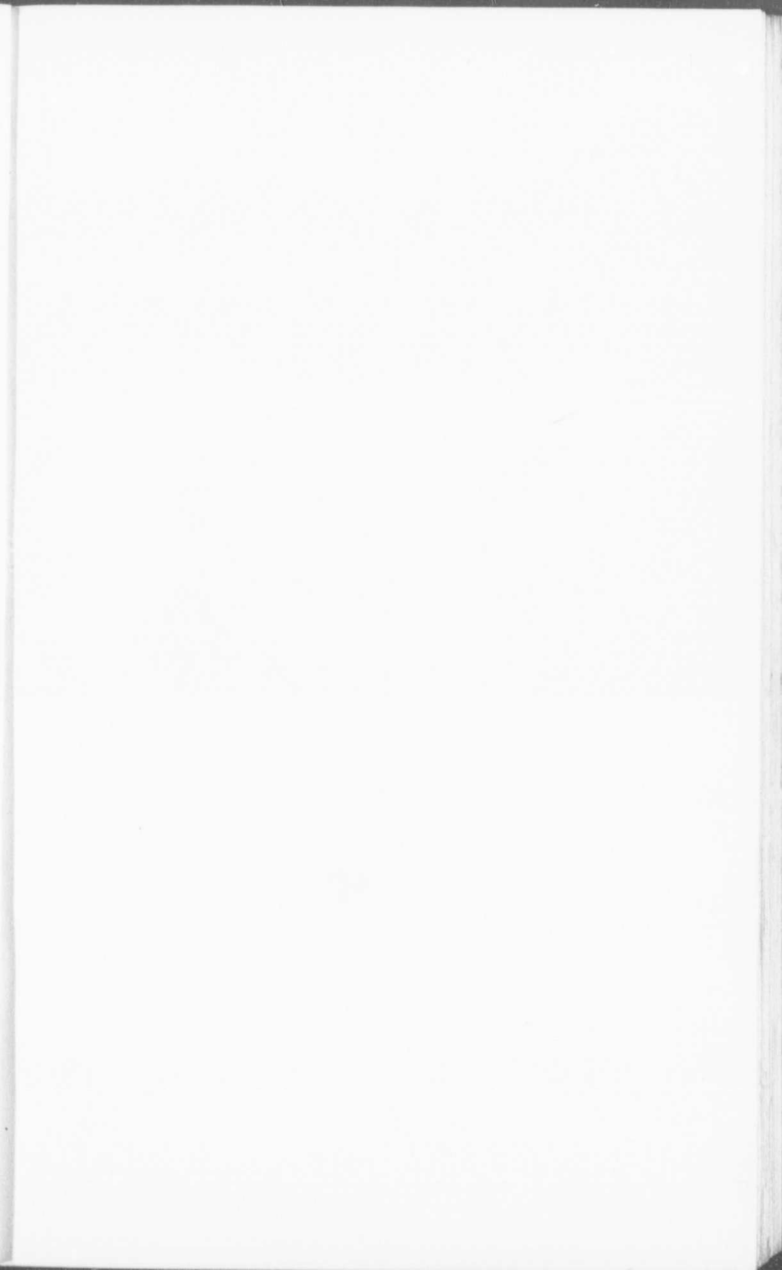
60-

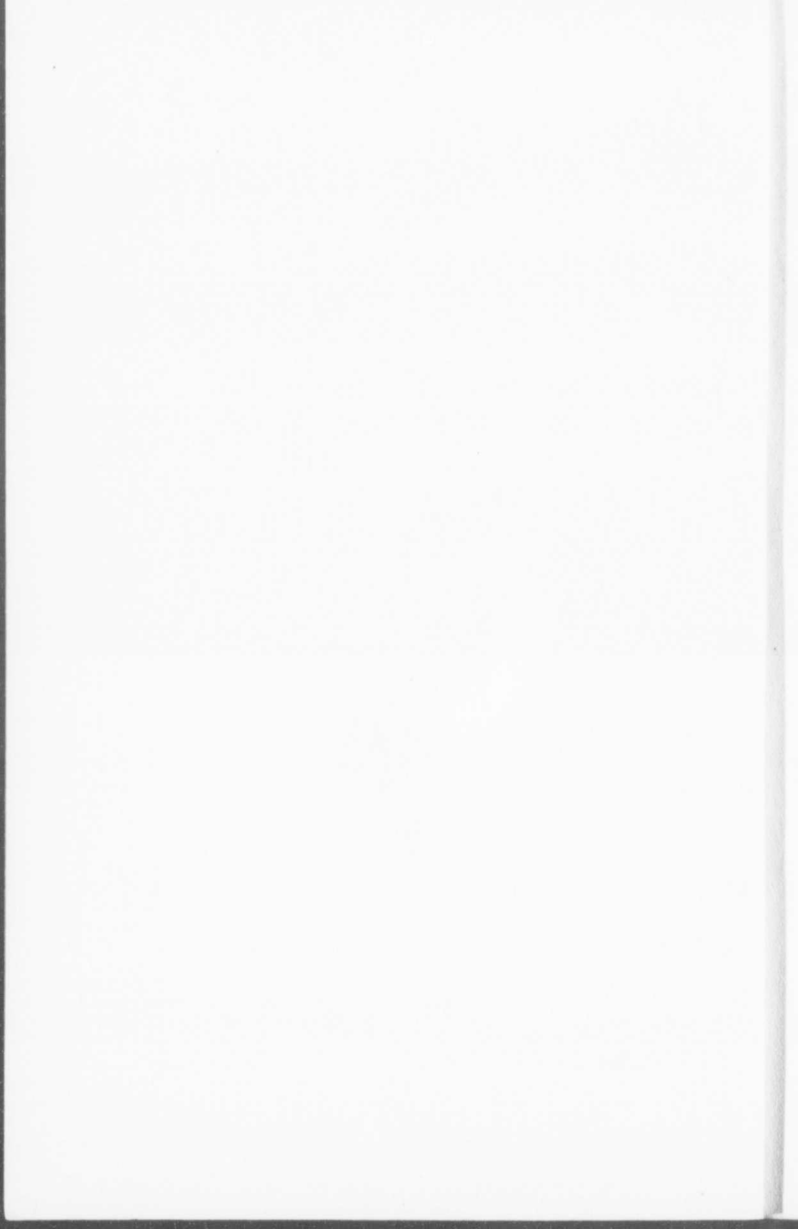
WWI

1919

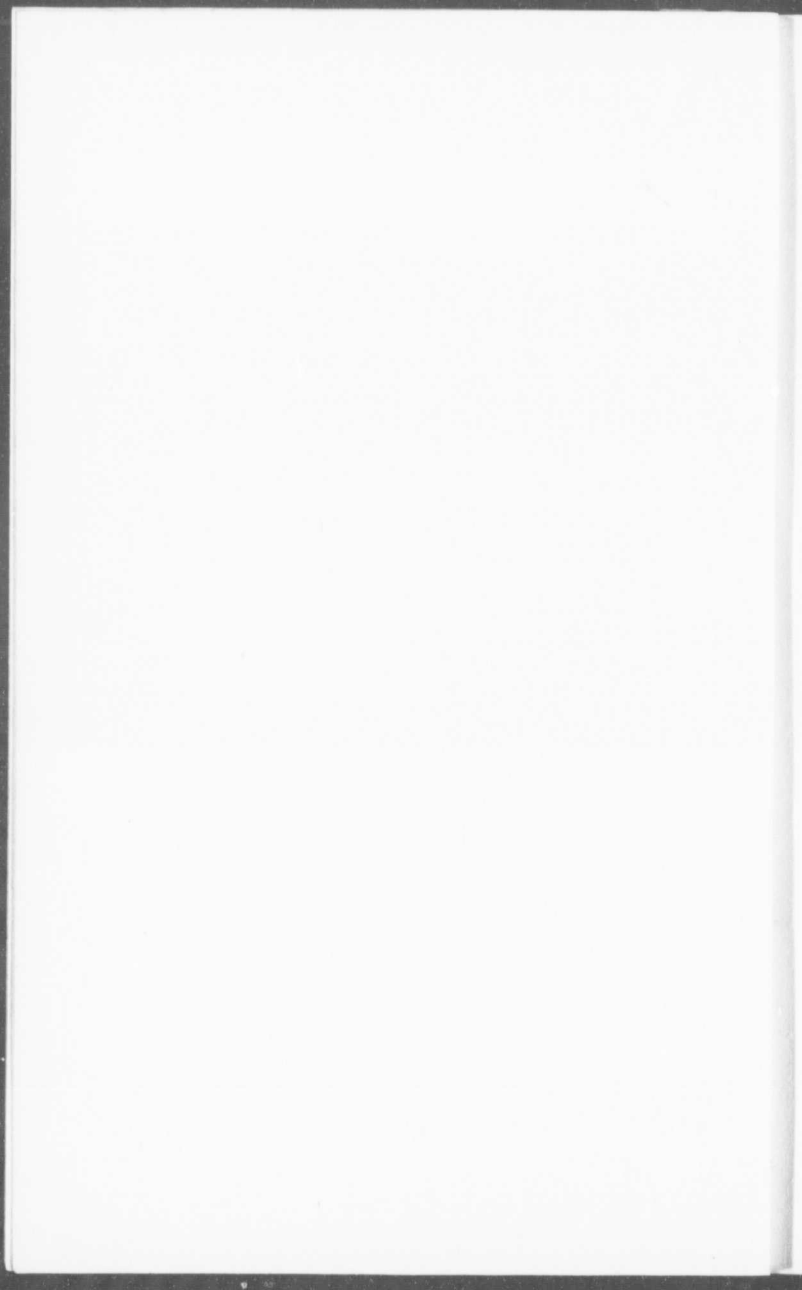
1st ed

watters p 240





# SISTER ANNE! SISTER ANNE!!



# Sister Anne!
# Sister Anne!!

BY

GERTRUDE ARNOLD

McCLELLAND & STEWART
PUBLISHERS - - - TORONTO

PS8501
R615
S57
1919
c.2

COPYRIGHT, CANADA, 1919
BY McCLELLAND & STEWART, LIMITED, TORONTO

PRINTED IN CANADA

09501321

TO

MY

FATHER AND MOTHER

TO WHOSE INSPIRATION

I OWE

THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVICE

# CONTENTS


PAGE

Preface . . . . . . . . . . IX.

The Awakening . . . . . . . . XI.

On An Ambulance Train . . . . . 1

The Fear of Fear . . . . . . . 19

Sister and the Sikhs . . . . . . 35

Christmas . . . . . . . . . 48

The Searcher . . . . . . . . 65

The Push is On . . . . . . . 84

When A Party is On . . . . . . 95

Hospital Mornings . . . . . . . 111

In the Officers Ward . . . . . . 123

"The Military Cross was Awarded" . . . 132

Tommy in Convalescent Camp . . . 136

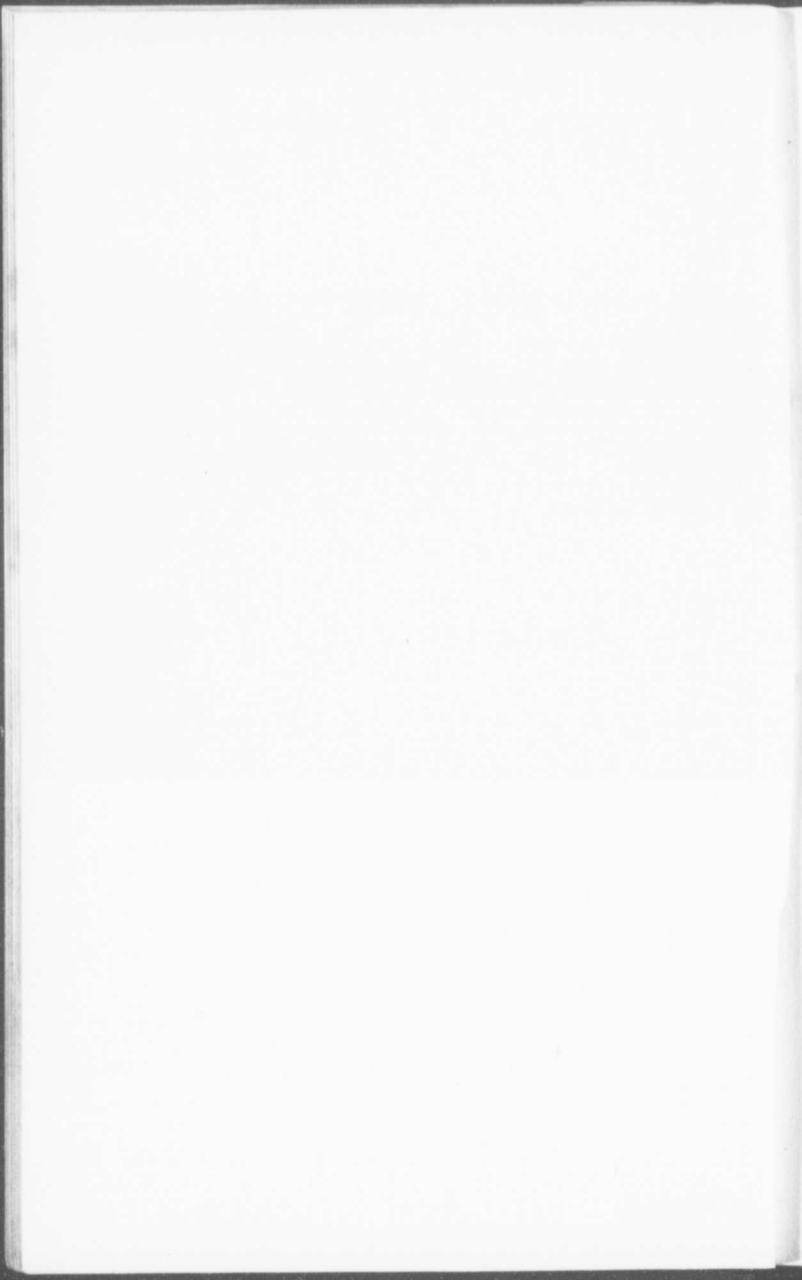
When the Raid was On . . . . . . 156

In our Midst . . . . . . . . 172

Before the Dawn . . . . . . . 184

Sister Anne! Sister Anne!! . . . . 194

Aftermath . . . . . . . . . 217



# Preface

TO "Sister Anne", working in France, appeared a Vision—a mighty assembly of women, in the Homeland, with outstretched arms, peering through the mists that enveloped that Land to which their Sons had gone.

She heard their voices, swelling like the sound of many waters, and these were the words they spoke:

"What manner of women are these, white veiled, to whom has been granted the honour of tending our Beloved?

"Show us the hearts that beat beneath these aprons of white linen!

"Is Understanding there?

"Is Love there?

"Have they, too, known Sorrow?

"Let them give an account of their Stewardship!"

"Sister Anne" arose from seeing the Vision, with a new purpose in her heart.

"Let us tell them," she said, "of our laughter and our tears; of our failures and our successes; of our 'common task and daily round'."

So she repeats these tales, simpler than the simplest, and in her own words, as she tells them, I pass them on to you.

"Too late!" says a Voice, "The War has now been over a dozen months. We have heard enough!"

One has a vague idea, that to "Sister Anne," a *cycle* of months will make but little difference—for the hearts of men do not vary according to the times or the seasons.

GERTRUDE ARNOLD

# The Awakening

An old fashioned village—the name sounds like Edinieu—drowses its days away, in the North of France. Trains glide leisurely through unnoticed. The village is asleep.

War came. Trains *stop,* now, and men in khaki, on their way from hospital, jump out to make the change for "Up the Line".

Weary hours! The village is disturbed.

In a corner of the old grey station, mice ridden, flagstone floor, live four girls, with white veils and red crosses. Through the night, and through the day, they make food for the queue of Convalescents-in-khaki.

The village is awake.

*LINGERS the grace of thy sweet-sounding name,*
*Hesdigneul!*
*Lingers the vision of foliage aflame,*
*Hesdigneul!*
*Dies the hoarse voice of War in the peace of thine hills*
*Strident, rumbling, forboding, threatening of ills,*
*Till its muttering rage, thy tranquillity stills,*
*Hesdigneul!*

*Where the maimed come for shelter, like Ararat's dove,*
*Hesdigneul!*
*Where the "cup of cold water" betokens our love,*
*Hesdigneul!*
*Where the Scot and the Celt, and the Man from the West,*
*Pile their weapons, in clanging array, as they rest,*
*Forgetting past horrors, see only life's best,*
*Hesdigneul!*

*Now, the Steam, and the Thought, and the Strife of to-day*
*Hesdigneul!*
*Thy inherited peace brush rudely away*
*Hesdigneul!*
*The grace of old France, its manors, gray stone,*
*The charm of quaint gardens, and dahlias full-blown,*
*The turrets, grim sentries, o'er fields lately mown,*
*Hesdigneul!*

*For dreaming and languor we bring life and stir,*
*Hesdigneul!*
*As the lotus must yield to the pine and the fir,*
*Hesdigneul!*
*Thy plane of existence is loftier now*
*Scattered men with new graces thy name shall endow*
*For Service is placed, like a crown, on thy brow,*
*Hesdigneul!*

# SISTER ANNE! SISTER ANNE!!

# On an Ambulance Train

WHEN one is working in France, one learns to expect the unexpected.

One jumps up in the morning, looking forward to "carry on" as one did yesterday, and the day before, and many days before that.

Suddenly a messenger arrives:

"Will you go to Matron's office. She wishes to speak to you."

Passing on the immediate piece of work which I happened to be doing, I run quickly downstairs, my hands busy adjusting my cap, patting my hair, arranging my apron, so that a wretched spot of Lysol lotion will not show. I arrive at Matron's desk gasping, from my quick transit, and wishing I had come in a more dignified fashion.

"Good morning, Sister," Matron says. Her eyes are very keen, and all I can think of is whether or not she sees that spot.

"I have just received word from Headquarters that you are to go on duty on the Ambulance Train. We shall be sorry to lose you, Sister, but I think you will like the work. Be ready to start the day after tomorrow."

In a minute I am outside the door, breathless over the sudden change that is coming into my life.

## SISTER ANNE! SISTER ANNE!!

Here I am, then, where I little ever expected to be—at the Railhead—as near the trenches as is allowable for women. I am glad. I have always wanted to get away from the Base, and to go with my Tommies up to the feet of the Monster that has been devouring us.

It is a desolate looking spot, this Railhead; nothing in sight except a few motor ambulances and lorries, wobbling over the broken road.

A Casualty Clearing Station is near, and to-night I am going to visit it. To-morrow, we will carry away their patients on our train, down to the base.

This particular Clearing Station—C.C.S. we call them—is an old French farmhouse half hidden with poplars. It is not quite large enough for its present purpose, so two or three tents have been added.

It is night, when we arrive to pay a friendly visit to the C.C.S. Sisters, who see so few women, and so many men.

Inside the white tent, is the soft light that we find more restful to nerve racked men than complete darkness.

It is so quiet—both Fritz and our men seem to have decided to defer their usual "Straf."

The C.C.S. Sister leads me about from tent to tent, speaking softly.

"*This* will be your patient to-morrow—and this—and this. Not that head case. We will keep him a little longer."

They are wrecks of men, but only here and there, one hears a groan that Human Nature cannot shut in behind white lips.

"We shall at least send them to you a little *cleaner* than when they came," says Sister. "When they first arrive I am quite sure they would often be unrecognisable to their friends."

"Do you always have time to wash them, Sister?"

"Oh, no! When a push is on, we often send them straight on as they are. You will soon find that out, But you know a shave, and a wash, and even one clean garment, helps a man wonderfully. He feels convinced then that there is a much better chance of his recovery.

In the morning early, we begin to load the train. The Great Division, on an ambulance train, lies between the "Sitting Patients" and the "Lying Patients" or "Stretcher Cases."

After a Push, when most of the cases are very serious, we string up extra cots and hammocks in every conceivable corner, and have mattresses on the floor.

I stay in my little cabin and watch the Sitting Cases arrive. On their tunics is pinned a ticket, describing the wound. A red line is placed around the ticket, if the wound is very serious. A long line of them is hobbling wearily towards the train.

One man, whose head is scarcely visible for bandages, is being led along by another, whose eyes are free, but whose arm is bandaged.

These have arrived at the C.C.S. through the night, and are being sent on immediately, to leave vacant beds for cases which cannot be moved.

Few of the uniforms are whole. A sleeve has been cut from one, to allow the bandage for the arm. Practically the whole of the back of another is gone. I can guess that a great blotch of blood was there.

Few boast of a cap. Their hair is filled with sand, their faces red from the sun and splattered with mud—sometimes clots of blood. Their boots are caked with mud—their uniform, torn, cut up, blood stained, will presently be consigned to the fire.

*But* the Sitting Cases are the lighter cases, so, amidst the grim unkemptness of my poor returning heroes, I can see a sparkle in eyes that know they will soon see Blighty!

Our orderlies help them settle them as comfortable as they can, for the moment, and hurry on to assist in the loading of those who, though they are also Sitting Cases, cannot put their feet to the ground. Trench feet, or frozen feet, or some such ailment prevents them from walking. Here they come on the orderlies' backs, pick-a-back.

"*Splendid* work!" I cry from my window, admiringly, to a staunch little Welsh orderly, broad in shoulder, though short of stature, who staggers to the train under the weight of a huge Jock.

I like to watch this particular little Welshman pick

up his wounded burden, and settle him comfortably in his arms. Few of the men he has carried could give him a name, but I know Taffy will long be remembered in many a home, for his gentle handling of weary bodies, and painful limbs.

In the other part of the train they are taking on the Stretcher Cases:—

"Be careful of that leg, old son"! shouts Michael, showing a comparatively new stretcher bearer how to carry a stretcher with a fractured femur, so as to give the least pain.

"Easy there! Lower him! Gently my lad! *Easy* does it!" and with an expertness that one could not help but admire, he had carried the 'Fractured Femur' into the train.

"Did you ever work in hospital at the Base?" I called to him, wondering where I had seen his face before,—although it seemed to bring another atmosphere than that of wounds and war.

"I have it at last!" I explained to myself, suddenly, a little later, in the middle of my work. "No wonder I didn't recognize him!" The last time I had seen Michael he was holding an audience in ——— Hall, London, spellbound with the notes of his 'cello.

"I liked you before, Michael," I continued talking to myself, "but I like you ten times better now."

At last all were on board and we started. We had been notified of an addition to our expected numbers,

and every mattress, placed on the floor for emergency, was in use.

"How shall I ever be able to move about and to dress my patients"? I asked one of the old hands. "I can't exactly *walk* over them, can I?"

"Where are we going, Sister?" a small weak voice asked, from above my head.

"I don't know," I replied truthfully. We seldom know to what port we are going until we are well under way.

The orderlies were hurrying along the corridor, feeding the Sitting Cases. They needed it. Very often, if merely transients in the C.C.S., they have been fighting or working, or marching for a long time since they last had food. Of course, there are always some who are too sick to eat, but as a rule, philosophic Tommy digs his teeth into his ration, and feels the better for it.

I only walk through the coach of the Sitting Cases. They are the work of another Sister. Stepping gingerly over the corner of the mattresses, in my own coach, I make a hurried round of my new patients with the M.O.

"This dressing will have to be renewed, Sister. This 'Hand,' and this 'Shoulder'."

Before we begin the bigger dressings, we are called to a quick lunch. I don't really want to eat. It is all too interesting. This is a regular corridor Ambulance

Train, where one can walk from one carriage to the other.

Sitting with the other Sisters in our little Dining compartment, tucking into our chef's camouflaged bully beef:

"It is all so *complete,* Sister," I burst out, "The compact little kitchen! Such heaps and heaps of hot water all over the place! The tiny dispensary—the little operating theatre! It really is a hospital on wheels!"

Sister's clever eyes with circling, tired lines, gave me a quick glance.

"*You're* what we call a 'Foreign body' on the Train, Sister, and you've happened to be sent on, when, as you say, the Ambulance Train is one of the most finished contributions to the war.

"When I came out *first,* my dear, in 1914 we brought the men down in trucks, lined with straw. Sometimes, they were soaked through, poor dears, on an all night's run. *Well,* the people at home weren't going to stand that long, and so now you see comfortable berths and hammocks, double floors to give easy motion, and as you say, a little kitchen where we can cook anything for them we need.

"Even if each train *does* cost the home people £20,000 do you think they grudge it? Not they, my dear. And if they *did,* I could give them a picture or two of the old trucks and straw that would send their hands to their pockets quick enough!"

I stood at the door of the Stretcher Coach, waiting for the M.O., looking down a vista of bandaged heads, legs in splints, and white faces.

The Train was rumbling along at a very easy pace to prevent more jolting than was necessary.

Suddenly a voice from above my head startled me:—

"Geben Sie mir Wasser" (Give me water). German! I raised myself on tip toes and looked into the cot. A fair haired boy of seventeen was there, a weak, gentle lad, for all the world like my small brother at home.

"And this is my enemy," I thought. "Or would be, only that in hospital one does not distinguish between an enemy and a friend." He looked at me with alarm and much pain in his soft blue eyes.

"Where are you hurt?" I asked.

"It is mein Beine (Leg)," he whispered, and I found a smashed bone in the lower leg and the blood oozing from the wound. He already had been dressed at the Field Ambulance. I got off the splint, cleaned and dressed the wound, and arranged the fair-haired boy as comfortably as I could.

"Gut! gut!" he kept whispering. "Schister is gut!" and he looked up at me with eyes like a dumb animal trying to express his thanks.

Below him, on the mattress, was a young Londoner from the Artists' Rifles. His was not a serious wound, and I noticed how he watched with great interest, the dressing of the little prisoner's leg.

"Say, Boche, where do you come from?" he called up, in German, and the boy turned his young white face, gazed at him earnestly, and answered:

"Von dem Walde" (from the woods).

"Thought so," muttered the Artist, for he happened to be one of the Artists' Rifles, who really was an artist.

"Sister, there is a face—look at it—in which there is no guile." And looking at the face, I knew what he meant.

"Yes, I suppose they have dragged the children of the Forest, too, into this devilish business." I replied, and hurried on to the next case.

In the late afternoon, I stood with the M.O. at the side of one of our worst cases. He was a Canadian, and this was his first "Blighty," although he had crossed the seas three years ago. It was a leg case, crushed and broken, and because he had been lying out in No Man's Land for a considerable time, the mud, and dirt, had soaked into his wound, and it was septic. The M.O's face was grave and thoughtful.

"I don't want to amputate, if I can possibly help it," he said. "But it seems to me a question of his leg or his life."

"Will it be in time when we arrive at the Base?"

"Scarcely. I couldn't take the risk. No, Sister, I shall have to do it on the Train. It is very rarely that we stop the Train ourselves, though often enough we

have to wait on a siding for hours to let some other one pass. This is serious enough, however, to warrant it."

He hurried off to give orders to have the Train backed into a siding, and soon we had stopped.

The little theatre was in a state of complete readiness for an emergency operation, such as this would be.

In a few minutes I had to prepare the lad for his operation. I spoke to him very softly, that the other cases so very near, might not be disturbed.

"The doctor has told you it is necessary to amputate?"

"Sure."

"You're a brave lad to take it so quietly," I couldn't help saying.

"If I . . . if anything goes wrong, Sister, will you write to my folks? They live down East in America. I guess you've got the address all right."

The stretcher bearers arrived to carry him into the theatre. Heads were raised from pillows as he was carried past. As the orderlies with their burden, picked their steps among the mattresses, I coming behind, we passed a little bald-headed man of over forty, whose nerve was gone, and who was sobbing with pain.

"Cheerio, old buck!" came from my young Canadian, who was about to lose his leg, "Cheer up! See you later!" I could not help taking his hand in mine and saying:

"You deserve to win out, old Canada, and I believe you will!"

Now that the train had stopped, it seemed unnaturally quiet. One missed the rumbling and the noise. One forgot, when the operation was being skilfully and quietly carried on, that one was not in a regular hospital, but rather in a desolate little siding, miles away from town and village, in the War Zone.

It was completed, and the boy was carried back to his berth. I left a train orderly to watch him till he came out of the anæsthetic, and went on with my dressings.

The darkness had begun to gather in now, and the shaded lights would soon be turned on.

"Sister, sister, I am *so* tired, when will we be there?" came from a cot above.

"When'll ye be *whaur?*" put in a Jock across the passage.

"I don't care *where*, only *some* place! I am so tired, Sister, of being on my back, and my head is so bad!"

There was unutterable weariness in the voice and I knew that this lad would be on his back for many, many months to come, if indeed, he ever survived the wound in his spine. Sending for some hot milk to soothe him, I tried to ease his position a bit.

The M.O. was passing.

"Is there any chance of our getting in soon?"

"We've had bad luck this trip, Sister. We've had to stop so many times. Here we are at A———. We have to wait outside till the troop train passes."

In the darkness, one saw the few shrouded lights of A———. We crept in as near as possible, and came to a stand to let the troop train pass.

I went back to my Canadian. He was out of the anæsthetic now and was perfectly conscious and sensible. But he was in a state of great weakness. I sent for the M.O.

"There is a poor chance in any case, Sister. Try to brace up his heart. There is still a chance, though a very small one."

Afterwards I went for a minute and stood on the outside step looking into the night, with my back to A———. It was not dark enough yet to prevent the shrouded forms of trees and barns from forming grotesque spectres in the night. It was silent. Not a sound except the guttural voice of the French porter, saying good night to the dark-eyed child who had brought his supper.

"Bonne nuit, ma fille."

"Au revoir, mon père!" Then she disappeared, her foot crushing the gravel. In front of me was the silent, placid night. Behind me, a train full of maimed men, carried from the jaws of War.

The Troop Train rumbled up with a hooting and a crunching—aggressive in its exultation that it was bearing men to Battle. So long was the train that the front of it reached our back coaches.

Sister and I stood, looking over at its closed cattle

trucks and open trucks, filled with our Tommies. They were in bunches, jumping on each other's shoulders, when the train stopped, to show us their merry faces and to call out to us.

There is a feeling of comradeship when Tommy meets a Sister in the middle of France!

He has passed through villages and villages of little French houses. French girls have waved to him,—thrown him a rose,—thrown him a bunch of pensées—thrown him a kiss! Tommy has waved back violently to her, returned her kiss with interest, shouted adieux—and, hurrying on to the next village, has done the same thing over again.

When he comes across a Sister, he is not quite so violent in his welcome and his adieux, but he is mightily pleased—and equally so is Sister.

From the end of our train, then, I stood for a moment looking into the cattle truck which happened to be opposite, with its occupants, decorated with "tin hats."

Suddenly, against all orders, one leaped from the others, and rushed across the line.

"Hullo, Sister, *Hullo!* don't you remember me?"

"No, but *please* go back!" I was really alarmed. "Go back, or your train will start and you will be left. . . . Go *back*! I will talk to you when you are on your train."

"Righto!" he laughed, amused at my panic, and

leaped back among the others. He seemed to me to be sitting on somebody's back, with one leg round somebody else's neck. Tommy doesn't care much about reserved seats when he is going up the line.

Silence in the little bunch while we shout our conversation across the rails.

"Don't you remember me, Sister"???

"I'm very, *very* sorry," I said, really disgusted with myself, "but I just can't remember when. . . Do tell me when I nursed you," I begged.

"D'ye not mind Bennet at Wandsworth? Eh, what?? Me that used to help make the beds! Me that all the old ladies used to bring sweets to, when I hadn't any teeth. D' ye not mind ME!!"

"Of course," I called out, "I know you *perfectly*, Bennett. But how could you expect me to recognize an invalid in pyjamas and shaved head, in a brawny Tommy in a tin hat, which you now are."

I rushed into the coach and gathered hurriedly all the apples and biscuits and goodies my people kept me provided with; tied them up in brown paper and got back to the step, just as the train was moving.

One of our orderlies was watching me. "Here, Sister, give it to me. Did you ever know a woman yet who could throw straight!" And with a trained hand he pitched the little parcel into the midst of the yelling Tommies. Off they went, chanting, singing, laughing, cheering! Brave hearts!

I turned back to *my* boys—who had *been* there and were coming back! How different it was—though here still reigned that same brave spirit.

We had started again now and I went to the Canadian's berth. He was sinking. It was too evident. The M.O. came up at the same moment and examined him.

"I'm afraid there is no hope, Sister. It was the only chance, and it has failed. Do what you can for him, but I fear it will soon be over."

Presently the Canadian opened his eyes:

"It's about time to write that letter, Sister," he said, in weak tones, but a smile in his eyes.

I knew it was true. I brought a writing pad, and took out my fountain pen.

