

The Nurse's Story

BY ADELE BLENEAU

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

CHAPTER VII.

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

"We all have our pet aversion in action, old man, haven't we?" he said. "Now, there is Cecil Loring, who hates the thing that makes the least noise. You know we all used to laugh at him as he bobbed every bullet! And then, there was Shane-Lister—he was devilishly shaken by high explosives. Just the other day Barry said to me: 'Jan, my boy, you remember that day when we were talking to the observation officer standing on a haystack and the moment after we left it a shell struck it? That was a close call. Things like that go to my head!' And then in action when the bullets are singing and all hell seems to loose he insists that he feels drunk—as drunk as if he had been at it all night. It may be a form of funk, he says, but it's truth. Why, I am laughing all the time at absolute nothing, clean lifted out of myself, exhilarated. I feel as if I were treading on air, but—and here Captain Fraser dropped his voice in a most confidential manner and looked up at me with burning eyes—"as for me, I do not mind telling you when it is all over I have that sickening rattling sensation—you know, as if you were made of lead and were sinking down. And then is when I like my tea. Who's making tea? Give me a cup—no, I mean mugful."

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

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

This had been going on for some weeks now. He had grown weaker, of course, every day and less able to



He Had Grown Weaker Every Day and Less Able to Withstand the Fever.

withstand the ravages of fever. When the doctor came to see how he was he shook his head gravely and said:

"Unless we can keep that fever down for the next twenty-four hours our man is done for."

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

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

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

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

"I will do the best I can," he replied and turned on his heel and ran down the steps.

I tried to take my patient's pulse, but it was so irregular and rapid that it was impossible. In looking at him his eyes seemed already deeper and hollower, surrounded, as they were, by great dark shadows, and his hands, which lay flat on the cover, were so white that they were only distinguishable from the linen by the azure of the veins.

I heard the light ticking of a clock on the mantle. I felt that Time, the fugitive, was slipping by and what its passage might soon bring. I violently put the thought out of my mind. I could not bear it. Through those next hours there wasn't a moment but that I wasn't doing something—everything known to me—to fight off the dreaded end.

passed. Thoughts and images furrowed my brain. By supreme effort I conquered the terror that held me and quickly went to the bed. I put out my hand to touch his forehead, but the lid to do it failed me. Finally I held before his lips a little tuft of cotton—held it there with infinite precision. The weaving of a thread showed the strength of his respiration. All my soul hung on those parted lips, which between moments might render their last breath. I controlled myself and before trembling placed my fingers on the pulse. It was firmer, stronger. There could be no mistake. A little time went by; it seemed incalculable. I took the pulse again. Without doubt my patient was better.

Looking up I caught with joy the first pale gray nuances of dawn. With the coming of the sunrise Captain Fraser weakly—oh, so weakly—struggled back to this side of the borderland which men call life.

Then I leaned half in a collapse, against the tall post of the old-fashioned bed and wept gently tears of joy, for I knew that God had heard my prayer and given me the victory.

Further over toward Belgium a group of Frenchmen were establishing a hospital. They had by their head nurse a young Miss F., who had been educated in the Presbyterian hospital in New York. Dozens of types of patients were arriving daily, and she was having some difficulty in making her untrained French assistants understand the cold bath system of treatment for that disease. In some way she had heard there was an American nurse in our hospital and had sent a request that this nurse be detailed to help her demonstrate the method. The colonel sent for me one afternoon and showed me Miss F.'s letter.

"I think she must mean you, Miss Bleneau, as you are the nearest approach we have to an American nurse. I know you would be of inestimable value, but"—said he passed and looked out across the garden. While he had been speaking I had felt like a person who suddenly finds himself at the edge of a precipice. Can it be possible that I must leave? My thoughts were interrupted by the doctor speaking again: "The truth is we cannot well spare you. The allies are expecting heavy fighting in the course of the few days. You can go to Miss F. tomorrow, but you must be back here at the end of the week."

