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THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S HOSPITAL AT THE FRENCH ABBEY OF ROYAUMONT By ANTONIO DE NAVARRO

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WITH FIFTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS



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THE HOSPITAL

CHAPTER I

PREPARATIONS—START FOR FRANCE

To the average civilian the outbreak of the European War burst with the suddenness of an earthquake. The inertia of the first days of incredulity was quickly succeeded by eager offers to help—to the limit of human endurance. But each individual had to face the bewildering problem: what services could be offered that would best assist the country in her hour of affliction? Fortunate were the young men of the nation, for they had a definite call. Fortunate also those engaged in work concerned with the manufacture of material of war. More favoured, even, the members of the medical and nursing professions, whose technical training was already an earnest of safety and repair for the yet unwounded soldiers. All of these were qualified to play an immediate part in the gigantic scheme of military organization. But the vast untrained numbers, unskilled even in the process of discovering where, and how, their patriotic eagerness could best be utilized! Pathetic was their condition of uncertainty; particularly that of the able-bodied young women, willing, capable, but ignorant of how best to satisfy their humane longings. But it was not long before the numerous organizations of women throughout the country came opportunely to their rescue. Throughout the nation, more than in any other country of Europe, women were already playing a useful rôle in municipal life, and with a betterment

of the conditions of their communities as a consequence. The growing importance of their public work had led to the formation of large associations organized on lines that ensured the utilization of the full working capacity of their members. Prominent among them were the several Suffrage Unions. The unpleasant notoriety of one society which promulgated militant doctrines served at least to draw attention to the majority of law-abiding constitutional societies throughout the kingdom.

The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, of which Mrs. Fawcett is President, decided, on the advent of the war, to set aside its propaganda and devote all energies and resources to the assistance of the nation in its hour of supreme need. Every member of the Union received a schedule of questions, and this proved to be a most useful guide to the working capacity of the Society as a whole. Meanwhile, it had become evident that the Army Medical Corps and Red Cross arrangements for the wounded would be taxed to their utmost powers to cope with the surgery and nursing on so gigantic a field of battle. In this work Great Britain was especially fitted to contribute important assistance. Supreme among the occupations of woman stands the art of nursing, and the excellence of the English nurse has been a matter of universal recognition. We owe it to the genius of Florence Nightingale, to her practical brain and clear-sighted idealism, which, despite the "passionate heart," refused marriage and the happy limitations of the domestic hearth to follow the call of a more comprehensive duty to humanity. Since her great example, thousands of women have left comfortable homes for work which in its routine details is as mechanical and trying as the labour of any ordinary domestic.

Before the first month of the war had passed, a number of schemes were started for the formation of hospital

units officered by women. The Women's Imperial Service League was early in the field, and promptly organized such a hospital and dispatched it to Antwerp. The history of its work before the bombardment and surrender of the city, and the subsequent flight of the entire staff, are already well known.

Under the auspices of the *Croix Rouge Française*, Dr. Louisa Garrett Anderson and Dr. Flora Murray organized and maintained by private subscription a military hospital of 100 beds in Paris (Claridge's Hotel), where excellent work was carried on from the middle of September 1914 to the end of the succeeding January. By the month of November (after the battle of the Marne) the struggling line had gradually receded to the North, and the wounded were sent to Paris in rapidly decreasing numbers. In consequence, the medical staff at Claridge's Hotel, feeling that their services were no longer urgently required in Paris, founded a branch at Wimereux, near Boulogne. This was promptly recognized by the English Royal Army Medical Corps, and rations and supplies were dispatched to them by the Government. Dr. Garrett Anderson and Dr. Flora Murray were then requested by the British authorities (in February) to undertake the management of a military hospital of 500 beds in London. This organization began its work early in May at Endell Street, Covent Garden, with a medical staff of fourteen women, comprising a doctor in charge, a chief surgeon, a chief physician, eight assistant surgeons, a pathologist, an ophthalmic and a dental surgeon.

Early in August, only a few days after the outbreak of war, the Scottish Branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (N.U.W.S.S.) formulated a plan for supplying and maintaining two complete hospital units of one hundred beds each, to be officered entirely by medical women. A Committee was

appointed for the working out of this scheme, the moving spirit of which was Dr. Elsie Inglis, of Edinburgh. Her enthusiastic and generous heart spared no pains in getting together a personnel and equipment which would be of value wherever need was most urgent. In the beginning, many harassing obstacles had to be surmounted. The services of the two hospitals were first offered to the Scottish Red Cross and to the War Office. Both replied that they had at that time adequate medical provision, and would not require the assistance of women in the capacity of military surgeons.

It was then suggested to Dr. Inglis that her scheme might be acceptable to the Allies, whose long line of battle had thrown a sudden and enormous strain upon the resources of their medical organizations. The Scottish Federation thereupon offered their hospitals to the Croix Rouge Française and to the Serbian authorities. The Vicomtesse de la Panouse, President of the Comité de Londres de la Croix Rouge Française, welcomed the proposal, and gave great assistance in furthering its progress. About the same time the Serbian Government accepted the offer of a hospital, and arranged to provide a suitable building and rations. The important preliminaries were thus far successful; but trying work remained to be carried out before Dr. Inglis bade farewell to the first unit, which started for France early in December 1914, and to the first Serbian unit, which sailed before the year had ended.

Long before 1915 had elapsed, the original modest proposition, which had represented 200 beds, had developed and included two hospitals stationed in France and three in Serbia, aggregating over 1,000 beds. The Scottish Women's Hospitals, as these units were entitled, remained under the control of the Committee which had been appointed by the Scottish Branch of the N.U.W.S.S. To the office of this Committee, in St. Andrew's Square, Edinburgh, streamed

a steady flow of subscriptions, both in money and gifts. These resources came at first from the members of the N.U.W.S.S., but eventually the merits of the Scottish Women's Hospitals won such widespread recognition and approval that the names of non-suffrage and anti-suffrage individuals of both sexes figured on the long list of generous donors. In the autumn of 1914 no one could have foreseen this ultimate triumph.

To send out the first hospital to Serbia had taxed Dr. Inglis's endurance to severe limits. Unforeseen obstacles and delays were constantly occurring, as would be expected when the heavy equipment of a modern hospital had to be conveyed to the other end of Europe during a war which had already appropriated many of the available means of transport. Again and again the date of departure was unavoidably postponed: the Admiralty could not supply the necessary transport, the many stores could not be guaranteed safe arrival, etc.; but eventually the first unit sailed in December. The tragic death-roll among its members, and the sad destiny of its heroic grapple with the irresistible typhus plague are now a matter of history. In May, a second unit was sent to Serbia, equipped with tents for the open-air treatment—the only method able to cope successfully with the fell disease. On their journey out they were held up for a week at Malta to nurse the English wounded arriving there in numbers from the Dardanelles. During the course of the year (1915), the Committee undertook to staff a Serbian hospital of 300 beds at Lazarovatz and a new unit was also formed at Madlanovatz.¹

The history of the initial steps which led to the successful installation of the French unit may now be out-

¹ Since the above was written, the Germans have overrun Serbia. Some of the members of the unit escaped by trekking over the hills in mid-winter. Dr. Elsie Inglis and Dr. Alice Hutchison, with their staffs, reached England after a term of imprisonment.

lined. As already stated, the sympathies of the Vicomtesse de la Panouse had been enlisted in Dr. Elsie Inglis's work, and she spared no effort to find a suitable habitation for a hospital in France. Dr. Alice Hutchison, whose labours in Bulgaria during the Balkan War had rendered her an invaluable assistant in the choice of a suitable position for a hospital, was sent to France and Belgium to report on the different sites which had been suggested to the Edinburgh Committee. She found that in many places in Belgium and in France there was urgent need for individual doctors and British nurses. A typhoid hospital was required at Calais, and Dr. Depage, the famous Belgian surgeon, persuaded her to remain there and organize one for that purpose, under the auspices of the Croix Rouge Belge. Ten Scottish fever nurses reached Calais within forty-eight hours after Dr. Hutchison's telegram. Such good work was performed, that the rate of mortality in the Scottish Women's Hospital proved to be the lowest in the town. In consequence, Dr. Depage expressed his intention of visiting England as soon as the war was over to learn the secret of the training system of British nursing. Owing to the efficacy of typhoid inoculation, the epidemic did not extend as widely as had been feared, and by the spring Dr. Hutchison found herself free to go out in charge of the second unit of the Scottish Women's Hospital destined for Serbia.

In the early months of the war, the French hospital arrangements had been inadequate to cope with the overwhelming rush of work in the North, where the enemy's attack and advance through Belgium had not been expected. British medical assistance was therefore imperatively required in that part of France and in Belgium; and for the moment the Scottish Women's Hospital was endeavouring to discover a base where the demand was most needed. It was

found that practically every building in the hard-pressed northern area near the coast had already been appropriated for military or medical purposes. After much consideration the Abbaye de Royaumont (placed at the disposition of the French Red Cross by the owner, M. Edouard Gouin) was accepted by the Organizing Committee in Edinburgh. The proximity of Royaumont to M——, the important military evacuation station, was the determining factor in the decision to start the hospital in that locality. During the months of October and November, each member of the potential staff of the first French hospital unit had lived in a whirlwind of expectancy and telegrams. Feverish inquiries as to the destination of their future work had elicited only vague replies; negotiations were being conducted with regard to sites near Furnes, Ypres, Dunkirk, and Chantilly. The latter, it was thought, might be too far from the firing-line; Furnes, too near. Eventually it was decided that Royaumont was to be the destination. Suspense was at last at an end, but only a few days before the date of starting from England.