He thought a few moments, and with a far away look in his eyes. began hesitatingly,

"Dear Dad,—

I have had a corking time. I wouldn't have given up my place here for anything in the world. I am jolly glad I came, Dad. Sorry you'll be alone, but this would have been hard on Mother. It takes us men for war, don't it Dad?

Yours ever,

Ed."

"That's all, Sister. Thanks!"

I waited with him, till I was obliged to change some dressing further down the coach. Presently I looked

up and saw the orderly, who had been left with him, sign to me. I hurried to his side and took his hand in mine.

"Brave! Brave boy!" I whispered to him. He opened his eyes to smile, and . . . his life was over. . . . . .

Presently through the open window, creeping through the early dawn, came the salt smell of the sea, and a rush of cold fresh air. Heads were raised.

"Was is das?" asked the German 'from the Woods,' sniffing the air.

"It is the sea," I said. "We are getting near it, and *then!*" turning to the others to whom it meant so much, "and *then*—Blighty!"

The boy shivered a little, but the other faces brightened considerably, and some began to talk excitedly.

The orderlies brought round an early breakfast—tea and bread and butter, and I took the chance to dash into our little compartment, pull up the blinds, let in the dawn and the sea air, and drink a cup of very strong tea.

I got a glimpse of myself in the hanging mirror. "I could pose for 'After Night Duty,'" I laughed. "Rings round my eyes. Color, a ghastly white. Hair, untidily coming from below my cap—uniform, crushed and soiled. This will *never do!*"

I did a quick change act and came back to my coach a little more tidy, though scarcely ready for the critical

eye of the man or woman, who had spent a night in bed, instead of rolling about a train.

When daylight was fully established, and preparations were in order for our arrival, the little German's alarm grew stronger.

"Schister! Schister!" he called eagerly, and when I finally came to him, "My own schister is married to an Englesher."

Poor thing! he was trying to gain me over as a protector from the horrors he had been taught awaited him in England. He thrust his hand into his tunic, and brought out a faded little cheap photograph of a stolid German frau and an English Jack Tar. "My schister and her man," he announced, to prove his story.

"You needn't get the wind up, old Boche," explained the Artists' Rifle man, "We won't hang and quarter you in England!"

We were crossing a long bridge now, and in a minute we would be in. My work was over. When the trains are being loaded and unloaded, the Sister takes no part. The M.O's, the Sergeant-Major, and the stretcher-bearers do the work. I always stand at my little window and watch the boys, who have been my patients for so short a time, being carried down the platform and placed in the Red Cross Ambulances which I know are there—a long line of them, all ready backed up.

After all, they are only going to be carried to the big

hospital ship which is lying in the water,—lazy and languid, in its white dress and huge red cross, ready to carry them over to blighty.

French porters stand about the station in their blue smocks.

No civilian is allowed in this part of the station, but only at the outer gate. I know there will be a crowd of black-eyed French children staring, open-mouthed, at the procession of stretchers and ambulances. The fat "bonne femme," with her starched cap, and her wicker of fish slung over her shoulder, is there too.

"Oh, là là, pauvres blessés!" she chants.

"The last of the lingo!" says Tommy, looking forward to a greeting he can understand, when he is carried out again, on the shores of the Tight Little Island.

The engine of my Train gives a snort! Time for me to get off, and stretch my limbs, before I come back to sleep in my little bunk.

To-night we start again, through the French villages, through the French towns, back to the Railhead and the C.C.S. and the heart of war.

# The Fear of Fear

WHEN we have said Good-night to the Ward, and hurried through our fifteen minute dinner, it is half past eight and there is at least one clear hour before we feel obliged to turn in.

It just happened that my room became the happy hunting-ground of the little côterie to which I belong; principally, I suppose, because my home people keep me well supplied with good things to eat, and also because I commandeered a few jolly soft arm chairs.

In most of the other bed-rooms, there is a kind of unwritten law—"It is forbidden to talk of the War or the Wards."

"We have enough of both through the day," they say, "We want a change at night."

In my room it is different.

"I can't talk about anything else," I insist, "and what is more, I don't *want* to talk about anything else. The War and the Wards are my whole life and I just warn anybody who comes in here, that I'm going to talk about them just as much as I please."

So, we have pretty well resolved ourselves into a Society of Three—

"Australia" with her keen sense of humour, and her

open heart and hand; "Peg-o' my Heart," the little red-headed Irish Sister, who is so like the "Peg-o' my Heart of the stage, that she is known by nothing else; and myself.

Peg has the real Irish love of sentiment, sees the Vision, and has the power of understanding. Patients always open up to her the secret places of their minds. I suppose she has, what the novelists call, charm. To her, the Hospital is a world; the patients are never "cases"; they are individual men to be studied and understood.

To-night we all seemed a little silent. Even "Australia," who generally furnishes the rowdy element of the party, was more taken up with brushing out her ruddy locks than with entertaining us.

I had already, made tea in my "Tommy's Cooker," Peg had opened a box of shortbread, a tribute from an adoring Jock; and my oil stove in the corner was as bright and like a "pukka" fire as it was possible to be.

"*Why* such solemn silence?" at length asked "Australia." "You have provided nourishment for the body. What about the mind"?

"That's your bit," I replied, with my mouth full of shortbread, "I've done mine. Tell us something funny, Australia."

"Nothing funny *has* happened to-day," she replied, getting very red in the face over a tangle that wouldn't come out, "so that settles *me*."

"Funny things aren't the *only* things that happen," drawled Peg-o' my Heart reminiscently.

"Well, go on! Let's have it, Peg. Tell us all about it—no reservations."

When Peg-o' my Heart tells a story, she has a little way of gazing in front of her as if it were all happening there. Her eyes are sad and gay, tender and angry in five seconds. She began hesitatingly, feeling her way, as it were:—

"Sometimes I don't quite know, girls, just how much right we have to repeat these things the men tell us. I wonder—I wonder if we are breaking confidence! If I didn't feel and know that you two *love* the boys as much as if you were really their Sister—it would be different! But I know, for instance, when 'Australia,' here, tells us some of the funny things, the *ridiculous* things that have been said and done, it is much the same as when you see a Mother delightedly telling a ridiculous story about her three year old. We laugh at them, but we love them, don't we girls?" We both nodded our heads vigorously.

"Well, you know, I have only been off Night duty for a week or so. I always feel at night, somehow, when it is silent and dark, the men are a little—different—from in the sunshine.

"Things that have happened—terrible things sometimes—come crowding back to their minds. They become nervous, and often call you and ask for some-

thing, not because they really want it, but because they want to hear you and see you, and feel that something human and awake is near. You have noticed that, haven't you?

"Well, in my Ward was a young Air Service Officer, who had no wounds, but was a nerve case. A regular nervous break down—very sudden—he had had, and was sent down the line, and on to us.

"He used to lie there, absolutely silent, never speaking, unless when it was really necessary. He had the most lonely and despairing eyes I have ever seen. He looked as if he lived in a world of his own, which we could not reach—his body was there in the Ward, but his eyes seemed to say that he was not one of us, that he was as far removed as if he belonged to another sphere.

"I had the greatest desire to make him speak, to reach him, as it were, to make him express emotion. Even to have seen him suffer pain would have been better than this horrible apathy.

"When I asked him if he wanted anything—if I could bring him anything—books, flowers—he answered very quietly and courteously:

" 'Nothing, thank you, Sister. Nothing'.

"The M.O's were at a loss. They could not rouse him. They could not get at the root of the trouble.

" 'I wish you could make him talk Sister,' they used to say. "Something is on his mind, and until we can

find what it is, we cannot help him. If he shows *any* inclination to talk at any time, encourage him.'

"You know that, as a rule, the doctors don't want us to encourage the boys to talk about their experiences up the line. They rather want them to forget them. But now they told me to do everything in my power to make this one talk.

"Naturally then, I did my best—starting all kinds of subjects. He always answered in the same toneless way, as if he were too much taken up with what he was thinking of, to be really interested in anything I could say.

"Often, during the night, when I made my rounds of the Ward, with my little electric torch, I would find him lying motionless, with eyes strained wide open, staring into the darkness.

"One night, when the others were all asleep, I stood by his bed. It seemed to me that night as if a lost spirit dwelt in his eyes.

" 'Talk to me a little,' I said at last. 'Sometimes I feel lonely in the night, when everyone is asleep around me. Talk to me!'

"The ghost of a smile seemed to flicker about his lips.

" '*Lonely, Sister, lonely!* Do you think you really know what that word means?'

"Just at that moment, a patient, one of the very highly strung, excitable kind, began to sing in his sleep, that chorus that a sergeant of the Fusiliers wrote. *You know*—the men have been singing it a lot lately:

'Keep your head down, Chummy, keep your nut well down,
When you're in the trenches, keep your napper down,
Bullets are flyin', nasty bits of lead,
It's all up with you, Matey, if you stop one with your head.'

" 'Keep your head down, Chummy,' repeated the boy. 'Aye, he's trying to save his pal, but what would you think of a man, Sister, who threw a pal out to destruction?'

" 'It's coming! It's coming!' I thought, and stood very still, thankful that the noisy, wakeful singer, had turned, and was sleeping quietly.

" 'Tell me!' I said, for it seemed as if the load were about to be lifted.

" 'Tell you, Sister! Shall I? Shall I show you the black shadows in which a man may live?'

" 'That would be from the beginning, Sister, when I was only a kid, when I first remember hearing people say, 'What an *imagination* that child has got!' And as a kid, I used to say to myself: 'What do they mean? Does it mean that I can *see* things when people only speak of them. Does it mean that when Dad told Mother about the Launch bursting up, I could *see* it flaming to the sky. I could *see* the sailors sizzle in the flames! Ough! Is *that* 'Imagination?' I don't *want* it! I don't *like* it!

" 'It followed me, though, Sister, through the school years. It was so vivid. I called it my Devil Imagination, and indeed it was more of a curse than a blessing.

" 'Then the War broke out, and, of course, I joined

up. I was in an Infantry Corps first, and if I am to tell you the *truth,* a truth which has never crossed my lips before, I felt even then that I was a Coward. Nobody knew it, of course, for I acted a part, but deep in my heart I knew what to fear when I went to France. I feared Fear. I feared that I would become an outcast, because of some white-livered cowardice.

" 'Well, we went over, and finally came to our time in the trenches. We were going to attack. The zero hour was given. When the whistle blew we were to go over the top.'

" 'Who was to blow the whistle'? I asked, simply for the sake of stopping for an instant, that tense voice, in its terrible monotony.'

" 'I was to blow the whistle. I stood leaning against the parapet—all my preparations were made. I was picturing what was going to happen, the shells bursting, the bayonet, the wounds! Nothing in reality ever came near the ghastly pictures in my mind.

" 'I began to feel cold, and physically sick.

" 'The men were standing waiting for the sound of the whistle. They were laughing, talking—even joking.

" 'I wonder how much of it was real.

" 'Some of them reminded me of hunting dogs straining at the leash—their blood was up—the years of civilization had rolled away—they were back to the elemental things.

" 'They were the old hands. How I envied them!

How I *honored* them! I wondered if they could read my horrible thoughts in my face!'

" 'Stop for a minute,' I interrupted him. 'You must not let yourself get so excited. Wait till you rest ——!'

. . . . .

" 'It is now or never, Sister, and, until to-night, I thought it would be *never*. . . . .

" 'I raised the whistle to my lips, wondering how I could blow it, when the time came. In doing so, I knocked out my cigarette, which indeed, I was scarcely conscious of holding. Quite mechanically I took out my case for another cigarette.

" 'That case, Sister, was given me, when I joined up, by a girl who lived near my home in the country, and who played at Soldiers with me when we were kids.

" 'She was with her father on the 'Lusitania' when it went down! God! I could see her tossed by the water! Her white upturned face was more real to me then, than yours is now! The curls, that as a kid, I teased her about, were dripping and filled with sea-weed—she was choking, struggling!!

" 'That saved me, Sister. For once my Imagination had helped me. The blood beat back into my brain,—my hands twitched to be at the throats of the Bosche who had murdered her!

" 'I forgot everything else.

" 'Thank God! the sign was given. I blew my

whistle till my ears almost burst. I scrambled with shouts, over the top—— I——'

"Another patient had wakened, calling for me, and I went—remaining as long as possible to enforce a little rest on the boy.

"Whenever he saw that I had finished, however, a hoarse whisper called me.

"'Come back, Sister, I'll finish now, and never again shall I speak of it——

"'The horrible spell was broken. You've been told already Sister, what 'over the top' means,—the shells screaming and whining, the rattle of the machine guns, the face to face playing with Death, the falling into shell holes; the sudden victorious dash into the enemy front trench!

"'You've heard it all before. I should have been dead half a dozen times. The earth was ripped up behind me, before me, the bullets sang past my ears, but I was only conscious of feeling *thankful* that the horrible nightmare of fear had left me. I opened my arms, and I almost think I sang aloud.

"'Well, when this Hell was over, and those of us, who were left, were panting for breath—some of us dazed with the terrible noise, and the remains of the gas—here was I, with nothing but a mere skin wound, —and an obsession to be at their throats again.'

"'So you see,' I broke in relieved. 'It was only, after all, that physical sense of fear which almost every

man owns up to, at one time or another. You know, this is the first War that men have not been afraid to say they were afraid!'

" 'That is not all, Sister———.

" 'After a few months, several of our company resigned in order to join the Air Force. I decided to do the same.

" 'I can't tell you exactly *why* I did it, unless, because the Air Service is supposed to be one of the most dangerous, and I was absolutely *determined* to bring that Devil Imagination of mine, face to face, with every kind of horrible fact, until I had brought it completely under my control.

" 'I knew the Air Service would give me lots of opportunity——. I won't bore you much longer, sister.'

" '*Please,* please don't use that horrible word. You know that I am interested beyond words', I said. 'Only I don't want you to do yourself harm with so much excitement!'

" 'Well, I soon became an old hand at it, and France soon followed.

" 'The nightly stunts over the enemy trenches! Over the clouds! It *satisfied* me, somehow. I think I was nearer being really happy then, Sister, than for years.

" 'One night I was given a special commission.

" 'One of our Secret Intelligence men was to be taken behind the enemy lines, where he was to descend by parachute. My business was to get him there, and, at

a given sign, the next night, bring him back—if he were lucky enough to be still alive. *He* was to do the rest.

" 'All the details of course are secret—you understand that, and I shall not give you them. This special information which Headquarters required, would be gained at the imminent risk of his life. It was only one chance in many that he could keep out of the hands of the Bosche.

" 'The night came, and he arrived, disguised in a German uniform.'

" 'Did you know him before?' I asked.

" 'No, I had never seen him, though I had often heard of him and the wonderful work he had done. Jove! these fellows have brains and pluck!'

" 'Did he look the part?' I queried, with a woman's curiosity.

" 'Far from it—a small, skinny, insignificant looking beggar. Nothing to mark the brains of a man of his kind, except one quick, penetrating glance when he first met me, keen enough to reach your very marrow.

" 'It wasn't the first time by many he had been up in a machine, and he seemed to thoroughly enjoy the motion. We went up with the other machines, on their way to the nightly stunt, but presently, we went a little higher, a little further 'port', and after a while shot up suddenly and found ourselves in a plane by ourselves——.'

"He stopped there, and, I hoped the story was finished or practically so. He was utterly exhausted, his white face shining out in the darkness. There was a kind of unnatural element in the whole thing.

"I had left him two or three times to see about other patients, but something always drew me back. Of course, as I told you, the doctor had insisted there was something on his mind, preventing his recovery, so I thought it best to let him go on——.

"Do you think I was right, girls?"

"Assuredly," we answered.

" 'People often ask me if the stillness, the utter silence, up in the clouds, does not seem uncanny,' he went on. 'They forget that the noise of the machines is so loud that the Pilot can hardly carry on any conversation with the Observer, without shouting at the pitch of his voice. One seldom speaks to the other, when the machine is going.

" 'Well, I carried my passenger over our front line, and over the enemy lines, and presently arrived as near as I could judge, over the place where I thought he might descend by the parachute.

" 'I motioned to him to prepare, and he adjusted the belt. It was the minute for him to drop off the plane ——.'

" 'To drop into nothingness!' I shuddered.

" 'Yes, Sister, to leave our tiny ark of safety, floating in immeasurable space, and plunge into that gulf of

blackness, which surrounded us. Of course he was attached to the parachute, but what if it did not open! Dropping—dropping—into that horrible emptiness!'

" 'I looked swiftly at him, and in his face, I could read his thoughts as if they were my own.'

" 'He had lost his nerve!' he whispered. 'Did one wonder? A mere atom, like a grain of dust, to be dangling in space!

" 'Was he looking at the picture of our daring now as I was? I was giddy at the thought. It was a hideous nightmare. Two atoms of humanity penetrating the clouds,—the immeasurable space which terrifies the limited mind of man! Held up by a few boards and rods of steel, and to suddenly plunge from it—into what!'

" 'And we never even hear of these terrible deeds men are doing for us,' I interrupted.

" 'You *will* hear, Sister, when it is all over—I am sure you will understand how necessary it is to keep these things secret now.'

" 'Indeed I do—Go on! Go on!' I urged, for the very first *beginning* of dawn was glimmering through the windows and my busiest hours were at hand.

" 'Well, I saw from the sudden look of fear in his white face that his nerves had got the better of him, and that he was trying to *shout* to me. His voice came faintly above the noise of the engines——;

" 'Take me back! I can't do it! I tell you I *can't*
I can't leap into that horrible space!'

" 'There we were, we two, alone in the world as it seemed,—and to all intents and purposes we were. The occasional stars peering at us, seemed almost nearer to us than the world which we could not see, but which we knew to be at our feet.

" 'Here, with me, the only other speck of humanity was trying to rise above these horrible fears, that flesh had made him heir to.

" 'I knew of the record of brave deeds which he had built for himself, and the invaluable service he had done his country. I had been told of the imminent danger, into which he, without the slightest hesitation had thrust himself. I knew how he had played with the chance of Death!

" 'And, I knew equally well that in this man's brain lurked that Imp Imagination which had turned me into a Coward, that first day, before I went over the top, and was now about to wreck his career.

" 'Supposing I listened to him, aind carried him safely back to earth?

" 'He must then return to his Headquarters and confess that his orders were not carried out, because he had not the courage to do so; that the trust they had placed in him was misplaced; that he was a coward. In other words that his honor was in rags.

" 'Could I help a fellow-man to do this? Could I

allow him to yield to that physical sickening sense of fear, which had him in its power for the moment? Would his life be worth living, Sister, after that? Would it? I ask you, *would* it?'

" 'No——' I said hesitatingly, 'I suppose——'

" 'You do *not* suppose, Sister, you *know*. To a brave woman, honor is as dear as to a man . . . I made up my mind hurriedly. I motioned to him as if I could not hear. I saw that he was still attached to the parachute—or *vice versa,* and I motioned to him to come near, as if I wanted to hear better. Nearer! Nearer! He was standing, now quite close to me. With a sudden jerk of my wrist, I caught him and—pushed him —*pushed* him—into that black abyss!'

"The Boy's voice trailed off, and he lay shuddering beneath the sheet.

"For a minute I could not speak. Then he broke in again.

" 'It was his scream, Sister, when he went over! To the end of my days, that awful despairing—fading—scream will ring in my ears——!'

" 'But what is the end?' I hurried on to change his thought. 'You said he was attached to the parachute. Perhaps he landed safely. Did you not find out?'

" 'I had no time. I became ill immediately afterwards, and was sent down here. I see him every minute of the day, Sister, falling off the plane. I hear his cry at nights.'

" 'But we *will* find out about him,' I insisted. 'I shall help you.'

"Well, I told the M.O. the whole story.

"The Boy, later, would not give names to the M.O. The doctors came to the conclusion, however, that only if the Boy's mind were relieved, could he ever get better.

"They thought accordingly that they were justified in laying the case before Headquarters—keeping back as much of the story as possible.

"They discovered that the Secret Service Member *had* arrived safely on German soil but had been taken prisoner.

"A few days later further word was sent that he had escaped and was in Holland."

"I am just longing for the day," went on Peg wistfully, "when he can be brought into the Ward, and when the sight of him and the touch of him will bring peace of mind to that poor Boy, with his sensitive mind, and, what he calls, his Devil Imagination."

"After all," decided 'Australia,' rising to go to bed, and carefully folding her veil, "he really did a mighty brave thing, didn't he? He sure had the courage of his conviction. "Now," to me, "it's your turn to-morrow night."

"It will have to be something *very* much lighter then. I can't aspire to anything else."

"So be it," they agreed, and soon my light was out, and, I was dreaming of "infinite empty space."

# Sister and the Sikhs

A FEW evenings had passed since Peg-o'-My-Heart told us her story, which she called 'The Fear of Fear,' before our little côterie met again. This time we had added numbers, though we tried to limit our party to those Sisters who were large-minded and sympathetic enough to "laugh and love" at the same time.

On this particular evening "Australia" seemed in great spirits. She had dropped into the corner of my chintz-covered sofa. She was in mufti, and the light above brought out the soft blue of her new blouse and the tawny color of her hair.

She had just consumed three cups of our usual bed-time tea, and I had protested,—"Why didn't you give me warning that you meant to drink me out of tea and home? I could always have phoned the Food Controller," which only won contemptuous:

*"Cups!* You call these little dolly things *cups!* Why a canary could finish half a dozen and feel no inconvenience!"

*"Very* well, my fair Anzac," I replied, "as you cannot appreciate my dainty *Limoges* I shall buy you a crockery pudding bowl."

"Oh, please, *please,"* interposed Peg, "remember we

have company," with a wave of her hand to the two Sisters we had admitted for the present session. They were still in scarlet and grey uniform, looking like robin red breasts, while 'Australia' fluttered about us like a gay bird of southern plumage.

Finally, whirling into a graceful position at my feet, she turned to me.

"Begin, Old Thing. It's your turn to regale us with a 'feast of reason and a flow of soul,' only I warn you, I feel in a talkative mood, and don't be offended if I interrupt occasionally with a few remarks."

"That settles it," I said, leaning back with a satisfied sigh, "I am rather in a lazy mood, and as you seem even a little more talkative than usual to-night—which is saying a *very* great deal—I retire in your favor. I absolutely refuse to play the part of interlocutor for your remarks."

"Interlocutor isn't the right word," answered the Anzac briskly "You are thinking of the clown in the circus, and the gentleman with evening clothes who asks questions for the sake of the clown's funny answers. Which do you propose to be, Old Thing—the clown or the gentleman in evening attire?"

"Neither," I answered decidedly. "You may as well make up your minds to it, girls, Australia has evidently *got* to speak to-night, so submit to the inevitable and allow her. You have the floor, Maiden of the West. Begin.

"Won't," said Australia.

"Must," I rejoined.

"Well, after all I don't care," she went on. "My turn will be over. All close your eyes for five minutes till I decide what I shall tell you about."

"Righto!" we agreed, and for full five minutes five Sisters sat, with closed eyes, to await the Oracle.

"Open, Sesame!" shouted Australia. "I'm ready!"

"I'm prepared for anything," I said resignedly. "If she's too long, Peg, wake me up for breakfast," and I leaned back in my cushions luxuriously.

"Well, wherever you may be sent, girls, to France, or Salonika or Mesopotamia, or *anywhere*, you will never strike anything as picturesque and as *delicious* as I did when I first came over from dear old Australia and was sent to nurse the Sikhs and the little Gurkhas!"

"Oh, the *Sikhs!*" I interrupted, feigning a disappointment which I certainly didn't feel. "They're a back number now."

"Keep quiet, Old Thing, and let's have Australia's story," interposed Peg. "You know very well they're always worth while."

"Back numbers indeed!" echoed Australia fiercely. *"Back numbers!* .When the hills and the sea become 'back numbers', *then* you can talk about an Eastern, picturesque people—a people that our brothers live among and fight beside—being *back numbers."!*

"Humble apologies," I answered meekly. "Tell us

about when you nursed the Sikhs and the Gurkhas."

"Well, everything was so totally different. Such a thing as being nursed by *women* was quite unheard of to the Eastern mind.

Of course they had their own orderlies to prepare their food and serve it. Everybody knew that, but everybody did *not* know that, when they were at their meals, we Sisters had to be mighty careful not to step between the Hindu, eating, and the light. If the shadow of the Sister fell on his food he would not touch it. He would rather go hungry. That is at least the case with many of them, though certainly *some* were more enlightened."

"Do they wear their turbans in bed?"

"Why *of course!* Queen Alexandra, who has always been most practically interested in them, sent regular bolts of white buttercloth for their turbans, and we divided up the bolts into even lengths.

"Oh! the jealousy! the heart-burnings! if I didn't cut it perfectly straight. And if I gave one man one inch *more* than the seven and a half yards which was his due, Jealousy simply leaped into the dark eyes of the others."

"Seven yards and a half!" interrupted Peg. "Come, 'Australia,' there is a limit even to your exaggerations. Seven yards and a half in one of those white turbans we have all seen!"

"Exaggerating!" echoed 'Australia,' "Quite the re-

verse, my dear. They didn't think seven yards and a half anything like enough.

"Once, for instance, a number of rolls of linoleum arrived, and the brown paper in which they were rolled was left lying for a few moments on the floor.

"In a trice the whole bevy of warriors was tearing it up in strips to make new turbans. Never shall I forget fourteen tall Sikhs, standing in line in front of a wide mirror, arranging their new brown paper head-dress.

"At first, you know, Queen Alexandra sent a present of a special turban to each patient, but they refused to wear them, insisting on keeping the precious articles to take home with them as souvenirs.

"She then presented them with walking sticks, which perfectly fascinated them, and they were so terrified that they would lose them, they carried them about every place they went—even to table."

"How did your glib tongue manage to converse with them, my dear?" I mildly asked. "Could they speak English?"

"Well, they certainly *tried*—especially one very ambitious Hindu who was always tagging after me, practising his English.

"Just about dusk one evening, I was crossing the Rectangle within the Hospital square when a voice from the shadows hailed me with,—

" 'Good *mawning,* Memsahib!'

" 'No! No! I corrected, 'not good mawning. 'Good mawning' *no good.* Good *evening.*'

"Next morning, in the early sunshine, I was again crossing the Rectangle when the same voice accosted me,—

" 'Good *evening,* Memsahib,' with a very superior intonation on the *'evening.'*

" 'No! No; I again corrected. 'Not 'Good *evening.*' Good evening *no good.* Good *morning!*' But I am afraid the poor Hindu lost faith in me and my instructions. When he said 'Good morning' I told him it was 'Good evening,' and *vice versa!* Poor old thing! He gave me such a hurt look.

"You have no idea how like children they are.

"One evening I came into the Ward with the doctor, after the lights had been turned down. In the dim light I was surprised to see, in one narrow bed, *two* white bundles instead of the usual one. I went closer to examine. In the little cot, a close fit for *one,* lay two black warriors, one turbaned head at the top, and the other at the foot. The interloper was Gunda, who *used* to be in my Ward, but had been sent to the Convalescent Ward on the other side of the building. When night came on, like a child, he thought he would prefer his familiar old sleeping quarters and had crept into the Rectangle, in the dark, and slipped into bed beside an old pal.

" 'No good, Gunda, Bad! Bad!" I scolded, in the

early morning, as I led tall, ebony Gunda, in his night robes, like a naughty child back to his own bed."

"I can see you, 'Australia,'" gurgled Peg-o'-My-Heart. "What a picture! 'Australia,' the tawny haired daughter of the Anzacs, leading back to bed the dark Hindu, with his melting eyes!"

"Go on, go on," said the others.

"Well, as I told you, they were just like a set of children.

"One morning I was busy writing up my reports when I noticed two or three of the men very much engrossed with something going on at the end of the Ward. I drew near cautiously, and what do you think I saw? Two Sikhs twice as big as I, regular warriors, with grave, handsome faces, were playing at putting their Hindu orderly to bed. One felt his pulse; the other took his temperature. They bandaged his legs and arms and imitated the doctor and me to the life! I watched for quite a while without them knowing it: but when they did see me they hung their heads, and looked at me with the saucy, coaxing eyes of children caught stealing jam or something of the kind. Who *could* straf them?"

"Certainly not *you*, 'Australia,'" we agreed.

"But think of the wisdom of the East!" one of the visitors put in dreamily.

"Yes, they are the greatest blending of cleverness and simplicity that one could ever expect to come

across. You look into their eyes and you seem to read the history of the ages, and the next minute they are playing like little children, and enjoying it, too.

"Another time, one poor old chap was in a high fever, restless and suffering. I just knew that a cool sponge would relieve him and bring down his temperature. You know, we are not supposed to touch them. Their orderlies do it under our direction. Well, what needs be, must be, but I at least determined to stand by and direct the proceedings and try to relieve the poor chap. Besides which—and you needn't laugh, old thing, though I know you want to—I knew he had tremendous faith in 'Little Memsahib,' and would think the sponging much more efficacious if I presided."

"I am afraid we haven't half appreciated you, Superior Lady!" mocked Peg-o'-My Heart.

One of my rose chintz cushions was despatched at the head of the mocker, and then the story went on.

"Well, I had screens placed all round the bed, fencing it in, and giving us a little privacy. Presently I happened to look up. What *do* you think was there? Twelve dark turbaned heads ranged round the top of the screen, twelve pairs of serious eyes calmly watching 'Little Memsahib' and their pal! What was a little thing like a screen to them—great tall creatures! They didn't even need to stand on tiptoe. Silently they gathered in and stood around. Not a rustle, not a footfall!

I tell you I got quite a start when, without any warning, I suddenly saw those twelve dark heads!"

"Sounds like Blue-beard," murmured Peg, but we didn't take any notice of her.

"You know, they are thoroughly devout. Yes, I am sure some of us could easily take a lesson from them! Many a time have I just saved myself from falling over a long, black figure, prostrate in its devotions; and once, hurrying into the Wards, I stopped still at the unusual quiet. Sitting up in bed were twenty-two Hindus, their thin, dark faces more solemn than usual, white turbans more imposing than usual. Twenty-two fingers—have you ever noticed their beautifully shaped hands—were raised, pointing to the ceiling; and then twenty-two heads were again turned attentively to the bed of the oldest Sikh, who had been reading their Bible to them. It was 'Church,' and I had disturbed them at it.

"I can tell you it made an impressionist picture that you cannot beat. It was hard to believe one was in practical England, and that presently these devout figures would just as eagerly be gathering round for something to eat. It seemed like an old picture come to life, and I crept quietly out again, feling that I was the note of discord in a harmony of black and white. I could almost see the temples of the East and smell the deodar and feel the breath of the palm waving!"

"Well, *really*, 'Australia,'" begged Peg. *"Never* call *me* sentimental again. I'm a Treasury exchequer,

or a money changer, or whatever is hard and practical, compared with *you.*"

"I didn't know I was," said our Anzac very simply. "But I'm beginning to think this old world of yours is making me so.

"However, if Peg wants something practical, how is this?"

"In a tiny room next my Ward was an officer. He was of the kind that your American Cousin, my dears, would call 'Johnny-on-the-spot.' Ever heard the expression? Well, it means he was 'all there.' Do you understand now? Nobody could get ahead of him. He was what Peg calls distinctly *practical.*

"Sometimes their Majesties visited our hospital, and on this occasion, on his way to your very humble servant's Ward, the King stopped at my officer's door to exchange a bow and a greeting with the dusky dignitary.

The minute the King put his head in at the door, my Sikh handed him a paper, on which he had written something, and a pencil. The King turned questioningly to the Interpreter, who glanced at the writing and explained it. King George laughed heartily and good-naturedly signed his name to the paper and handed it back. What do you think it was? The wily Sikh—'Uncle' we always called him—had made out the regular form of army promotion, raising his own rank to a higher. It only needed the King's sig-

nature to hold good, and 'Uncle' had the pencil all ready for that.

"Does that satisfy you, Peg?"

"Didn't think it was in them," replied that lady. "I shall take a tip from 'Uncle' when I feel inclined to be Matron!"

"Well, later, you know, I was ordered abroad. Though I had always wanted it, and longed for the day to come when I should be off, when my orders came I just hated to leave my dusky warriors. More than that," and 'Australia' preened her pretty self, looking more than ever like a bird, "More than that! Loud wailings and lamentation, tears rolling down their lean, ascetic cheeks, when my warriors were told of my approaching departure!

"Yes, *truly*, the tears were there, streaming down their faces. The emotional again, you see, Peg!

"'Memsahib no go trenches! Memsahib no go France! Shermans no good!'

"They evidently thought I was going right into the Front trenches.