"I do not know why, but his decision gave me the greatest relief, even more—a sense of acute pleasure. In the natural course of things it would be an hour or two before my duties would call me to Captain Fraser's room. Generally the hours were never long enough to accomplish all that was to be done, but that day time scarcely passed—it fell drop by drop, lastly and heavily. But at last the moment came to go to him.

The afternoon was soft and warm. We could hear the birds singing in the garden, and through the open window floated the perfume of the last autumn flowers, inspiring me with new emotion, a little like that of being afraid of oneself. To counteract this I kept saying over and over, "To be effective your work must be calm and concordant, calm and concordant." I repeated.

Then I turned to him and said: "Tomorrow I shall say goodbye. I have been ordered to a typhoid hospital at one of the French bases."

He broke in, with a wistful little smile in his eyes: "Please don't go. What will I do without you? I have thought about it all so much as I have lain here hour after hour. That I am not dead and buried these weeks goes to my head." There was a moment's pause, after which he added simply, "Now, and be emphatic the word, 'I can only thank you.'"

"Nonsense," I replied. "When all is said and done it is nature that does the work."

"Perhaps," he answered, "but in a case like mine nature only does so in conjunction with unrelenting and skillful care." Into his voice came a note new to my ears. He went on speaking: "That night—you know the night I mean—when it was just a toss up whether I lived or died, I think if one could know how much will power has to do with things, it would be found that I lived because in a few lucid intervals I realized the heroic fight you were putting up for me, and subconsciously my will went out to help you. For when one is in that near the other side, self, material things and interests count for little. But now," and he looked out across the hills, crowned with purple shadows, "realizing that on my life depends the happiness of my mother, my family, and that the life of any man who has had a certain training in warfare is valuable to his country, I am deeply grateful to fate that I am living—and fate, in this case, my dear little nurse, means you," he said tensely.

"That's a very pretty speech," I answered lightly, "and I should so like to take it all to myself, but the very distinguishing fact remains that it was your subalter."

Without heeding my words he interrupted: "The disillusioning fact remains that you are going away," and he looked up at me with wide distraught eyes, and as he put up his hand and took mine I felt it tremble. "Don't go," he said, with a gesture of entreaty, and I listened to explain that it was only for a few days, or a week at best; as I thought suddenly he looked not so well today and must not be worried by even trifles.

"I must go now," I said. "My other patients are needing me," and I hurried away toward the German ward. I had taken only a few steps when he called me back.

me, and a trembling I could not master overcame me.

"I am so glad I have been able to help a little," I stammered and ran quickly down the stairs.

It was only when I reached the ground floor that I remembered I had not told him the story of how he came to be at our hospital, but I resolved to do it before I left tomorrow.

CHAPTER VIII.

War Prisoners' Gospel.
I got to the German ward I could go outdoors, through a court and pass in by a French window. I often did this, as it gave me a breath of air. It was twilight, but the lamps had not yet been lighted. Rubber soles shoes made my approach noiseless, and as I came upon the little group of German prisoners I heard one of them say:

"Russia will want peace in the early summer, and France will seize the first possible opportunity to abandon the struggle, which will leave Germany free to fight it out with her true enemy—England." At which one of them picked up his glass—he was talking to a man who was a little like this one and which gave an excuse for a toast—but instead of the customary "Prost" which the German usually uses he looked solemnly into the faces of his comrades, blinking like an owl, and said with an unmistakable vibration of hate in his voice, "God punish England!" And the others, with equal feeling, responded, "God punish her!"

I was amazed at this. I had never heard it before and frankly said so. They assured me that in place of the time honored "Auf wiedersehen" one often now hears this even as a leave taking. It originated with the officers and men in the field, but now all over Germany it was said with sincerity and earnestness.

I was always interested in their point of view, for the three who had remained with us owing to the condition of their wounds were educated and representative Germans. Apart from their hatred of England, frankly expressed, they were courteous, agreeable gentlemen. One was a Bavarian nobleman, whose taste was evidently luxurious, for when he came to us his buttons, cigarette box, wrist watch, everything except the inevitable plain gold bangle, was literally encrusted with enamel, diamonds and rubies. As I approached he raised his left arm, bending his wrist with a quick motion quite characteristic, and looking at his watch, said sharply, for the desire to command runs so innate that to separate him from it would have been to separate his soul from his body. "You are a little late, nurse."