All the members assembled on the evening of December 2nd. Dr. Elsie Inglis had arranged to meet every one at dinner and to conduct them afterwards to a farewell address at the home of Mrs. Fawcett. In the early hours of the succeeding morning, before six o'clock, everybody would be up, and the long-anticipated journey would begin. It was the dominating thought of all: that they would at last be able to do their share in assisting those who were exposing their lives in the great struggle for humanity.

Imagine the consternation when Dr. Inglis's first words announced the fact that the date of the journey would have to be postponed, the Red Cross Society having received a telegram that day requesting a delay until the necessary qualifications of each member of the unit should be received. Obsessed by this fateful

telegram, the unit listened to the farewell eloquence of Mrs. Fawcett and Miss Maude Royden, doubtful if they would ever be considered deserving of the good wishes so earnestly expressed for their future. The subsequent hours, however, passed quickly. Dr. Inglis worked with untiring energy and to such good effect that she was finally able to dispatch the Royaumont unit from Folkestone on the morning of December 4th.

The personnel consisted of seven women doctors, ten fully trained nurses, eight orderlies, and three chauffeuses, under the direction of a head surgeon, Miss Frances Ivens, of Liverpool. The equipment for one hundred beds had already been dispatched from Edinburgh.

CHAPTER II

ARRIVAL OF PIONEER PARTY IN FRANCE AND AT ROYAUMONT

THAT 4th of December was a day of unforgettable storm. The party crossed to Dieppe over a Channel lashed by furious winter winds—an interminable journey of seven hours. *La Ville Lumière* was reached in darkness, fourteen hours after the start from Victoria Station.

Paris had then more the appearance of a provincial town than of the gay metropolis of Europe. The streets were perhaps more brightly lit than those of the Zeppelin-haunted London of early days, but the traffic was not more than that of a sleepy country town. What struck particularly the English visitor was the absence of the usual large advertisement-placards and the silence of the streets. Hotels, trains, 'buses, underground stations, and cafés were notoriously short of men of military age; women were already doing their work. In the quiet thoroughfares most of the pedestrians were in deep mourning.

The first day was spent in hard work by the Chief Surgeon, who interviewed the authorities of the Red Cross, railway officials, etc. The proprietor of the Abbaye de Royaumont, M. Edouard Gouin, was a prominent member of that branch of the Croix Rouge Française known as the *Secours aux Blessés Militaires*. A meeting with him was arranged for the early afternoon. Almost his first words informed her that he

had wired the previous day advising the unit to postpone its departure from England—a telegram which had only reached London when the unit was already on the Channel. He explained that although his private apartments in the western wing of the Abbey had been placed at the disposal of the small advance party of five, which had arrived a few days previously, the accommodation being limited, there would not be beds sufficient for the additional twenty-eight. He stated also that soldiers were billeted on the premises, and that all available space in the farm and stables was already occupied. The situation, discouraging as it was, was rendered all the more hopeless by the fact that the hospital equipment had not yet arrived. The Red Cross officials had undertaken to put pressure on the railway authorities in order that it should be at Royaumont at the earliest possible moment, but no news could be obtained as to when it would reach Paris. What to do in the meantime? The imperturbable Chief disarmed all doubts as to the capability of the Scottish women to deal with the unexpected dilemma. With her usual resourcefulness, she decided to purchase that very afternoon (a Saturday) ten straw mattresses and blankets, and travel down with a few specially selected, robust members of the party to see the Abbey and form an opinion as to the possibility of converting it into a modern hospital. M. Gouin, rising to her level, agreed to send down his architect and all the workmen procurable in a land already depopulated by conscription. Immediately after leaving the Red Cross headquarters, the Chief Surgeon searched the large shops of Paris for bedding materials which could be used by the pioneers until the equipment arrived from Edinburgh. The evening was spent in planning future arrangements.

Anxiously did those left in Paris on the Sunday await the report which Dr. Ivens would bring on her

return that evening; and great was the relief at her first exclamation that "no matter what the obstacles, all must be overcome. The charm of Royaumont makes it imperative that we should succeed."

It was decided to send down daily parties of two or three, each carrying their own bedding: mattresses and coverings which would afford temporary protection from the cold, draughty stone floors of the cells, and yet cost next to nothing. The cheapest of ordinary *paillasses* were dismissed as expensive luxuries; even flock was pronounced a rich man's prerogative, in comparison with the grass mattresses which were finally selected. These had a coarse brown jute cover and smelt pleasantly of hay. The consternation of the hall-porter of the hotel may be imagined when the first batch arrived from the shops in a bulging taxi-cab. At each purchase of a new instalment the prospective sleepers would delightedly roll them up and carry them across the road to the Gare du Nord to catch the early morning train—all rejoicing at being the chosen ones to brave the first hardships of an embryo hospital. Fortunate were those who possessed sleeping-bags or hold-alls which resisted the damp of the Abbey floors. With all available cloaks and skirts heaped upon the beds, they passed shivering nights; in the early morning waking to find everything dripping with moisture. Yet, strange to say, no illness resulted from the trying experiences of that memorable week. Some described it as a weird dream from which, every hour, they expected to wake. Until the equipment arrived on the 12th, the company used utensils borrowed from the kindly villagers and tradespeople. Another difficulty in those early days was the inadequate stock of provisions obtainable. Both Viarmes and Asnières were small, and had carried on very little trading since the general exodus in August and September before the advancing German tide. Milk and other produce

were obtained from the farm in the Abbey grounds, but vegetables and bread were not at first forthcoming. A supply of the latter continued for a considerable time to be a stubborn problem.

In less than a week the entire party had reached Royaumont. And strange as it must have seemed to an already much-tried community, the equipment actually arrived from Scotland just in time to save the last five members from sleeping on the floors.

No one will ever forget the first glimpse of Royaumont. The chill grey sky of December did but enhance the mysterious beauty of the ancient Abbey, set in the peaceful valley of the Oise and surrounded by undulating country of historic forests.

CHAPTER III

FIRST TRANSFORMATION OF THE ABBEY INTO A MODERN HOSPITAL—APPOINTMENT OF A *GESTIONNAIRE*

It is well that in accordance with Divine ordination the complications of important undertakings are not at first realized. Under contrary conditions, it is safe to believe that the transformation of an abandoned thirteenth-century abbey into a modern hospital would have been one of many possibilities unattempted. To relate how much has been achieved by the hospital at Royaumont since it opened its abbatial doors would be incomplete without a proper consideration of the herculean task of its installation. If "The Ladies of Royaumont" are agreeable to a record of their medical and surgical labours, they will perhaps bear with the writer in wishing to chronicle as well the stubborn and bewildering physical difficulties that had to be overcome before the venture became a possibility—a task for giants, accomplished by the hands of women.

In order to realize fully the nature and importance of the achievement, it will be necessary to remember that the Abbey was without light, heat, or water. It had been built to conform with monastic requirements; it had been dislocated by industrial installations; was uninhabited for ten years, and represented at the moment the progressive results of mutilation and abandonment. Light, heat, water—ordinary requirements of domestic life—what could a hospital achieve without these fundamental necessities? Furthermore,

a spring-cleaning to remove the accumulated deposit of ten years was first in order before the after-consideration of such luxuries as light, heat, and water. The task, considering the dimensions of the Abbey and its overwhelming disorder, was an undertaking fit to choke the serenity of a family of vacuum cleaners. And there were but women's hands to undertake the work! Women's hands, but happily women's courage and enthusiasm to ensure its success. In two weeks the poisonous dust-storms had abated, the faithful workers (more chimney-sweeps than ornaments of chimney-corners) had issued from their dust of ages, and had restored the Abbey to its former monastic order and cleanliness. What discomfort, distress, determination this severe task must have meant; what those begrimed faces must have represented in the dim candle-lit cloisters and dormitories, with only a familiar voice to distinguish them from denizens of a nether-world, only their courage, modesty, and sense of humour can ever estimate. And when all was finished, and poisoned lungs had at last their first deep breath of satisfaction—there was still no light, no heat in the Abbey, and only one cold-water tap in a dark, distant kitchen. How the crowd of black, impatient figures must have gathered at evening—the day's work ended—about that one imperturbable tap and made the monastic walls ring with—shall we say (*temps de guerre*) explosive language!

All day long, the nurses, orderlies, junior doctors—healthy, active young women, with a full share of the modern girl's strength—scrubbed, dusted, washed the floors and walls, opened huge packing-cases and carried up flights of stairs their heavy contents: beds, bedding, and all the other paraphernalia necessary for fully equipped wards. Day after day, from the first gleam of winter daylight till its disappearance in the early afternoon, did these heavy tasks continue. A few workmen were pressed into service to install light,

stoves, and chimneys, and all laboured with such diligence and goodwill that within a week two large rooms on the first and second floors were practically ready for occupation. The larger of the two, situated on the first floor, was in early days the library of the monks. Deep windows, opening north and south, overlooked the cloistered terrace and the southern rose-garden.

A large stove was fixed in the centre of the room, and the walls and floor were cleaned times out of number. When the winter sun poured through the three southern windows on the red coverlets of the thirty-six beds, the first ward of Royaumont was beyond all compare the loveliest ever seen. Adjoining this large ward, leading into the cloisters, was the ancient refectory of the monks—too cold and dark in winter to be of permanent use. At the east end of its hanging gallery—a modern addition—a group of small rooms was discovered. After much consideration these were converted into an operating-room, dispensary, X-ray-room, and bathroom. The operating theatre was selected on account of its tiled floor, and for the added reason that it had two communicating tiny chambers which were easily transformed for purposes of sterilizing and cleaning, indispensable for modern aseptic surgery. In one of them was placed a stove of the ordinary small kitchen variety. This supplied sufficient water for surgical requirements and for the heating of the operating-room. These simple contrivances continued to give satisfaction throughout the winter. The dispensary could not for a time be satisfactorily completed, for the reason that it was impossible to find the necessary carpenter and substantial, well-seasoned wood. But with packing-cases and old tins the young orderlies built up ingenious shelves and storage cupboards. The X-ray-room was selected on account of its wooden shutters inside the long window. Its entire contents consisted of one short shelf; but the packing-cases,

in their coat of dove-grey paint, provided sufficient furniture and storing space for the apparatus. A dark-room for photography was discovered in a spacious cupboard on the ground floor.