"And then they finished up with 'Memsahib our Brother!' Afterwards I was told that to be their 'Brother' is the very greatest honour they can pay you."

"No distinction of sex," murmured Peg.

"Jealous! Madly jealous!" decided 'Australia.' "Yes, I am their 'Brother.' More than that, they brought me parting gifts."

We all evinced the greatest curiosity, and the proud Sister went on:

"You know there is a flat kind of pancake—don't ask me what it is made of—that they are particularly fond of. Sometimes they present the Sisters with one. It is rather a difficult situation. If you can persuade the donor and his accompanying friends that you are too blissfully happy about it to eat it up at once, you are safe! But if they line up to watch you eat it, what *can* one do?

"Well, when I was going away, Harey, the 'white-haired boy' of our Ward, presented me with the biggest of these podgy white atrocities I have ever seen.

"Moreover, in the centre of it were three pieces of *kidney*, a mark of special richness. I assured Harey that he had made me prouder than words could say, and that only the fact that I had just finished my dinner—praise be!—prevented me from demolishing it there and then!

"We think we are all rather mad on the subject of souvenirs, but we are mild compared to the Sikh and the Hindu. Sometimes we have had to search them, when we see abnormal juttings out, and have brought forth bath thermometers, small mirrors, enamel bowls, and a very miscellaneous collection. We often present them after drawing them forth from odd parts of their garments.

"Poor dears!" finished 'Australia' with a sigh.

"It has been *charming,*" said the visitors. "How little we knew about them, didn't we?"

"After all," said 'Australia' quite seriously, "that is exactly what this War is doing—teaching us about each other. How much did you know of us, Peg, in your Ireland, and how much did I know of you people—a little hearsay, a vague, far away idea. Yes, girls, that is *one* thing. We are learning to know each other, and we will include my dear, old, dusky Sikhs, won't we?"

# Christmas

TO-MORROW will be Christmas. I am glad. It has been our "objective" for the last two weeks. We have talked of little else, and thought of little else, and now we are within reach of it.

Leaning, rather wearily, on the step ladder on which I have been mounted for the last hour or two, I look about me at the result. I glance, too, at my bandaged finger, the result of the prickly holly festooned round the wall.

Certainly the glossy green holly was plentiful enough in the French woods, where the trees were veiled in white by the first drifts of snow more than enough to make beautiful our bare walls, and to smother the high wooden structure in which our little South African has his fractured femur swung.

"Let's take our 'time off' in the woods, and see what we can bring back for the walls," one of the Sisters had suggested.

"Time off!" we laughed, "who in her wildest moments would talk of 'time off' so near to Christmas"!!

Nevertheless, three pairs of eyes wandered critically over the bald, white walls. They didn't look like

Christmas—which means warmth and color, red, and green. They settled the question.

It amused the French Bonne Femme, with her crimson cloud wrapped warmly around her ears, and her swarm of black-eyed "petits," to watch three strapping girls, scrambling over fences, and climbing through hedges, where the holly grew thick and glossy.

"Oh, Les Anglaises!" explained she to her gaping off-spring. "They are *mad*— tout-a-fait!" and they all looked curiously at our growing heaps of green—higher than our heads.

A Canadian Sister, high among the boughs, her white veil floating about her,—for she had thrown her scarlet lined cape about her, and come as she was, —waved a long spray of ivy in the breeze.

"Shure, she thinks she's 'Jane Dark,' or whatever they call the crather," muttered our Hibernian orderly, gazing admiringly at the pretty picture.

"Joan of Arc wasn't in the habit of climbing trees, Paddy. Tie up the holly into three big bundles, and we'll each carry one over our shoulder."

I wonder if the Bonne Femme sometimes thinks of us, as she saw us, striding into the crimson of the setting sun, over the white patches of snow, with only the crunching of the snow beneath our feet, to break the quiet, piles of glossy leaves on our shoulders, entangling our flowing veils, and the red of exertion and cold in our cheeks.

"You couldn't go to Blighty for Christmas, boys, but we are going to have a Blighty Christmas here," we announced.

White faces looked up and flushed, eyes grew eager, and tongues became brisk, as we dragged the green bundles into the ward."

"I can make the wreath, Sister. I once helped the undertaker at our corner, when there was an epidemic!"

"H'aint you got no mistletoe?"

"Wotcher talkin' abaht? Mistletoe, an' ther aint no gals!"

"Wots them Sisters then? Huh?"

"They aint—they're just *Sisters!*"

"Right you are, Bill," we assured him, "Now come and stand up on the ladder, and we will tell you where to hammer the nails."

The little African's wooden structure, to which was slung his leg, proved an obstacle and roused Bill's ire.

"See here wot you've did," he stormed at the poor unfortunate, "gone and slung your blamed leg in the way of the deckorations. Ain't you got no sense? Can't you stop a bullet wiv a 'and stead o' your leg?"

Feeling the importance of his job, Bill carries authority with a high hand, finally consenting to trail the ivy decoratively round the bare wooden structure that had roused his ire.

Three of the 'up' cases, whose bandaged feet formed

no obstacle, with much discussion, managed to manufacture a holly wreath, which they finally hung above my desk. As I worked, making out my reports, I heard, without listening.

"Betcherlife our Ward 'll beat the rest to smithereens," asserts Billy of the Bluffs.

"Shure, and them wreaths be as purty as the wans round the angels' heads in the little chorch at home," dreamily adds Paddy.

"Yer michty sure o'yersels," cannily drawled Sandy of the Seaforths, polishing the holly with a corner of his kilt, "Ye think ye're the salt o' the airth. I was amang the Germans once, and ane of them plunked doon on his knees, and began to shout 'Kamerad! Me a Christian!'

"*You* a Christian," says I, stickin' ma bayonet through the crater. Mon you're a leer, but in twa seconds ye'll be an angel."

" 'Ere Scotty," interrupted Bill, "this 'ere's Christmas, and we don't want more of your bally argifyin."

I interrupted the conversation by placing three thermometers below three busy tongues.

"Even on Christmas Eve?" asked one.

"Even on Christmas Eve I replied, adamant, and drawing forth protesting patients from the spoils of the French forest.

Hands, big and strong, and all too eager, had brushed the red berries from their stocks onto the floor.

They were rolling all over, making the floor dangerous for Sandy's stick, and 'Canada's' crutch. 'Canada' looked down at the little scarlet atoms, making his path doubtful.

"Let's pick them up and make jam of them, Sister. It would be a change from 'plumapple'!"

At the end of the ward was a vacant bed. To-night it was curtained off by a sheet, pinned so as to screen it from the Ward.

Eyes looked curiously at it, and, as I finished up the pulses.

"What's there Sister"?

"A secret."

"Won't you tell us?"

"You'll know to-morrow."

I looked round the little circle immediately around me, into six dark lined faces. I looked into eyes that had lately visioned the horror of war. Now, I saw these eyes shining with eagerness over the secret of Christmas. Past was the horror. The fascination and the mysticism of the joy of the season was creeping upon them.

"You're only big children after all!" I laughed. "You'll know the secret to-morrow."

. . . . .

"I can't believe it is 8 o'clock," I gasped, when the Night Sister walked in. She was wheeling before her an empty trolley, the kind in which lotions and instru-

ments are pulled round for the dressings. She didn't answer me, but hurried into the Ante-room and shut the door tight.

I peeped in, I couldn't help it. Other people had been curious about my secrets, and I was just as curious about Sister's.

Peeping round the door, I felt a presence behind me and above me, I looked up. It was "Long John" bending his six feet four to look over my head into the Ante-room.

His hospital dressing gown was of the usual length, but on "Long John" it merely grazed his knees. He was clutching it together, at the chest, with a bony red hand, for the Ante-room door was in a draughty spot. The hospital shoes he wore had seen better days.

I remember when they arrived in the hospital, new, with a little note tacked on,—"Made by Dorothy Ross," and the address of a Girl's School in Toronto. Many and many a man have your shoes kept warm, "Dorothy Ross!" But now, the uppers are at variance with the soles. "Long John" has to slip-slop along the floors, in order not to part company with them altogether.

I turned to "do my duty" by Long John.

"I'm *ashamed* of you, 'Long John,'" I stormed, "Trying to see what Sister is doing, and on Christmas Eve, too! I'm *ashamed* of you!"

"Was I spoilin' your view, Sister? Is that what

you've got the wind up for?" The smile that broke over "Long John's" countenance extended from ear to ear, curving up at the given points.

"What an idea, John!" I protested. "Go back to bed *at once!*"

"I'll shure be gettin' 'cold feet' if I don't, with them things on," and "Long John" balanced the remains of his shoes on his toes, and skilfully shuffled them on again .

"I really must explain the disturbance, Sister," I cried, entering the room,—having at last found an excuse to do so

"Bother your explanation, Sister! Who ever heard of an *explanation* on Christmas Eve? Come in and shut the door. Look here, and here! and here!!"

" 'Sure thing' for a Blighty Christmas," I gasped, looking at a toy shop, and a heap of the most miscellaneous looking stockings I had ever seen. "What does it mean?"

"It means a stocking at the foot of each bed. It means that when the boys are all asleep————"

"*That* won't be to-night," I interrupted.

"Well, when most of them are asleep, I'll give you the call, and we'll hang up the stockings and fill them full of toys.

"But the—'Secret!' "—for Sister knew it.

"Oh, that's the *real* thing. The stockings are just to let them pretend they're kiddies again."

So, later on, contrary to all rules, sitting huddled up in a corner of the verandah attached to the Sisters' Mess, I watched the clear stars that the shepherds saw two thousand years ago, shining over our hospital.

I listened to the bells at midnight from the steeple of the great tower of the old French cathedral. I wondered again why Hate could live on an earth to which Peace had come in the form of a little Child.

Then I heard Sister call.

"Go very quietly," she whispered, handing me a pair of felt shoes to slip over my own. "I thought some of them would never go to sleep."

The very faintest beams from the moon were slipping over "Bill of the Bluffs." The wreath he had hung over his bed had slipped from its fastenings, and lay on the pillow, like a halo over his head.

I hung up a stocking. It had holes of no mean size in the toe, but what of that? Sister crept behind me, and into the vacuum she slipped a brass trumpet and a tiny parcel.

"The little parcels are *my* secret," she whispered and I knew how many hours of sleep she must have missed, during the days, which were her nights, to prepare these thirty-five little parcels.

"My secret!" I watched her standing there in the dark Ward, with only the light of a lowered torch to show us where we walked. She was a stout middle-aged woman, her veil slightly awry, but the light in her

face made it beautiful. In her eyes was Mother Love. Gently she touched a head here, placed an outstretched hand below the sheet there.

"If only 'Canada's' *Mother* could look into the face of this Sister now," I thought, "she would rest content about her boy—in a French Hospital at Christmas.

"If Sandy's wife in the Shetland Isles could see the care with which this stranger English Nurse had pondered over the little gifts that would bring him most pleasure. If, on the Veldt in Africa, the dark haired mother that De Villiers from Capetown has told us about—if *she* could hear the note in Sister's voice, when she soothes the boy, startled from his sleep by an evil dream!"

Mothers, like poets, are born, not made. And here, in the centre of this darkened Ward, is a woman, tending with the love and care of the truest of Mothers, her wounded children.

"Away to bed with you, Girl, or you'll be a wreck to-morrow!" and Sister, having packed each shapeless stocking, pushes me out of the Ward.

. . . . .

I opened my eyes, struggling with the thought that something unusual is in the air. It is almost dark. Dawn is only creeping in, pressing away the shadows of night.

Suddenly a blast from a tin trumpet, a shrill penny whistle! I know. It's Christmas Morning, and the

boys in the Ward have opened their stockings, and are children again.

It is scarcely six yet, but I hear, through my open window, the first Christmas bells pealing from out the steeple of my beloved French cathedral.

And already, in the streets below, I hear, "Joyeux Noël, Madame!" "Joyeux Noël!"

I dress to the clanging and the swelling of the music of the bells:

> "Forget the war!" they ring.
> Forget the war!
> Christmas Day,
> Forget the war!"

They clash and they clang, as I run through the old French Garden to our Mess for breakfast.

. . . .

At the door of my Ward we stand. We couldn't hear the bells here. Such a talking and laughing, and shouting. "Merry Christmas, Sister! Merry Christmas!!"

Really, the Ward looks very pretty. Festooned round the walls, the trailing ivy is most graceful, and the wooden structure, which had annoyed Bill, looked quite effective with its holly trimmings. The picture of the King, presented at the last minute by Sandy, has place of honor. The colors may be rather startling. but that is only more like Christmas.

Sandy had placed the little bunch of ribbon, usually

fastened to his heather wool stockings, on top of the picture.

"God Save the King!" says Sandy. "He's guid eneuch to be a Hielander."

"No dusting lockers to-day, *surely,* Sister. That would be beyond human nature!"

And then the embarrassing moment when the Ward, shyly and individually, brings forth gifts for us.

Pearls beyond price could bring no warmer glow than these gifts, awkwardly passed over to us by "Long John," in his shortened dressing gown, and by the red headed Aircraft boy, in the pink striped pyjamas. *These* will remain among our treasures to the end. My pink satin handkerchief case with "Happy Christmas" painted in bright gold letters, and with blue birds flying all over it, and my German bayonet, wrapped in tissue paper, and tied with blue ribbons!

"I saw Australia buy the handkerchief case for you," Sister confided later—Australia is an up patient and is sometimes allowed a pass for a few hours leave. "He was standing in front of a window, his nose flattened against the pane, seriously and deliberately pondering over what you would like best."

Speaking truly from the heart, these Christmas Gifts, carefully thought over and bought in the little French Town, will surely always be amongst our most precious treasures.

Joy is seldom unalloyed, and this Christmas was no

exception. Screened in at the farther end of the Ward lies a man—dying. His terrible wound across his shoulder, almost separating his head from his body, is too deep for recovery. For weeks he has struggled to live. His features have become sharpened with pain, but there is a sweetness in his face which fascinates us all.

"We shall each sit an hour with him," Sister says. "The Doctor thinks the end is very near, and there is very little we can do for him."

It is twelve o'clock now, noon, and it is my hour to be with him.

Dinner will soon be brought in. The turkey is to be placed on the long table in the middle of the Ward. The Chief Surgeon, in a chef's white cap, is to cut the turkey with a sword—as a Bride cuts her cake.

I am glad to slip behind the screen, and leave the noise and excitement in the Ward. The knowledge that this white, still figure lay dying there has been haunting me all morning.

He is from Wales. I think of his people in the Mountains, as I sit quietly beside him, moistening his forehead and lips. Suddenly the great dark eyes open, and he looks up.

"What day is it?" he asks, so faintly that I must bend very close to him to distinguish the words.

"It is Christmas Day," I answer. As the white lids droop slowly over his eyes, he whispers.

"Christ, have Mercy upon me, on His Day." He repeats the words slowly and faintly, but distinctly, and the voice is the sweetest I ever heard. They are the last words he speaks on earth.

. . . .

When we come from behind the screen, into this other world of recovery and happiness, the contrast seems almost too much. One knows, however, one must, for the sake of these others, forget, and if thoughts *will* wander behind the screen, remember that surely *there* lies no cause for grief.

The Christmas Dinner is in sight. At the appearance of the turkey a tremendous blast from every tin whistle, penny trumpet, everything capable of producing sound, rents the air.

We rush round the ward, carrying to each patient a heaped up plate. I sniff the air hungrily. How long it seems since breakfast! How good the turkey looks! I take it out in sniffing, however, till the plum pudding, received with wild shouts, has gone the way of all plum puddings, and the patients happy—but incapable of further happiness of the same solid kind—sink back among multifarious pillows, ready for that after dinner rest guaranteed to aid digestion.

In the afternoon we are going to have our Secret—our Real Secret. The Orders of the Day, however, demand first one quiet—perfectly quiet—hour. We do not want relapses from too much excitement. We re-

fuse to speak to any single one of them, and promptly squash any attempts at conversation. Quiet—compulsory quiet—reigns, till soon after four o'clock when it is time to draw down the blinds *closely,* that no chink of light may attract any wandering enemy aeroplane—and the lights are all turned on.

A cup of tea to which the few relatives, who had been brought on to France, are invited! Sandy passes round his box of shortbread. On it is traced, with little, round, white and pink sweets, "Dinna be blate," which is Scotch for, "Don't be too modest in helping yourself." Glancing at the many patients, and at Sandy eager to dispense it, I hope, on the contrary that they will be very "blate."

Night Sister, who has got up for the occasion, only being in bed about two hours, draws aside, at last, the white sheet that has provoked so much curiosity, and wheels something out.

"Almichty! it's a tank!" ejaculates Sandy.

"Wot'r yer givin us?" mutters Bill of the Bluffs.

"Bonza idea." Allows Australia.

The orderlies made the Tank. It is an exact model of the real one, made out of papier maché, painted green, and the wheels and the roof, camouflaged. It is on wheels. When you open the door, instead of armed men, you find it full of saw dust, in which are buried thirty-five presents, wrapped up in tissue paper.

It quite charms the patients. Sandy "hurled" it

from bed to bed under Sister's guidance, and each soldier dips his hand in and brings out a present.

"Tricky!" said the little South African.

"Some Tank," agreed the Yank beside him.

"It's like two Christmases rolled into one, Sister," whispered a seventeen year old boy with a foot off, but with eyes shining like stars.

"I got a pocket mirror. What did you get?"

"I got a razor." "I got a pocket flash." "I got a pukka writing pad," and so on.

And when the jokes began to come out, and "Long John" won the dainty pink ribbon garters, and a Welsh Miner, fished out the powder puff, the shouts must have frightened the French kiddies who were trying to look over the garden wall.

After a couple of hours rowdiness, Matron sent word that all the Wards were to be still for an hour. During that hour, when the Ward was looking its prettiest, the soft red shades on the lights making everything seem beautiful—to us—suddenly from the door we heard in sweetest sound, "When Shepherds watched their flocks at night."

Gathered round the door, were the V.A.D's, their white veils gleaming against the holly. They were singing the Christmas Carols. There was no accompaniment. Their voices rose and fell, sweet and high with the beautiful words of the hymns of Christmas.

I looked at the soldiers lying there. Not a man

stirred. They are quick to see beauty, and to recognize it. And it *was* beautiful—a scene one would never forget.

> "Hail the Heaven Born Prince of Peace!
> Hail the Son of Righteousness,
> Light and Life to all he brings,
> Born with healing in His Wings,"

sang the voices.

I watched the rugged stern face of a man from the heart of the West of Canada. I saw the growing interest in his eyes. "It has a new meaning to him," I thought. "He has heard the words many Christmases, but now, through his pain, he has learned their meaning."

> "Hark the Herald Angels Sing,
> Glory to the New Born King,"

the gruff voices about me joined in.

I looked up at the white letters we had made, out of wadding, on a scarlet ground, and nailed in a prominent place.

> "Peace on earth—Good Will towards men."

"When will it come? When will it come?" I whispered to the Canadian I had been watching, and whose glance had followed mine. He shook his head, and turned again to the voices.

When the Girls had softly disappeared through the door, to sing in another Ward, "I like that *best!*" said

little African with a mighty pent up sigh,

"I think I did, too," I told him.

It was beautiful ending to a beautiful day. Even the passing of that heroic soul from our midst could not sadden it.

"Christ, Have Mercy on me on this, His Day," I seemed again to hear him say, and I knew I need not grieve.

The orderlies had been sent off early in the afternoon, so we were 'carrying on' their work, too, and remained a little later in the Ward.

"It sure has been a Blighty Christmas!" said a sleepy voice, as I finally picked up the last wrapping paper, and swept away the red berries which we had *not* made into jam.

"Perhaps the next one will really be in Blighty, but I don't think any of us will ever forget our Christmas in France," I answered.

"Betcher yer life not," Bill reassured me, and with the Peace of a Christmas Night stealing over my Ward, I went out below the silent stars.

# The Searcher

EVEN in France one falls into a narrow routine, and fancies one's own microscopic share in the work, is the only part that really matters.

Then, one day, some new phase of Life knocks at your door, and your knowledge of the intricacies of the life of the Army puts out sprouts, and grows.

Shortly after our Push in the South, we had been ordered to keep the greater number of our beds vacant, and had evacuated every case fit to be moved. We were, therefore, not quite in the same rush as a few days previously, when, early in the afternoon, I was called from the far end of the Ward to speak to a middle-aged gentleman in the uniform of a Red Cross officer.

"Good afternoon, Sister. I don't think you were in this Ward when I last had occasion to come."

"I don't think so," I said, studying his face, "I have only been in this Ward for a few weeks."

"Then you must let me explain, why I am here. I am one of the Searchers for the Missing and Wounded, and I have quite often been here in your Ward, to try and find clues from your patients of missing men."

"Of course, I have heard of your work, but I must

confess I am absolutely ignorant as to how you go about it. Do tell me?"

He hesitated a moment:—"To put it in a few words. There is a little group of Searchers here, as there is in every hospital area, under the Red Cross. We are all over Military age, and, as we cannot fight, we are giving our time and what ability we may have, to do this work.

We receive lists of the missing men from our Headquarters, and our business is to find them if they are alive, and bring proof positive if they are dead. We find clues more often and more easily in hospitals than any where else. You have no objection to my talking to the patients?"

"Assuredly not," I answered eagerly, noticing his keen, clever face. I felt certain he was a lawyer, and so he proved to be. Later on, at various times, I met the other men who formed the group—gentlemen of the keenest intellect—a Bishop from South Africa, a London Financier, and the others—lawyers. It seemed a tremendous work to me—to find an individual in chaotic France!

"Pte. John Graham, of the S—— Regiment, missing since March 16th," we read in the morning paper.

And these men, with their trained intellects, set out to discover in which element of the sphere Pte. John Graham is hidden.

"It is a beautiful name—Searcher," I thought. And

later, when I grew to know this particular Searcher better, I asked him if I might not use it for his name.

"The name means so much," I explained. "To me you will always seem that—a Seeker—a Searcher.

. . . . .

"Is not Pte. Neil Munro, of the H.L.I., in your Ward, Sister?"

"That is Munro in the 4th bed, with his head bandaged," I answered, leading the way.

"Is he well enough to talk to me?"

"He is well enough, but whether he talks to you or not is another story. He is a very silent man—but if you can get him to talk, it will do him no harm in the world."

The stretcher-bearers arriving for a case to be X-rayed, I went off to see to his removal, leaving Pte. Munro and the Searcher together.

Occasionally I glanced up, hoping Munro would not maintain his obstinate silence but would pass on any information he might have.

It did not look like it, however,—his mouth half open, his one visible eye staring vacantly in front of him.

Very hard and stony soil, I fear!

"Do try to give this gentleman all the help he wants, Munro," I urged, thinking how quickly I would have given him over for a bad job, and how wonderfully patient the "Searcher" was.

Matron arriving in the Ward, I left the two, to make my rounds with her.

"I would like you to allow that gentleman to come into the Ward any time he chooses," she said, bowing from a distance to the Searcher. "What splendid work he is doing! What faith and patience and determination! I am afraid they would be sadly lacking in me, Sister! It would seem too like a wild goose chase."

"Have you had any satisfaction?" I asked him later, as we walked down the corridor together, he, jotting notes in a pocket book.

"Nothing at all. Munro has a bit of the oyster in him. By the way," he said, turning round to the Ward, "have you any Lancashire men here?"

"Sergeant Miller is the only one, and his leg is being massaged at present. I wonder," I went on hesitatingly, "if you would mind giving me an idea how you go about such an indefinite piece of work. I have seen the results—the lost found—but I have never seen the machinery at work."

"It's very simple, Sister. There's no mystery. We study the lists of the missing and the dates when they were missed. If the area is small, one Searcher works by himself—sometimes two—sometimes half a dozen, as there are here, where there are so many hospitals.

"Lists of patients admitted are sent to us from the different hospitals. If we find one from the same Regiment as one of our missing men, we go to him and try

to find out when he last saw the missing man, and under what circumstances.

"For instance, there are two missing men from the H.L.I. on my list. When I saw Munro's name as one of your patients, coming from the same Regiment, I came to see if I could find out anything from him. Had he been able to give the slightest scrap of information I would have sent it at once to our Headquarters and it would have been added to the file with the missing man's name on it.

"Another Searcher, from another area, will probably send another scrap of information—and so on. I am coming to-morrow to see that Sergeant from the Lancashire Fusiliers."

After he had left, a lively discussion began among the patients—and curious, indeed, were the tales told of the discovery of one—and another—and another missing man.

I, however, was too much occupied with my new patient of yesterday to pay much attention to them.

On his card was written, "Pte. Henry Willis, Regiment ——, London."

His head was bound up, and one cheek covered. When I renewed the dressing I saw that most of the hair was closely cropped in the C.C.S. A few tufts of red were left by the amateur barber. His body was horribly torn with barbed wire.

Now, when I came to him, I found him trembling violently, with a high temperature.

"How did you ever manage to get so horribly entangled in the wire?" I asked him, using means to abate the fever.

At first he did not answer at all, and when I repeated the question, he spoke in such an affected, slow, extraordinary fashion, that it was almost grotesque.

"Where do you come from, Willis?"

"I come from Lon-don," he said, separating each syllable from the other in a very peculiar way.

*"What* a victim he will be," I thought, knowing the ways and habits of my Ward.

My Ward possesses one characteristic which I am absolutely at a loss to destroy—it is mad on imitations.

For instance, when poor little Nobbs, from Edgeware Road, after the M.O. had examined him and left the Ward, eagerly asked:

"H'any 'opes of 'ome, Sister?" the Ward was at it in a trice, and now, the minute the door closes behind the M.O., the chorus begins:

"H'any 'opes of 'ome, Sister?"

And when Jock, in an ecstasy of delight over his first steaming bowl of porridge, ejaculated, "Man, but I'm thinkin' this parritch is *graund!"* it was just the same.

As regularly, now, as the breakfast is served—like saying Grace—there is a shout of, "Man! but I'm thinkin' the parritch is *graund!!"*

So I knew how it would be with Willis's stilted unnatural voice.

When, finally, it *was* heard, after the foreseen shout, I turned to Monks, my New Zealander, and the cleverest man in the Ward.

"What do you think of it, Monks?"

"I think—I think I would keep an eye on that cove, Sister. Sounds to me 'sif he was tryin' to hide something."

By this time Willis was rather annoyed and shouted out something to the aggressive patient opposite—something with a spice of the West in it.

"You're from Lancashire!" suddenly Monks shouted to him.

To my surprise the new patient turned a brick red.

"Lan-ca-shire? No! *No!* I tell you. I come from Lon-don."

Willis was to have an operation next day, and I found him in a panic of fear over the Anaesthetic.

"But what makes you afraid?" I asked curiously.

"When the man in the oth-er hos-pit-al had it, he spoke a lot of things he did-n't know. Per-haps I do that, too."

*"Exactly!"* said Monks, as I passed his bed. "There's something deuced queer about him."

Next morning the Searcher came again—as he had said—to interview the Lancashire Sergeant.

"Stay if you like, Sister. You are interested, aren't you?" said the Searcher, as I was about to leave them.

I only had time for a minute or two. After the first preliminaries:

"Do you think you remember seeing Gentles, of the —— Battalion, Sergeant? He hadn't been very long in the Battalion, and he has been missing for almost a year."

"I was in that action, sir, almost a year ago. Aye—I remember Gentles, a young, red-headed chap with a scar on his face—and he played the banjo, too, he did. Yes, sir, but Gentles was shot in the stomach that action and crawled away into a shell-hole. Last I seen of Gentles, sir."

I was quite excited. I turned to the Searcher: "I'm *so* glad you found out about him, and in my Ward!!"

"But you mustn't make too sure, Sister. Do you know that four different reports have already been sent in about him? See!" And he showed me a business like looking document:

Note 1.—Informant (name and Regiment given) remembers Gentles—fair-haired boy—scar on his face, impetuous—always taking risks. Killed and buried on April 14th."

Note 2.—Informant (Corporal in —— Regiment) remembers Gentles. Played concertina, or some other instrument. Informant doesn't remember what—all are same to him—Was in next trench to him in first week of May.

Note 3.—Informant (name, Regiment) saw Gentles, a Lancashire lad, reddish hair, noisy, sang, and played some instrument. Was with him in Rest Camp on May 10.

"But," I gasped, dumbfounded, "how can they *all* be true? Buried in April, and playing the banjo in May!"

"They *do* sound rather contradictory," agreed the Searcher. "Well, they are all sent back to Headquarters to Gentles' file, as I told you. Presently, when we have added every item of information possible, wise heads will sift it, and with a few further inquiries, often arrive at the truth."

"Often!" I repeated.

"Certainly not *always,* Sister. Many, many of the missing will remain so till Earth itself yields the secret."

"Do they not have things in their pockets or their haversacks that could identify them?"

"Very often. If you care to come with me to-morrow, in your off-duty hours, I am going to the Billets of an officer who often helps me. His Regiment has just come out of the line. The Padre is coming, too, so you will be well chaperoned, Sister."

"I should love to," I said, and next day, with Matron's formal permission, I sallied forth with the Searcher and the Padre, to identify the contents of the haversack of a soldier, buried, with six others, up the line, some weeks ago.

We found the Captain sitting at his desk, a troubled frown puckering his brow, and gazing fixedly at two little piles of odds and ends, lying on the table near him.

After greeting us—

"I am at a task, which is harder to me than planning and attacking a citadel."

"I think I can guess what it is, Captain," said Padre. "I can sympathize with you."

"It is the after results of action, Sister. Yesterday, or a day or so ago, we attacked, fought, strained, killed and won. But it had its price—and to-day I am writing to the Mothers and the Wives who made is possible to gain that victory—and who have paid the price."

"And do you write to all the mothers and wives," I asked, noticing the tired lines about his eyes.

"I try to—as many as I possibly can, Sister. I try to remember some little personal thing they would like to know, and if I can't find any, I can, by writing, at least show them we valued the son they have given—or the husband."

The searcher had already attacked one little heap of things.

"I haven't looked at these things yet," said the Captain. "I had them brought here—as I knew such things often help you in your work."

"Indeed they do—they are our implements," answered the Searcher, examining a kit closely to see if a name was scratched on it, looking in vain for a pay book, but finally, after a rather disappointing search, finding a much be-thumbed, highly ornate post card.

The address on it was almost invisible, having been written in pencil, and grubby marks of wet muddy fingers were all over it.

The Searcher, however, seemed as pleased as if he had discovered a diamond mine.

"See here, Captain, this is luck. You have discovered for me what would have taken weeks or even months, and even then might not be a certainty."

Pulling out his tragically long list of missing, the Searcher turned over one page and another, finally pointing excitedly to the name and regiment identical to that on the card.

Little did the kiddy far away in Blighty, buying a picture post card—a child's face peering through two vivid pink roses,—and with painstaking efforts addressing it to "Dad," know that she was providing the undoubted evidence of her dead father's identity.

I looked at the little heap—two red hankerchiefs, tobacco stained and soiled, a tobacco pouch and pipe, a little bracelet made out of aluminum, probably bought for the kiddy who sent the card, his emergency rations, and a broken pen knife, besides the card.

"No photographs!" I remarked, rather surprised.

"These would be in his tunic," answered the Padre.

"It has been of use to you then?" said the Captain, playing with his fountain pen, and probably wishing he could be as successful with his task.

"It has indeed, and many, many thanks," heartily answered the Searcher.

We walked slowly back over the barrack grounds, and as the Hospital walls, in the near distance, rose in sight, I said:

"How little one knows of the other one's work! I always seem to be learning something new about the Army. I never before pictured a victorious officer, in the hour of his success, sitting puzzling over a sheet of paper, that he might send a little comfort to his men's people. We only seem to know our own little bit in the war, don't we, Padre?"

"Tell Sister about that last case of yours," suggested Padre.

"Tell me the most interesting case you have worked at," I added.

"A large order," laughed the Searcher. "Did you hear a few months ago of the disappearance of a very well known General? As you may guess, we were all working very hard at the case. It really seemed as if the earth had opened up and swallowed him. Only after many weeks did we learn that the General had left his headquarters, immediately behind the line, had gone gradually through the communication trenches till he reached the front line."

"I should think a General, wandering through the trenches, would be a very marked figure," I interrupted.

"Exactly, only this General had taken the precaution to put on a Tommy's uniform before he started;

and so, of course, nobody had paid any attention to him. In the trenches he was killed, and buried with three other Tommies. I can't tell you the many steps that were taken, but finally the fact was proved beyond doubt. The grave was opened, and his body re-interred, with the honors that this war-scarred veteran deserved."

. . . . .

I entered my Ward to find Monks and the others chuckling with glee.