"Did you fear I had forgotten you?" I asked without really thinking what I was saying.

"The Germans fear God and nothing else," he answered quickly. His tone was a little aggressive. I stopped for a second and looked at him. There he sat, propped up in bed with pillows, a heavy, handsome type of his class, a prisoner of war, and yet the whole thing struck me as too funny for words, and I began to laugh. He evidently saw the humor of the situation himself and laughed also.

"Ach, du bist ein schones madchen," he said, using the familiar and friendly "thou." "Forgive me," he added, "and tell me the news." They were forever eagerly asking for news.

"Well," I said, "Kitchener has his extra million men. That ought to please you."

"Well, it doesn't make me sad," he replied, "because we know that for all their drumming and advertisement, Kitchener cannot get the men, and the English won't tolerate conscription. In fact, it is too late for that now, as it would be a confession of failure, and besides, what will you do with a million men without officers? We know how long it takes to train an officer—try to do it. As for the French, I am sorry for them," he said. "Poor devils! They would like to make peace in time. But you know," he gravely assured me, "English troops are drawn up behind them all along the line, which is a constant threat if they should give way. Why?" and he raised up eagerly. "England has even threatened to bombard their ports if they do."

"A good bombing will be England's salvation," added one of the others. "Think of the effect on future generations of Englishmen, when they ask

why some parts of London are so much more beautiful and better built than the rest! The answer will be that that part is superior because Germany rebuilt it when it was destroyed."

The seriousness with which this was said proved too much for my ribbles. I was sorry, but I could not help it. I simply had to laugh. I longed to suggest that as he was an architect perhaps he might put in some of his enforced idleness suggesting improvements in the architecture of London. But I was a nurse; I was a prisoner and what I did say was, "Good night."

Later that evening when I went to Captain Fraser's room to get him ready for the night, I told him the story of how it was his little boyish lieutenant and not myself who really deserved his thanks for saving his life.

"But you say he was not very badly wounded. What has become of him? Why hasn't he been to see me?"

"For the very reason that his wounds were slight the doctor sent him that same night to one of the nearby big base hospitals. We have only room here for the badly wounded, you know."

After thinking for a few moments he said, "Well, the first thing I shall do when I get out will be to find Tubby." "Tubby?" I cried in amazement. "Why Tubby? He is as thin as a match!"

"That is just the idea," he laughed. "But I'll write to him. I'll do it this very minute."

"Please wait until tomorrow," I quickly interrupted, for he was becoming so excited I began to regret having told him anything about Tubby at all.

Then I suddenly remembered with joy that I had a letter for him, for it gave us a diverting topic of conversation. It proved to be from a brother officer who was in prison at Torgau, in Germany. He asked me to read it to him. It ran:

My Dear Jan—I thought perhaps you might want to know what a day's work out here is like. You know I was taken prisoner at Mons. First we were sent to Cologne and then on to Metz, where we were joined by a party of Scots. The journey was made in a cattle car, but our keepers were a decent sort, and it's all in a lifetime anyway. The only thing I really would like to register a kick about is the German Red Cross. The journey is made in a cattle car, but our keepers were a decent sort, and it's all in a lifetime anyway. The only thing I really would like to register a kick about is the German Red Cross. The journey is made in a cattle car, but our keepers were a decent sort, and it's all in a lifetime anyway. The only thing I really would like to register a kick about is the German Red Cross.

We have an exercise ground here which is half a mile in circumference. At first we were a comfortable little party, but the other day 500 French came in, and all the outposts, wagon sheds, etc., are used for their quarters. We only had one meal, but I did get hot when they refused us water. We got to Torgau about 10 in the morning and were marched to the fortress, but the particular building is called the Bruckenkopf. Napoleon the First built it to protect the bridge over the Elbe for his great Russian exploit.