Above the first floor was a spacious room that had been used as a dormitory in ancient times. It had bright sloping skylights, and at each end, tall windows overlooking the cloistered quadrangle and the distant forest of Carnelle. Even in December this vast room was flooded with light and air. The fact that it had ample ventilation through north and south windows and was perfectly dry decided the Chief to arrange it as a ward in preference to the more accessible rooms on the ground floor. When two stoves had been installed, and the rows of red-covered beds stood ready for use, the second-floor ward was quite as beautiful as, and even more homelike than the converted library.

Long before the furnishing was completed it became obvious that, if only for facilitating dispatch of messages and finding each other in the large building, it was necessary to christen the wards with individual names. An interesting evening of discussion resulted in the unanimous choice of *Blanche de Castille* for the beautiful library-ward on the first floor. Mother of the builder of the Abbey, it was only fitting that her name should receive the post of honour. The name of *Elsie Inglis* was placed over the second-floor ward.

The members of the staff were housed in lofty cells which opened on a long corridor in the eastern wing of the building. The walls were saturated with the moisture of years, and in consequence it was found necessary to keep great fires burning wherever possible. These, and the hungry stoves in the wards, devoured much fuel, and during the early weeks it was a problem how to obtain coal and anthracite. Day after day the difficulty of transporting the coal purchased in England,

and already waiting at Rouen, was discussed with growing concern. Adequate to the situation, the Chief travelled to Paris to consult with the President of the British Red Cross, who suggested the advisability of securing a motor-lorry. In those early days, before the installation of the hospital had been completed, subscriptions were of a hesitating nature, and such an addition to the list of expenditure was necessarily of arresting importance. But with characteristic courage, Miss Ivens wired to the Edinburgh Committee that a motor-lorry was indispensable. The result proved the wisdom of her decision. Her request promptly granted, the possession of a motor-lorry freed the Abbey from the vagaries of railway delivery, and has ever since proved a most useful asset to the hospital.

Before the arrival of the coal and anthracite, many logs of wood had been amassed, but it was always a mystery during those impatient days of waiting how rapidly this accumulation dwindled. The secret was eventually solved. Every passer-by shouldered a log to be carried upstairs; and thus the work of portage to the top floors proved an easy undertaking, and was carried out so gradually that in the end one was obliged to wonder how the vast pile had reached its ultimate destination.

Those who were fortunate enough to be of the pioneer party at Royaumont during the early eventful days remember certain ordinary incidents which stand out with a vividness that in the average routine of life is associated only with what is startling or unusual. The first time hot and cold water could be obtained without having to go to the kitchen afforded as much excitement and food for conversation as the début of an unexpected "star." The eventful afternoon when cartloads of coal were spied crawling slowly up the avenue, after the endless days of anxiety as to whether the anthracite for the ward stoves would arrive before the first patients;

the appalling morning when some one poked a hole in the mica door of the *Blanche* stove and the beautiful ward was poisoned with coke-fumes at a moment when the first visit of inspection from General Février was momentarily expected ; above all, that most wonderful and rewarding experience, the transformation-scene occasioned by the first electric light bulb, were events of historic importance in those early days of a struggling installation. For some twelve days the personnel had groped about after the early winter sunset, hopelessly lost in the innumerable corridors, staircases, and halls, unless provided with old-fashioned storm-lanterns or candles streaming down empty bottles.

Meals were at that time served at a long table in the kitchen. To reach this dining-hall from the sitting-room on the first floor entailed the descent of the great staircase, and a complicated journey through icy corridors and refectory. When the supper-hour approached, the high arched roofs were picturesque with flickering shadows cast by cautiously advancing candle-bearers—mysterious figures stealing out of dark corners to cling for guidance to the more fortunate “ glow-worms.”

The kitchen was furnished with an immense antiquated range. Storm-lanterns and bottle-candles lit a long simple table—the groined roof, lost in shadowy gloom, the high round pillars, grim sentinels of a remote past. A weary but cheery company, fortified by the difficulties of the day, refreshed by its hard-won achievements, gathered round the board for daily refreshment.

But a new era was at hand.

During tea one late afternoon—no one remarking the presence of two busy workmen scarcely visible at the top of tall ladders—suddenly the dim candle-light was extinguished by a dazzling illumination from an electric-lamp placed high in the vaulted roof. A deafening applause greeted the efforts of the workmen, who triumphantly proceeded to insert a second lamp, which

in turn revealed with welcome brilliance every corner of the great room.

Steadily but quietly the process of electric illumination spread from ward to halls, from corridors to staircases, finally to the first-floor bedrooms. With increasing light came convenience and rapidity of movement; but the subtleties of shadow and mystery soon became, alas! a thing of the past.

During the early weeks, before the arrival of the wounded, it was considered unjustifiable to incur any unnecessary expense. In consequence, no assistance was sought from the neighbouring villages. The hardest menial tasks were performed by the orderlies. Without a murmur, the highly trained nurses also scrubbed and cleaned their wards, a task they had not been called upon to perform since their early probationer days. But by far the hardest lot, and the most uninteresting, was the life of the cooks and orderlies, whose work lay all day long in kitchen and scullery. It was difficult to believe possible that such drudgery should have been carried out uncomplainingly by girls not inured from birth to conditions of working-class life.

The kitchen orderlies were obliged to be dressed and downstairs at 6.45 each morning, to prepare breakfast for nurses and orderlies at 7. Another breakfast followed at 7.30; and at 8 o'clock, the matutinal dinner for the night-nurses. From then on to 11: washing of dishes in the kitchen and scullery. At 11, two luncheons had to be prepared for 12 and 12.30, with the added duty of the orderlies having to stand about at both meals to undertake the service of parlour-maids. Luncheon over, washing up again was in order until 2.30, when an interval for rest until 4 o'clock was allowed. At 5—again washing-up of dishes, the preparation and service of the two daily suppers; after which the final *coup de grâce* (or grease), washing-up

again until 9 o'clock or later. The strain and tedium of these relentless duties can best be estimated when it is realized that at the time there were no hot-water pipes, all the water having to be carried from the kitchen sink and poured into the great kitchen range boiler as fast as it was used.

The cooks (Scotch gentlewomen who had taught dainty cooking at Edinburgh advanced schools of cookery) rose at 5.30 to wrestle with the old-fashioned range and to carry up coal from the cellar. There were no labour-saving devices of any description. All the day long, and into the night, they were at their work in the kitchen, hampered by antiquated utensils and apparatus. Even at their only rest-time (the hours during meals) there was no repose for these brave women. The vaulted roofs then rang with the chatter and laughter of the hungry staff, who trooped in from their various occupations, all eager to add the tale of their daily experiences to the general conversation. The resounding arches made these cheerful hours perhaps the most trying of all to the tired inmates of the kitchen; and no one welcomed more than they the eventual removal of the dining-table to an adjacent room.

When arrangements were in full progress, a new member of the Staff appeared upon the scene in the person of M. Léonce de Boyrie, who came to take up the duties of *Gestionnaire*. "M. le Directeur," as he is usually entitled, is the official appointed by the Service de Santé to act as its representative in each of the Red Cross Hospitals. He is morally responsible to the Service de Santé for all accidents, evasions, or graver acts committed in the hospital to which he is appointed. Special duties connected with the post are the "surveillance des Musulmans," correspondence with the families of the wounded, soldiers' pay, and full charge of all matters concerning decorations.

A resident of South America, M. de Boyrie had at the

outset of the war travelled from the Argentine to place himself at the disposal of the French authorities. Debarred from military service on arrival, he offered his services to the French wounded, and eventually was appointed to the post of *Gestionnaire* at Royaumont. At once he threw himself heart and soul into furthering the progress of the hospital; each day, he accompanied the *Médecin-Chef* on a comprehensive tour of inspection, during which every possible means of progress was discussed.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST VISITE D'INSPECTION—CONDEMNATION OF A GREAT PART OF THE WORK ACCOMPLISHED—A REORGANIZATION DEMANDED

THE seclusion of Royaumont, its atmosphere of peaceful antiquity, was never so accentuated as during the early days when the boom of the guns from Soissons and the Aisne dislocated the stillness of its monastic walls. The Abbey, then a hospital for the murderous harvest of those same guns, seemed still detached in time and purpose from all the butchery of the zone of war. Yet eye and ear bore lamentable testimony of its tragic transformation.

It was a litany of death on January 12, 1915, when the flooding of the Aisne barred the retreat of the imperilled French army.

On December 19th, everything that the members of the Staff could possibly do was accomplished. Yet two essentials were still prominent by their absence: light, and the anthracite still awaiting transportation from Rouen. It was a time of disheartening suspense, considering that all else was in readiness, and that the inspection of the Médecin-Inspecteur of the Service de Santé du Camp Retranché de Paris was a daily probability. Without his recommendation, not a single patient could be expected. He had been informed that the hospital at Royaumont awaited his approval, and it was agreed that until his visit was an accomplished fact, no member of the medical staff should

absent herself from the Abbey grounds. Four days slowly passed. During that temporary respite, after the weeks of hard manual labour, the daily routine was still too novel to permit of dullness or discontent. Each morning the visit was expected before the mid-day meal ; by noon it was decided a certainty for the afternoon ; by sunset, disappointment had surrendered to resignation, and the evening was spent in finishing touches to be accomplished before the following morning.