"What's the joke, Monks?" I asked casually, my mind taken up with the pathos of what I had just seen.

Amidst grins and chuckles he at last made himself understood:

"It's that cove in the corner what had the operation —to-day—Willis."

"Yes, I was out when he had the operation. Did it go all right?"

"Rather. Doc, gave him the dope to knock him out —see, so as he couldn't feel it."

"Yes, of course, the anaesthetic."

"Well, when the cove come round he opens his mouth and lets sling the greatest bunch o' Lancashire lingo ye ever heard in your life. Forgot all that tom-foolery, cissy-rot he talks, an' let her go in real old Lancashire!"

"But why on earth would he try to *hide* that he's from Lancashire?" I asked, really puzzled.

"An' that's just what I'm goin' to find out," said Monks, suddenly sobered.

I decided not to mention this fact to Willis himself for the present at least, and once more he began to speak with the affected deliberation as before.

He tried hard to find out what he had said under the anaesthetic, but I simply told him I wasn't there, and he seemed relieved.

At my request the men took no notice of his sudden lapse into Lancashire.

Two days later the Searcher appeared again.

"Any more Lancashire F—s, Sister? I'm really anxious to find something definite about Gentles. Headquarters writes that his people, at least his father and mother, are writing most pathetic appeals.

"Seems that he was married since the war, and the father and mother didn't think much of the girl. He had met her in London since he had enlisted, and married her. Though they didn't like the girl—and small blame to them evidently— they kept in touch with her. Some months ago she wrote to them that as the papers had said Gentles was missing and reported dead, she supposed he was dead, and was going to marry again, which she has done."

"How disgraceful!" I interrupted.

"But not so unusual as you might imagine, Sister."

"It would be rather unpleasant for her if you did find him," I suggested.

"I'm not thinking much about her feelings, but I am anxious to find out about him for these poor people's sake—the father and mother."

"I have reason to believe we have another Lancashire man in the Ward," I said, and told him about Willis.

"It is strange that he should be so anxious to hide his birth place," and he walked slowly down the Ward.

Watching, I saw Willis give a tremendous start, as the Searcher, instead of passing his bed as usual, took a chair and sat down beside him.

"If he has anything to hide he won't keep it long," I thought, looking at the clever profile of the Searcher's face.

Minutes passed—half an hour. I was deep in temperatures and pulses, and paid no heed to the familiar figure of the Searcher.

At last, hearing a frightened sound, between a gasp and a cry, I hurried from the end of the Ward.

Willis lay, his eyes popping out of his head, his face white, and his breath coming in quick gasps. The man was frightened, terrified.

"I am indeed sorry, Sister," said the Searcher very quietly, "to have put your patient in this condition."

"Will you wait for me at my desk in the ante-room," I said, noticing that his presence caused Willis such alarm.

With great difficulty I finally quieted the man, re-

maining beside him till he seemed ready to fall asleep.

It took some time, but the Searcher was still there when I came to the ante-room, walking up and down excitedly.

"What is it? What have you discovered? What put him in such a panic?"

I know my questions tumbled out one over the other, I was so impatient.

"The most extraordinary thing has happened, Sister. But then my days are filled with extraordinary things, only one can't always see it so plainly."

The Searcher's eyes were very bright.

"Your patient Willis is not Willis at all."

"Not Willis! Who is he, then?"

"Not Willis," repeated the Searcher, "but Gentles!"

*"What?"* I gasped.

"He is, indeed! He is the Gentles who has been on the missing lists for months; he is the Gentles whom one man saw disappear in a shell hole in April, and another saw playing the banjo in May."

"But how—why?"

"Caused by a most extraordinary mix-up of human emotions—love—fear—self-sacrifice—desperation."

"Love!" I echoed.

"Yes, I believe that Lancashire lad truly loved that worthless girl, and still loves her. For the powder and paint that covered her face, he had no eyes. To him she was the most beautiful woman in the world."

"You said Gentles didn't write home for six months. How was that if he was so fond of her?"

"Did you ever realize, Sister, how difficult it is for a Tommy to write, when so many things are barred. He wants to tell them about the place they are in, the country, the billets. Not allowed!

"He wants to tell about the Regiment that used to be near them at home, and is near them here. Not allowed!

"He wants to tell about the wonderful attack he has been through, and the wonderful escape he has had. Not allowed!

"Then, Tommy, not having, perhaps, a very keen imagination, and not caring to expatiate about his feelings, gets tired writing 'that he hopes this finds them well, as it leaves him,' and gradually puts off till Leave, and sometimes drops off altogether, especially if his letters from Blighty get lost or don't reach him."

"How do you know all these things?" I asked.

"It is what I have studied from school days, little Sister—human nature."

"And Gentles—after not writing for six months?"

"Then he was hit by shrapnel—as the Sergeant told us—and lay in the shell hole till he was carried, in an unconscious state, to a French hospital. When he was better and allowed out, he met a man from home, in a canteen, who had just come back from leave, and who told him his people thought he was dead, and his wife had married again."

"Are you telling me the story of Enoch Arden?" I asked.

"When you search for the missing, Sister, you find things ten fold times stranger than fiction."

"What did he do, then?"

"Here the best part of the man's nature came out. In his cot in that hospital, surrounded by foreigners, he seems to have fought out this crisis in his life. If he went home *now* this worthless, self-seeking woman, whom he had idealized, would be known as a bigamist. Therefore he decided that he would not go home, but would bury his identity.

"He deliberately lost his badges, claimed to belong to a London Regiment, drifted half over France, and finally into a London Regiment, which was just going into action. Got entangled in the enemy's barbed wire, and here he is."

"But why—why did he try to pretend he hadn't come from Lancashire?"

"Because he heard me asking for Lancashire men, and was afraid he might be detected."

"Tell me, Searcher, do you often come across such wonderful revelations?"

"Not often as complete as this."

"And what are you going to do?"

"There is only one thing I can do. I am sent out here to discover the missing. I have found one, and I am duty bound to report it."

When I re-entered the Ward the look of despair on Gentles' face was pitiful to see.

Poor Gentles! His problem was soon solved. After some communication between the Searcher and the home people, the news had to be broken to him that his wife, on her way to Australia with the man who believed himself to be her husband, had been torpedoed and drowned.

Another side issue of war!

## The Push is On!

THE PUSH is on!

The first breeze of the morning, as we open our eyes, wafts the news to us. It is already on every side. An orderly calls it to us as we run across the quadrangle to Mess. At breakfast, one Sister whispers it eagerly to her neighbour. An M.O. meeting the Consulting Surgeon in the court-yard, greets him with it:—"The Push is on, Sir," "It is, indeed," answers the Surgeon.

It is in the air. The atmosphere is brimming with it. The war, thereby, is a step nearer its end. Our Wards will be filled to overflowing with wounded men. There will be death and sufferings and glorious deeds.

Outside my hospital garden walls, I hear people hurrying, talking excitedly. I hear a mother with a high pitched, nervous voice, trying to quiet a fretful child,—

"Hush, there, can't you. Don't you know your Dad 'll be in the battle this very day—killin' Germans, or—my God! bein' . . ." The voice trailed away, and I hurried on.

Things move fast. Convoys come and go. Patients,

whom it is possible to move, are sent to Auxiliary Hospitals or to Convalescent Homes. Afterwards, incidents, little things that happened, come back to one's mind, that at the time one did not realize one had even noticed. Each moment of the day is filled with work, and then it is not done. One longs for the strength of ten men. Sad and terrible things one sees, which can never be forgotten, but always glorified by that spirit of silent endurance for which men with British ancestry, are famous.

Three, four times a day, the large folding doors are thrown open to admit the stretcher bearers with their burden. Scarcely has one time to make up a newly vacated bed before another patient is waiting to be put in it. The receiving blanket is thrown over the white sheets, the orderlies cut away the blood stained uniform and the boots caked with trench mud. Surgeons come and go at all times, and the operating theatre is busy day and night.

The dangerously wounded list grows apace. Their relations in response to telegrams begin to arrive.

In one's little bedroom, high above the front entrance, one wakes suddenly through the night, with the sound of an approaching motor. Down the long street one hears it coming nearer and nearer, finally dashing up to the steps. One's ears seem always to be listening even when asleep.

One sits up in bed in the dark, and thinks aloud, "Is

it Captain F's father, or is it the wife of the patient with the head wound?"

One sees him again—the patient with the head wound—as he was last night, tossing, feverish, wandering, with all the most modern results of science in combat with the poison in his veins. Would he know the wife hurrying through the hours of night to his bedside? Will he even be alive? One sleeps again, in utter weariness, till one of the night Sisters' voice says, "Six o'clock," and one hurriedly cries,—

"Wait *one moment,* Sister,—Did Captain F's father come? How is he?"

"Captain F. died shortly after twelve o'clock," says Sister, and one wonders if the rushing wheels one heard were before or after twelve. This happens night after night.

The Push is on!

One sees suffering, amputation, death, and one glories in the spirit in which it is met. One thanks God daily for the privilege of being allowed to help.

In one of my beds is placed a young lieutenant with shell shock—a severe case. He must be watched closely, and I remain near him, turning every minute to look at him, as I go on with my other work. He has fallen asleep—restless and disturbed, but still asleep. Sister-in-Charge calls me to the other end of the Ward for an instant. In as short a time as possible, I hurry back, dismayed, as I come near the cor-

ner, to see a figure, on all fours, crawling over the floor. It is the shell shock patient. I bend over him and help him to rise.

"Let me go! Let me go!" he whispers, weakly. "I want to get my men out! Let me go. I tell you I took them over the top and *I'll bring them back!*" The voice fails from utter weakness, and the orderly helps to lift him back into bed. It has been his constant cry ever since. He took his men into the attack; he wants to lead them back. Can we ever really know what the responsibility of their men's lives mean to these young officers? Few of them talk of it, but there is no question how they feel it.

Further down the line is one of the Irish officers —a young second lieutenant. He is on the D.I.—dangerously ill—list, and his father has come to be with him, and is, of course, a daily visitor.

In the mornings, when I am "carrying on" in the little ante-room, I often see the Father coming towards the Ward, and his actions puzzle me. Instead of turning in at the door, he walks deliberately past it, and saunters along the path running below the Ward windows. At first he walks only a few yards up and down—not even as far as the middle of the Ward—then a little further, and a little further. Finally he reaches the window immediately opposite his son's bed, when he quickly turns his head, and looks directly in, after which he walks back to the Ward entrance.

"Good morning. Did you think you were too early to be allowed in?" I ask, as he passed the ante-room.

"No, Sister, but . . . to tell you the truth I haven't the courage to come into the Ward, till I have made sure that the lad is still there!"

What dire fear must have been deep in the heart of that quiet figure walking leisurely along the path! The young Irishman, however, did get better, slowly and gradually, and when the Father came, a smiling and grateful man, to say good-bye, he only preceded his son to Ireland by a few days.

In the Push, however, all cases do not end so happily.

I am not going to enlarge on these ghastly wounds which war brings in its trail. Although, sometimes, I think—why is it that we may not even hear of the sufferings which will be the price of our Victory when it comes? Our brothers can suffer them, but we must not speak of them.

Sometimes it seems as if the more terrible the pain, the greater the grit.

For instance, an American doctor, who was five months in our Ward. At first it seemed as if his wounded hip would be easily healed. Time went on, and, with every care and skill, the doctors endeavoured to eliminate the poison. No success followed their efforts. Three months passed, four months. New treatments were tried. The doctor patient was as cheery and as hopeful as if each week were bringing

about steady improvement, instead of, as he very well knew, less chance of recovering. His face became gaunt, his eyes unnaturally large, and his frame as thin and light as a sickly child. Still the same optimism. He never seemed to doubt that he would be all right in the end.

"I am going to have a good big leave, Sister, when I get out of here! You just watch me! It will be *some* leave I reckon!" One turned away lest he should read the doubt in one's face. Amputation was tried as a last resource. It was evident to everyone that the days of this splendid man were swiftly drawing to a close.

"When are you going to write to my wife?" he asked one evening—for I usually wrote his letters for him.

Anxious to find out exactly what he thought of himself, I said, "To-night I will do it. What shall I say to her? Tell me exactly what you wish her to know." He paused a little, but the same cheery spirit looked out of his eyes.

"Tell her—tell her I'll soon be all right!" I waited, wishing I could penetrate his secret thoughts.

"Perhaps, Sister," hesitatingly, "perhaps you had better wait till to-morrow."

I waited till to-morrow—and when I had watched the Union Jack draped over all that was left of this hero, when I had watched the stretcher bearers gently

carry their burden through the open doors, when my eyes had become dry, and my hand steady, I wrote to the widow of one of the bravest men I have ever been honoured to know.

The Push is on!

There is no cessation. We are holding our own. We are gaining ground. We, in hospital, see the price. Do they grudge it, these men? Not for an instant. They are attaining the highest of which life is capable. They are giving their lives for their fellow men.

Beds are put up in the corridor and in odd corners.

A Captain of one of the oldest Scottish regiments is lying side by side with a slip of a boy from Trinidad. The boy longs now for the blue skies of Trinidad with a mighty longing. It was different when he was strong and well and full of the wine of life. He is sick, now, and his people are many thousands of miles away, and poor "Trinidad" tells us he doesn't think he'll come to the next war.

There is a great out cry for news, and, when the paper boy arrives, all stop whatever they are doing, and set upon them.

This morning, before the usual time, the door burst open and the Head Surgeon came in precipitously—

"Boys, we've got M——!! It's ours!" Bandaged hands wave in the air, white faces are raised from pillows. A shout showed that the spirit was not

wounded. I do believe that news did more than all the tonics the hospitals held.

To-day, an incident happened, stranger than fiction. Is not all life now stranger than fiction?

Our Sister-in-Charge had very often spoken to us of her younger brother, who had played an active part in the East, and was now in France. He had Leave on his return from the East, but Sister could not arrange hers, so she had not seen him for four years. He expected to have special leave, he wrote, and come and see her, when things had quietened a bit.

A large convoy had arrived immediately after breakfast. Sister, having to arrange for more than the usual number, was here and there and everywhere at the same time.

To one of the beds on my side of the Ward was brought a head case—shrapnel wounds. The card from the Casualty Clearing Station showed that it was a serious case.

"They will put him later in a room to himself," I thought, hearing his excited wonderings and loud outcries. Sister was coming up the Ward seeing to each new patient. When she was within a few beds of the lad with the head wounds, he suddenly sat up, waving wildly to her, and shouting in an excited voice, "Sister! Sister! Sister!"

"Sister will be here in a minute," I tried to reassure him, holding down his hands and talking very quietly

to him. He paid not the slightest heed to me—did not even seem to know that I was there.

"Sister! Sister!" The M.O. had come into the Ward, and Sister had gone down to the door to speak to him. Hearing the excited cries they both walked up the Ward to the bed, and Sister began to take off the many bandages.

"Sister! Sister!" he kept repeating, and only when the manifold wrappings were removed, did Sister find that it was the young brother from the East who had been calling, in very truth for his own Sister.

"Strange that he did not call your *name,*" I said curiously. "I wonder why!" The "why" was simply that his memory had been slightly affected, and though he had recognized her as his sister he could not remember her name.

After all, Sisters are women, and weep, and laugh like other women. And when, after a few minutes alone with the newly found brother, this particular Sister turned to us, half laughing and half crying, to tell us, "The last time I saw that dare-devil scamp he was being chucked out of a farmer's orchard for stealing apples with the other boys," we pretended not to notice the tears in her eyes, and rung her hand warmly, as we hurried on to our work.

In the next convoy, an older man, a man of perhaps forty, was carried in, evidently in much pain. One of the patients who had already been with us a day or

two, recognized him, as he was carried past his bed, as Captain of another Battalion of his regiment.

"He's a corker, Sister," he told me, "He's a genius! He plays the fiddle like one possessed! He had it up from the Base, when we were out of the trenches, in the rest camp. He used to sit at the window of his billets and play! Jove! How he played! All the French 'bonnes femmes' and the 'mademoiselles' gathered round like a flock of sheep. They weren't the only ones, either. Jove! But he seemed to pluck the heart out o' you! What's the matter with him, Sister?"

"I don't know yet, but I'll let you know later." He was as grieved as if it had been his own, when I told him that the Captain's right arm was broken by shrapnel, and the wound so full of poison that he must have it amputated.

"Jove, Sister!" he went on dismayed. "Do you know what you're saying! His right arm! Never play the fiddle again! He'll never stand it! I tell you he'll never want to live without an arm to play his fiddle!"

Yet it was true. To lose one's arm, under any circumstances, was surely bad enough, but here was a man, whose life was built up round the music he created, a man who 'plucked the heart' from his fellows. I scarcely dared to approach him, when it was necessary to prepare him for the operation.

"Does he know! Does he know!" I kept asking myself, as my hands were busy about him. The deep grey eyes told me nothing. His set white lips were firmly pressed, and scarcely a quiver showed the agony we knew he must be suffering. I murmured a few words of what I felt for him, as I cut off an impeding garment. A smile parted the pinched lips.

"It isn't for long, Sister. It's coming off!" So he knew. One becomes accustomed to seeing this wonderful endurance of pain, but here was a man suffering exquisite agony—physically, and probably mentally, and never once, during the days that followed, did one word of it escape his lips. One read it in his face—in his eyes, that was all. Afterwards, I heard that he was a V.C. I could understand that. He was the stuff of which V.C.'s are made.

And so the days wore on. We still read of the successes we were gaining, of the counter-attacks, of the barrages, and the tremendous artillery fire. We saw the price of the gains, but we knew it must be so. It is war. We do not enter into it without foreseeing suffering and death.

But here, in our Ward we saw, too, the heroic endurance that made one's heart grow with the knowledge of what man is capable.

There are heights and depths in the nature of man. We looked into the depths in their agony, and we lifted our eyes and in their heroism viewed the sublime heights.

## When a Party is On

OUR Ward is invited out to tea. As we are rather a large family, however, transport accommodation limits our acceptance to twenty.

It is a difficult proposition to select the twenty. There is always a faint hope that some of the "up" patients, eligible, may not want to go.

"Lady Grubber of Grubber Hall has invited twenty of you to tea," I begin, glancing round.

I am afraid it is characteristic of our Ward to bestow nicknames, and these come to me now more naturally than the names on the Report Sheets at the foot of the beds.

The "Chocolate Soldier" is sitting up in bed trying to look as fit as possible. He is a very sociable individual, always ready for a tea fight. He isn't really brown, as you might think from his name, but he has such an inordinate appetite for chocolate, that the name is irresistible.

"Caruso," in the bed next him, doesn't look so keen about the party, but that is to be expected, as his sweet voice, which gained him his name, has brought him many invitations. He is, on the whole, rather blasé.

"David and Goliath" might go. Yes, I shall include

them. Ever since "Goliath"—a huge Cumberland farmer—was carried in, silent and depressed, I have been able to count on David, the little Welsh Fusilier, to sing to him, and keep him entertained.

"Aussie?" Well—"Aussie," like all other Australians, has a "way with him," and usually does come in for the treats. Still, he is so far from his own people—we must take "Aussie," and I will warn him well not to brandish his wounded hand in her Ladyship's face—as he has a way of doing when he talks to you.

"What about you, Dad?" Of course every one knows it is the custom in a Military Hospital to call the middle-aged men "Dad," just as one calls the younger ones "Sonnie."

"Can't say as I wants to go, Sister. All them Society Jinks ain't for me now."

"Why not, Dad?"

"Society's changed since my day, Sister, and me an' her Ladyship mightn't hit it off, so to speak."

"Nonsense, Dad. Come along with us, and I wouldn't be surprised if we could take along 'Sunny Jim,' too. You haven't been at any of the parties yet, have you?"

"Sunny Jim," a young Artillery man from Northumberland, by dint of his habit of sitting in his corner and smiling, and thinking, it would all come right in the end, is rather popular in the Ward.

"Smut" I am rather afraid to take. He is so clever

at practical jokes, and I would be in constant terror that he would bring us all to disgrace.

"Phyllis," too, is all right in the Ward, but I quake for what his powers of mimicry might lead us into. "Phyllis," with his very fair hair and pink complexion, dressed up as a girl, which is his favourite form of entertainment, is difficult to recognize as a man and a soldier.

The delight of the Ward when Matron, coming in one afternoon after visiting hours, saw him, robed in a muslin frock and flower hat, sitting by the "Chocolate Soldier's" bed! "How is this, Sister?" says Matron. "Visitors at this time of day!" "Phyllis" is obliged to cast aside his upper garments to prove he was not of the gentle sex!!

"Phyllis will go to the *next* entertainment, wont you"?

But there is such an uproar at leaving the only "lady" of the Ward at home that I am obliged to include him too.

Matron smiled when I handed her my list:—

"You will certainly have a cosmopolitan party, sister," she said noticing 'Hawaii's' name pencilled in at the end.

"I think they'll do us credit, Matron," and she said she hoped so, in a rather dubious tone.

During the next afternoon, the Ward was very busy making Toilet preparations.

The uninitiated may imagine convalescent Tommy's toilet is a very simple affair—a blue suit and a red tie. Probably they have not spent a morning in the Ward ante-room, or kitchen, when Tommy, in a dressing gown, peeps round the door.

"Is there any chance of an iron, Sister"?

"An iron"?

"Just to press a crease in these trousers, sister, I won't be a minute", and he holds out entreatingly, 2 or 3 pairs of light blue trousers, which he thinks could be improved with the crease, so necessary to the masculine mind's satisfaction.

"Are there any more red ties, Sister? I have'nt any"!

"Here old man, I'll lend you this" and the "Chocolate Soldier" produces a navy blue knitted tie from his locker.

"No, *indeed,"* I insist firmly "You would all be C.B. for a week."

One of the most fixed, unalterable laws in a military hospital is that Tommy, when up and dressed, *must* wear a red tie.

It is an inexorable law, and if a patient is discovered, wandering about the hospital grounds, or even in the building, with his coat buttoned up to his neck, and no red tie, he is immediately reported.

The very last time 'Dad' had a pass out for the afternoon, I was horror stricken to see him being led back by the Sergeant.

What on earth is the matter"? I gasped, knowing Dad to be a model character.

"I found your patient in the town improperly dressed" replied the Sergeant. "He had no red tie"! and if I had not made a special plea for Dad's ignorance of the law, and mine too, for that matter of it, his pass would have been countermanded for a week.

*Therefore,* when my 20 all line up beside me, ready for our "Motor Transport," I walked down the line critically scrutinizing the 20 red ties!

Lady Grubber was giving her first soldiers party, and was in rather a panic over the entertainment.

She had gone very carefully over her visiting list, before she had finally decided who was to receive a card inviting her to help entertain the "Wounded," as Lady Grubber persistently designated my little party.

Those selected were, Lady Gwendolen Snaggs, Lady Sarah Snaggs, Lady Dorothea Snaggs, the Hon. Beatrice Crisp, a Staff Colonel and General Sir Edwin Grubber.

Also, to my relief, Miss Doris Tweed, the rector's daughter in a white frock, and michief in her eyes.

The entertainment was to be in the garden—and tea sharp at 3, Lady Grubber having a fixed idea that tea must not be later than 3, when the "Wounded" were being entertained.

We entered in procession, led on by an imposing individual in black, with side whiskers.

"The Fairlawn Wounded—and Sister" he announced, and we passed in. At the end of the queue limped Smut, whose name had finally been added to the list.

I did not like the glitter in his eye, or the furtive wink as he passed me.

"Pleased to meet yer Ladyship" he said quite at his ease, as he passed his hostess.

"And now, what shall we do? Shall we play croquet?" said she.

The soldiers smiled faintly, and nobody spoke, till 'Phyllis,' rising to the occasion, marshalled them into line.

Aussie and the Chocolate Soldier were ranged against "Canada" and her Ladyship.

"I am so pleased that my daughter-in-law is having her soldier's party when I am here, Sister. May I ask you to introduce some of your patients to me?"

I turned. Beside me was standing one of the most charming and dignified old ladies I have ever seen. Tall, distinguished, her gleaming white hair, and dark eyes reminded me of the pictures of the old French aristocrats at the time of the Revolution.

She was bending slightly, and leaning on a gold headed cane.

"My daughter and I have not quite the same ideas about entertaining" she went on quietly, "I do not feel I can know my guests by meeting them *en masse*.

I would rather know your patients individually, Sister, not as the 'Wounded'!"

She sat down on a rustic bench below a large copper beech, like a gracious kindly Queen ready to receive her courtiers.

"Her Grace, the Duchess," Doris, passing, explained. "Goliath and David" were near, and I brought them to her.

"Will you both sit down beside me, and have a chat," she asked, shaking hands, and smiling very winningly.

I left them, glancing occasionally at the little group—Goliath, usually so silent, was talking, in his deep voice, of Cumberland, its hills, its farms. David, evidently surprised at the unusual flow, was drawing him out by leading questions, until the Duchess led a debate between the beauties of Wales and Cumberland, which included him in the conversation.

I was not very comfortable about the party on the croquet lawn.

Knowing Smut's capabilities, I was never exactly at ease about him.

"Ladyship" I heard him say, "Us soldiers don't seem to have no luck with games! 'Ow did it 'appen that your Ladyship as beat us *twict,* an' us playin' every time we 'ave been out at tea"!

"And do you often go out to tea, my man"?

"Well now," mused Smut, "there was the day we

had tea with the Dook, and the day we was on the river with the Countess, an' then the time as we played billiards with the Baronite."

"Dear me" Lady Grubber was beginning, when I was relieved to hear the rumble of the gong, and the same imposing individual appeared to conduct us to the orchard, where tea had been laid, under the trees.

"Let the deah men have *all* they want, Sister, *just this once,"* cried Lady Grubber over the table. I wondered if we had been in the habit of cutting them short in their desire for food.

Lady Gwendolen Snags, Lady Sarah Snags, and Lady Dorothea Snags waited on the "Wounded."

A table was carried out below the copper beech, and I heard the old lady order tea to be brought there, too, for Dad.

"May I be blessed with half the grace and tact and beauty of that English Duchess, when I grow old" I thought. "Hereafter, I shall form my own opinion of the aristocracy. There are the 'Lady Grubbers,' but there are also the 'Duchesses'."

"After tea we are going to have a concert," announced our hostess complacently. "A lady is coming from London just to amuse you. Do you ever have concerts in your hospital?"

"Not 'arf we don't," replied Smut, and as I felt another wink was on the way I turned my head.

"Well, this time you are going to hear a *real* London singer," she told us, beaming.

We returned to the lawn, where a piano had been placed, and chairs in a circle.

"Are you enjoying it, Sunny Jim?" I asked, watching the boy bending over, and smelling every flower in sight.

"Betcherlife," replied Sunny Jim, using our hospital abbreviation.

The real London singer had not yet arrived. Instead "Sir Arthur Rolles" was announced, and, with his gold pince nez adjusted, bowed over Lady Grubber's hand.

He spoke to her in a lowered voice.

"The Bluffs." She answered, "Yes, there is one of the Bluffs among the Wounded. That man over there —the one with an arm off—he is in the Bluffs. Yes, that one with the deformity."

How I *wished* she would lower her voice. I knew how sensitive Bigger was, and I could see his face growing red. He was leaning on the copper beech near where my Duchess sat.

"Tell that man to come and speak to Sir Arthur, Sister," commanded her Ladyship.

"My patient's name is Bigger," I remarked, and moved over to the tree.

"I ain't wantin' to speak to no Sir Arthur," he told me before I could speak to him.

"I don't know what it is, but I am sure it will only be for a minute, Bigger. Won't you come?"

"What does the cove want. I ain't 'ere to amuse swells. He's a swell an' wot does 'e want with me? I ain't goin', and that's all."

Suddenly the Duchess leaned over and beckoned him.

"Will you please come and speak to me for a second," she said, very sweetly, and in a trice Bigger was at her side.

"I want to tell you that Sir Arthur is one of my very oldest friends, and a month ago he lost his only son. He was a young lieutenant in your regiment, and Sir Arthur has scarcely been able to hear anything of how he died. He is always looking out for men of the Bluffs to see if he can hear anything from them about his son. He is a lonely, broken-hearted old man."

"That's different," said Bigger slowly, and walked rather sheepishly towards Sir Arthur, who was coming towards him.

"I shall be so indebted to you if you will perhaps tell me a little about your life in the Trenches during the action in May. I have lost . . .," and Sir Arthur, passing his hand through the blue-coated arm, led Bigger down a quiet walk.

Is there a heart in the world more responsive to trouble in any form than Tommy's? Passing them, half an hour later, I heard Bigger, with eyes shining, going over each step of the fight.

It was long past time for the "real London singer" to arrive. She had not arrived.

Lady Grubber was in a state of panic. "What shall I do? How can I keep the Wounded amused?" she begged.

"How would you like the boys to give us some music till she comes?" I suggested.

"The men! Can *they* sing?"

"I think they can," I replied, smiling at my memories of hospital concerts. "Would you like them to begin?"

"Perhaps, but—do you think your father, the rector, would speak a few words to the Wounded, Doris?"

"I'm sure I wouldn't give him the chance," promptly replied Doris.

"Well—Lady Sarah will sing, won't you, dear?"

Faced with this dire emergency, Lady Sarah said she would try. We sat in circles. Doris wriggled on a music stool too high for her, and Lady Sarah wailed to us to "dry those tears."

Lady Sarah *tried,* and when she had finished the "Wounded" chivalrously applauded, "Phyllis," behind Lady Grubber's back, making extravagant motions of wringing out a handkerchief, wet from his tears.

The real London singer still not appearing, Lady Grubber said that if any of the men *could* sing, and *wanted* to sing, she was sure we would be very pleased to listen to them.

"David," I said, "sing one of your Welsh songs,"

which he did so sweetly that, at the end, my Duchess called him over to her side and made him stay near her.

And then Smut went and sat down at the piano. Smut can play. Smut plays by ear. Smut is taken to an opera, and comes back to the Ward and plays all the songs.

A lady comes to sing to us, and scarcely has she vanished before Smut is playing her songs, and teaching us to sing them.

So Smut began—a one step, and everybody stopped fretting about the London Singer,—a waltz, and we were swaying in rhythm, and wondering why the chairs were there in the way.

He played "Somewhere a Voice is Calling," and we were dreamy, "Any Time's Kissing Time," and we were sentimental.

Lady Sarah and Lady Gwendolen sang louder than anybody else. I don't believe they had ever had such a good time before.

Smut played on—"Hello, my dearie," and deliberately turning, gazed straight at Lady Grubber, as he rolled out the words; "I'm on the Staff," and the Major General, hanging over Miss Doris' chair, was obviously dubious as to whether he should be offended or amused; "My Old Kentucky Home," and my Duchess joined in with a sweet, shaky note or two.

And suddenly Smut changed his tune. With the beat of drums be began:—

"Left! Left!
I'd a jolly good home
And I left."

He pounded it on the piano. He sang it. The boys sang it. The girls sang it. They began to beat the time with their feet.

"Left, left,
I'd a jolly good home
And I left."

It is irresistible. You don't sing it. You chant it, and you can't chant it without beating time with your foot.

Doris, of course, had been at it from the first, stamping her white canvas shoes in time with the boys, and now the Major General caught the germ:—

"Left, left,
I'd a jolly good home
And I left."

His highly polished boots were going over time. There was no variety to it, but we didn't seem to want to leave off.

I turned my head. My Duchess was tapping the grass with a little gray silk slipper, nodding her head and smiling as she and "Dad" kept time.

There isn't any music in it—but Smut is at the piano—up the treble and down the bass, and always the same beat of the drum.

Only one person was adamant, the sombre individual with the side whiskers, come suddenly upon the scene.

The "Wounded," of course, he could have understood stamping and chanting a nonsensical ditty:—

"Left, left,
I'd a jolly good home
And I left."

There was nothing one might not expect from the "*Wounded*", but the Staff Major General! Her Grace, the Duchess! the Honourable this and Lady that!!

Surely the war has not spared England!

"You have been quite a help to me," graciously said Lady Grubber as Smut finally rose from the piano.

"Steady on, Ladyship," exclaimed Smut. "Yer cawnt feed me on toffee! But we'll 'ave to hop it now, Ladyship."

"What *does* he mean?" Lady Grubber turned, puzzled, to me.

"He means what I was just coming to say. It is time now to be getting ready to go back to the hospital."

"Just one more chorus," begged Lady Sarah and Doris.

So Smut sat down again and the chorus began:

"I want ter go back to the trenches,
I want to go back to the Front,

I want to go back to the rifle and pack
And 'ear me old strap break and grunt.
I want to get back to me blanket
An' sleep on me little old plank
'Cos the cold, clammy sheets
What the folks think is treats
Makes me shiver like rats in a tank."