Our building is divided into about fifty rooms which are British quarters. Out-boards are used for the particular building which are used for messes. Usually twenty-five or thirty officers mess together.

We can get all sorts of medicines made up in this place, but they are very scarce about selling anything with poison in any quantity in it and it is a much mooted question whether they fear we might use it for suicide or to poison the British. I hardly think it is the former because if it were there would be regulations against the daily bath, as the British often remark to each other that if the English are on bathing in this fashion all the time there won't be a one of them left when winter is over.

We have been able to buy, in the canteen, bread, cheese, chocolate, apples, jam, sausage and even beer, but the list has dwindled until only jam, marmalade, sausage and ham are left. In another canteen on certain days in the week one may buy clothes and the like.

True, our trousers are of khaki corduroy and must have a narrow red band down the outer seam—a narrow effort to conceal. Trying to escape, I might add, isn't exactly popular as a means of diversion, as a good many fellows have tried it and paid for the attempt with their lives. We are never allowed on the battlements, and even if one attempts to peep over a great big Hun with a great big gun brings his rifle instantly to his shoulder with unmistakable expression of business in his eye. The whole place is surrounded by a moat, and in place of water there exists the un picturesque barbed-wire entanglements, and we are constantly reminded that a high power live wire runs through the whole of it. At some of the prisons the sentries carry live bayonets, but here it is evidently not considered necessary.

For a long time, as you know, we were not permitted to write letters home, and the knowledge that our families were suffering the greatest anxiety on our account was the most distressing part of the imprisonment. Finally one day it was suggested by the commandant that we might like to subscribe to the German Red Cross fund. Nothing could have been received with greater alacrity than this suggestion, as the most of us remembered as our most humiliating experiences those which we suffered at the hands of the Red Cross workers. But when we had submitted that if the amount was such as to make it worth while to send the checks we should be content to cash them ourselves, we were told that the German Red Cross fund was not a charitable organization, and we were constantly reminded that a high power live wire runs through the whole of it. At some of the prisons the sentries carry live bayonets, but here it is evidently not considered necessary.

that the orderlies are soon going to fall heir to that job.

English newspapers or books we don't have, but we are able to buy German ones. Often when there is a German runner they publish it as an unconfirmed rumor from London, Rome or somewhere, but at other times there seems no attempt to disguise their losses. My own opinion is that the press of Germany is inclined to be creative rather than suppressional. They continually lead their readers on with great expectations, when one plan fails through, to go after another. First it was the move on Paris; then it was Calais, and so it goes.

For some weeks past now we have been able to write two postcards or one letter a week. You should feel highly complimented that this week I have chosen to spend my precious letter on you, though it's pretty certain to be cut to pieces by the censor, even if a decent German officer here has promised me to get it through intact some day. But there is no use beating about the bush, old chap, behind it all there is a motive—I want to borrow £20. You see here all the officers of the rank of captain and upward are paid 100 marks a month by the German government. The junior officers receive from 50 to 60 marks. We have to pay 10 of this for messing. The money left over—in my case there is none—one spends for food, tobacco, chocolate, etc., but it is never enough, and we piece it out by money from home, obtained through our banks or the American consul or embassy. All that might be all right, but the days are long, and for pastime, morning, noon and night, we play bridge. I leave you to guess the whereabouts of my present credit, but I don't want to say that the governor—you know how he feels about such things.

I often think about the good old days at Exeter; but, as the Americans say, "What's the use? Goodby and good luck until we meet again. Yours,

After cautioning him repeatedly about his medicine, diet, etc., for the nurse who would look after him was unthinkable busy, I said good night and goodby, for I was leaving very early on the morrow.

(To Be Continued.)

AN EASY WAY TO GET FAT AND BE STRONG

The trouble with most thin folks who wish to gain weight is that they insist on drugging their stomachs or stuffing it with greasy foods; rubbing on useless "dash creams" or following some foolish physical culture stunt, while the real cause of thinness goes unnoticed. You cannot get fat until your digestive tract assimilates the food you eat.

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