During that trying time of waiting, the Staff in groups, armed with warm cloaks and wellington boots, made miles of the metres of garden paths that framed with rectangular formality the Abbey grounds. Peripatetic monks in the old days, silently saying their Office ; now, groups of women pacing the leafless walks, absorbed in their ritual of medical ministrations. The opulence of autumn had faded into the nakedness of winter ; a soft blue mist made ghostly the Abbey and ruined Chapel ; long straight cuttings through the surrounding woods encased distant views of the purple hills above Asnières. A season of melancholy and muffled sounds—the old atmosphere of antiquity again in residence within the monastic enclosure.

One thought alone preoccupied the restless groups, restrained their liberty of movement : not to stray beyond easy distance of the great Abbey door, not to be surprised by a sudden arrival of the Médecin-Inspecteur. Only when evening was at hand and the day had recorded another disappointment was there a sudden relaxation from all caution. Then the approaching darkness was like a curfew of release, and strolling feet hurried far afield for the refreshment of unrestrained activity.

During those relentless days an orderly was stationed at the great door, where, with only a tiny stove for occasional warmth, she paced the long hours in sentinel silence. Many were the false alarms, numerous the

rapid and unexpected musters, before "the day" finally dawned. Indeed, so effective were these rehearsals, that on the afternoon of the visit of the Général-Inspecteur—December 24th—the transformation from begrimed overalls to the spotless robes of office was effected in the few moments that elapsed between the arrival of the car at the outer gate and its appearance at the Abbey door. According to a pre-arranged signal, three blasts were blown on the hall-whistle, and within five minutes the nurses were in the wards, and the doctors in long white coats awaited the visitor at the foot of the great staircase.

The courteous and deferential greeting of the Général—tall, dark, of commanding figure—at once dissipated all *malaise* or apprehension. A moment later, the architectural beauties of the entrance-hall, and the "call of the cloisters" through a distant open door had captivated his entire attention and that of his attendant architect. It was quickly realized by all that it was to be the Abbey first, then the Hospital.

Time passed at such protracted length that the hall orderly afterwards affirmed that she could not but feel that the General had completely forgotten the object of his visit. At last the hospital inspection began. The Chief Surgeon led the way upstairs, followed by the tall General, the critical French architect, the anxious Directeur, and the white-coated doctors. A silent, preoccupied procession. The electric-light installation had been pushed forward at a pace undreamed of in the days of peace by the average workman; but it was, alas! still in its initial stage. Vast lengths of wire coiled their shameless way round the staircases, through the corridors, and along the wards. The innumerable switches and points were, it is true, in order, but many of the bulbs were conspicuous by their absence. The 200-candle-power globe of the operating-room had not yet arrived from Paris, and an appeal to

the awaiting bunch of wires suspended from the groined ceiling over the metal table was the only possible response to the inquiries of the General. The X-ray-room met a kinder fate, for thick wooden shutters plastered with black paper had darkened the room that very morning. They proved, however, equally effective in hiding the important apparatus already installed. The Pharmacy had been liberally stocked, and the ample store of anæsthetics (at the time insufficient in many hospitals) must have created a favourable impression. From the Pharmacy, the procession wended its way to the first-floor ward: *Blanche de Castille*. Its stately proportions, the groined roof sprung from central pillars, at once captivated the attention of the measuring architect. Fully aware of the fact that French people demand equable temperature in their rooms, scrupulous precautions had been taken during the preceding days of expectation to combat all the sly inroads of *courants d'air*. Unfortunately, the delay in the arrival of good stove-anthracite had necessitated the temporary use of coke, the only stove fuel then available. This unavoidable handicap proved a serious matter, for unless hermetically sealed, the pungent fumes of coke escape the best fitted stove-doors. A nasal gesture on the part of the architect revealed the fact that it had affronted his olfactory nerves. The beds, with their red coverlets—on those, at least, we banked our confidence—they were like as many friends, and aroused immediate admiration. From *Blanche*, the procession proceeded to *Elsie*. In this ward, so cosy and homelike, a Waterloo was in waiting. Never before had it looked so cheerless: a dull grey light struggled through the end windows and skylights, the dishevelled wires, hanging overhead, added a note of grim helplessness to the scene. Only the group of efficient bright-faced nurses standing about the *marmite* stove brightened one corner of the long room; their



presence, at least, contributing that sense of comfort and security radiated by professional workers. Even the long rows of red-coverleted beds seemed to have lost their complexion and all power of appeal. It was a cruel moment.

Much pacing and measuring were indulged in; and it soon became evident, without words of disapproval, that the sloping roofs and general feeling of dejection pervading the ward at that sunless hour would end in its condemnation. The words of praise lavished on *Blanche* (upon all except the stove) as the procession again passed through it, made certain that the silence that had fallen to the lot of *Elsie Inglis* was of ominous significance. The tiled ante-room of *Blanche*, where newly arrived wounded could be washed and prepared, and a small adjacent chamber where utensils might be kept in readiness, made it certain that the ward that bore the name of St. Louis' mother would be accepted without reserve. It had the further advantage of being on the same floor as the X-ray and operating rooms, and not far distant from the kitchen.

"Are there any other rooms available on the ground floor," demanded the Inspector, "where the conveying of wounded from ambulance to bed and the carrying of food from kitchen to ward might be managed with facility and dispatch?" Had the General witnessed the strength of the girl-orderlies lifting from the cars their huge contents and carrying them to the upper wards, he might not have considered the long staircase such an insuperable obstacle.

The vast rooms on the ground floor were next visited: the panelled Guests' Refectory, full of logs and the débris of packing-cases; the Chapter House, a veritable hayrick; the Novitiate rooms, crammed from floor to ceiling with the accumulated lumber of years. Damp, cold, cheerless, hopelessly impracticable to the Staff, their stately pillars and groined roofs drew exclamations

of admiration from the General and his architect. It became at once evident that the beginning had come to a sudden end, and that a new plan of organization was to be demanded.

After a courteous farewell, the General held M. de Boyrie in conversation regarding the personnel and organization of the proposed hospital, and, with a final admiring look at the cloisters, took his leave. A résumé of the General's impressions from the Directeur was anxiously awaited; and no one was surprised to learn from him that the top room had met with no approval, and that the ground floor would have to be cleared of all its contents and prepared as principal wards before any wounded could be sent to Royaumont. Furthermore, it would be necessary that adequate certificates be furnished as to the qualifications of both doctors and surgeons. The General was himself convinced that they were all genuine practitioners, but as the responsible head of the Service de Santé of Paris, it was necessary that he should have proof of the faculties of those to whom he was to entrust the care of the French wounded. This precaution met with the unqualified approval of the entire Staff.

A few days later, a typewritten report was received from Paris embodying all the above-mentioned facts and criticisms: "The beds were in readiness, but although everything bore evidence of a very laudable intention of establishing a hospital with the greatest dispatch, nothing was yet ready for use. The electric wiring was not yet finished; the Pharmacy bottles were still shelfless; the high-power light for the operating-room was not yet in place, and the slow-combustion stoves in the wards were not conducive to health."

After the General had left, the evening was spent round a blazing log-fire discussing how it would be possible to meet the demands of a transformation which all felt would be the outcome of the visit of

inspection; how to face a second time the colossal accumulation and disorder of the lower rooms, which had already caused a hurried retreat to the more manageable upper story. It was a night of discouragement and perplexity. Those of sensitive temperament surrendered to the conviction that the Service de Santé, being antagonistic to the idea of accepting the services of women as doctors and surgeons, had discovered in a physical obstruction a subtle means of refusing their proffered assistance. To those of stronger fibre, the threatened difficulties did but whet their appetite to face and overcome them triumphantly.

Ultimately, two resolutions were formulated and communicated from the doctors' room to the entire personnel. First: the following day being Christmas, it was decided that a whole holiday should be granted to the nurses and orderlies. Secondly: that Dr. Ivens should travel the next morning to Paris to get into touch with the representative there of the British Medical Association. The unexpected relaxation of a holiday in the climax of perplexity refreshed all wavering spirits among nurses and orderlies; the visit of Dr. Ivens to Paris resulted in the possession of the requisite medical qualifications demanded by the Service de Santé from the doctors and surgeons. A subsequent interchange of ideas, and a frank discussion with M. le Directeur, cleared the air, and all ended in an agreement with the Service de Santé in their determination to spare no precaution for the proper protection and care of their wounded men.

The unit had arrived in December, when a lull in the active fighting in France had set in, and as Royau-mont was situated in the Paris zone of the Service de Santé, it would necessarily have to compete with the luxurious hotel-hospitals of the metropolis. The Staff of the Scottish Women's Hospital had expected to find the conditions near Paris in December corresponding

with those existing during August on the Franco-Belgian frontier, when unforeseen and terrific fighting had filled the hospitals with wounded and dying. Had analogous conditions of necessity prevailed at the début of Royaumont as a hospital, the exigencies of the moment might have spared all impatience and disappointment.

CHAPTER V

TABLEAUX—REORGANIZATION—NAMING OF NEW WARDS

AFTER the temporary collapse occasioned by the General's revolutionary visit, it was determined that something must be done to restore the spirits of the community. A fancy-dress dinner with *tableaux* to follow was decided upon as the proper panacea. Here again the resources and inventive powers of the Staff were called into active operation. The long kitchen-table, appropriately decorated, surrounded by the personnel arrayed in outrageously comic costumes evolved from sheets, "soldiers' comforts," and a misfitting exchange of each others' clothes, provided the proper frame to the prandial picture. The after-dinner speech was to be the expected *bonne bouche* of the meal, and Miss Cicely Hamilton proved to be at her best. Had the many hidden accomplishments of the Staff only included the art of stenography, a verbatim report of her address would find a deserving record here. Suffice it to say that her words included not only a humorous survey of the Staff's weeks of heroic (and condemned) endeavours, but a deserved appreciation of the efforts of the two *cordons bleus* who had succeeded in providing a real old-fashioned Christmas dinner of turkey and plum pudding.