"How peculiah"! exclaimed Lady Grubber, looking at the "Wounded" through her pince-nez.

"How delicious"! gurgled Doris.

"How soldier like!" added my Duchess.

From the beginning of the party, the boys had been Doris' devoted slaves, and now I found them forming a circle round the little lady to say farewell.

The Duchess was making arrangements to take "Dad" out for a drive—"Dad" and "Sunny Jim."

Smut, separating himself from the circle, made a military bow to Lady Grubber, "Ladyship" he began, "It ain't me I'm speaking up for. It's all of us soldiers. When you, and your lady friends is feeling a bit dull, an' wantin' some party to keep your little 'earts up, just you send for Smut an' company, an' we'll come and cheer you up."

The motors drew up and we climbed in.

"The men have had a lovely party, Lady Grubber"!

"Well I think they have," she replied and turning to Lady Gwendolen "Thank goodness, *that's* over for another year."

"Good-By-ee, Good-By-ee," sang the boys.

"Good-by-ee, Good-by-ee
Wipe the tear, Baby dear
From your eye-ee
Bon Soir, old thing,
Cheerio, chin, chin.
Napoo, Toodle oo Good-by-ee"!

"Good-by-ee" shrilled Doris' treble voice, as she and Lady Sarah scrambled up to the highest bough of the apple tree, to see the last of us.

"Good-by-ee" shouted "Dad" standing up in the motor, and waving wildly to my Duchess, whose lace handkerchief was still fluttering in the air.

And as the "Wounded" were tucked into bed and lights were lowered, "Good-by-ee"! they called to me, as I left them for the night.

# Hospital Mornings

I cannot remember that lockers—plain, little, two-shelved bedside lockers—were of much moment to me before the War. Since boarding school days, when contraband chocolates were tossed into them for safety, they simply had not existed for me. Now it is different. They occupy a considerable part of my early mornings, and they let me into the secrets of the fads and fancies of my patients.

I scramble through my breakfast—seven minutes does it *easily*—so that I may loiter over the garden path from our Mess to our Ward, breathing deep the early air, lifting up the young rose-bush, beaten down by last night's rain, and deliberately brushing the rhododendrons that they may shower me with their hoarded raindrops. A rapid transit of uninteresting stone steps and I am in my Ward.

It is the first work of each new day in its turn, and as I remove the treasures from each locker top, and proceed to scrub, my mind is curiously wondering what new experience to-day will bring. Many experiences have come floating through these folding doors, one holding back—Monotony. It cannot exist here for one who has eyes to see.

I scrub under critical supervision. I am accustomed to it now. At first it was confusing. The newcomers, 'Foreign Bodies', the Ward calls them, watch me apprehensively. They are sure I shall mix the cigarettes, and place "Three Castles", on the locker which should hold "Gold Flake". Gradually I prove my efficiency and they are relieved.

Harris watches me lazily. Is there any luxury like to that of lying in bed, inert, with the knowledge that you are not obliged to get up, in fact that you *must not* do so, and watch some less fortunate individual, with rolled-up sleeves, scrubbing with might and main! For many years before the War Harris knew what it was to be up and at it soon after dawn. He is thinking, as he watches me, how he used to envy the lie-a-beds, and now he is one of them.

"After all," thinks Harris, "there are compensations!" and idly watches my soapsuds fly. Perhaps that is why his locker is usually in wild chaos, always requiring a little longer than the others.

Next to him is a mere child. His card reports eighteen years but I doubt it. He is really the Baby of the Ward, and has not got over his boyish trick of keeping his eyes closed, breathing slowly, and pretending to be asleep. I know he is furtively watching me from under his long lashes, but I play up to him, and ostentatiously move quietly that I may not awake him.

Silently I pass the next locker. It and the bed are empty. Yesterday I moved and replaced photographs, and letters, that stood for the loves and affections of earth and its human ties. They meant much yesterday. Today, they have been carried away. Their motionless, silent owner does not require them. Earth's love is gathered up and blended with a Higher Love.

I have come now to Ross—Pte. J. L. Ross of the D. L. I. On his locker is a large square chocolate box. I know it is there, before I look, and I know each step of our daily programme. Silently he opens it, and offers me a chocolate. I take it, and as I scrub I smile at him and eat it. Poor depressed Ross! Never will he utter a word, except to answer the doctor's questions in monosyllable. The M.O's. hope great things from this large cheery ward, and his sociable surroundings.

His daily offering of a chocolate is his silent method of showing good fellowship. The first day, that he did so, when he was almost a new patient, I refused it—coffee and bacon were so recent— but the flicker of disappointment in his dull eyes quickly taught me my lesson, and now I do not make that mistake.

I work my way through a few transients, whose "Woodbines" and "John Cotton Mixtures" mean nothing particular to me, and then I come to Griffiths, whose resonant snores are unmistakably genuine.

Griffiths' treasure is lying before him wrapped up in a piece of bandage. It is always there under his eye, and at his hand. I lay it on his pillow as the safest place. It is the piece of shrapnel that gave Griffiths his "Blighty". When he was carried in from his operation, and drifted back to consciousness, he found the piece of shrapnel, which the Surgeon had removed, tied by the Theatre V.A.D., in a piece of bandage round his wrist.

"Bless her," says Griffiths, when I told him how it came there, "Bring up the little girl to see me, Sister. She's a bit o' all right, she is"! It doesn't matter to Griffiths that three-fourths of the men in the hospital have the same little attention paid them. He still thinks that he alone benefitted by that bright idea of our Theatre V.A.D. "Bless her!"

Now I had hoped to have passed little Drummer Owen's locker before he was awake. It is not that I *mind* answering his questions when I can, but they are always of a nature that I can't. Our morning dialogue rarely varies.

"Busy this morning, Sister?"

"Yes, sonny," wondering if extra spluttering scrubbing might drown the daily conversation.

"Do you know if they'll mark me out of hospital soon, sister?"

"I don't know, sonny."

"Do you know how long I'll be in bed yet, sister?"

"I don't know, sonny."

"Do you know if they'll send me to a Con. Camp, sister?"

"I don't know, sonny."

"Do you know if they'll let me sit out in the garden?"

"Sorry I don't know."

"Do you know . . . ?" but the locker is finished, and I hurry off, as little Drummer Owen confides to his pal, in a deprecating whisper,—"Sister don't know much, does she?"

There follows a tossing of pillows, a swirling of sheets, a barrage of blankets, commonly designated bed-making. The untidy must be made tidy, and the uncomfortable, comfortable.

But when I come to the bed in the corner, I hurry slowly, and the new Orderly, and the nurse from the other side of the ward, come to my assistance. It is only a week since Evans lost his left leg—his right foot is completely crushed—and though he has the pluck of a dozen men, the stump which he always addresses as 'Maria,' is very very tender.

So the big new Orderly gently lifts the nervous body up the bed, I carrying "Maria", and the other nurse arranging the sheets as he is moved, as gently as one can, but what will drive pain from these tingling nerves! A suppressed moan from the white lips, and, as it eases a little, a glimpse of the old fun—"Easy,

there, 'Maria'—you jade, Steady old girl!" And then we tenderly arrange "Maria" on pillows, and leave Evans—plucky old Evans—as comfortable as it is possible for him to be. He looks up gratefully at the big Orderly, "Say, old chap, you've got some muscle! Where did they grow you?"

A huge creature he was, this new Orderly, in other days a London policeman, whose autocratic hand had controlled Piccadilly traffic. Over age for the trenches he had been enrolled as a hospital Orderly.

"I don't know your name, Orderly. What is it?" I asked, cricking my neck to gaze up at him.

"Nobody ever knows my name, sister," answered Goliath pathetically, "It's Small." And so sincere was the pathos, that I refrain from the obvious joke.

Never did our hospital have a more willing, a more anxious, a more gentle Orderly than Small. But there was no getting away from the fact that he was too big. His very anxiety about the furniture caused him to send lockers sprawling, chairs crashing, while tipped flower-glasses and smashed plants marked his daily trail through the Ward. So, proud as I was of my Piccadilly policeman, I could not but acknowledge the wisdom of enrolling him among the Pioneer Orderlies. For carrying stretchers to and from ambulances, to and from the Theatre, for moving beds out into the sunshine, who could beat Goliath Small?

When it is announced that we are to have boiled

egg for breakfast a thrill of expectancy passes through the Ward. Since it has become the custom for egg-gatherers and egg-donors to inscribe the shells with names and addresses,—greetings,—poetry, all the "blessés" are on the qui vive and impatiently stretch out a hand for an egg.

Practically every egg I have distributed lately has had some message on it. Naturally, I cannot take time to read them, though I may fly for a minute to one bed or another, in answer to a laugh or a question as to the inscription. They are not always original, certainly, but what would you?—"If at first you don't succeed" is a great favorite; "Home Sweet Home," "I want some one to Love me," "We'll kill the Kaiser."

Let there be no mistake. The time spent in decorating eggshells with these little doggerels is *well* spent, if it is only to bring a smile, a little glow, and a better appetite to the wounded boys.

Had I read them first, however, I would scarcely have handed Evans that particular one, which he proceeded to read aloud,—"Put your best foot foremost!" Yet you could not hear one bitter note in his laugh that followed—a little too quickly, "Well, Maria, old girl, you don't count. You ain't got a foot, and the other's out of biz at present!"—and his laugh, finishing rather abruptly, he whistled the last two lines of "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag, and smile, smile, smile!"

I knew the cause of the speech, and the laugh that followed. I knew he had immediately seen my look of distress at the clumsy mistake I had all unwittingly made.

Never, never, have I seen more delicate tact, more innate consideration, more far-sighted sympathy, than among my Tommies. This was only one little example from very many. I think every nurse has, the same experience.

We're there to work for *them*, to look after *them*, yet not once, but many times, one and another says as we pass their beds—"Are you not tired, Sister—You do too much—Quit work for a little, Sister, and have a rest yourself. Why are you *always* working for us, Sister,"—and so on and so on.

They never seem to think of us as a piece of a large machine. They never seem to think that even if we *are* a little tired, what is it to their loss of limb or their terrible sufferings? They never seem to think that they have a *right* to our service. It is almost humiliating the manner in which they persist in thanking us for the very little we can do compared to what each one of them is doing for us. So when one of my Tommies calls me to his bedside and says in a reproachful, but understanding way, "You are tired, sister, and you *know* you are!" I laugh and deny it, of course, but I turn away feeling rested.

To return to breakfast. One of my patients is a bit spoilt. I know it, but it is almost to late to alter. It is Forgan of the H.L.I. He has blue eyes, a fair skin, looks much younger than he is, and comes from Paisley. His right arm is broken by a machine-gun bullet, and is in a long iron splint. This happened some time ago, however, and he is really perfectly able now to help himself in many ways.

When it comes to meals, for instance, I cannot persuade him to make the effort to feed himself. At first, when he was suffering pain, it was different, and we did not expect it. After I had hurried round with the other twenty-three porridges and teas, I always kept time for Forgan. And Forgan, I might add, was not to be hurried. Everything must be done with great deliberation, and when, with much complacency, he had approved of the porridge, and eaten "them" up, there was little time left for anybody else. So Sister-in-Charge tried her hand with him.

"Nurse really hasn't time, Forgan!" says Sister quite kindly, "You see how many there are who can't possibly feed themselves. Try, like a good lad. It'll come quite easy, and you'll enjoy your meals much more."

"I canna'."

That was all. But the tightly closed lips said, "Mountains won't move me."

"I wouln't ask you, if I didn't know you *can*, Forgan."

"I winna' then."

And Sister, being a wise woman, decided for the moment, to retire. Now the other breakfasts are round and I arrive at his bed,—"Come on, Jock," and I find I am using the same tones as I would to a child. "It'll be a great help to me. You know I haven't time."

"I canna' and I winna'."

I put the spoon in the porridge, and slip away. When I have returned the Scot, the porridge, and the spoon, are in the same position.

"You see, Jock, it isn't that I don't *want* to feed you, I would really *like* to do it,"—with exaggerated license —"but there are *so* many and there is so little time."

"I winna'."

I gave a sigh—a big sigh—"And it *does* make one tired, Jock, when one has to hurry so much . . ." (My voice was *very* pathetic.)

But, of course, if you *really are* too weak . . ." (My own voice was so appealing it almost made me weep)!

"Here! Gie's the spune. What for did ye no say ye had a sair heid?"

As a matter of fact, I hadn't mentioned a "sair heid," but if a "heid" adds dignity to the changing of one's mind, then why not?

We have one other little flurry of excitement at breakfast time.

Pte. W. J. Nobbs has been in hospital for a consider-

able time, and is beginning to look upon himself as one of the oldest inhabitants. Three weeks ago he confided in me that he had sent a picture postcard of our Town Hall to the lady, whose name and address had been inscribed on his breakfast egg. She responded with a picture card of a soldier in kilts bidding farewell to a girl (red cheeks and a sky-blue frock). Letters followed, and finally arrived a parcel of fresh butter, a gift to Pte. Nobbs.

Now in these margarine days, butter is a treasure much to be prized, and, after much consultation, we decided that I should keep a corner for it in the ice-chest, bringing in a portion each morning and evening. But Pte. Nobbs had a generous heart, and after carefully considering the size of the piece of butter, and the state of the weather, decided that I should bring in two portions at each meal—he to be the judge as to who would be the winner of the second portion.

Naturally this plan was the cause of a great deal of fun. Rivalry ran high, and loud cheers followed the presentation of the second portion of fresh butter. As a rule, the prize went to one of two—a big, rather handsome American whose assumed indifference and loud-voiced drawl "that he wouldn't give a dime for the gol darned butter," piqued and attracted Nobbs,—or a little Welshman with a frightened pinched face, whose eyes hungrily devoured the butter. Taffy's

head had been badly smashed in France, and he now looked like a bandaged, plucked chicken in bed. Nobbs' soft heart was touched, and more often than not I was directed to carry the prize to Taffy.

It is high time now, however, to clear away, for very shortly the doors will be opened, and the Surgeon will walk in. His rubber apron is all ready to tie on, his rubber gloves are gaping for him, and the real morning's work is at hand. The boys sit up and look interested, or shudder in anticipation.

The dressings are about to begin!

# In the Officers' Ward

I HAVE had to say good-bye to my Tommies for a time, and come to the officers' Ward.

I find that one Ward in hospital differs from another in much the same way as one little county in England differs from another. The same laws and transgressions of these laws, the same pains, the same convalescence, the same hard work and the same glorious satisfaction. So when I had to say *au revoir* to my dear old Tommies, I knew a slight difference that might exist in the "eye-wash" was all that I would find.

Officers of the British Army,—with their stars and ribbons in the cupboards, with their swords and bayonets in the kit store lie before me—twenty sick men, discussing their chances of an afternoon visitor as eagerly as they have discussed yesterday's manœuvres.

The Ward across the corridor is called the Brass Hat Ward. In it is principally the staff, and the senior officers. Some of these may drift into our Ward, but my patients are principally young lieutenants; boys who have hastily left Oxford after one term, or just finished Harrow, or the very beginnings of a business career—boys who would still in ordinary times, be

shouting themselves hoarse over their old school teams, but who have already done the work of a lifetime. Such boys, some of them, that one almost forgets that they have returned from being the leaders of men, from leaping first over the parapet, from urging on to victory or to death with their young enthusiasm. Our battles are won or lost by the sacrifice of these young captains of men. Often we forget this, and teaze and bully and scold them, not sparing those of the red tabs who may filter into our Ward.

Afterwards, when one and another becomes convalescent, and, attiring himself in his kilts or his khaki, towers over me with his M.C. or his D.S.O., very dignified and very military, I wonder how I *dared* to presume to bully the British Army. After all, however, I believe they rather enjoy it; And when Sister decides that Captain This must not have more sugar to his porridge, or Major That cannot be allowed a pass for the afternoon, her word is immediately accepted as law, however eagerly they had hoped for another decision.

My two South African flyers were the first to catch my attention. Pilot and observer, they had come a cropper as they were about to land, and had smashed into a tree. The pilot's right eye had been damaged, the observer's left eye had been damaged; and now they sit up in two little beds, facing each other, smiling broadly, the one with a bias bandage over the *right*

side of his round face, and the other with a bias bandage over the *left* side. They are very comical and are called Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee from the moment they arrived. Both have been up the line for some time, taking their lives in their hands each night, flying over the enemy's trenches. Two round, brown, smiling faces! I cannot associate them with death and war.

Presently, we began to receive gassed cases, and the work of the Ward changed materially. Among the others, two Australians were brought in, each being temporarily blind from the effects of gas. While feeding one, I told him that he was not the only Anzac here, that I had another, in the very same predicament, further down the line.

"What's his name, Sister?"

"Captain Galt."

"That's bonza news. He was sent down the line to 'carry on' for me when I was knocked out. He got caught in the same gas and so here we are!"

I carried messages from one blind warrior to the other, eager questions as to their battalions, and reassuring answers. In a few days sight began to return to Captain Galt. Wondering how much he could distinguish,—whether only light from darkness, or one object from another—I asked him, when helping him to dispose of an egg,—

"Can you *really* see now? How splendid! Can

you see me at all yet?" A short silence followed, and I thought "Poor chap! probably after all he can only distinguish light from darkness and he is disappointed." Then deliberately came the answer:

"I can see, Sister, that a piece of your hair is peeping out from below your veil, and I can see that the aforesaid veil is an eighth of an inch further to the right side than the left!"

"Oh, very well! 'Australia.' I am not sorry for you any more." And I turned away laughing, and delighted that once more the blind could see. Later, I was told that 'Australia', after this experience, felt such a keen sympathy for the blind, that he promised a certain part of his income for the rest of his life to aid Homes for them. He had no private income and the future was uncertain, but whatever it would bring to him, success or comparative failure, he gave a written promise that a certain portion would be handed over to the blind.

Lieutenant Norton suffers a great deal at the dressing of his arm, and the M.O., thinking the strain on his nerves, is the worst thing possible, has ordered an anæsthetic for his dressings. Now, Lieutenant Norton takes himself very seriously. He is by way of being a poet, having written some war verse, talks about his subconscious self, and asks me what I think of the philosophy of Nietzche. He will soon get over this

stage, but just at present he holds the Ward to be rather frivolous, and tries to improve the atmosphere by starting psychological discussions, which the Ward refuse to take seriously. He means well, poor chap, and when he heard about the anæsthetic he became greatly alarmed, lest he should not behave in a fit and becoming fashion.

"I am told, Sister," he said ponderously, "that often under the influence of an anæsthetic one says . . . things quite different to one's usual custom. I should be glad, Sister, if you would afterwards inform me whether I so far forgot myself."

"Oh, you needn't worry about *that,*" I assured him. "We are all too busy to mind what you say."

The time arrived, and with a very solemn countenance my brave lieutenant signified his readiness. The mask was adjusted and the anæsthetic given. I believe he took it quietly, but we were much too busy, waiting on the surgeon, to pay much attention, until the dressing was over, and the patient allowed to drift back comfortably. Suddenly, I heard a soft humming. I glanced at him, as the humming became louder and more cheerful. It changed to words, louder and louder, and completely out of tune. "If you were the only girl in the world and I were . . the . . only . . boy."

"Whoop it up, old man!" The patients sitting up in bed, were a delighted audience, "And . . I . .

were . . the . . only . . boy," sang my Poet Patient.

The voice rose louder and louder, quite cracked, and the patients were more and more charmed. I touched him gently. "Quietly! You must lie very still!" I admonished.

"What *wonderful* things we'd do," sang the voice, amorously and discordantly. I finally managed to quiet him, but now, whenever he begins in his instructive and imposing manner;—

"There is a wonderful criticism of the Higher Thought—," the Ward is ready to break in with their disconcerting chorus. "If you were the only girl in the world and I was the only boy." And poor Lieutenant Norton subsides.

I think the hour we all like best is the tea-hour. When that time arrives the most strenuous part of the day is over. We can afford to be a little less professional. I have cut the bread and butter as thin as is allowed, and made the plum-and-apple sandwiches look as inviting as possible. The orderly has brought in our big brown teapot,— the "Tank" it is called. Everybody sits up in bed, or gathers round the table expectantly. The Colonel—he really should have been in the Brass Hat Ward, but he came here by chance, and here he has stayed—insists on helping me with the teapot. He carries it round and I carry the milk and sugar—when there *is* sugar. At first my young lieuten-

ants didn't like his arrangement. It was not military etiquette, said they, that they should be waited on by their superior officer. But the superior officer soon settled that:—

"See here, my lads! I am not the superior officer here. Sister's the Superior Officer of this camp. I have got two hands and *you*, my lad, have only got one. I have got two feet, and *you* my lad, have one. Let's forget there is a war on." And so we ambled on, handing out tea and bread-and-butter and nonsense, for if one can't be jolly at tea-time, when is it permissible?

Generally, after I have handed round the second cup, we land on one subject or another of interest, when I keep very quiet, and listen to these men who have been doing deeds worth hearing. I cannot tell you of the things I heard, for all that one hears in hospital is as secret as the grave, but I know, although never once did I hear boasting or the slightest approach to it, I always came away from these hospital teas thanking God I was a Britisher, and belonged to the same race as these men.

A Major from India was amongst them—a man in later middle life, who had thrown up, in a moment, the work of his life-time, his tea plantation—his habits and customs of years cast aside—and had hastened, with others of the same calibre, to cast his lot with the Motherland. Magnificent! He brought a breath of the

mysticism of the Hindoo, of the deodar, and the waving palm. He talked of his men—"the most loyal, the best fellows in the world!" The Colonel knew they were "good fellows—splendid fellows," "but he still had to meet the men who could beat his own, "true men and tried."

Aye, here was the crux. Never a one of these officers would put forth a word for his own credit, but touch on his men!—

"I suppose by chance, I have struck the secret of our Army," I said to myself, carrying away the tea things. "The officers glory in their men, and the men in their officers."

. . . . . . . . . . . . . .

The evening draws in and it is time to make over the beds for the night. They are all feeling a little weary with the long day, and some of them are already dreading a sleepless night. Pain is easier to bear when the sun is shining and the day yet young. With the night comes reaction.

"*My* bed is all right, Sister! Look at it! It's *quite* tidy. It surely does not need to be made *again*?" I have heard the same story all up the Ward.

"It won't take a minute, old man. It's worth it. It's a long time till to-morrow morning."

But "Africa" is a big man, long accustomed to have his own way, and tired enough to feel a bit peevish.

"Well, if I do get up, can I have a bath?"

"We'll have to ask the Doctor first, 'Africa.'

"Am I *always* to be at this stage of the game, Sister? Milk and tea! and tea and milk! Lord! What wouldn't I give for a juicy beefsteak!"

"Coming in time, old man. Didn't you have bread and butter for tea, to-day! You'll soon leave your milk diet far behind."

A funny idea struck big "Africa,"—"So I'm reduced to this—bread and butter for tea, *or* a bath!" He was quite amused, and ready to jump up.

"One of the decisions of life, you fellows!" He went on laughing. "Will you have bread and butter for tea, *or* a bath?"!!

"Some happy day you'll have both," I replied, as I tucked him in again and passed on to the next.

I carry away the flowers for the night, see that Lieutenant Racey's leg, and Captain Norton's arm, are in comfortable positions; place everything at hand for Night Sister; make a hurried good-night round, as Sister-in-Charge carries up the report of the day to Matron; and regretfully turn my back on my Ward for the night.

## "The Military Cross was Awarded . . ."

### told by

### The Man in the Next Bed

IN a corner of our Ward—stands a four-poster wooden construction, which the M.O. refers to as a "Sinclair." In the bed below lies "Sunny Jim"—a fair-headed, twenty-year old lieutenant of the Bluffs. His fractured femur in a long iron splint, is attached by pulleys to the beam of the structure.

"Sunny Jim"—it is what the Sister insists on calling him—is "fed up." A fractured femur is a long wearisome job. He is in the next bed to mine, so I often see Sister laugh at him. "I'm not *too* sorry for you, you know, Sunny Jim, for though this is a long business, in the end you'll rise up and walk. Cheer up, old man! There's a good time coming!"

It is fourteen weeks now since Sunny Jim was carried in, and though but little of the old pain remains, he is unmistakably bored. He is the oldest inhabitant of the Ward, and he is tired of seeing one, and another, and another, carried out of the folding doors on their way to convalescence and freedom, crying back to him:

"Cheerio, old chap! Cheerio!" He has heard it so often, their faces one huge smile of delight!

To-day, our small Scout messenger stopped at his bed, saluted, and handed over a telegram. I noticed that Sister hovered around—doubtless the old feminine distrust of telegrams making her wary. "Nothing wrong, I hope," asked she anxiously.

"Don't understand! Greek to me! See what you can make of it, Sister," and he passed it over to her.

" 'Warmest congratulations to my dear son,—Mother," she read aloud, "And you don't know what it means?"

"Quite at sea," answered Sunny Jim, though a heightened colour seemed to imply some vague idea was present.

Later in the evening, the Scout again appeared, marching up to the "Sinclair,"—"Lieutenant A. R. Markham," he read deliberately, saluted, and handed Sunny Jim his second telegram.

"From my kid brother," he announces, a minute later, a large smile spreading over his face. Sister scurries up the Ward like a hen on a hot gridiron.

" 'Military Cross—Congrats---Some swank—Phil,' " reads out Sister. "Oh, Sunny Jim, how *splendid!*" and like a proud mother hen she hurries round the Ward, spreading the news.

You see our Ward is just like a big family, and though it is a drizzly day, and we are all a bit 'fed up,' the atmosphere suddenly seems to change. Old Major Bill of the 80th's stumps up like a good 'un, on his

crutches, and Walker of the U. S. A. Engineers, from his bed on the other side, gives a whoop like a wild Indian and shouts, "I reckon you can play ball, old feller!"

I'm not saying that was the first time any of us had news of the M.C. in hospital, but that it should come to 'Sunny Jim,' to the white-faced lad in the wooden frame! None of us but remembered him when we were first brought in.

"How long has he been there, Sister,—that tired-looking chap in the frame?" we had all asked, our first day in.

"Fourteen weeks."

What an eternity it had seemed! and though Sister had said he was not always in pain, *we* knew what it would mean never to have the feel of the earth, the wind in your face for fourteen weeks!

So when we heard from "Kid Brother Phil" that the M.C. was coming to him, we yelled ourselves black in the face. When good old Colonel R. arrived before dinner with a long-necked paper parcel, handing it over to Sister with a whispered explanation, we looked at each other out of the corners of our eyes; and when, after dinner, Sister passed around extra glasses, and a familiar pop was heard behind the screen *we* knew! Oh yes, *we* knew! I could bet each man Jack of us had accounted for a goodish quantity of "fizz" in our day, but the taste of that thimbleful, carefully poured out

by Sister, delightedly hurrying from bed to bed, will last for many a day!

"What's the matter with Sunny Jim? He's all right! Oh, yes, you bet!" The old college yell came as natural as breathing!

Presently the lights were lowered and the Ward settled down for the night. An hour passed. One of the men lying near me, a chap who had rushed into a very hell of artillery fire to bring out one of his men, was tossing wearily about. At last he lifted his head and called Sister. In a minute she was with him, arranging his pillows, whispering to him. It might have been our old nursery days, when we started up with nightmare and had to be soothed to sleep!

Now it is quiet again, and with my eyes, peering through the dark, and resting on the slender, sleeping figure of the new M.C., my brain weaving fantastic contrasts between the hell where he had gained the honour and the tranquil spot where he was acclaimed for it, I fall asleep.

Next day with much merriment, "pomp and circumstance" the purple and white ribbon is pinned on the striped pyjama coat of 'Sunny Jim'.

# Tommy in Convalescent Camp

LOOKING over the stone wall of our Hospital, I can see a Camp—tents upon tents—a long, low wooden hut—and swarms of men.

"That is the Convalescent Camp," I was told, and I often look at it up there on the Hill, sometimes with the setting sun gleaming on the white tents, sometimes the steely dawn making them grey and dreary and cold.

A large convoy of Sisters had arrived the night before to replace some of our staff who had been sent to the East. To Matron's surprise two more than the expected number had arrived. So, when the O.C. of the Convalescent Camp came to Matron with a tale of woe—that two of the ladies who had come from England to run a Canteen for his men were prostrate with Spanish Flu, and he was at his wits' end to find substitutes, he found a sympathetic ear.

"If it had only been in England it would have been easy enough, but here in France, if one woman falls out of the ranks, there is not another to take her place."

"My troubles are in the other direction," replied Matron. "Here are two extra Sisters sent out to me beyond the number I requisitioned, and as we are slack

anyway I have absolutely nothing for them to do."

"The trouble is solved," cried the O.C. delighted, "I'll take the two extra Sisters pro tem to run my Canteen."

"Impossible!" laughed Matron. "Nurses under the Red Cross *must,* according to the rules of Geneva, only work for sick men—not combatants."

"Sick and wounded!" repeated the O.C. "And what are my men if they are not sick and wounded!"

"True enough," replied Matron. "I suppose they still are sick men though they are convalescent."

"My Camp is simply like a large additional Ward to your Hospital," pleaded the O.C., and after some further argument it was decided that the two extra Sisters should help the Convalescent men—only, instead of the two newly arrived Sisters, Sister Weir and I were sent, as Matron thought we needed a rest.

"A *rest!* Are you sure it is so easy," asked the O.C. laughing. "Sister will give you her opinion when she returns."

So we emerged forth in our new rôle for the time being.

"I hope no one will object to the plan," Matron had said a little doubtfully. "It is only working for sick men in a different way from our usual!"

Nine o'clock a.m. seems luxurious when one is accustomed to be on duty at 7.45, and we both left the Hospital with a kind of holiday feeling.

Beside the two whitened posts, at the entrance to the Convalescent Camp stood an English girl, one of the two survivors of the Flu. It was rather jolly to see a woman in mufti. In France one is so accustomed to see every English woman in uniform of one kind or another that the short grey skirt and plain white tailored blouse was distinctly refreshing.

"Good morning, Sisters! This way to where the animals feed!" she called out before we reached her, shaking our hands afterwards till they ached, and leading the way with long rapid strides.

On the Parade Ground, in front of the Canteen, parties of men were doing their morning physical "jerks." Behind it the Band was practising, producing weird, unnatural noises.

"Here, Smith, for Heaven's sake, where do you expect these potatoes are going to live? And if *that's* all the sausage they've sent, we might as well shut up the Canteen. Every single man *wants* a sausage—since we can only have them on Friday nights—and he's jolly well going to have it, too."

"Sorry, Miss, but 'Arkness 'e's that scared 'e brings too much!"

"Better send Harkness to me, Smith, when he comes, and I'll deal with him. Here, Sister, this is our library, dining-room, tiring-room and rest-room—if you ever find time to rest. Sit down and try the new chair, but don't lean on the back for the glue isn't dry yet."

"Is this a 'Liberty' room?" we exclaimed looking with surprise at the four arm chairs, stained a deep walnut, impressionist chintz, a large hanging cupboard, and walls walnut stained.

"Liberty!" she laughed. "I like that! Did it ourselves. Only got the four bare walls—did the rest. Chairs are old barrels with the lids for the seats."

"And the beautiful walnut stain?"

"Condy's fluid."

I must confess we rather fancied ourselves in the pretty green overalls she threw across the table, and the darker green veils.

"I'll just see if the Counter is properly arranged. When you're ready, come through and I'll tell you some of the prices before the doors are opened."

"And when is that?"

"Ten o'clock—and then look out for the scrimmage."

Not being as fleet of fingers, we had only finished adjusting our new veils before the tiny mirror,—and walked through the kitchen into the Canteen when the fingers of the clock pointed to five minutes to ten.

"Take a squint at the Hut as it is now, for you won't see it again like this till to-morrow morning," laughed the English girl. "By the way, my name is Woods, and I am consequently called 'Chips.' You might as well begin with it at once, because you'll come to it in the end."

From the other end of the Counter came a tall, beautiful girl, aristocratic to her finger tips.

"This is Cowly—usually known as 'Cookie,' " introduced Chips. "Cookie makes the porridge and the buns, and cooks the sausages—as her name implies." I recognized in 'Cookie'—Lady Mary Cowly whose Mother used to open our bazaars.

We just had time to glance down the long empty hut, with tables clean and empty, and chairs and benches neatly arranged round them, when the clock struck, the gong sounded, the doors were flung open, and it seemed as if the whole British Army tumbled in.

"You take the tea urn, t'other Sister the cocoa urn," Chips called above the din of many feet.