After the dinner followed the tableaux, arranged by Miss Hamilton. They were given in the *Blanche* ward, and represented the history of the building of the Abbey and the dramatic phases of its transformation

into a military hospital. To this pictorial representation Miss Hamilton contributed a running commentary of humorous inspirations, which convulsed the audience with continuous and reparative laughter. Even M. le Directeur, in all his world-wanderings, had never before experienced so unique an evening's entertainment, declaring that in his estimation "no country had ever witnessed such a banquet of humour and originality."

The result of the evening's entertainment was universal merriment; subconsciously, a self-sacrificing agreement with the recommendations of the Service de Santé, and all were prepared to face bravely their new and heavy task.

The second and final reorganization represented a veritable gamut of planning, counterplanning, revolution, and accommodation. As before stated, the four vast halls on the cloister floor were crammed with the accumulated lumber and débris of years: great marble slabs, stone balustrades, innumerable fragments of the Abbey, gigantic cupboards, sofas, chairs, toys (!), etc. Even on a second view, and armed with the inevitable duty of having to achieve what before had been considered impossible, it represented a grim collection, with an air of "squatter's sovereignty" which seemed to defy trespass or ejection.

With carefully covered heads, sleeves and skirts well tucked up, the Staff first tackled the herculean task of clearing the vast rooms. Prizes in plenty were rescued from the disordered medley, and each "discovery" occasioned a relieving interlude in the great undertaking. Spacious cupboards, tables, sofas, and chairs were triumphantly captured for the furnishing of the prospective sitting and bedrooms. Until then the only furniture in the latter had consisted of the reconstructed packing-cases in which the hospital equipment had been sent from Edinburgh. Now, treasures

such as stuffed chairs, china, glass, lounges, and cushions fell to the lot of adventurous hands. The wards once cleared, the pestiferous work of sweeping and washing the floors, walls, and roof began in earnest. Delicate professional hands roused the sleeping deposit, and the dust of accumulated centuries rose in rebellion at its impertinent disturbance. The air cleared of microbe despotism, great patches of damp, crumbling plaster next claimed the attention of the orderlies. On high ladders, they dressed the affected walls. In due time, the stove and electric light workmen were summoned to undertake their share in the transformation. Then a procession of exiled beds made their way down the great staircase, carried by merry young women infected by the humour of the situation. During this time of radical alteration, each morning discovered the Chief Surgeon and M. le Directeur making a methodical tour of inspection, reviewing the work progressively achieved. Innumerable changes of furniture, etc., were necessary before the entrance hall—which proved of such successful appeal to all who entered the abbatial door—reached its final perfection. In fact, “the bacillus of change” introduced by the first Visite d’Inspection had so infected the atmosphere of the Abbey that nothing attained permanent location until a tour of peripatetic experiments had established at last its proper destination. A single instance will illustrate the spirit of tentative moving which before long became a chronic feature of the reorganization. A gigantic cupboard had been placed in a prominent position, when a nurse was discovered one morning emptying it of its great store of linen. When asked why the cupboard was again to be moved, she placidly replied: “Oh, there is no reason, madam, only that in this hospital nothing is allowed to stand still until it has been moved to at least half-a-dozen different places.”

Nothing escaped ruthless experiment. The doctors’

sitting-room was moved into a different wing, then away again to what had been the nurses' section; the bedrooms were constantly on the move; and the dining-room, which had at first graduated from the kitchen to an adjoining chamber and subsequently to the half-landing, discovered itself at last in the beautiful but previously condemned Refectory.

When all was in comparative readiness, the naming of the substituted wards was next in order. The Chapter Room in the eastern wing which opened on to the cloisters received the name of *Millicent Fawcett* in honour of the President of the N.U.W.S.S. Organization. The two wards running north and south became known as *Jeanne d'Arc* and *Marguerite d'Ecosse*. The impressive oak panelled apartment in the west wing—in monkish days the Guest Hall for entertaining distinguished visitors—remained during the winter months a wood-barn and general store-room. In the spring, when the hospital was pressed to double its number of beds, it was transformed into the present *Queen Mary* ward, with a capacity of ministering to fifty additional wounded.

CHAPTER VI

REORGANIZATION FINISHED—SECOND *VISITE D'INSPECTION* A COMPLETE SUCCESS—ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST WOUNDED

IN response to a notification to the Service de Santé that all was in accordance with their requirements, the Chief of the Zone Nord de Paris, in which the Abbey was situated, was sent to inspect the new hospital. This second visit proved a complete success. Everything was found to be in order, and the result of strenuous endeavour met with unqualified approval. Wounded would be provided at the earliest moment—in a week's time, after the necessary official preliminaries. The head of the Gare Régulatrice at M—— would be informed of the existence of a hospital at Royaumont, and in his hands lay the selection of patients to be sent to his district. The Staff was advised to do nothing further, but to await the official notice from the Service de Santé.

Waiting proved a severe test during those long, impatient days. Those of the Staff who were not of the inner circle, *au courant* with the high politics of the situation, pictured an indefinite time of inaction, until the harder fighting of the spring months should fill the established hospitals and reveal the need of added institutions. Gloomy forebodings indulged in during the long cold, dark winter evenings were dissipated the following morning when, work early accomplished, the majority of the personnel were free to take long walks in the beautiful surrounding country.

The cooks alone found no respite. To Paris they journeyed for the purpose of studying carefully at different hospitals the nature and preparation of meals most pleasing to the French soldiers. On their return to the Abbey, their leisure hours were occupied in planning diet-lists which proved more than satisfactory when the eagerly awaited "guests" appeared.

Meanwhile the less busy members of the Staff explored with increasing interest the Forest of Lys and the neighbouring villages of Viarmes, Asnières, Baillon, Luzarches, Boran, and Lamorlaye, accumulating health and strength for the important task which each day brought nearer to hand. Asnières, on the placid Oise, peering over wide-spreading fields of corn; Boran, with its dismantled bridge—two suspension towers standing like a ghostly guillotine on the high river-bank;¹ Lamorlaye, nestling by the forest of Chantilly; somnolent Baillon, intersected by a slow-running stream clamorous with busy ducks—all formed an environment of varying and appealing features. But the Forest of Lys proved a permanent attraction in all seasons and weathers. It was impossible to determine at which period its long avenues were most beautiful, their spell most potent: in the winter, bare branches sparkling with morning frost; in the early spring, a tangle of palest green over a sun-flecked carpet of bluebells and lilies of the valley; or when all was radiant in copper and gold, the falling leaves in their russet flight alone breaking the forest's autumnal sleep. Mossy avenues, in star-like radiance, ran through the forest and met at circular *carrefours*, where pillars with arms extended gestured their romantic names: "Route des Princes," "Avenue de la Chaussée de la Reine," "Route des Moines," the past resuscitated, and in the sequestered *allées*, the historic dead of Royaumont.

¹ Destroyed at the beginning of the war to stem the advancing enemy.

Of a sudden, the boom of the guns at Soissons and the Aisne would break the speaking quietude. In an instant the grassy avenues were deserted, and the frightened leaves flying from withered branches clashed in confused whirls "comme des sabres qui se choquent." History was a thing of the past; the present, the terrible present, again at work, moulding in fire and blood the character of the French race for a future that hung tragically in the balance.

During these first days, the kindly villagers welcomed eagerly the British women who had come to establish ambulances for their wounded soldiers. These brave, almost stoical country-people manifested the same quiet courage and endurance that have since characterized the entire race and won the admiration of the world. In the little village shops, the women left to carry on alone the work spoke freely to sympathetic questioners. One and all admitted the necessity of war and made light of their sacrifices. But tears, bravely restrained, were always imminent, and often the older women broke down when telling of the brave deeds of their dear departed. It was difficult to realize then that three months before the enemy had penetrated those peaceful districts, and that almost all the villagers had fled for safety, some as far as Bordeaux. I recall a peasant of Baillon speaking with remembered terror of four generations of a particular family huddled into one cart, packed with hastily collected clothes, food, and furniture, stampeding from the village for—they knew not where! Only the animals were left behind to their fate: cows quietly browsing in the surrounding pastures (with no one to milk them), sheep, lambs, pigs, fowls, and rabbits, in field, coop, and pen, tasting for the first time of famine and unfamiliar independence. What must have been the feelings of these same peasants on their return later at finding their destitute animals astray, emaciated but still alive, can only be estimated

by an imagination capable of realizing the emotion of the uncared-for animals themselves on recognizing the familiar faces of their long-lost owners. Entire villages were then on the road: afoot, in reeling carts, hurrying in processional terror from the advancing enemy. A troop of Uhlans had already reached Royaumont, and for days had been in possession of the farm buildings of the Abbey.

On January 10th, a day of sunshine and sparkling frost, the longed-for communication from the Service de Santé arrived. The Chief Surgeon decided that it would be advisable to send a motor-ambulance to M——, that the resident Médecin-Chef might see that the Royaumont equipment for transporting wounded was all that could be required. The ambulance was driven by a competent chauffeuse, and two strong orderlies accompanied her to demonstrate, if necessary, their capacity as stretcher-bearers. The radiologist was included in the number to explain the admirable X-ray department at the Abbey, and M. le Directeur's presence was deemed necessary to introduce the "Dames Ecossaises" to the French medical authorities.