I placed myself behind the great tea urn, flanked by many mugs. I don't know what anybody else did. I only know I filled mugs and mugs and mugs, passing them over the Counter to an indefinite number of hands.

"Surely nobody is taking cocoa," I thought. "Everybody wants tea." But when I took a swift glance at "t'other Sister" at the other end she seemed to be quite as busy as I.

I didn't have time to even look at my customers. When presently Chips said, "Did you see that pale-faced boy with the scar on his cheek, two ahead of the one you're serving now?" I would only answer, "Good gracious no! I haven't seen *anybody* since I began."

"Oh, you'll soon get used to it," she laughed, handing over a package of cigarettes, and asking the purchaser

if he knew there was a "War on, buying such expensive cigarettes."!

After what seemed to me a whole half day, but was really little more than an hour, the queue seemed to melt. I looked round the side of my urn down the Hut.

Almost every seat was filled. It was raining outside, and round the stove in the middle of the Hut a dozen men were pressing close up to its warmth—steam rising from their wet clothes. Almost everybody was eating and drinking, and certainly everybody was smoking.

"Come here, Chips," I called. "I want to ask you something. We are ignoramuses about Canteen work. Tell me, do these boys not have any breakfast that they all want to buy things to eat so early; *and,* as they are buying them all now, who is going to buy the hot buns Cookie said she was going to make—and the sausage "Arkness 'is bringing?"

"Good gracious, Sister! You certainly are not—so to speak—trained in the Canteen warfare. To begin with, you must know the British Army is *always* ready to eat, any time, any place. As a matter of fact *none* of us think we're having a good time if there's nothing to eat or drink, do we?"

"There's a long, long day for these Convalescent men, and until the Hut was opened there was actually *nothing* for them to do except wander aimlessly about the Camp or sit in their tents if it was stormy."

"Are they never allowed to go down town?"

"Yes, twice a week they get passes. But when they do go down what is there to do? It isn't like in England, where there are English people to talk to and English houses to go to. There's one picture house, where the explanation of the pictures is put up in French. That's all there is to amuse them—if they stay out of the Estaminets. So they generally drop into another Canteen in town, or, if we have anything interesting going on here, they come back long before their time is up."

"Do you and Cookie do anything else besides preparing and selling food to them—not that that is not hard enough work," I added apologetically.

Chips' eyes shone, and after helping a Jock to pick out the nicest writing pad, and giving him his change, she began:

"That's only the very *beginning* of the work, Sister, though it is the most obvious to the outsider. It's one of the means by which we get to know them and get in touch with them."

"Look at the Front Row,' she whispered, and turned hurriedly to a New Zealander who was asking for a boot brush outfit.

"Is it true that you are going to be 'boarded' to-day?" I heard her ask.

"Worse than that," he answered. "I was boarded yesterday and I'm marked out to-day."

She looked a little sorry.

"We haven't had you very long with us. We'll miss you, you know, Wilson."

"Nobody'll miss me same as I'll miss this Hut, Sister. I tell you it's been the nearest thing to Home we've struck yet," and he passed on to give space for the small queue that was again forming.

"Do they call you 'Sister?' " I asked.

"I think the boys call every English woman in France, who is working for them, 'Sister.' I know that officially it is only the Army Sisters who should be called it,—but it's such a beautiful name, and the boys like it—especially away out here."

"Why not?" I said. "What did you mean about the Front Row?"

The Front Row, immediately in front of the Counter, differed from the Front Row of the Opera House in that its occupants, instead of gleaming linen and broadcloth, wore khaki shirts buttoned up to the neck, trench coats, torn, spattered and stained.

"The same boys have sat there all morning, and yet it's the furthest away from the fire and not the nicest part," I said.

Chips and I, for the moment idle, were standing with our elbows on the Counter. I was gazing at the Front Row till I suddenly realized that the Front Row was gazing intently at me.

Chips laughed at my embarrassment.

"You mustn't mind being looked at," she explained. "The Front Row, I have found out, is composed of boys who have been up the Line for a year perhaps and have scarcely seen an English woman for all that time."

A young Artillery boy, counting his pennies as he walked, left the Front Row and came up to us.

"Have you got any—er—braces?"

"Yes, Gunner, we've got braces," answered Chips, bringing them over. "Are you sure you really want braces, or did you just want a chat with us?" she asked smiling.

A sheepish blush and smile proved she knew their ways.

"A little of both, I think," he said.

"Well, then, tell Sister all about our Canteen," and Chips hurried off to fulfil the many requirements of a boy just going up the Line.

"It's a treat for us, sure," began the Gunner, "just to set here an' listen to you girls talkin' an' laughin'."

"I didn't know it was such a rare thing to hear girls talking," I laughed.

"'Tis with us, Sister, *I* can tell you. Me an' these other lads have been in the Line, an' French villages an' Rest Camps for a year. There's the French Mademoiselles, but that ain't like the English ones. No, *sir,* it ain't."

I left him to get tea and bread and butter for a cold-

looking newcomer, and when I came back he was on the same line.

"I'll never forget, Sister, when I was brought down wounded. The stretchers were laid down on the Station, an' I saw the Ambulances bein' lined up ready for us. It was girls as was drivin' them. That was the first time, Sister, as I'd heard a girl's voice for pretty near a year." His voice trailed off, and he looked dreamily out at the window, evidently seeing again the Girl and the Ambulance, and himself prostrate in the Station.

"Yes," he went on, half to himself, "the very first English girl's voice."

"What did she say?" I asked, thinking it must have been something very sympathetic and womanly to linger so in the boy's mind.

"I could see her, Sister, trying to bring her big Ambulance Car between two others, and then I heard her speak: 'Darn you, you fool!' says she. 'Don't back your fool car into me!' "

I gasped! Was the little Gunner making fun? No. It evidently didn't seem at all funny to him. He was still gazing dreamily out of the window.

"And *so,*" he finished, "us fellows like listenin' to you girls talkin', jest like her!"

Up to the Counter marched a pinched faced man, with his left sleeve empty.

"He's going to ask you to write a letter for him,"

whispered Chips diving below the Counter for something.

"But it's his *left* arm that's off, not his right!"

"Don't take any notice of that, Sister. Right and left are the same to him, but he doesn't like to admit he can't write."

"Time to write a letter for me, Sister?"

"We'll begin anyway, and if anybody demands tea I will just come back again. Who's it to?"

"My gal, Sister. Here's hers to me. Will ye be readin' it to me?"

What a price to pay for inability to read and write—to have a stranger read aloud your love letters!

Before I could have believed it the hands of the clock pointed to 1.30.

"Time for our lunch now," cried Chips, as the doors were locked on the emptied Hut, whirling through the kitchen, and sweeping the things off our table with a wave of her arm. "Hope you like Bully, Sister."

Scarcely had we begun when a bugle note rose high and clear. Chips rushed to the door, which opened on the Parade Ground, threw it open, and dragged us out.

The boys were lined up in marching order, headed by our Band.

"Where are they going?" I asked. "It's freezing standing out here."

"We won't be a minute, and I *always* watch them start off. It's their daily march through the town,

just to get them fit for their work when they go back to their Bases. Sometimes they carry their whole kit."

The Band, composed of the musical Convalescents, began a lively march, and they started off at a swinging gait.

I noticed that most of the heads turned slightly to catch a glimpse of Chips standing well out in the open, beating time with her foot.

"I never let them start off without being there to see them," she explained, when we were again at Bully, "They might think we weren't interested."

A knock at the door! It was the Games Corporal.

"Is it the Whist Drive to-night, Miss, or the Chess?"

"Whist, Corporal. Are the scores ready? No? Well, I'll do them later myself."

Another minute, and another knock.

Padre pushed the door open, with an apology.

"Come on, Padre. Have some macaroni. It's last night's left over, and it's grand!"

"I just looked in, Miss Woods, to say the Church tent almost blew down last night, and I think we'd better change to a hut. I want your advice."

"*One* minute, please, Padre. Come along, Sister," and once more I was dragged out to the biting breeze.

"What is it now?"

About thirty men were lined up in front of us.

"These are the boys who are marked out. They are leaving the Camp and going back to their Bases and up the Line again. Poor chaps!"

"I saw you saying Good-bye to some of them before the Canteen was closed."

"I do think some of them hate to go, Sister. Some of them really feel this is the next best to Home."

"I can see that already."

The roll had been called, and they were beginning to march along, Chips waving madly.

I looked at the girl. Her head was held high. Her cheeks were rosy from the wind that was blowing. She had made "home" for these boys for the little time they had been allowed to remain here.

I believe most of those men carried away in their hearts that picture I saw—a girl, whose face was full of Mother love.

"There's McGregor! The sturdy little kiltie just turning round the gate! Look! I knew he'd turn again to look at the Hut. That laddie's got a sore heart, Sister, though he looks so young. He's married, and his baby of eighteen months is almost dying.

"And there's 'Canada' just behind him. He's just won his greatest ambition, and is going to train to be a flying man!"

"Do you know *all* their family histories?" I asked.

"If I didn't know many of them I wouldn't be much use here."

"Do you never take any time off?"

"Oh, yes. Do go and rest now, Sister. The Canteen won't be open again till four o'clock. I'm just going

to do the Whist scores and copy out a song for an Irish boy to take away with him, and mend a torn pocket."

By four o'clock the wind was so bitter that when it was time to re-open the doors, the boys, returned from their march, were huddled up against the door.

The Camp being high on top of the Hill, it seemed as if every wind that blew had a shot at it.

They came tumbling in,—tall, thin men—short, fat men—blue with the cold. A rush for the stove in the centre, round which four benches had been placed!

Too late! Some of the Battalion from Bermuda were in Camp and were already there hugging the warmth. Their land of sunshine and roses had not prepared the black warriors for our cold.

"Tea!" "Hot tea!" "And for muh!"

The queue is here again, just as it was in the morning—only twice as many.

A delicious fragrance! What is it! Praise be! It is buns—hot buns! Home-made buns!

Cookie is carrying them in. Her sleeves are rolled up, and her beautiful arms are smudged with flour. Her cheeks too are smudged with flour. Who cares?

"Six for me!" "Ten for me!"

Chips interferes: "*One* for each. No more! Our home cooking has to be distributed evenly!"

"What luxury," I gasped.

"Not 'arf, ain't it!" chuckled a pinched little "London Scottish," swallowing his ration in two gulps.

"What's she going to make now?" I asked as Cookie disappeared again into the kitchen.

"I ken! I ken!" answered an excited kiltie, with the Military Medal ribbon on his chest. "It's parritch!"

"Would you care to go down through the Hut for a little, Sister? I shall have to go presently to start the Whist Tournament."

So I came from behind the Counter and drifted through a mass of humanity.

The piano at the other end was going. It always was going.

At one table a heated discussion was going on: "I tell ye, none o' you knows a better fightin' Regiment than the ———" I hurried past. *They* were happy.

At another table a red headed boy was sprawling over unfamiliar efforts with the pen.

At another four cups of tea were disappearing in gulps.

At another an R. E. was proving with pen and paper how Verdun could have been taken by the Bosche if they had had *one* engineer who knew beans in their entire outfit.

And at another a very young Australian was alone, the picture of disconsolate grief.

"What's the matter, Sonny?"

"Just heard my brother's killed. That fellow over there, just came into Camp—he saw it!"

I stayed here a while. I got him to talk to me and

tell me about the Sheep Ranch that he and this big brother were going to have had after the War. Home must seem very far away indeed to these boys, when they come suddenly face to face with a sorrow like this.

And when I left I brought Padre, who is a tactful, warm-hearted man, to shake him by the hand and carry him off to his tent.

Another violent discussion between an American and a violent Scottie:

"You needna' be tryin' to tell me that there's a brig longer nor the Brig o' Forth!"

Again I hurried past. They and their admiring listeners were happy for the evening.

"Take your places for the Whist Drive," shouted the Game Corporal above the din of three or four hundred men.

I went back to the Counter to free Chips.

It was the biggest Whist party I have ever seen. Hurriedly handing out packages of "Players" and "Woodbines" to the 'guests', who dashed up at the last moment, I watched them.

There was the usual scuffle and confusion. At last Chips and the Corporal had straightened them out.

"Laidies move up, Gents down," shouted the Corporal.

There was a roar of laughter.

"You're the laidy, Bill."

"Not 'arf, I ain't bein' no laidy!"

"Tie a handkerchief round the laidy's arm," explains the Corporal, "an' we'll know who *is* laidies!"

Corporal shouts out the few necessary rules, and they are off.

I peep into the kitchen. Cookie is bending over a huge caldron, stirring something with might and main. I can scarcely see her for the steam.

"It'll be ready in a minute, Sister!" she cries. And in a minute, sure enough, she appears carrying a great crock of steaming porridge.

Immediately I am busy.

"Syrup or milk?" They can have either with their porridge, for twopence.

I love to watch the long row vigorously putting away Cookie's porridge.

As a matter of fact, they are not allowed to have their meals at the Counter, but at the tables. I am glad to make the excuse of the tables being occupied with Whist players, and let them sup it near me at the Counter.

"Look, Sister, what I just got in a letter,—my Missus an' kids."

He hands me a postcard with representations of a stout Missus and kiddies with curly hair.

"Splendid family," I ejaculate, and the "family" is passed down the line of critical but admiring porridge suppers.

The bell rings and the first round of Whist is over.

Shuffle! Confusion! Bell! and they are settled again.

"Oh, Sister! I've got *such* toothache. I can't eat anything, and it's *awful* sore! Can't you give me something to stop the ache?"

"Has it been aching long, 'Australia?' "

"*Two* days, Sister, an' I'd rather have Jerry an' his shells than this!"

A suspicious moisture about the boy's eyes showed that toothache had indeed worn down his nerves.

"Off to bed with you. 'Australia,' and I'll send you a bowl of hot bread and milk. *That* will make you sleep!"

Off he goes to his tent, and presently I give his pal a covered bowl of steaming bread and milk.

The pal is charmed to act the part of nurse and keeps dashing up to me every few minutes to report results:

" 'Mike' liked it fine, Sister. He nearly licked the bowl!"

"Mike's lookin' awful sleepy, Sister. I believe he'll go to sleep."

"Mike doesn't have no pain, Sister."

"I hope you didn't wake him up to ask him!"

And finally: "Mike's asleep."

As a matter of fact it wasn't only the bread and milk that soothed poor Mike. Everybody likes to be fussed over when toothache reigns,—and that's what we're here for.

Outside the wind is howling, and, as the Hut door

opens and shuts to admit one and another, the cold rushes in.

The Bermudians hug the fire. How they must hate our bitter cold.

*What* a noise! The Whist Drive is over! The names of the prize winners are being shouted out.

"First Gent's prize, Private A. S. Smith."

"First Laidies' prize, Gunner Brown."

A mad dash to the Counter by the ex-players.

Cookie has brought in the sausages we heard about. She and Chips and Sister and I are going like mad! Such a queue!

Only when the Counter is emptied, and not a crumb remains to be sold do we stop.

"Fifteen minutes left yet," says Chips. "Come down to the piano, girls."

We start down the closely packed Hut.

"Clear the gangway," shouts one and another, and a lane is opened up for us.

We gather round the piano, Chips on the music stool.

With a touch too strong for anything but a Hut in France, she pounds out "The Long, Long Trail."

Everybody sings. I look down the Hut through the smoke and the fog.

Hundreds and hundreds of faces gazing into ours—eyes that have once looked on War *and are going back to it*—responsive to every chord we touch.

To them we stand for the women folk they have left in Blighty, in Canada, in New Zealand, in Australia.

Another song.

"Time to close," shouts Corporal, and Chips breaks into "God Save the King."

What a sight I am gazing at.

"At Attention!" dusky Bermudian from the land of sun and roses.

"At Attention!" Jock, in your faded kilt, and your sun-burnt face.

"At Attention!" you Anzac, with your massive frame and your deep kind eyes.

"At Attention!" "Canada," from your prairies and your mountains.

"At Attention!" you men of England, making your country's history.

"At Attention!" you four women, proud and grateful to be doing the very least of this mighty War's work.

# When the Raid Was On

I AM in hospital in France. Our hospital is in a quaint old monastery, with an old-fashioned garden, where the monks used to walk and tell their beads. Outside the high stone walls surrounding our gardens. almost buried in the green moss of ages, I can hear the sea tumbling and tossing. Sometimes spray leaps over the wall. It plays about me. I love its wet touch. It says to me, resting there in the garden:—

"I can reach you here, you see, just as I did in England. You thought yours was the only country where I love to leap and dance, but I come here too. What matters it that in this land men are struggling to kill each other? It is nothing to me. I break away from my Mother Wave, and leap and play as carelessly as I did on your peaceful England's shore."!

It was the end of a long day—a day of more than one convoy—and I was sitting in a crumpled heap, too exhausted to straighten out my tired limbs. It was a summer evening—at dusk. If I had not been so tired, I would have climbed higher up the slope, above the old currant bushes, and watched the gold and copper and flame coquetting with the water.

From where I sat I could look into my Ward. It is

a hut, lately built, to give us more beds. The long windows are open to admit all the air possible, after the heat of a breathless day. Here, by the sea, we are not accustomed to this oppressive sultriness, and we are not bearing it well.

I could just see our little Cockney Bill, tossing listlessly on his pillows. I was worried about him to-day. I had done my best to please him this afternoon, when I took my off duty hours to tramp about the town for some *special* coffee he fancied.

"A cup of cawfee!" he had insisted. "It's 'ard if a cove can't 'ave a cup of cawfee! Nuffink to drink, an' nuffink to eat! Lor' love me!"

So I had offered to try and find some coffee and make it for him myself. I knew how ill the lad really was, and I wanted him to have whatever he fancied.

"Bet yer a bob you won't find it," he insisted.

"Bet you a bob I will," I answered.

"Bet yer a bob if you do, ye'll 'ave to pay 'arf a crown—for a cup of cawfee!"

"That's a different story, Bill. I didn't bet about the price. I'm going out to find coffee, and I will."

"Ye'll lose yer bob"—

"Will I?"

"Straight yer will!"

So I had started off to the straggling little French town near us. It was a quaint little place, cobble stone streets, irregular lanes leading from one to the other,

and a dear old market place. "Bonnes femmes" sitting round on low wooden rocking chairs, sell their wares, with broad smiles, and perfect manners. They wear the old Breton starched white caps high on their heads.

I see some dear old fashioned Sweet William, and I believe my Cockney Bill would love some on his locker. I don't begin the transaction as I would in England, by saying, "Give me sixpence worth of Sweet William, please." These are not French manners.

I stop and begin the conversation with,

"Bon jour, Madame," with a bow.

Madame thereupon looks my nurse's uniform, up and down.

"Infirmière" (Nurse) she says.

"Oui, Madame."

"Beaucoup de blessés. Madame?" she asks, rolling her eyes and hanging eagerly upon my answer, though she knows very well what it will be.

"Oui, beaucoup de blessés," I reply, nodding vigorously.

"Oh, là-là!" says she, shrugging her shoulders dramatically.

I wish you could hear our dear old Tommies imitate the 'la-la' of the French woman. It means anything and everything to them—delight, horror, dismay—and it is never off their lips.

This particular time Madame is shaking her head disconsolately, her usually merry mouth drooping at the corners, and her eyes rolling.

"Oh, là-là!" she mourns.

Then it is time for me to begin business.

"How much for these charming flowers, Madame?" I ask in my halting French.

"Three francs," she replies in her even more halting English.

"Ah, Madame!" I say, horrified, "Three francs! and they're for the poor blesses!"

"Pour les blessés!" she repeats, and picks up the bunch with a dramatic gesture, thrusting the flowers into my hand.

"Pour les blessés! Take them,—two francs only! Only two little francs."

She nods delightedly at me as if she were presenting me with a handsome gift. I know that the Sweet Williams are scarcely worth a franc in that part of the country, but who could resist Madame's gracious manner. In reality she has made me feel as if I were receiving a gift, instead of overpaying her. So I carry off her little bunch of old-fashioned flowers, while she bows and smiles till I am out of sight.

Sometimes my Tommies go shopping by themselves, in this dear old market. Then indeed it is a treat. Tommy's French and Madame's English—each trying to practise on the other. Shouts of laughter from Tommy, and delighted smiles and repartee from Madame.

Well, sitting now in my corner of the old garden,

watching Bill's figure in the corner of my Ward, I can see the new V.A.D. carrying away the Sweet Williams for the night. She is on night duty, and the flowers should have been carried away by the Day Staff, of which I am one, but Bill had begged so hard to have them a litle longer that the new V.A.D. had turned to me and asked.

"If you will allow them to remain, Sister, I shall gladly carry them all out later." So I withdrew.

I was sorry that it had been necessary to put the new V.A.D. on night duty so very soon after her arrival. She seemed so slight and fragile and young. I would have liked her to become accustomed to the hospital, and to us, in the hours of sunlight, instead of night.

This afternoon, just before dinner, I had stepped out of the Ward for a moment's fresh air, and I saw her sitting in my favourite corner, half way up the slope, where you can see far over the sea. I beckoned to her.

"Have you had enough sleep, Nurse? Are you sure you have not got up too early?" I asked.

"I couldn't sleep, Sister, and I wanted to have a little sea-air before I went on duty."

"Do you think you will find the work too hard?" I couldn't help asking, noticing again how young she looked.

"Oh, I am sure not, Sister," she said eagerly, the words tumbling over each other, as if she were trying to defend herself against some charge.

"I know I look a little pale. You see my brother was killed three months ago, and now my younger brother is missing. I feel I must work, but I could not sleep very well before I came out. I am really quite strong."

"Do you find it a little lonely yet?" I asked, thinking she really ought to be in her own home, being cared for, instead of taking care of others.

"Oh, no, Sister. I am *never* lonely, when I am with the patients. I feel now that they are like my brothers, and whatever I am able to do for them, I feel sure some other girl has done for my brothers."

"Her motives are all right, if her strength is equally so, but I doubt it," I thought, feeling drawn to the girl.

"How is the new V.A.D. getting on?" I asked the Night Sister in her Ward—Stubbs.

"Oh, all right. She certainly is willing, and seems to know how to go about things, but she doesn't look strong enough. I wouldn't feel that I could trust her in an emergency, for instance."

"I don't know. I think I would take a chance on her," I said slowly. Stubbs has no imagination, and can't see beyond the surface.

In the falling darkness the piles of sandbags round the hospital, looked grotesque. We are scarcely accustomed to them. The fact that the hospitals not far from us had suffered from Air Raids, had caused the C.O. to take precautions before it was too late. So men had come from the Labour Companies and built

up a barricade of sandbags round our windows, and even dug trenches near the Sister's mess. All the stretcher cases had been kept in Wards on the ground floors, and only those who could walk were in the upper Wards.

I suppose because so far we had been perfectly immune, we believed we would remain so. We had looked interestedly at the sandbags and the trenches, and nodded our heads approvingly at the C.O's wisdom in taking things by the forelock.

"But surely we will be on our Wards!" exclaimed a little Sister, just off the Train. "We won't want to be looking out for our own safety, if there's a raid."

The C.O. had come with us, and turned at her words:

"The Night Sisters, who are already on duty, will remain at their posts. If there is the slightest necessity of further help, you will each go to your own Ward at my order. Otherwise, each Sister will go to her place assigned here."

"I hope I shall be on Night Duty if there is a Raid."

"So do I!" "And I!" "And I!"

That had been a week or two ago and nothing, so far, had happened.

To-night, I could not bring myself to go indoors. I sat in my corner, watching the sea and incidentally, my Ward. The moon was just beginning to rise—just the very faintest shimmer of silver on the water. I knew it would not be full till nearly one o'clock.

One of the M.O. passed me on his way to an emergency call.

"Lovely night!" I said in reply to his salute.

"Yes, for raids."

"Oh, I don't think of them." I answered carelessly and he passed on. In my Ward, I could still see the new V.A.D. going about. She was bringing a drink to Cockney Bill.

"Can't sleep—as usual, poor lad," I thought. "No wonder with such a prospect of life before him."

One arm and one leg had been amputated, and Bill was in constant pain, with the remaining leg. The Night Sister called away the new V.A.D. to give her instructions for the night, and presently I saw her come back to Bill's bed. He was talking to her, and I knew perfectly well what he would be saying. I had heard it a dozen times that day.

"That blamed leg of mine! Can you rub 'im a bit, Nurse? 'e's givin' me 'ell."

It was the only relief for poor old Bill—to rub his leg slowly and continuously. Whenever I could spare two minutes I did it for him. Sometimes, after the operation, he used to say,

"Golly, that's all right! T'other one now, Nurse." Poor Bill! He forgot there was no t'other one. The nerves of the amputated leg still caused him pain.

So I knew what he was asking the new V.A.D., even before I saw her raise the blankets and stoop over

him. It was an awkward position to be in, and my own back had ached considerably with the stooping. Certainly she kept it up much longer than I had been able to do. She had force of will, I expect.

There were no lights in the little French town, and in the hospital the lights had been lowered and softened with shades, so that the figure of the new V.A.D., with her white cap and apron, and bare white arms, bending over the bed, shone out in the darkness. I watched the slow, monotonous motion of the white arm from my corner, till I became drowsy, and finally went to bed and to sleep.

Nursing in a Military Hospital in France is not a sinecure; and as a rule from the moment my eye-lids drooped, I am quite dead to the world till the early sun wakes me up.

To-night, I had fallen asleep watching, through my little window, the beams of the moon broidering a wider and a wider lane over the waters; then I seem to lose it and to drift into nothingness.

. . . . . . . . . . . .

Suddenly I came to consciousness with a crash overhead. A quick roar of a gun! A rushing through the sky! Silence! A peal of bells ringing violently an alarm—ringing—ringing A hurry of feet! Suddenly another crash!

I was up, with a heavy dark coat buttoned on and shoes on my feet. I was in the corridor, where doors

were opened, and girls gathering. It was pitch, black dark. One girl tried to flash a torch.

"Put that down," came in loud whispers from half a dozen voices. I don't know why we whispered, unless it was the instinct that we were in hospital and sick men's ears must not hear the sound of many voices.

The machine guns begun their pep-pep-pep. Bullets whistled.

We stood at the windows, little groups of us,—waiting the C.O's orders. The shrapnel was flying in the air. Searchlights were picking out the enemy airships. We could not see the airships. The searchlights focussed right over our heads, and we knew the Zeppelins were directly over the Hospital. Crash! The night was turned into a hell!

A new Sister, just out from England, stood beside me. She pushed past me to look out of the window:

"I've been in raids in England," she whispered, "but this seems so horribly near! Just for us! We will sure be hit!"

Her bare arm brushed me in the darkness. It was cold as ice. Not a sound or a word of fear, but each girl knew Death was throwing her missiles about her and that up there, in the darkness, she might be the next.

The airship seemed to remain poised over us.

A terrific crash, worse than all the rest, deafening our ears, The room shook! A bomb had dropped in

the Hospital or very near. An order came from the C.O.

"Each Sister to her Ward."

With a gush of thankfulness, that we were to be at our posts of duty, we felt our way in the darkness, groped along the walls, counted steps. The same unnatural whispers, always. The darkness and the whispering made it seem like a night-mare.

I reached the door of my Ward just as there came another awful crash. A terrible explosion, and huge pieces of shrapnel came flying through the windows and breaking through the roof of the hut. A bomb had exploded immediately outside of the hut.

Nobody called out, nobody shrieked. Nobody mortal, made of human flesh and blood, but must have known fear in his heart—but no sign of it.

I had a sudden vision of a little white figure hurrying across the Ward, suddenly smitten down by a piece of shrapnel, hurled through the air. In a flash, I was bending over the prostrate figure. The new V.A.D.

Night Sister left her work with the patients, to help me lift her. We found we could not. Both legs were broken.

Just as we discovered it, a horrible smell of fire and a cloud of smoke burst into the Ward. The Ward was on fire! The orderlies, with wet towels over their mouths and nostrils, were here in thrice. All hands to

carry out the helpless patients from the flames!

Three orderlies hurried to the white prostrate figure on the floor. I bent over her to direct them. She was conscious:—

"We're going to move you, dear," I said.

"Leave me alone," she called out, almost fiercely. "Leave me alone, I tell you, you must not move me first. Move these patients first! I am finished. Move these men first I tell you!"

She was so wild in her excitement, refusing to let the men touch her, that I was momentarily at a loss, till at last holding her hands firmly, we managed to bear her, expostulating wildly, to the grass outside.

Meanwhile, one patient and another and another were lifted on stretchers and carried out.

When you have had anything to do with a Fire you will know that these things happen far, far quicker, than one can tell of them.

To me, there was a blurred vision of smoke and flames bursting into the end of the Ward; men running about with masks or wet towels over their blackened heads, throwing water and chemicals on the fire; sisters lifting and carrying helpless men into safety. Two or three patients, whom I helped to carry out, had fainted. I was glad. They could not suffer.

The noise overhead began to slacken and then ceased. I did not notice it. I did not care now if the whole German Zeppelin fleet were there. My Ward had been burnt. My sick men, my children, had been hurt.

At last—the fire was under control.

"Are they all out?" shouted the C.O. I did not recognize him, as he spoke. His hair was burnt, his face and hands absolutely black, the trench coat he wore torn and singed.

"All—yes—except one," answered the Night Sister, with cheeks white as death.

"One! Who?" shouted the C.O. "Why was one left?"

"It is Bill," said Sister, stopping the C.O. as he was about to dash in. The fire had ceased, but we were forbidden to enter in case of the falling beams.

"Bill!" I cried. "My Cockney Bill!"

"Wait a minute!" said Sister, as I too turned to the Ward:

"Bill has already passed all danger."

"What do you mean," I cried.

"A piece of shrapnel, at the very beginning, struck him and killed him."

I turned away. It was over now—the necessity for immediate action—and for a moment I went to my spot, from where a few hours before, I had watched the new V.A.D. helping Bill in his pain. I put down my head on my knees and cried.

Only an hour or two ago I had sat here in the perfect stillness of a perfect summer night, watching, under the first moonbeams, the perfect organization of a Military Hospital—watching the men, wounded and torn

on the battlefield, lying in their beds at peace, asleep,—watching the quick, quietly moving white figures of the Sisters. Now—!! Hell had been loose!

Only a moment I stayed for the relief of tears, and then the recollection of the new V.A.D's suffering came to me. I found her in the Sisters' Sick Ward, which had not been touched, with legs in splints, and still not out of the anæsthetic under which they had dressed her.

"Will she live?" I whispered to the Sister. "Has she strength to bear it."

"I am afraid there is very little hope, Sister."

"Poor child!"

In at the door came the Night Sister, who had done such splendid work in the bombed Ward, still black from the smoke, with white patches below. She touched her little co-worker as tenderly as if she had been her mother.

"Well, Sister," I asked, "could you depend on her in an emergency?"

"Don't, Sister, don't!" she replied, much moved. "Forget that ignorant speech of mine. That child is a heroine—if ever there was one. From the first moment of the reports of the gun she ran from one to the other of the patients, cheering them, and 'carrying on' as if nothing at all were happening. You know the condition most of the patients were in. Had she lost her nerve or become frightened, or hysterical, it is quite

possible the Ward would have followed suit. Instead that girl—she isn't more than a school girl, is she—was as calm as if she had been under shell fire all her life. Depend on her! If I were going to be in a dozen raids, I would want no better helper than this dear child has been."

We looked down at her for a minute, before we went back to work—two Sisters experienced in the work and the world—with love in our hearts for the brave little beginner with her slender young body, and her big brave heart.

"She won't want for care when *we* are here, will she Sister?" I said. "I believe you love the child."

"Indeed and I do," she answered, brusquely and heartily.

When an hour had passed, and the patients had been placed in empty beds in other Wards, given hot milk, and were more or less asleep, I turned to the Quadrangle to meet the C.O., leaning wearily against a half burnt wall.

"I feel as if it were my own four walls," he said, glancing about him. "Thank God, they only got a bit of it."

"And not many casualties, Sir?"

"No, thank God for that. One orderly, too old for the service and doing voluntary work here. Splendid old chap! Well, he's got a soldier's death!—that Cockney lad from your Ward, and the new V.A.D."

"Poor Cockney Bill! I want to go and see all that is left of him," I said.

"I shall come with you." We turned our steps to where Cockney Bill was lying at rest, with the wound of the shrapnel on his forehead.

"They are all like my own boys. Poor lad! Poor lad! It is a grief to me that under my care he should have come to his end."

War brings about unexpected meetings. Five years ago Bill was selling fried fish on the streets of Whitechapel. The C.O. was then a much sought after, consulting surgeon of London. Opposite lives. War had brought them together. Here was the eminent London physician bending over the fried fish vendor, grieving over him as if he had been his own son.

I wish I could tell you that my sorrow ceased here and that I helped the new V.A.D. to health and life. But with truth I cannot.

Only a week later, and I followed the gun carriage on which lay her little coffin, shrouded with the Union Jack, and borne with military honours to a corner of our cemetery.

Her days in France had numbered scarcely seven.

I knew she had gained the better part, and I remembered how, at the end, she had put her arms round my neck and said:

"Be glad, dear Sister. Rejoice with me. I am going to find my brother and to be where there will be no more war."

# In Our Midst

I FOUND her in a small frame house in a little settlement in the Laurentian Mountains. Not one of these Lakes to which summer visitors come, and where, therefore, one may procure, in an emergency, ice, or delicious fruits, or cold drinks. It was, rather, a tiny French village, where the unpainted frame cabins had patches of tobacco, some straggling potatoes, and the beginnings of Indian Corn waving about them.

The Presbytère was different. It was painted white with green stripes round the windows and doors, and when Père Le Blanc, the village Priest, rocked on the verandah, in the evenings, and smoked, he took much pleasure in the scarlet Geraniums and the insolent Tiger Lilies, which grew in his garden. But then *they* had the shade from the high church steeple to protect them in the sunny days, and they also had the people, as they drove up to the church to admire them, and inspire them, with their encouraging remarks:

"Comme ce sont *belles*—less fleures du Pére!", they would say. And that all helps in the life of a flower.

She was lying in a big French bed, below the window, which, thanks to a mysterious Providence, was open wide, with green gauze to keep out the flies.

On the opposite wall, of rough hewn pine logs, was a coloured print of the Christ with the Bleeding Heart. At the bedside an empty orange box turned on its side, formed a table, on which was a glass of milk, and a box, the lid of which was made of old fashioned shells, and bore the inscription "A present from Brighton."

She was a War Bride—an English War Bride—who had come to this new Country less than a year ago.

She had brought with her, alas! other things besides the frocks and pretty things she had sewed for herself. All unconsciously she had brought the germs of this Trouble which had already declared itself.

A few months in the City—a hacking cough—fading strength,—and the Doctor said:

"The Mountains, my boy, the sunshine and the high air!"

And the startled, broad shouldered boy whom she called "husband," with but little of his discharge pay left in his pocket, had given up his City job, and had found this refuge for his little English Bride.

. . . . .

"You have not spoken to many English people since you came to Canada?" I asked, touched by the pleasure in her voice when she greeted me.

"No indeed, Moddam!"

"But why do you call me 'Moddam'? I asked a little uncomfortably.

She looked at me awhile and smiled.

"You see before the war I worked in a Mantle Shop in Oxford Street, and we always called the ladies 'Moddam.' When you came in just now, you looked just like the English ladies that used to come to our shop, and it was just like the old days to call you 'Moddam.' "

"It was your English accent that puzzled me," I laughed. "I didn't know you meant what I call 'Madam.' "

So I remained 'Moddam' to her; and the little old French woman who owned the house, thought it must be my Christian name, and called me Mademoiselle 'Moddam', and as that I am still known in that little village among the Hills.

"You are happy here"? I asked, but it was really only half a question, and that was answered already by the content in her English gray eyes. Presently there was a knock at the door, and by instalments, her broad shouldered lumberman came in, saluting me,—for he had not been long enough in overalls to forget khaki etiquette.

"This is 'Jang'," said the Bride, and the pride and love in her voice, as she spoke his name, made sweet the English pronouncing of the difficult French name.

" '*Jean!*' Cherie, pas 'Jang'," said the lumberman, and his face broke into smiles.

"Yes, that's how I like it too, '*Jang*' "! she repeated, feeling quite certain that she and her French husband were at one in the pronouncing of his name.

Jean snatched up her hands and kissed the white fingers, laughing delightedly, as one laughs with love at a child's attempts at a difficult word.

"Madame will sometimes come an' read an' speak to ma Engleesh femme"? Asked Jean.

But I soon learned that the girl, who, however content and happy she might be in the love of her Jean, yearned not to hear of this *new* country, but rather to talk of that *old* country, where her life had been—her home. her sisters—her shop—her fun—the first time she saw 'Jang'—what her mother had said—what her girl friend had said.

Many and many an hour we passed talking of these things.

The breath of some pine trees near her window came sweetly to us, and a poplar shivered and trembled with the cool mountain breeze.

Pictures came to me there, built by the eager, reminiscent words of this girl who had come to our midst —to die.

. . . . .

The old embankment at Battersea is a good trysting place. It has been tried and proved for many more years than Jean can remember. But after all that does not mean much, for when one spends ones years on the St. Maurice River, swinging an axe, and living in close intimacy with the trees and the sun, one comes out looking *very* young, as brown as a berry, and as supple as a sappling.

Therefore, the years that had passed over Jean's head, seemed even less than what they really were—and 24 is no great age.

Jean's khaki looked very smart, and the 'Canada' shining on his shoulders seemed like a King's decoration to the girls on the Battersea embankment—these English girls who had worked their seven and eight hours in their factories and their shops, and were out for an airing and for all the fun they could possibly muster—in that hard working world of theirs.

There is a great amount of laughing and talking in excited voices, some pushing, and the same coquetting that khaki breeds in the Palace and the Hovel, as groups of twos, and threes, move past Jean, in his khaki, with his shining 'Canada.'

Jean, however, is blind to it all. He does not even know they are there.

Why should one notice the glimmer of a candle when the glorious sun is about to shine?

Presently Nellie slips from out the shadows, and leaning over the Embankment, pretends to be too much wrapt in thought to even know that her 'Canada' soldier is taking two strides to reach her and slip an arm around her.

(Here the little Bride paused to act again the surprise she had evinced in finding Jean there—of *all* places!!)

They ask each other, with much annoyance, why so

many other people should choose to crowd to the Embankment that particular night! Are there not many other parks, and Embankments in London that they all seem to choose *this* particular one? Why, there is not even one single bench left vacant for them!

Jean, however, explains, as they are finally obliged to share a bench with two other intruders! that when they go to *Canada!*—Ah there will be so much space—they will live away among the Mountains where they need never see a single person for a *month* or a *year* if they like!

Nellie admits, however, in great confidence to me, that this was 'going it' rather strong! She didn't want to exactly be Mrs. Robinson Crusoe—though she *did* like them to have a bench to themselves, *at certain times!*

The war has wrought other changes than the changes on the map. It has drawn into its vortex the life of this English girl who journeyed each morning on the top of a bus to her shop on Oxford Street, that she might persuade 'Moddam' to buy a gown or a coat, and who returned each night in order to sleep and gain strength for the same endeavor to-morrow—and to-morrow—and to-morrow.

To her that was life.

Then war began. Bands marched through the streets, stirring something to life in this shop girl's pulses, which she did not understand or recognize.

Then Jean came.

At night, when the lights are out, and she lay down beside her little sister to sleep, she was not wondering whether she would choose white or blue for her new summer hat; she was not regretting the announcement that, because of the war, there would be no rise in wages this year. She scarcely even remembered the letter from her Aunt in the Country asking her to go to her farm for her holidays.

The Great Adventure had come into her life, and she whispered over and over again to herself, in the dark, the words of broken English the French Soldier from Canada had said to her—the Soldier who had come to spend his leave with the people living across the way.

He did not call it his 'leave' though—as all the other boys did—he called it his 'permission.'

The flush died out of her cheeks when she thought of how her father had looked displeased, when Jean came home with her; and she had heard him say to her mother, that an English lad was good enough for him—he didn't hold with these Foreigners.

And then that day when Jean had gone to her father, sitting smoking after supper, and had asked him to let his girl marry him, and go with him to Canada after the war!

How her father had scolded and stormed and raged and said '*no*' in a way she did not like to listen to,—

though she knew it was just because he really loved her, and was afraid she couldn't be happy with a Frenchman away in Canada.

And then there was the day when the telegram came that her brother had died of wounds in France,—and a month later when her Father suddenly told her she could write to Jean and tell him he would let her go with him, for he saw she would really never be happy without him!

"An' so, 'Moddam', 'Jang', promised father, he'd let me go back an' see my people in a year or two. He said he'd get the money *somehow,* an' I was to count on goin' home again *soon"!*

I was silent.

"An' so I'm goin' *next Spring,* Moddam."

I was still silent, for I knew that when the leaves, in a burst of golden and crimson, fade away, the little Bride would pass from us too.

. . . . . . . . . .

We had our jokes too, which we never tired of repeating. This was one of our favourites:—

When the little Bride's father refused to allow her to marry Jean, she kept going to her shop, day by day, as usual, folding, unfolding, and trying on new frocks automatically.

Her hands were busy with them, but her mind was far away. Sometimes she was looking at the picture of the log cabin among the big trees in Canada, of

which Jean had told her. Sometimes she was beginning to see before her a long long trail of grey days, following each other drearily—never ceasing—when Jean had gone back to Canada.

And all the time her voice was saying:—

"Yes, Moddam, it is very good material," or

"No, Moddam, it doesn't look too long—or too short—or too wide"!

One morning one of the most important customers came in for a ready made summer frock.

The little Bride told me at great length of the importance, and the *richness* and the *grandeur* of this particular customer!

In fact, she was never waited on by any except the Head Sales-lady.

This morning, the Head Sales-lady, being at home with headache—or was it toothache? It took quite a while for the little Bride to remember which, and in our stories, these little points are what *really matter.*

At any rate *she* was asked to attend to the Important Customer.

"After a while, Moddam, I got tired o' hearin' her sayin' one was too *thick* an' the other too *thin.* She put on one that was meant for a skinny Miss, her that was ten stone, an' she looked at it, an' looked at it, an' turns round an' round an' says:

"Seems *something* is wrong with it. Do you know what it is"?

"An' me, Moddam, I was dreamin' away about Jang an' about Canada an' I just plumps out, "You're *too fat, that's* whats the matter"!!!

And then we laugh and laugh at the consternation that must have been on the Important Customer's face, and we talk in bated breath of how very very nearly the Bride lost her 'job'!

These are the stories that we love—and repeat many times.

. . . . . . . . . .

Sometimes, before I go away, I write a letter to the people at home.

She tells me what to say and I write it down. It tires her so much to do the writing part.

We tell them how sweet is the breath of the pine trees; how its just as if you sat down beside the old flower women in Piccadilly Circus, and smelt the Cabbage Roses and Mignonette all day long.

We tell them about the funny old French woman who looks after the little Bride, as if she were her own daughter; and all about the little French children, who can't speak even one word of English, and speak French just as quickly as the Waiter in the Restaurant in Soho Square where Jean took them to dinner after they were married.

We told her mother, too, how, when it was beginning to be dusk, and the day was over, we were thinking of them all over in the little home in Battersea, of

how they would be finishing supper, and of how the little sister would be washing up, and Father smoking in his big chair.

The fact that the time of day here did not coincide with the time of day in England was very puzzling and not at all satisfying.

So we gave over thinking about that, and just talked as if the time had been the same in England and in Canada.

Generally, about that time, we heard Jean's whistle as he went to milk the little old French woman's cow, and I prepared to go.

Jean thinks that this little English Daisy that he plucked and brought up to his Canadian Pine Trees, has the gay heart of a child. They laugh, and play, these two, now that they have got accustomed to the thought that the little Bride must stay in bed. She is always smiling, when he comes into the room—except when the cough is too bad.

But *I* know—since we have become so accustomed to each other that she does not hide things from me—*I* know that it is the heart of a *woman,* who sometimes, notwithstanding the deep love which guards her and surrounds her, yearns for old faces, old voices, old familiar places—a woman's heart, where the yearning is hidden deep, lest it should wound the man for whose sake she has *gladly* left them all.

. . . . .

"Is this true"? I hear you ask. It is indeed, in very deed. And now, at this moment, when you are reading these words, away up there in the Laurentians, I can hear the two voices.

"Jang——"

"'*Jean,*' Cherie, pas 'Jang'"!

"Yes, dear, that's how I like it too—'Jang'!!!

And I know that Jean and his little English Bride are gazing into the Pine Trees, and forming dear and precious memories, which will presently be the breath of life to Jean.

I look at them and I think "Is Happiness measured by degree or by length of days"?

One wonders.

# Before the Dawn

"REPORT to-night to Sister, at 8.30, Nurse, for your period of night duty."

Matron's voice was decisive, and I turned to the door, rather dubious as to this new step in my nursing experience.

To adjust my veil and fasten on my white apron, collar, and cuffs when the even shadows were gathering, instead of in the early sparkle of sunshine, was the first note of strangeness; while, meeting the day staff lazily dragging up to bed as I ran briskly by at the beginning of my "day," was the real parting of the ways.

It is an old story now. I feel that I have belonged to the family of "owls" for a very long time. Sunshine and noonday, and busy traffic are for that other part of the inhabitants of the globe, with whom I have little to do. When I belong to them again, I shall wink, and blink in the brilliant light, and learn again a new world.

I am in charge of my ward, with Sister, supervising the floor, to consult when I require—and I very often require. I begin my "day" by saying, "Good-night." From bed to bed I go, down the length of my ward,

handing Paddy his barley water, while he tells me, his wicked eyes gleaming with mischief, of the new joke he had on Sister; and listening, adamant, to "Young Australia," next him, pleading for the light to be left on a little longer, that he may finish his belt.

It is a handsome belt, too, "Young Australia," sewed on canvas with brown wool, and the flags of the Allies cleverly worked in. Belts are all the rage in the hospital just now, and quite elaborate pieces of work they are. Slow, clumsy fingers, presently growing wonderfully expert, work patiently over them.

"I shall hang it on the foot of your bed, Sonny, and it will gladden your eyes when you first awake. See, I shall move your back support a little, so that you may lie more easy, and you will soon forget your belt and your poor old back in sleep."

And Jock—next in line—what's the cause of this exhaustion, quite evident through the flush of excitement? Well, drink up your hot milk first, and tell me. You were taken out in the long wicker chair! Down to the sea, where you have not been for two months! Splendid! Jock. Hospital will soon be "napu" for you! You'll be "hurling" somebody else to the sea, instead of being "hurled" yourself. Milk "fini" is it? Really, we're all so Frenchy, since we've been in France, that we must be excused, if sometimes our conversation is interlarded with its language.

And so on down the line and back again, every man

Jack of them having something to tell, or some new fancy work to show. Never have I seen more dainty and exquisite work than in my ward, done by these boys whose hands were, but lately, pressing home the bayonet to its mark, or charging the cannon with its terrible load.

I put out the light and throw open the windows, closing the door, that the light from our little ward kitchen may not penetrate into the darkened streets and bring a visit from the policeman.

"Good-night, Sister!"

"Good-night, *children!*" The mild joke never fails to please. God knows they are like children, as they lie there.

Silence reigns.

Silence, but behind the screen, in that corner bed, no peace. Goodall's weary face, white and lined from his days of pain, is turned towards me, too listless for speech. Here, at his side, most of my night will be spent, following with every sense alert, Sister's directions to fight the fever consuming him. How it has changed him, even as I watch, during these nights! The face, that was still round and boyish, when he was carried in from the trenches, is long and gaunt and lined, and almost like that of an old man; the hopeful look, as, at first, he willingly took the medicines prescribed has given place to fretful despair. He turns his head wearily away now, refusing the dose that I

must give him. Poor lad! so easy it is *now* to lift his light frame up on the pillows, compared with the task when he was first brought in.

As I creep from our little kitchen to his bed, behind the curtain, and back again and again, bringing an ice pack, counting drop by drop, the new medicine from which we hope so much, I conjure any imagination that I may possess, to provide the right word, some new thought, *anything* that may change the wearied monotony of his troubled mind.

As the hours creep slowly on, the fever does not abate, but Sister's visits and advice relieve my responsibility.

Softly, round the ward, changing Jock's fomentation, lifting Paddy's pillow, which he is worrying viciously in his sleep—grinding his teeth and muttering something—not complimentary—about the Bosche!

Goodall has fallen asleep at last, and before I leave the ward for our midnight supper, I read over again the chart above his head,

PTE. W. GOODALL,

— BATTALION

PLACE OF BIRTH: HAMILTON, CANADA

It's a long, long trail, Goodall, that has brought us together, here in this hosiptal, far away from our separate homes!

The contrast between the brightly lighted supper

room, the chatter of wide-awake nurses, and the dark ward of sleeping men, from which I have come, is a decided relief.

Not that one ever expects supper to be undisturbed. Usually a violent fit of coughing, downstairs, interrupts a story. Sudden silence, as we listen!

"It's *your* ward, Roche, no getting out of it." Nurse Roche disappears, in a whirl, to administer whatever her particular treatment may be. Colds are popular just now.

Another cough repeated and repeated.

"That's Cutler!"

"No, it's Harston. I would know his cough in a thousand." Disappearance of Harston's nurse, and so on. If you know a good story or an interesting piece of gossip, keep it for the midnight supper. We need it all.

Back again in my ward, and making preparations for the work which comes later on. Suddenly a hoarse muttered shout breaks the silence. I know it well. It is De Bas going "over the top." Each night this huge South African goes "over the top" in his sleep, and I hurry in to try and bring him to his senses before he wakes the others.

When the war broke out De Bas lived in West Africa, was imprisoned by the Germans and suffering much at their hands, became so more than ordinarily embittered, that it is terrible to hear him, standing,

trembling with passion, railing against God and man. He did wonderful service for us till a bullet laid him low, and now I see on his locker orders, just received, that he is to be sent to Convalescent Camp. There is a savage kind of exultation on his face, as, still unconscious of his peaceful surroundings, his great shoulders and dark massive head are raised from the white sheets.

"Quiet! De Bas quiet! Remember where you are. You will waken the others!" Another muttered imprecation at the Bosche and, his hand strained, his whole figure quivering with the fiercest passions, he opens his eyes. All trembling from what he has gone through in his vivid dreams, he gradually recognises me, with a half ashamed laugh—

"Was I at it again, Sister? I really *was* going over the parapet that time!" and he again susides.

He tells me—this huge African—that he lives through the fight, suffers and hates, and sweats in agony more vividly in his sleep than he did in the reality. It is my nightly dread that he will really get "over the top" some night, and half murder Jock in the next bed, before I can stop him.

The night is creeping on, and I have scarcely finished preparing some concentrated nourishment, for Goodall, when I hear him tossing two and fro behind the curtain. It will be a struggle to persuade him to take it, for he loathes every kind of food.

*How* he pleads! He doesn't need it! He doesn't *want* it! It will do him more harm than good. Won't I *please* just once let him off taking it? How unkind I am to insist! Poor lad! Every night we go through it—he is weak to the point of extreme irritability, but one cannot give way.

"Is there no end to the night, Sister?" His voice comes in a weak whisper.

"It is almost over now, Goodall. Watch the end window, and you will see daylight is just beginning to peep in. Listen! You can almost hear the first birds already," and listening, and watching he dozes off once more. With what relief I watch his face relax. It is the hour when his soul is nearest leaving his body—the hour of dawn.

I open the door of the hospital leading into the garden, and step out into the exquisite loveliness of the approaching day. It is but faint—the light—it is struggling with, and conquering the heavy shadows of the night. It's victory brings its own music, from the nests in the elms, and the ivy, and the bushes. So soft, at first, pianissimo! till one, and another and all the chorus have joined, and the garden is filled with melody, and the sweetness of the roses and jasmine, and the light of a new day!

If I could only gather some of this loveliness of life, and sound, and scent into my arms, and carry it into my Ward! I pluck one great White Rose, the

dew sparkling on its petals, and carrying it with me, place it in Goodall's open hand. When he wakes, he may have one moment's impression of beauty, before he remembers his pain.

I love these moments—only a few—in the garden, at dawn. I think they are worth while, and I am sure my work—my practical, prosaic work that follows—does not suffer from these moments in unparalleled loveliness.

It has been an easy night with the exception of the constant attendance on poor Goodall. Quite unlike these many nights when our doors are open to admit a convoy from the front, when men are carried in to each ward, still covered with the hardened mud of the trenches, moaning with discomfort from the long journey they have had, and with their pain.

. . . . .

*Now* it is day, and I throw open the blinds and let the sun stream in.

"Time to waken! It's to-morrow!" and thermometers are produced. "Now, Paddy, don't pretend you're asleep. I saw your eyes open long ago. Here's your morning pipe," and I slip the little glass "pipe" between his lips.

"The top of the morning, Sister. And is it *to-morrow* you're sayin'?"

A kind Fate seems to arrange that in every ward *some* born "First Aiders" turn up to act as volunteer

orderlies in place of the regular hospital orderlies sent to the Front.

Donald, a former South African jockey, Edwards, a tall dark Welsh miner, wearing the Military Medal, and Tweddle, a red-headed Lancashire lad, are my "right hands" when the early morning rush begins. They carry water to the bedsides, lift heavy patients, prepare the breakfast trays, and help in the bed-making. And *such* bed-making! Never were lines straighter or corners squarer than those of my African-Welsh-Lancashire orderlies!

Temperatures, pulses, fomentations changed, patients washed, brushed, bolstered up in bed, spruce and ready for breakfast!

In the ward kitchen plates piled with bread and butter cut in the earlier hours, trays of cups and saucers:

"Ten milk diets, Tweddle, this morning, instead of eight!"

"Leave it to Tweddle, Sister!" and indeed I know I can, as I hurry off, glad of some extra minutes to attend to Goodall. My faithful three will "carry on" in the kitchen.

One pair of eyes is certainly not enough at breakfast time. Paddy is on milk diet, so the browned, fragrant sausages being carried past him are barred. On the other hand, his neighbor, De Bas, has no appetite for food and looks with *scorn* at the sausage placed

before him. Unless this corner is closely watched a quick transfer of the sausage from De Bas to Paddy will occur! Keep an eye on De Bas!

Again, the Doctor says "Young Australia" must eat a fresh egg every morning. He, however, has "no use" for eggs, is heartily sick of them in fact. He, therefore, has been known to scoop the contents of his fresh egg into his tooth-brush mug, hide it in his locker, and swap it for some cigarettes with some hungrier men. The empty shell, and 'Young Australia's' innocent face, deceive you. It is really safer to hover about and see that he disposes of the fresh egg himself.

Keep an eye on Australia!

Breakfast over, follows a whirlwind of cleaning, washing, tidying, till every trace of the night staff is removed.

A last look at Goodall.

"I think it will be easier for you to-day, Goodall. You'll take *all* your medicines and be very good, wont you? I'm going to rest now, so as to be able to take care of you again to-night!"

The tired eyes try to smile good-bye, and one's heart goes out in gratitude and love to the boy, suffering there, in his weariness and pain, because he gave himself for us.

*So* little we do! *So* little! one thinks, as one lies down to rest, while *they* are giving their all; and thinking of Goodall—I fall asleep.

# Sister Anne! Sister Anne!!

OUR ward is a long narrow corridor, with small rooms opening off each side. In each room—I had almost said, "Cell"—are two small beds, and, because Monks used to live here, a crucifix hangs over each. I am glad, when they gave up their Monastery to us, that the Monks decided to bequeath their Crucifixes also. There is one, in particular, of beautiful ivory, yellow with age. The Face of it is lovely beyond words.

A young officer, who had been for a long time in the bed opposite it, glanced at it, as he was being carried out to convalescence, and said, rather shyly:

"Somehow, I don't think I'll forget that, Sister. I didn't think any Face could be so wonderful, or mean so much. It'll go with me—in memory."

Each morning we start at one end of the Corridor, and go down its whole length, room by room, making beds. Always the same thrill of expectancy as we open each door. Always the quick searching glance when each takes measure of the other—Patient and Nurse; although we, perhaps, practice more tact, and do not make our summing up so obvious.

It is the usual thing for the sick men, who come to

us, to be unnerved—too highly pitched, or too low. So we have learned to take them, in whatever condition they may be, very casually—just as ordinary, everyday occurrences. It is not want of heart, it is Method.

Once, we used to approach a badly cut up man with apprehension and awe.

"But, *Sister,*" we would exclaim to the Sister-in-charge, noticing with dismay her brisk, casual manner of talking to him, "Isn't he a *very sick* man?"

"Sure, an' he is maybe, but it isn't going to make him any better to be the first mourner, is it now?" she would laugh. So we learnt the lesson of Atmosphere.

As it happened, Peg-o-my-Heart and I were for once in the same ward, and as we went up and down, making beds together, there was a fair amount of chaffing and teasing—for the lady is an adept at the art, and the patients needed all their wit to answer her glib Irish tongue.

There is a—weakness, shall I say—to which she is addicted. She has a perfect passion for cobbling, and patching every bit of khaki that comes within her range. The minute she enters a room, after a new convoy has arrived, her eyes dart round and round, and, if the orderly has not yet carried off the discarded uniform, she springs upon it. A tunic with a rent! Slacks with the knees torn out! Oh! Joy! She is at them like a flash, darning, piecing, cobbling with more speed than skill.

As it isn't exactly in the Day's Orders, however, that she should sit down and mend tunics and slacks in the middle of the morning, a certain lookout has to be maintained.

"D'you see anybody coming, Sister Anne! Sister Anne!" cries she.

"Sister Anne! Sister Anne! d'you see anybody coming," echo the delighted Patients, while I give quick glances up and down the Corridor.

And because she is, more often than not, doing something in her dear, quaint way—lovable enough, but not orthodox, the cry usually follows us from room to room.

If she hasn't time to put the garment back before Authority arrives, she hides it. I have seen her rapidly stick a half darned tunic between the matresses, to the huge amusement of the patients, sworn to secrecy, while her pretty Irish voice kept calling in a whisper, long drawn out:

"Sister Anne! Sister Anne! d'you see anybody coming?"

This one particular morning, however, it was different. We came on the ward and found a Shadow hovering there, which could not all at once be dispersed.

A few days ago there had been a big gas attack at the Front, and we came suddenly face to face with the result.

As we opened one door, and another, and another, in each room we saw two men sitting up in bed, heads bowed, eyes bandaged, blind! Twitching hands groped about for the feel of something familiar. We shrank back into the darker Corridor—to control our voices before we tried to speak.

"Try to remember it is only for a time," the girl beside me whispered.

"If they would only cry out! If they would rage! If they would weep!" I replied, my heart sore with the sight of these silent figures, "It is the *resignation* in their bowed heads that I cannot stand!"

Perhaps our voices were not so successful as we thought, for the Welsh Captain in Room I. suddenly smiled, when we spoke, and began to comfort *us*.

"Don't worry, Sister! It's just an experience after all. We'll be back at Jerry in a month!"

"Righto! We'll take you at your word," replied the Irish Nurse, bracing up, "and we'll pass the word along."

So on she went, back to her usual, with her nonsense—her tender nonsense—her beautiful nonsense—stirring these boys' hearts, and lighting again the love of life.

"She thinks we'll be well again in a month," came from one bed doubtfully.

"Do you think I could bear it else?" a deep throated voice replied, hoarse from the gas. Finger tips press-

ing in straight lines along his bed showed tense nerves controlled.

In the end room of the Corridor, one moved swiftly and silently, speaking no word beyond that which was actually necessary.

It is smaller than the others, the sloping roof making only one bed possible; consequently the most serious cases are generally brought here.

The face of the gaunt figure in the bed one cannot see, for it is almost covered with bandages. The right leg is in a splint.

Sister, passing, whispered, "He has been in great pain ever since he was brought in, and has just dropped off to sleep, be very careful not to wake him."

So, silently, we pass out to the orderly, the stained uniform lying on the floor, and the leggings and mud covered boots.

"Pass me the board with his card," I whispered. It is awkward not to know a Patient's name even the first morning he is in.

"A Canadian from—I don't knowt the place, and I can't read his name," I said, passing it back, not much the wiser.

Always lithe and steady in her movements, it was unfortunate that just in this very room, after glancing at the board, Peg-o-my-Heart should suddenly let it fall.

The noise of it, clattering on the iron bed, of course

wakened the Patient. Seldom does such a clumsy thing happen! How unfortunate it should have been here and now."

"So sorry," I said very quietly, moving his pillow a little, and standing beside him, hoping he would fall asleep again.

"It doesn't really matter," he whispered hoarsely from among the bandages.

I looked up expecting to hear some witty apology from the other girl, but to my surprise she was moving quickly out of the room.

"What's the matter?" I hurried after her. "Surely not so dreadful that you should get white over it." Good Heavens! Girl, you are actually trembling! Don't be silly. Come back and speak to your new Patient."

"He's not my Patient," she returned, excited and flustered. "He's *your* Patient. He's on *your* side of the Ward."

"Why, I thought just yesterday you asked me to change sides!"

"Well I don't want to! I don't want to! I want my own end. *Please* don't ask me to take this end. Nothing would *induce* me to take it!"

"You certainly don't have to," I said, very much surprised at her sudden panic. "It's all the same to me which end I have," and we went off to the Ward kitchen for the breakfast trays.

Although the food was brought to the ward by the orderlies, we carried it round, on little trays, to the Patients. As a rule, however, there was a queue of convalescents lined up outside the kitchen door, to do this part of the work for us. Sometimes the queue was garbed in dressing gowns and bedroom slippers, sometimes it had graduated into khaki.

Peg-o-my-Heart had a Patient waiting to be marked out—a very smart young lieutenant, who had learned all the tricks of the trade by devotedly and constantly following his idolised nurse.

"Some day you will be rewarded," I heard Peg tell him, when he had been most assiduous in his efforts to help. "I shall decorate you," and sure enough she did. We all gathered round to watch the ceremony, when, with pretty dignity, Peg capped her Knight, and turned him into a V.A.D.

"Sure, and that girl is worth all the tonics in the dispensary," remarked the Sister-in-Charge, and I am quite sure she was right."

But in the end room, where there was so much real suffering, it was different. We gently re-arranged the bandages, and tried, sup by sup, to create an appetite that was not there.

. . . . .

"Seems to be gas all about—my mouth—my throat. Wonder if it's me—carried away from the line?"

Sounded like a woman's voice before I fell asleep. It must have been part of the dream that's mixing another chap up with me—kind of an all-the-time dream—no end to it.

After all, perhaps the chap—or is it me—is still in a shell-hole. Seems to be a might deep shell-hole, too —so dark—sand in my eyes—something dragging at my feet when I want to rise. . . . No guns . . . artillery must have been put out of action. Anyway he's so thirsty. No—*I'm* so thirsty—What does it matter about the Artillery or the guns! Good Lord! how dry my lips are—and all that water in the wood yesterday. Tell him to crawl there—even if he can't walk—and start right off *now!* Funny—something seems to hold him back—or hold *me* back. If one could only see! Something over one's eyes! Tear it away, and get out of the hole . . . ! A sheet of flame leaping from the dark and . . . that same voice again! Let's listen to it.

"Close the door. Keep out the light," it says.

Strange how that voice keeps following right down into this shell-hole—and all that gravel still in one's eyes. Who cares about a silly voice anyway, when one's so thirsty—I mean *I* am so thirsty and parched! God! how dry one's throat is. . . . Somebody touched me! Who is it? Can't see!—shout!—*Shout* again!

. . . . . .

This Patient must have a 'special,'" said the M.O.

"His is one of the most serious cases and if he manages to drag this bandage again, as he did just now, it may mean irreparable damage to his eyes."

So, because the little end room was on my side of the ward, I was marked off to be the "special."

Shut off from the world by a closed door, in a darkened room, with a fevered soldier who gropes ceaselessly with restless twitching hands! I see the trail of war! The pain of it—the delirium of it lies unveiled before me.

Broken snatches, hoarsely muttered, have not been trimmed for a woman's ears.

The pathos, the chivalry, the sacrifice of war are here.

But there's a grand hope beating in my heart. I have already seen eyes bandaged, that I know are now open, joyously looking on the Sun; and scorched, blistered skin, that is now white and firm. So I jealously watch each ray of light that has dared to elude our vigilance, and I guard the door, that no sudden sound or disquieting presence may enter.

Days creep on, and the hoarse voice becomes clearer, quieter, and is often stilled for a long time. Some of the bandages are removed, but the room is still dark. I know, however, that very soon we shall draw aside the curtain and let in the light of day; so I peep out to see what manner of world the newly opened eyes will look upon.

The little window of our end room, with its sloping roof, and ivory Crucifix, looks straight into the pollared Limes. How old the trees are, gnarled with age! These same twisted boughs tapped at the window, as they are doing now, when the Monks were here; and long before that, when the Germans used this very building for a hospital for their wounded, fifty years ago.

The leaves and the branches of these trees are like old friends, and I can't decide whether I like them best in shimmery green or in the glory of autumn red. Straight through the old yews comes the breeze that is blowing our little white curtain.