The old town of M—— lies on the banks of an historic river sixteen kilometres distant. The intervening road winds through beautiful forests, past the straggling villages of Gouvieux and Laversine, and the great yellow quarry which contributed its stone for the building of the Abbey. Up a sharp ascent, a wide panorama stretches for miles, with rows of sentinel poplars against the distant sky-line. A sudden drop into the valley, fringed by oak and silver birch, and the Gare Régulatrice is discovered in the embrace of the winding Oise.

It was a memorable journey: the mixed feelings of expectation, of final importance, accentuated by a sense of the beauties of mid-winter; and through it all, the subconscious realization that in the early days, over

the same ground, the enemy had penetrated and had hurriedly disappeared.

The main bridge over the river had been destroyed before the approaching foe, and the car was driven cautiously over the temporary wooden structure that led to the station. M— was picturesque with blue-coated soldiers, and a large crowd at once gathered about the Scottish ambulance. An unexpected disappointment was in store. The Médecin-Chef had received information concerning the new hospital, and was preparing to set out for Royaumont. A hurried return, a determination to reach the Abbey before his arrival, made a blank of all the beauties and local interest that had been of such progressive appeal on the outward journey.

The third inspection was not a disappointment. M. Cousergue made a thorough examination of the hospital, and declared himself satisfied in every respect; adding that before long it would be allotted forty *malades* and sixty *blessés*. Fortunately, he proved equal to his word, and since then has been a helpful friend on all occasions. But at the time his kindly words—the Staff had been subjected to so many disillusionments—were accepted only as an expression of courtesy, characteristic of the French race. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday passed, and the doctors were beginning to be convinced of the emptiness of polite promises, when on the evening of January 13th, about 9.30, an orderly rushed into the doctors' sitting-room, exclaiming: "*Blessés! Blessés* arriving!" "Where?"—"How do you know?" met her excited announcement. "Oh! A car is at the gate, but the drive is so dark one can hardly see!" Still incredulous, but hopeful, all fled to the entrance hall with hurriedly donned white official coats. No one believed the rumour. It was accepted as another of the merciless "rehearsals" to which all had now become resigned. But this time,

sorely tried endurance was to be rewarded at last. The first advance-guard of patients had arrived.

It was a strange sight : the begrimed group hobbling silently up the long cloister, dimly lit by two electric bulbs. A battered company, war-stained, branded by five months' struggle in the trenches. All sank exhausted on the hall benches. Hot soup and bread were at once served them while awaiting the examination of their papers. Not a word passed their lips ; even the doctors' lowered voices accentuated the pathos of the scene. Those present will never forget the exhaustion, the furtive, almost distrustful expression upon the faces of the bespattered soldiers. One feature alone relieved the strain of the moment : the calm attitude of the Head Sisters, who stood beside the men they had already chosen to lead to their respective wards—mothers already in embryo. As the examination of the official papers continued, clandestine looks from the soldiers made acquaintance with their surroundings : the great entrance hall, the groined roof, finally—their nurses. Reassuring smiles from these, a few words of question and sympathy, and the oppressive silence was broken. Voices regained their usual resonance, professional directions their tone of command, and hesitating words from the soldiers relieved what tension still prevailed.

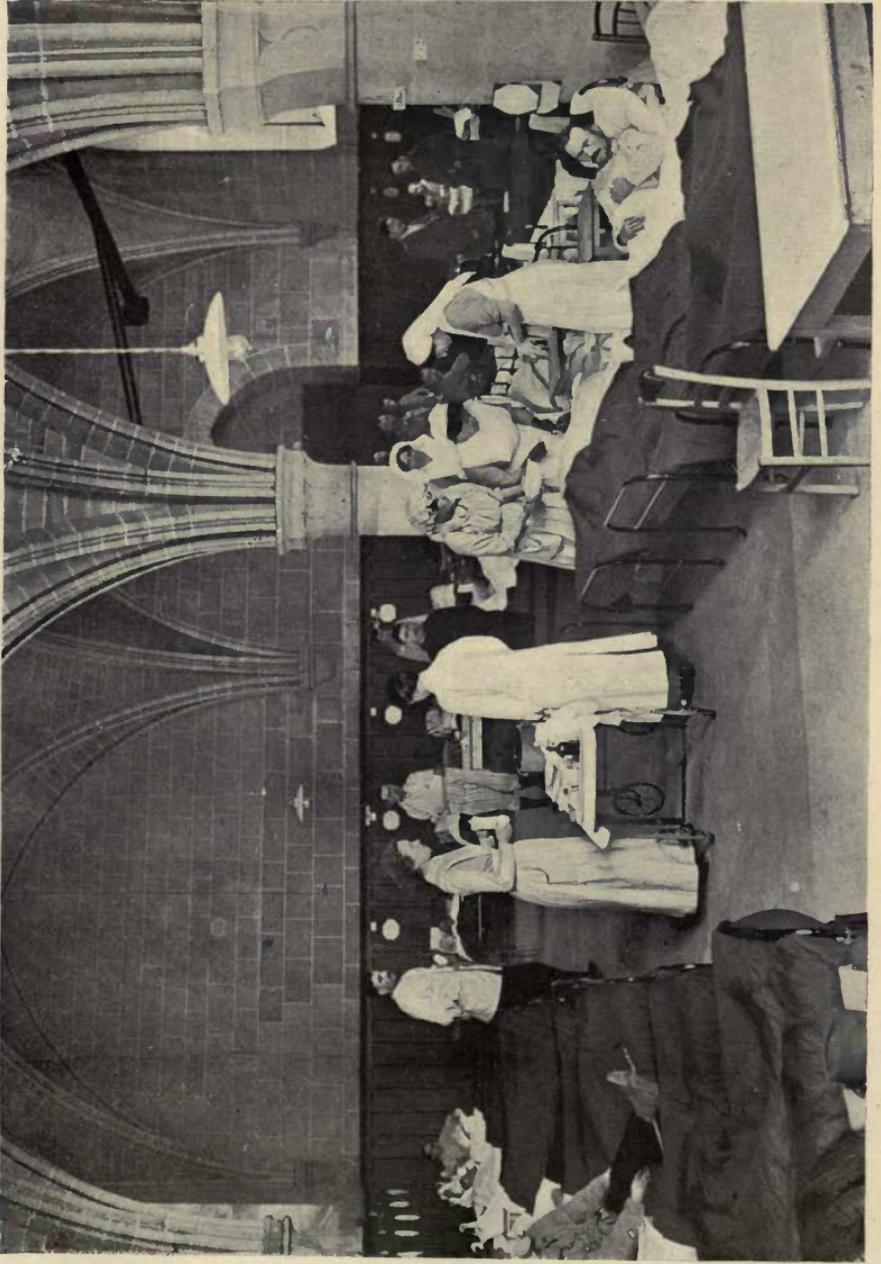
An unexpected dilemma suddenly presented itself. After five weeks of impatient waiting, the attitude of each head nurse revealed her eagerness for a patient. A moment of pathetic rivalry. Six patients—four nurses ! Eventually, four men were allotted to *Blanche*, two to *Marguerite*. The fortunate Sisters at once appropriated their charges, who silently rose and followed their white-veiled *infirmières*. I can never forget the incongruity of the scene : six tattered warriors (who had doubtless accounted for many of the foe, dead and wounded), stripped now of all arms, submissively

following the nurses to their respective wards. There was but one note of protest. The Sister of *Millicent*, tall, dark, distinguished, had stood during the Head Surgeon's distribution of the cases silently holding by the hand one of the patients. It had been her resolve not to let him escape from her particular care. But discipline had to be maintained, and he was ruthlessly included among those destined for *Blanche*.

The embarrassment of arrival, the bruising of a long railway and motor journey, must have been magically relieved when the poor wanderers first saw the light and welcome of the wards. Their open-eyed wonder! A warm bath awaiting them; then a bed—rest at last for their trench-weary limbs. And for their harassed eyes—a scene of soothing tranquillity, of unexpected peace: lights burning brightly, the flitting forms of nurses in white and blue ministering to all needs, a soft glow from the central stove playing fitfully on pillar and groined roof.

Notes of comedy relieved also the pathetic submission of the bed-ordered patients: the orderlies practising at last their instructions how to wash the men under warm blankets—the patients as new to the task as the novices themselves; a short fair girl leading a dark gigantic Algerian across the ward (he leaning heavily upon her shoulder, she in blue, he in red); two black African heads on snow-white pillows in neighbouring beds, etc. An unforgettable scene to all who were present on that memorable night. And when lights were turned low—the unutterable relief on the suffering faces as they settled down for the night between clean, comfortable sheets!

The driver of the ambulance was a bright-faced, courteous Frenchman. In hesitating words he explained the patients' dread of an unknown hospital. Transported relentlessly, in the early days, from firing-line to base ambulances, it was but natural that the



QUEEN MARY WARD.

poor sufferers, with temperatures aggravated by necessary removals, should yearn at last for permanent shelter. Before retiring to his room for the night, the chauffeur expressed a desire to see his "passengers" in their wards. It was suggested that he should wait till the morning; but proving obdurate, he was led through the now dimly lit rooms. With an observing eye he watched the final ministrations of the nurses. Favourably impressed, he shook hands reassuringly with each sufferer, and said: "You will find yourself well cared-for here."

It was remarked to him that they could not well escape being spoiled, as they were the first patients of the hospital.

"They deserve it," he answered quickly. "They do deserve it."

And then the lights were extinguished—a single lamp glowing beside the night nurse, quietly sewing at a table near the central stove.

In the morning he visited his "passengers" a second time; and remarking their improvement from the night's rest, expressed, on leaving, a hope that soon "a hundred soldiers" might find their way to Royaumont.

It was an experience of unexpected solicitude: an ordinary chauffeur manifesting a fatherly interest in his disabled compatriots. And I have always felt that his "good-night" handshake of reassurance to each of the patients that evening contributed to them a peace of mind that ended in sleep and oblivion.