"Sister!"

. . . . .

I turn quickly, for the voice is different. The unnatural note of fever is absent; it is quiet and sane.

"What do you see through the window, Sister?—the great big world?"

"I am looking for the Trail of the Breeze."

"Well, have you found it?"

"I have. It has crept through an old French garden, where there are lime trees and bent pear trees. It has filtered through the new green shoots, that prove the shrubs are beginning to live again.

"Like me?" he queried.

"Like you," I answered.

"Go on."

"It has broken away from the Spring sunshine that tried to stifle it, and swept past an old Rookery,—and here it is."

"As it has done for a hundred years, I suppose," he added.

"Not exactly; for this year it has made a détour, that it might brush the cheek of a sick soldier, sitting out there. He has lost a leg."

There was silence for a moment.

"Somehow I did not expect you to use that word —'lost,' " he said slowly.

"I know, I know what you mean!" I interrupted quickly. "No, not *'lost,'* but *'given.'* "

I was standing now, looking down at him very earnestly, although my heart was dancing with the thought that Spring was here, too, in our little end room, just as truly as out there in the garden.

Did I think my work in the end room was over? Perhaps I did, but if so, I was very much mistaken.

"Slowly! Slowly! Hasten slowly!" the M.O. would repeat, day after day. "No reading! *No. Distinctly* no! No excitement yet! Keep out the crowd, Sister, and amuse him the best way you can. Don't let him get bored."

Oh for that Irish Peg-o-my-Heart, I thought, with her glib tongue and her winsome ways! But it was too late to change, and strangely enough, she refused even to come in and see my Patient, though I felt sure I could have got special permission for her.

She was usually so ready to make friends with all the boys that I couldn't understand her irritation when I pressed the point, and simply put it down to that Spring feeling from which we all suffered more or less.

As we both—my Patient and I—possessed a fair share of the gift of the gab we were never at a loss for entertainment.

Many days passed with little alteration in our daily programme.

My Ward name had long ago filtered into the room, so the evening game usually began with the same formula:

"Sister Anne! Sister Anne! Do you see anybody coming?" And I, peering over the stone wall of the garden into the street, would reply, "Nothing but the wind blowing and . . . ," a chaotic fragrant would follow, made up of a little fact and a lot of fiction, a picture here, and exaggeration there.

This particular evening the "trailing clouds" seemed to linger; the soft light in the garden was lovelier than usual.

"Sister Anne! Sister Anne! D'you see anybody coming?"

I thought his voice sounded rather weary, and I urged myself to greater exertion.

"I am looking through nature's loveliness to man's grimness . . . I see a sign of what we call Victory . . . listen!" and I stood breathless, that his hearing might tell him the tale of the streets.

"Tramp! Tramp! Men marching! What men? Who are they, Sister?"

"Listen again! Listen again! Do you hear? The step is broken . . . lagging . . . hopeless . . . Prisoners being taken to the base. How many? Fifty --a hundred—it seems to me like a whole regiment. I can hardly see their grey uniforms for the dust. Yes, but you should see *our* boys, their guards! They are *just* as tired—Oh, how exhausted they all look!

"Do I feel sorry for them did you say? The Germans? No, I am not sorry. Their officers are passing now, and they are *sneering*. Oh . . . the French women! I wish I could tell you how they look! Some of them, quite old, are hobbling along beside them. Quite as fast as they! One of them is shaking her fist right in the face of an officer. Oh, you funny old Bonne Femme! Shake it *hard!* If our boys in Germany had nothing harder to contend with than an old woman's fist, we would not feel so bitter against them, sneering as they are at these French peasants—women and children!

"Such *hate* in the women's faces . . . such grimness. It is past now. Have I told you too much? Are you tired?"

Silently we sit a while, and listen to the evening peal from the Old Cathedral. It is almost dark now, and I turn away from the window.

"You are so well now, you know, that very soon

you will have to share with the others, instead of having a 'Sister Anne' all to yourself," I tell him.

"Sister Anne!"

"Oui, Monsieur?"

"I want to ask you something . . . something that I have wanted to know for a long time. When I was ill . . ."

"You are not exactly well *yet,*" I interrupted.

"Well, when I was worse—was I delirious? Did I . . . did I . . . mention any names?"

"You did," I replied slowly.

"Will you tell me what name?"

"I think you had better forget these delirious days."

"Will you tell me what name?" he persisted.

I repeated it, in a confused way, for I thought I had heard something that I was not intended to hear.

"And I also said . . . ??"

"I refuse to tell you any more," I replied decidedly.

"It's a name that has meant a good deal to me," he went on, hesitatingly, "and strangely enough, Sister, at different times, when I have been lying here—when I was blind, and scarcely knew where I was, I heard the voice that belongs to that name quite distinctly."

"One often hears voices you know when one is delirious."

"O yes, I know, but this was quite different from the other voices, that I seemed to hear, and which I knew could not possibly have been here—that one

voice! The day I was brought in here—and other times since. Never near me, always at a distance! It used to worry me, Sister, for I felt I could not be getting better, if I still had these hallucinations, but now I have not heard it for a long time—and I miss it."

I said "Good-night," and came away, fearing very much that he had excited himself, yet knowing that it was better he should speak than brood over the thought alone.

I was puzzled too. He seemed so awfully sure about that voice. Whose could he mean, or was it only delirium? The first morning he was brought in, he had said. I could think of no one else but Peg-o-my-Heart . . . and Ireland and Canada are many miles apart. So, thinking and puzzling, I wandered off to the Sister's quarters.

A Nurse with a well regulated mind keeps her thoughts on temperatures and pulses, hot water bottles and ice-bags. That being the case, I cannot aspire to the possession of a well regulated mind, for mine is full of the whys and the wherefors—of Canada and Peg-o-my-Heart . . . of voices . . . and . . . sleep.

Next day was a disappointment from the beginning to end. It had such wonderful promises, too. I had the morning off, and my Irish girl and I were to spend all the hours till noon in the beautiful Fôret Verte.

Running downstairs to breakfast, Peg strained her ankle, and couldn't leave the garden, and I had to start off with a 'Foreign Body' in whom I was not at all interested.

The heart of the Forest itself, however, never fails to delight me, and I jealously stored up pretty pictures, incidents, bits of colouring, to carry into the little end room, when I went on duty in the afternoon.

When I did walk into that room, however, all these were dissipated. I had left a promising looking convalescent, who really repaid all my efforts. I found a pale shaken man, looking as if he had seen a ghost.

"What on earth's the matter?" I asked the Nurse who had taken my place. "What's happened?"

"I can't tell you at all"—and it was easy to see she was quite as worried as I. "He seemed just as usual, quite bright and talkative, till I left him about eleven o'clock to bring in his bovril. When I came back, he looked as if he had seen a spectre, and was trembling like a leaf. I was frightfully alarmed, and asked him all kinds of questions, but he has scarcely spoken a word since. I can't tell you how sorry I am . . . that I can't explain the change!"

For sometime I did not speak to him, but moved about the room, changing chairs, putting one book on the shelf and taking down another . . . little meaningless actions. I was too disappointed to want to talk, and also I thought if there was anything the matter, I would give him a chance to tell it.

Silence, however, lasted too long for my anxious mind, and finally I went over to his bed.

"Can you tell me why you are feeling like this?" I asked, as quietly as I could. "Has anything happened?"

"Yes—no—I don't know whether anything has happened or not—except that I know now I'll never really be well again."

"Why?"

"Why? Because whereas my ears used to play tricks—till recently, now my eyes have begun, too."

"But what do you mean? . . . What tricks have your eyes played?"

"I used to *hear* her—to-day I *saw* her Yes—I mean Nance—I saw her. Over there by the tree, leaning against it. What do you say? A vision! So near—so dear! I shut my eyes to see if they were playing a trick on me. I opened them and she—it—was—going—moving slowly away among the trees. But now I know, as you say, it *must* have been a vision! I guess my nerves have gone to seed and I'll never be able to count again on being like other fellows."

. . . . . . . . . .

A few days later, at the hour when the sun was at its best, the M.O. told me to bundle up my Patient and trundle him in a long chair, into the garden.

Very soon I had him settled below the Old Limes, that we had watched growing greener and greener.

His leg, which had not been so seriously wounded as was first supposed, was getting along splendidly, though he could not yet walk.

"Better stay a little while with him," Sister-in-charge told me. "We've still got to be mighty careful. I don't want any set back."

"What a flood of blossoms there will be," I cried, wild with delight at the rows and rows of opening green sheaths all about us.

"Yes, I suppose," he answered, without much interest.

"I thought you would have enjoyed all this—your first time out," I said. "You don't seem to enthuse very much."

"I'm thinking, Sister Anne, that after all the care you've taken of me, I owe you a little tale."

"Oh *please* don't feel obliged to tell me anything about yourself," I pleaded, rather embarrassed, for the beginning of a confidence is difficult.

"Perhaps it would help me, too, Sister Anne," he suggested, in a low voice, and I remained quiet.

"It is about—Nance. You know, don't you, that I came from rather an out of the way district in Canada, away up in the MacKenzie River, where one seldom meets a woman. It was all right for me, that big empty country—lots of space—and air. I don't think I was ever anything more than a big over-grown boy anyway, though I was thirty years old. It was the

big, open, simple life, with work out of doors, even in the 40 below weather. I beg your pardon? Oh, that means when the thermometer is 40 below zero. I forgot you weren't a Canadian.

" I used to come down to Calgary, or Winnipeg, or some town every Spring, but a few days was enough for me—or a week or two at the very most.

"In the Spring of '14 I had to come to one of these Western towns—you wouldn't know the name—to meet one the partners of the House, for which I was working.

"He was an awfully decent chap, and he had brought his wife, and meant to stay around that part for a while—for his health, though he never spoke of it.

"They took a hunch for camping life—especially when his wife heard that her cousin was out from Ireland visiting in the East. I helped them to get the tents and the tackle, and they wired for the cousin. She came, Sister—and—she was—Nance!"

He stopped for a while and we were quiet, except that from the nests above us, the birds twittered—"Nance—she was Nance!"

"We became pals, Sister. I had scarcely ever know a girl—intimately, I mean—and I taught her how to shoot, and ride, and fish. She didn't know anything about trees, and birds and things, and I had been living with them all my life. So we used to start off

into the woods early in the morning, and it seemed as if we had only got started to talk about the things we wanted to—when it was evening.

"It was just like that, day after day—till I knew, if I couldn't go *back* to the wilds with my girl, that I'd just have to stay *out* of the wilds with her—and that was all to it.

"I suppose I'm a big blundering chap that can't put all that kind of thing in words, Little Sister, but at the same time, well—I guess you know how I felt, when she said she would strike the trail, to use our Western lingo—with me."

There was another little pause, while the birds, busy with their nests, kept twittering—"Nancy—she was Nancy."

"And then came the War! I must confess I was not, at first, half as keen as I would have been in those other barren days—before I met her.

"Keen or not, however, there was only one thing to do, and in the first days of the recruiting I was on the spot. A great big husky chap like me! It seemed an empty form to pass a medical board; and nobody was more surprised than I when the doc., after jerking and tapping, found something in my anatomy that wasn't sound. After a month's treatment in Winnipeg he said I could come up and have another shot.

"The fact that I couldn't jump into the army as easily as I thought made me ten times keener. The

quicker started, the quicker, back, I thought, and I decided to be off next day.

"I worried a lot about what to say to Nance. I didn't like telling her that I wasn't fit and sound as I looked—especially when the doc, said I would be all right if I did what he ordered. If she knew, she would always *imagine* I wasn't strong. Women are born fussers, aren't they, Sister?

"Of course, we had talked of nothing but the War since it began—four ardent Britishers that we were—and Nance was hot as fire over it.

"I told her I had business in Winnipeg that I couldn't put off, and that when I came back I would get into khaki.

"'*Business!*' repeated Nance, looking at me in a funny way, but I stuck to my plan and was off in the morning.

"Of course, the camping business came to an end, but the three of them were going to stay part of the Autumn to help in the new work that was stirring our little town, just as it was the world.

"Somehow her letters—I looked forward—well—her letters seemed short and cool. Then suddenly, without warning they changed their plans, arrived in Winnipeg, on their way East, saw me in mufti, for I was an out-door Patient, and—and—that was all."

"Why, oh, why didn't you *tell* her?" I couldn't refrain from saying.

"In a few weeks she sent me back the few little things I had given her, and a note to say she had been mistaken, and she wouldn't expect to see me again."

"I don't like her," I burst out. "She might have given you a chance!"

He had on his tunic and I glanced at the D.S.O. ribbon. "Yes," he said, following my glance. "When I did get over here I would just as soon as not have had a knock out! There wasn't much to look forward to without—"

"I should think you'd feel terribly disappointed in her," I said.

"Well—no—I don't."

He suddenly looked very tired and I bestirred myself to prepare for the return journey to the Ward.

Suddenly a voice from the distance, drawing nearer and nearer:

"Sister Anne! Sister *Anne!*"

He sat up erect and pale.

From a slope behind us appeared, running—with cheeks scarlet and her pretty hair flying from beneath her long white veil—Peg-o-my-Heart.

"I didn't know . . .," she gasped, beginning to back away.

I had not been so "slow in the uptak" as it sounds, and I knew my next lines.

"Nance—" I heard, and the rugs slipped away from the soldier.

"Take care of my Patient," I cried back, disappearing into the Hospital.

As I looked out of the window of the end room, a little later, two happy faces were smiling up at me, through the trees, and two voices were calling softly—as if in confidence:

"Sister Anne! Sister Anne! D'you see anybody coming?"

# Aftermath

"DAMASE will drive you. You can easily do all that is necessary, and return before dark."

When Matron says it will not be dark before a certain time, one feels secure that night will not *dare* to drop its curtain before that hour.

I scrambled quickly into our old Ford, and with a lurch, forward and back, we were off.

Glancing round the Prairie Sky, I would have ventured, had my opinion been asked, that darkness had a big chance of descending on us before we arrived home. But Matron had spoken. Sic fiat.

I decided that I would not have recognized in this Damase beside me, the drawn face and long skinny figure carried into our London Hospital last year, had he not proved his identity by repeating and laughing over our old ward jokes.

I remembered that, before he was sent to the Convalescent Hospital by the sea, he had remained with us long enough to show the sparkle of mischief, never long absent from his saucy eyes.

Me, I suppose, he easily recognized, because, poor chaps, they had so little else to do except to stare at the omnipresent Sisters.

"Heugh! Damase!" I gasped, "You are surely not letting the grass grow under our feet," as a sudden lurch sent my bag spinning to the other end of the little car.

It was very precious to me—that bag—and, grasping it in my arms, I peeped in to see if all were safe. Yes, the iodine bottle had not broken, and the forceps and other little instruments were tucked tightly in among the bandages and the lint.

"I haven't quite got used to motoring round to my patients, Damase, instead of having them all round me in a ward," I began.

"Would they not send an ambulance for him, Sister, and bring him to you"?

"Oh, not for such a slight thing! I can as easily dress the wound there, and he can go right on with his work. These soldier farmers, you know, Damase, how *busy* they are!"

Damase, however, I found was not listening. He was far away in some other world—his dark eyes staring fixedly at the Trail before us, seeing it and yet not seeing.

Unconsciously he avoided each stone and bump.

A quick turn of his wrist, and we had skirted a ragged uneven bit of the road trampled down by prairie cattle.

When I spoke to him, Damase, with his beautiful French manners, turned to me with a visible effort to

be interested, but the *real* Damase was far away and I soon remained silent, watching the trained involuntary skill which guided us along the Trail.

Bending towards the wheel, his clear cut features and sensitive chin, were silhouetted in that vivid clearness of atmosphere which heralds the drooping of the sun to the waiting horizon

"No Man's Land"! I repeated softly to myself, with my eyes on the sweep of the silent Prairie, and the distant Peaks of the Rockies watching us—atoms that we were.

"No Man's Land," not that No Man's Land of our other life—but an untouched world of emptiness—unconquered.

A sudden swerve to save the life of a little brown gopher made me lurch heavily against the door.

Damase awoke.

There are two Damases, I have learned, just as we found there were two Frances.

The France that sparkled in the sunshine, the France that laughed and danced through life, the France that was our first love—*that* we had always known.

The other France that rose from her merriment and her dallying, and, smiling still, prepared to die! This is the *new* France that we have just learned to know.

Glancing sideways at that dark young face, where faint lines about the eyes and mouth showed contact with life and its emotions, the serious eyes, pools of

knowledge, I see that Damase, like France, has found his soul.

I see that the larky laughing French boy, with his saucy twinkle, whom I knew for a day or more, in a London Hospital, had reached out and found some stronger force in Life than he had yet known.

But how—or where—I do not know.

Idly again I turn to the brown Prairie grass whirling past.

No Man's Land—and the gophers scampering about here and there in consternation over the turmoil we are bringing into their homes, with our great Engine of Destruction.

Is it not to them as fearful as that other Engine of Destruction—a Tank—proved to the human atoms in that other No Man's Land?

" 'Scuse to me, Sister! you not think me good motorman, no"? Apologized Damase, after a swerve which nearly caused me to fall out.

"I know you did it to save the gophers, Damase," I allowed, rubbing my elbow vigorously.

"Sure t'ing I do! I see 'nuff t'ing get killed already —me"!

"I didn't know you could drive a motor. I thought you told me in London that your Father had a tailor shop and that you were in it."

"Sure t'ing I did—not ver' gran' tailor shop, but one for "alter an' repair." I learn sew with heem.

Then in France I get gas—*You* 'member, Sister—an' when I come home the doctor in Winnipeg, he say I must do somet'ing outside where plentee air—more air than in leetle shop."

"And so they taught you to drive a motor," I finished.

"Sure t'ing"!

Damase was sinking back into his old reverie, but I wasn't going to be left out in the cold any longer.

"Damase"! I interrupted, "You told me that day in the ward—that you wanted, oh so much! to be back in your Canada, and you said you would be *so* happy! Don't you remember you said 'Oh, Mon Dieu, let me be back in that old shack on our Prairie Town, an' I will be satisfy!' And now, here you are in your Prairie shack, and you don't look one bit satisfied. What's the matter? Is everything—or everybody—not what you expected"?

Damase lifted these far-away eyes of his and looked on the Prairie Trails crossing each other before us, half curiously as if he looked at them for the first time—questioningly and critically.

"Th' Prairie? Oh yes! She ver' same," he repeated indifferently.

"And *everybody* 'ver' same'," I persisted, for something in the boy's wistfulness appealed to me, and the old habit clings, that one ought to help him, mind or body, wherever the trouble lies.

Once a Sister—always a Sister!

Perhaps something in the stillness of these vast solitary spaces, through which we were passing, exercised its potency.

Damase turned suddenly, a flame of scarlet showing through the brown of his face.

"Sister, *no!* Everyt'ing *not* ver' same—" and rapidly changing from his halting English into his own tongue, first shy and hesitating, then exulting and eloquent, Damase poured forth the tale of his Fate.

That English girl in the Hospital in the seaside town, did I not know her? *Surely* I knew her? Yes, he knew there were many English girls in English Hospital, 'Alright' girls too, he s'posed. He didn't s'pose I would know them all—but *surely* I couldn't have been in Angleterre for all'dat tam'an' not know——!!

The sceptical voice and amazed look—that I should have so wasted my years in England *almost* made one laugh.

Fire blazed in the dark eyes now, as in rapid French he made a picture of his Beautiful Lady.

'Beautiful'! Perhaps I thought I had seen 'beautiful ladie' but would I permit him to tell me what it really meant to be beautiful?

There followed a marvellous picture of his divinity, who, I gathered, had worn a white veil and a scarlet cross on her breast.

Finally, my French failing to follow his poetic flights ,"Will you tell me her name, Damase?" I interrupted.

"Marguerite," Damase paused to answer, in a thrilled deep voice.

"So bad as that!" I thought. "Not even Nurse Marguerite, or Sister Marguerite, but simply 'Marguerite.'"

I had been in that little seaside town once long ago, and remembered it indefinitely.

"Where does she live, Damase"?

"Marguerite, she live in a house *superbe*? Sister, the trees—the garden!—Magnifique!"

"What was it called"?

When Damase said "Quintal Abbey," pronouncing the English name with difficulty, I was very much startled indeed.

"Quintal Abbey"! I repeated. "Surely you're mistaken, Damase"! for long as it was since I had been there, I distinctly remembered "Quintal Abbey" as one of the old ancestral homes of England and I knew that its owners had its bluest blood in their veins. Was it *here* the Fate of Damase lived?

How impossibly absurd! The daughter of "Quintal Abbey"! I remember how I have seen her portrait in one of the English magazines, with her Nurse's Uniform, doing her bit for her Country.

Had it not been for the War, she would certainly have made her bow before Royalty and taken her place in circles not very far removed.

Poor Damase! Poor Boy!

Another side issue of war. Had we not seen similar cases many times in our ward!

"But Damase," I began, really concerned for him. "But Damase,—we all met people—over there—whom we admired—and liked—and when the war was over—said 'Good-bye.' And soon we will begin to think of them as part of that far away time—that other life—that will be like a dream"!

"Non, Mon Dieu! Non!!" interrupted Damase fiercely, "You not understan' Sister, I will not think of her as a dream"!

"But what else———"? The words died away on my lips and I sat silent. . .

A voice in my heart was denouncing bitterly this coquet, this English Beauty, who had disturbed the peace of mind of this Canadian boy in her ward.

A ward is a World to him who lies there day by day.

This girl in her flowing white veil and her scarlet cross meant to Damase the woman, who, in the hours of his pain, helped him and cheered him, who at night when he tossed sleepless and weary, came to his bedside and, by her very presence, soothed him.

A breath of air might perhaps carry to the ward the news that her Father was a peer,—that her brother was a noted leader of men.

In the ward these things lose their consequence. One listens and wonders a moment, and forgets.

The trappings of the World have no place in the Ward.

"Damase, have you ever seen her—her home"?

I was groping about in my mind—I *must* help him.

"Yes, Sister,—— She invite us all—the soldiers in my ward—to tea. Yes," he went on, smiling and pleased, "Yes. the family at Quintal Abbey like me—for they ask me again—twice!"

I was silent. One does not flaunt the foolishness of the world before the eyes of a little child.

I knew too well the open doors of England in war time to doubt that he was asked twice. As many times as the blue coated boy had cared to go I knew how freely and without reserve would he be made welcome.

To Damase it had evidently signified more.

To his mind, untainted by the City, the open door had meant their acceptance of him as a lover.

"But——" with my heart bursting with pity for the boy—"Where will it all lead to"? I was going to say—but I could not.

"And Sister," went on Damase, quiet again in his resolution, "I'm goin' ask her marry me, an' come an' live in our Prairie town; but I'm waitin' for my father. He ver' sick an' I must help him with our familee for leetle while."

Like France, Damase was accepting his Fate.

"Do you—write to her Damase." I asked rather fearfully.

"I get my photo taken, on a card in Winnipeg, an' I send it to her las' Christmas. She write an' tell me she like it ver' much"!

There was no doubt in his eyes, no faltering in his voice. Love had come to him in the form of a girl in a Red Cross Dress, and he accepted it simply as his right.

It happened that the girl was rich and Damase was poor. It happened that the girl was one of the nobility and that he was a prentice tailor.

Were the cases reversed it would have been equally simple to him.

I wanted to warn him, and when I tried I found I could not shatter his dream.

I seemed to see a child happily picking flowers. Hidden beneath the bright petals, I could see hornets and armies of winged insects ready to burst out and sting him—to the heart.

Poor Damase!

. . . . . .

When the dressing was completed, and our old Ford turned in the homeward direction, it seemed almost as if Matron—or was it Nature—had made a mistake.

The sun had disappeared behind the distant peaks of the Rockies, and the faint stars were so low in the darkening sky, that it seemed as if one only had to reach up and grasp them.

"Hitch your Waggon to a Star," I repeated to my-

self, wishing Damase had not followed out the old saying quite so literally.

Sitting well back, I studied the face near me in the dusk. Certainly there was a new look of purpose there, and firm lines that went oddly enough with his imaginative eyes.

We began again in a round about way. I wanted to find out a little more about the Siren—to see if there might be pity for the havoc she had wrought.

I could not imagine a girl of Old England, with a father like the owner of Quintal Abbey and a brother with the spirit of hers, descending to be a mere coquette in this impossible fashion.

We talked about the seaside town where Damase had walked up and down the long promenade, in his bright blue suit.

We talked of the afternoons, when the band played on the pier, and nice old gentlemen gossiped with the boys and gave them cigarettes, and elderly ladies—and young ones too—took them to tea in the attractive little tea shops.

And then we talked of the evenings when you could see on every bench, along the Downs, a blue suit, and a flutter of white skirts.

Damase hastened to tell me that this evening frivolity was not for him.

The band might play, and the moon might shine, he assured me, but Damase preferred to remain in the

little ward kitchen, helping his Divinity to wash up the supper dishes and tidy up the ward.

Truly she was a brick—this daughter of the English nobility.

They stick at nothing—these girls. There may be interest and romance found in the ward, but where does she find it when she steps, without demur, into the kitchen and washes up and tidies up till she becomes an expert at the unaccustomed work.

Yes, Damase's "Marguerite," you go up a peg in my estimation!

And yet—I could see how here the mischief began.

"Of course, I see what Damase thinks—" I told myself, drawing the rug about me, as the Prairie night became distinctly cold. "Damase, who has watched her wash up the supper dishes in the ward kitchen, and fetch and carry for the senior Nurse, as if she had done nothing else all her life. Damase cannot see why she would not do the same with him behind the little shop, where they do 'Alter and Repair'."

I wished very much I had met the girl—then I might know if the havoc was wrought by the eternal desire for another scalp, or only by kindly interest unconsciously shown to the Canadian Boy.

We were speeding through the shadows now—we did not want to put Matron more in the wrong than we could help!

We ceased talking.

I was worried, and Damase, the real Damase, I am sure was in that little town by the sea.

"Tell me, Damase, when there is anything more to tell," I said, as I jumped out and ran up the steps of our Hospital, stamping my feet, for the Stars were tingling with the Autumn cold.

Yet, I was grieved, when two weeks later, he followed me about the grounds until we were a little apart from the others, and told me that had written over to Marguerite and asked her to come out and be his wife.

"Oh, Damase. . . ." I began, but he interrupted me.

"It's all right! Sure t'ing it's all right! Sister, you fear my Father, he not be pleased, no? An' dat I not be able work for him an' ma wife"?

"It wasn't just that——"

"It's all right! My Father he more strong now. He tole me, "Damase" he say "Why you not have wife like other fellers"? An' I tole him "Oui, oui, Mon Père," I say, "Dat be all right," an' I write toute suite to Marguerite."

The face of Damase was shining.

All the Romance and Dramatic Power—all the vision of his French heritage were in his dark eyes.

I believe at that moment Damase could see his letter being carried through the Avenue (Superbe!) to that wonderful old 'Quintal Abbey'!

"I am sure she is nothing but a horrid flirt," I said to myself, feeling the bitterness of the blow that was about to fall on him. I could only wave my hand to Damase-of-the-shining-face, and turn quickly away.

Strangely enough the last English mail had brought me, in one of the newest magazines, another picture of the important little lady who was causing so much turmoil in our Prairie peace.

I studied it closely—the face of the Hon. Margaret—Daughter of the "Abbey."

I could not help liking the face—admiring it.

What beautiful promise in these serious eyes!

What character—and dormant strength in the young face!

What dignity of carriage!

I could not look into the eyes and even question that the soul behind them would not 'play the game' on the most honourable grounds.

The Letter of the law was not for such as she—but the Spirit!

Puzzled and worried for the boy, I went about my work, telling myself that it was none of my business, and when would I learn to allow other people to mind their own affairs.

"If they were only happy affairs," I replied to myself.

"Poor Damase"!

I caught myself counting, counting the days that the

letter would take to reach the seaside town and how many days the answer—that cruel answer—would take to be hurled at Damase.

How ridiculous to make such a fuss about a little love affair like a hundred other such—of which I knew! Yes, but the shining face of Damase—and the joy in his eyes!

Do we care to look upon an animal hurt?

Is one indifferent when the love and trust in the eyes of a Spaniel die—beneath a blow?

When the moon shone in through my sky light window, I climbed up in a chair and looked through to see our Prairie town lying white beneath its light. Even so, with borrowed beauty shed around and about it, how crude! How bare!

I had not thought of it as such before, but now with my eyes closed, seeing again the grace and beauty of that old pile--Quintal Abbey!

"How absurd! How absolutely absurd!" I repeated, tossing about, and hoping she would at least make her letter strong enough to convince Damase that he had been living in a fool's paradise.

It would come—that answer would come—just before Christmas.

Damase had told us in London about the lovely Christmases they had in the Prairie and this would be his first one since his return.

Poor Damase!

Foolish, trifling, heartless—— No, I could not say it, looking into the straight young eyes in the picture.

. . . . .

"Another English mail coming on this train," announced an orderly, and I knew it was probably carrying the Fate of Damase.

The mail is opened in the Hospital Post Office.

Damase was hovering about, even before the train was signalled.

He came to the door of my ward, which was in the same floor. I knew what he wanted—a glance and a nod of sympathy; a quick word—if it were only "I know, Damase. Yes. I know what is coming."

But I kept far away from the door, and I would not meet his glance.

"I wish he was not so *sure;* it will be so much worse when it comes," I grumbled to myself, attacking beds violently, and punching pillows as if they were English Beauties.

One never knows with a temperament like his——

After all I would be near the door and ready to speak to him when the moment came.

Everything is so slow in our Prairie Town, even the motors that bring our letters from the train! Will they never come!

And when the bag is brought in, how awkward and stupid and slow are the hands that unlock it!

It is not right, it is a *shame*, of our Postman to stop

and joke with a passing patient, when he should be handing out the mail!

It is *ridiculous*—this delay!

. . . . .

"Paul Damase—Yes, here is me"!

Then I turned coward. I closed our ward door, and I ran. No, one doesn't *run* in a ward, but I walked so quickly that it was faster than running, to the very other end, where the linen cupboard is. I buried my face in the shelves of sheets.

"Sister——" I heard his voice through the door, and the quick knocks by which he hoped to gain admission.

I went on counting sheets. I could not face the stricken look that would be there.

"Sister, Damase, wants to speak to you," interfered my tiresome little junior.

"I know! I know!" I scolded, and the poor child retired, startled and alarmed.

The door was open, and on the threshold stood Damase.

Still a coward, my eyes began at his feet, travelling slowly upwards, for I have never become accustomed to the sight of pain.

"Sister——" A voice shrill with delight, a face shining! "She's comin', Sister, she's comin' "!!

"What do——you——mean"? I gasped.

"She's comin' out in Spring to be ma wife"!

I leaned against the door and waited.

"She's coming——"? I stupidly repeated.

"Yes, Sister, sure t'ing! She's comin' out, and she send me her picture. Not so beautiful! Mon Dieu!! Not half so beautiful as she self"!

And he devoured with his eyes a large photograph in his hand.

I snatched it from him, and saw—a rather pert looking young woman with a pretty doll face, and a rose in her hair.

*"This"!* I gasped. "Who is this, Damase"?

"This?" he repeated surprised. "This 'La Belle Marguerite' "!

"You said she lived at Quintal Abbey"!

"Yes, sure t'ing she live at Quintal Abbey."

Damase was so taken up with the picture that he was indifferent to my astonishment.

I rushed upstairs, and down again, with the magazine in my hand.

I thrust it into his hand, open at the picture of the Hon. Margaret.

"That," I said, "is the lady who lives at Quintal Abbey, and was in your Hospital, and whose name is Margaret."

Damase threw back his dark head, and laughed and laughed loud and long!

*"That,* Sister, that the *Mistress* of Marguerite." "That the fine lady who will have all that house for her own"!

"And *this* Marguerite, who is she"? I asked, touching the photograph.

"Ma Beautiful Marguerite is the maid to the lady in the picture. "She was nurse too in our Hospital—the lady—and Marguerite tole me when her Lady say she want go to work in the Hospital, and her father say yes, Marguerite ask her take her with her an' she help in the ward kitchen."

"Oh, Sister"! and Damase burst out again *"You* t'ink me some fool *shure!* for want marry gran' lady like *dat'!* Oh, Mon Dieu!"

And in my relief and my delight, I agreed heartily with Damase, that while the Hon. Margaret was 'Ver' pretty shure,' *his* Marguerite was truly the *real* thing!

Warwick Bro's & Rutter, Limited,
Printers and Bookbinders, Toronto, Canada.