CHAPTER VII

THE GARE RÉGULATRICE—CHAUFFEUSES

IT will be in order, and of advantage to the reader, to be informed of the prodigious rôle the town of M—— has played during the duration of the war.

After the battle-field, indeed, before, there are no military posts as important as the Gares Régulatrices.¹ In reality they are the *vestibules des armées*, through which must pass all supplies, provisions, fodder, munitions, material of all descriptions destined for the front. In inverse order, back to the Gare Régulatrice from the firing-line are dispatched the army impedimenta: sick, wounded, prisoners, all material past utility or capable of repair.

In addition to this vast undertaking, the Gares Régulatrices are responsible for all that concerns the Service de Santé. At the present moment, somnolent M—— is a beehive of industry and far-reaching organization. Numerous buildings admirably designed or adapted for the purpose, and established in close proximity to the railway line, contain immense stores of supplies for revictualling all the military hospitals of the district. These comprise dressings, medicines, surgical instruments, medical furniture, heating apparatus, etc.—a full stock of which is maintained by local purchases, or by supplies from station-warehouses in the interior especially designated to each Gare de Ravitaillement.

¹ Each Gare Régulatrice supplies an army corps.

Another important responsibility of the Gare Régulatrice is the supply of surgeons, medical men, nurses, stretcher-bearers, administrators, etc., to replace those who have been killed, wounded, or who have disappeared. This purveyance is maintained also from the resources of the interior. The forwarding of all material, surgeons, medical men, etc., is effected by a special service of trains to all the revictualling stations of the army.

Yet another task of supreme importance falls to the lot of each of these Gares : the reception of the wounded, and their evacuation to the surrounding hospitals, as well as to those further afield. Thus, sick or slightly wounded (who may be able to return to the front in a few weeks' time), as well as those serious cases whose illness or wounds having become aggravated by the journey cannot bear further travel, are lodged in hospitals at M—, or in the adjacent districts. Scrupulous search is also made for infectious or venereal diseases, and these dangerous sufferers are immediately isolated in local buildings destined for the purpose.

It may here be stated that, however inadequate was the Service de Santé for its manifold responsibilities at the outset of a war for which France was unprepared in many respects, its present organization and efficiency have marched in unison with the extraordinary military development of the nation.

At M— are installed separate buildings, where treatment for nose, eye, mouth, ears, and throat is in charge of medical and surgical experts. From these are evacuated after immediate care those cases of a serious nature demanding prolonged attention. A single instance will make clear the wisdom of such a measure : the American Ambulance at Neuilly, whose eight surgeon-dentists have worked wonders in reconstructing shattered faces. This particular branch of surgery has arrested the attention and admiration of the Service de Santé, and many of the worst jaw-cases

have been entrusted to the care of these specialists. The comprehensive organization of the Service de Santé at M—— was until lately under the direction of Dr. Cousergue, whose extraordinary labours in a like important post during the late Balkan War had made him pre-eminently fitted for the task. A perusal of his book, *Organisation du Service de Santé pendant la Guerre des Balkans*, published by Chapelet, Paris, will afford an intimate knowledge of the capacity of the man, and of the innumerable details which constitute an organization on so vast a scale.

The arrival of the trains with the wounded at the Gares Régulatrices is announced by wire; and the achievements of this particular branch constitute a railway *tour de force*. Regularity is not possible, as the wounded arrive in limited or important numbers at any hour of the day or night, according to the activities at the front. Every wounded soldier has a label attached to his *capote*, on which is marked his name and regiment, the nature and cause of his wound or illness, and the date of the injection of anti-tetanic serum. On the back of the label is the date of his admission to his last hospital, also the day of his evacuation. These important details are inscribed by the surgeon of the field-ambulance from which he has been dispatched. Usually the label bears the date of wounding and first dressing. If not, this information is procured from the man himself. Two special surgeons meet each ambulance-train, examine every patient, and determine which are to be treated at M—— or its surrounding hospitals, and which are to continue their journey.

It is a pathetic experience, and privilege, to be of service on the arrival of these trains late at night or in the early morning. Some of the carriages contain only stretcher cases, swung one above the other; others retain their usual arrangement—twelve or more weary,

blood-bespattered soldiers rescued from the trenches, their uniforms torn, faded, soaked, or caked with mud, all sitting huddled like stricken sheep in dimly lit carriages, facing each other in dazed silence. That is the grim note which characterizes these companies of labelled victims—*silence*. Slightly or seriously wounded, ill or exhausted by racking travel, not a word escapes them as they sit or lie there awaiting medical interrogatory or examination. The same silence continues after they hobble or are helped from the carriages, and is broken only when shattered bodies are transferred from railway to ambulance-stretchers, and agonizing eyes and voices make pathetic appeal for tender handling. Merciless coincidence often adds unexpected trials to such a scene. I remember, during my last visit to M——, meeting at midnight in the wind-swept station a company of shivering recruits, burdened with their huge paraphernalia of war, obliged to witness the painful removal of numerous wounded from a long ambulance-train just arrived. All stretcher-cases. The horrified expression on the faces of the inexperienced recruits on their way to the firing-line, the pitying glances of the wounded warriors—sympathy, warning in their sunken eyes for their departing comrades!

A further resource of the Gare Régulatrice is “La Cantine des Dames Anglaises,” a railway carriage within the station transformed into a Samaritan coffee kitchen. At all hours of the day and night, English ladies hold themselves in readiness there to cheer with hot coffee and light tasteful food the French soldiers on their way to active duty.

The transfer of the wounded to the Royaumont ambulances, and their return to the Abbey, is a credit to the strength, experience, and considerate driving of the chauffeuses—women of gentle birth, indifferent to temporary disfigurement from relentless work and

exposure, interested alone in whatever help they can afford, in their sphere, to the Allied wounded. The return journey of the cars with their freight of silent sufferers in the dark, solitary morning hours is an experience of singular pathos. On the night in question, only when the car approached Royaumont did one hear for the first time low voices from the stretchers: questions half expressed to each other, of concern, uncertainty as to their new destination, their fate in the hands of strange foreign women. At last, the arrival and the transfer of stretchers from ambulance to the entrance-hall floor: rows of motionless sufferers—silent again—revealing now, but only with their eyes, their unexpressed doubts and fears. Finally, their reassurance: the bright-faced doctors, the nurses—gentle eyes and hands of women ministering encouragement and bodily assistance. A careful removal of the stretchers—again by women's hands—up the staircases, and the first sight of the light and welcome of the beautiful wards dispelled all lingering uncertainty.

As the war progressed, the high reputation of the British hospitals for efficient treatment and comfort reached the trenches, and the French wounded became promptly reassured whenever told that they were to be sent to an "Hôpital Anglais." It was gratifying to observe their satisfaction when they first caught sight of the chauffeurs *in khaki*. At once all preoccupation on their part ceased.

Constant open-air work had transformed the faces of these young women into pictures of vigorous health; and clad in long, shaggy bearskin coats, their sex was not always evident to the wounded men. A turning down of the great collars which hid their hair, and a removal of the masculine livery, often elicited exclamations of surprise at the attractive revelations they had concealed.

An amusing incident will serve to illustrate the con-

fusion often caused by the sexless storm-clothes worn by the chauffeuses.

For several months there was one anomalous element in the hospital personnel: two male motor-drivers! It would be disloyal to my sex to affirm that they were a discordant note in an otherwise picturesque assembly; but somehow these "solitaries" gave one the impression of being trespassers upon hallowed ground. What were the feelings of these pseudo lords-of-the-manor it would be difficult to say; but their herculean work and unfailing courtesy seemed to suggest that they had promptly set themselves the task of justifying their existence within a conventual enclosure.

A few words on the work of the sorely tried chauffeuses can be but an encomium of all they have achieved for the French wounded since their arrival at the Abbey. Unused to hard or continual work, they have developed their sporting taste for motoring (which in the early days qualified them for the management of ambulances) into a physical and technical capacity that has transformed them into professional mechanics. There are three ambulances, two automobiles, one lorry, and a fully-equipped X-ray car at the Abbey. The care and the driving of this restless fleet are in the hands of three chauffeuses. Each driver is in charge of two cars, and her work includes washing, oiling, re-wiring, re-tyring, and repairs. Furthermore, everything that the hospital contains has been brought by them from the different railway stations, and, with the aid of the orderlies, unloaded, unpacked, and carried up to the different wards. The strength, resourcefulness, and pluck of these young women have led them far afield from their expected duties. All have proved themselves a working asset of inestimable value to the hospital.

The transformation of the Abbey an accomplished fact, the special work of the chauffeuses—the reception of the wounded at M—— and their transfer to the

hospital—began in earnest. In the early days this proved a light undertaking; but as the confidence of the Service de Santé in the efficacy of Royaumont increased, their work grew to be so strenuous that on many consecutive days during the rushes of work the cars were on the road twenty-one hours out of the twenty-four; the remaining precarious margin alone available for much-needed rest and the indispensable daily attention to the ambulances themselves.

During the first two months of the existence of the new hospital, the ambulances were dispatched to M—— only in answer to telephonic communication. Later, a daily service was inaugurated, the cars starting from Royaumont at 6 o'clock (often conveying the *sortis* or cured men), and returning with the freshly wounded at 8.30 or 9 p.m. Eventually the arrival of the trains at M—— was retarded, and the ambulances did not reach the Abbey on their return journey until the small hours of the morning. During 1915 and 1916, cars left nightly not to miss even one unannounced sufferer. During the summer of the latter year the hospital accommodation was taxed to its utmost limits and a welcome lull of ambulance transportation followed.

The strain, the exposure to rain, cold, darkness, and sodden roads, the long hours of waiting at the station for delayed trains, the painful ordeal on their arrival, must be experienced to realize the courage and devotion necessary to endure such labours. The serenity and capability of these young women in a foreign land have created astonishment and admiration. And with good reason. In January last, over 1,500 wounded had been received at the hospital, and the greater part sent back to M—— convalescent or recovered. This endless *va-et-vient* will in itself give an idea of the heavy ambulance work necessary for such a task. In addition, cars are sent daily to M—— or to adjacent villages for hospital supplies, marketing, fetching wood, laundry



A FLEET OF CARS.

TRAINS SANITAIRES

FICHE de BLESSURE ou de MALADIE

A ATTACHER

sur un bouton du vêtement
et à conserver soigneusement.

Nom Colombani Joseph

Régiment Sept 218^e 23^e C^o

Nature de la blessure Plaie de talon gauche

ou de la maladie par E. de Bombe

Injection de sérum { pratiquée le 26 Janvier (1).
à pratiquer le plus tôt possible (1).
antitétanique { à ne pas pratiquer (1).

Nom du médecin: M. Picou

(1) Biffer au crayon les indications inutiles.

LABEL ATTACHED TO EACH WOUNDED SOLDIER.

and postal service; and, when possible, friends or distinguished visitors are met at the neighbouring stations, and reconducted to Viarmes or Boran after tea.

An amusing feature has occasionally relieved the tension of these journeys after a hard day's work. On repeated occasions, ladies of consequence have—hesitatingly—offered tips to the obliging chauffeuses; and the resourceful manner in which the *pourboires* have been refused without hurting the feelings of the visitors, or revealing too obviously the equal social status of the drivers, might well suggest that these sublimated "mechanics" were in reality actresses in Red Cross disguise.

And perhaps this may account for the fact that in occasional theatricals they are such successful dissemblers!

CHAPTER VIII

NURSES—ORDERLIES

THE nurses of Royaumont deserve special mention. As already recorded in an early chapter, long before the organization of the hospital was completed, these admirable women, disregarding their special calling, never hesitated to use and even overtax their powers in whatever work was indispensable at the moment. Habituated to the technical duties of their profession, it was edifying to see them working as hard as the orderlies in promiscuous labours unexpected when they signed their contracts before leaving England. A little band of true socialists, whose only object was to work and achieve for the general good. During the "rushes" after the offensive operations of 1915 and 1916 (including those of the Somme), the theatre nurses were harder worked than even the theatre orderlies. The success of all operations depended upon their conscientiousness, endurance, and devotion; and though often wearily glad when the day was done, no complaint or dejection was ever heard or observed.

The work of the ward nurses needs no testimonial in book form. The progressive, often rapid recovery of the wounded, and their affectionate gratitude to the "Seesters" are the greatest possible tribute to the nurses' capacity and devotion. After the surgeon and physician, the nurse plays the most important rôle in hospital work, and Royaumont has been signally successful in the choice and achievement of its Nursing

Staff. A final testimony of their admirable qualities is the genuine sorrow of the wounded at parting from them, and the many letters which find their way back to Royaumont (even from the trenches), not only as a means of expressing their gratitude, but as an attempt to maintain after their departure the old affectionate relationship of patient and friend.

Most of the members of the General Staff at Royaumont are voluntary workers. *Per contra*, the nurses receive their usual remuneration. This important question had to be decided in the earliest days. The voluntary services of many nurses could then have been accepted, but the Committee considered it not only wise but just that these professional ministrants should receive payment for their services. As a rule they are not a moneyed class, and it was foreseen that the difficulty of not paying all alike might lead to difference of opinion.

The Royaumont nurses represent all parts of the English-speaking world. The majority are Scotch and English; but there are also Americans and Canadians. They do not come from any special organization. Application is made from all sources to the Committee, who select among the number. A long waiting-list is kept at Edinburgh, and this feature must often result in the beneficial effect of "choking off" ambitious amateurs—more devoted to the romance of adventure than to the crying needs of a world's tragedy.

In their particular sphere, the orderlies merit also special comment. Women of gentle birth, with comfortable homes, or sufficient incomes to ensure them in their own country an immunity from financial cares or necessary labour, they volunteered at the beginning of the war to undertake all the menial work at the distant Abbey. This included not only cooking, to which some were inclined by predilection, scullery work, which offered no possible interest, but all the

indelicate duties of scrubbing and cleaning which fall to the lot of the ordinary charwoman. In reality they were *bonnes à tout faire* in every sense of the expression, for, with the exception of the cooks (chosen for their technical knowledge of culinary matters), these lady orderlies on arriving at Royaumont had to go through an invariable routine of work, from the lowest menial cares to what, in increasing importance, offered at last occupation of an interesting nature. Whether fulfilling the vocation of second or third housemaid, or the duties of a night hall-porter, one could never discover any opposition in word or gesture on the part of these self-sacrificing volunteers. It should be remembered that, unlike the doctors and nurses, who with all their strenuous devotion were but indulging a superior service, there was not the remotest glamour of distinction in the menial work of the orderlies. And that many have signed on again and again after the first six months' hard trial is an admirable proof of how sincere and generous was their first impulse to help the cause of suffering humanity.

It was a sound sense of equity, and of discipline, which inspired the idea that each orderly should from her début make intimate acquaintance with all the branches of menial service at the Abbey; and doubtless was it in the mind of her who instituted the rule, that the progressive changes would afford a relief from the monotony of unfamiliar and unsympathetic labour. I must confess that I often envied the solitary duties of the night hall-porter—under groined roof or sentinel stars—communing with the long mysterious hours, the old monastic spirit returning at dusk to its ancient home, to disappear again with the actualities of early dawn.

From stars to soap is admittedly a distant excursion; but in order that the reader may form an appreciative idea of these "heroines in cotton frocks," it will not

be out of place to enumerate here their brave, but at times unpalatable, duties.

A letter just received from one of the Royaumont Staff acquaints me with the fact that "in the initial days the 'bluest blood' scrubbed on hands and knees the Abbey stone floors and broke their backs gladly over the operation." On a first reading, the statement sounded like an anatomical disaster to the hospital; but for many months I observed those same "backs" proudly recovered and performing tasks that would lead one to believe that the first and unfamiliar duties had but stiffened them for even greater performance. A description of their work will be sufficient to prove their present soundness of mind and body.

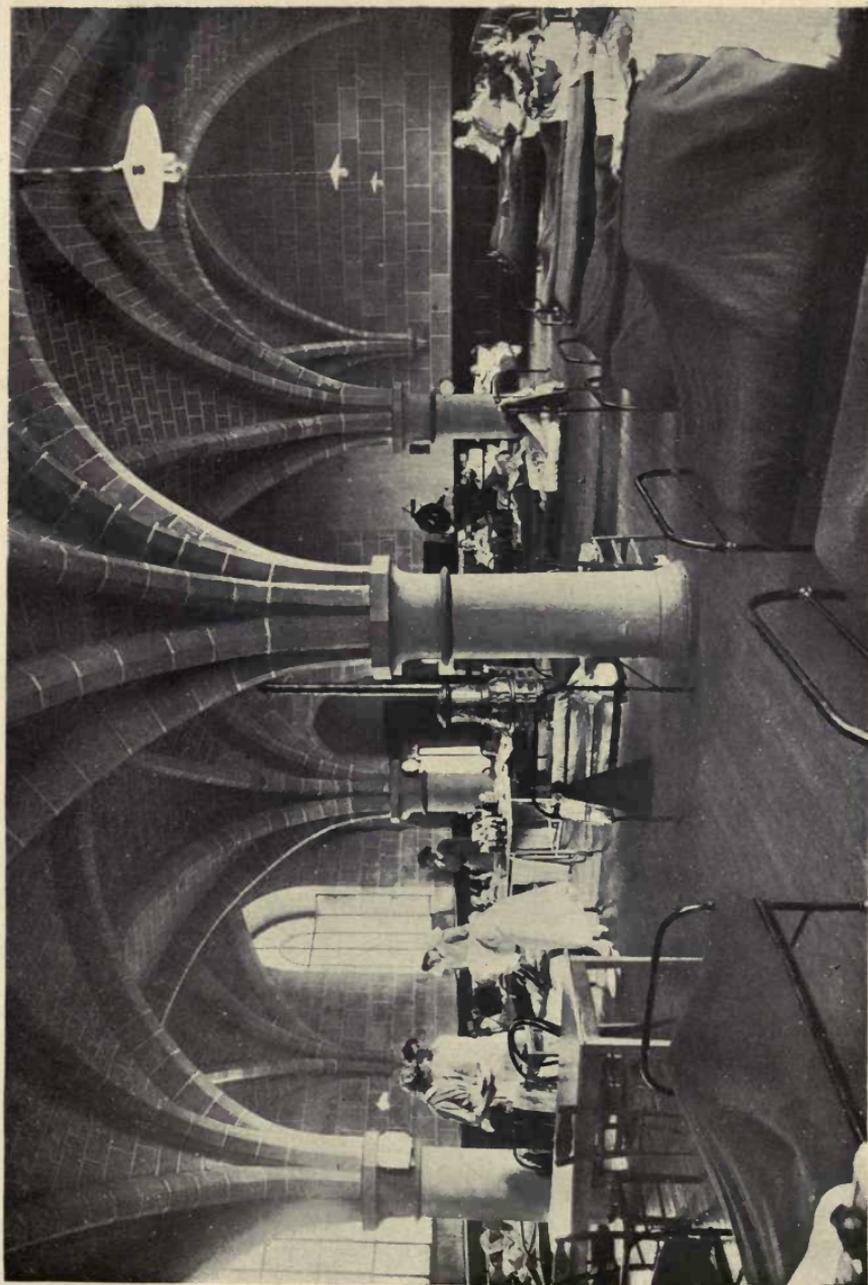
Added to floor massage, they were obliged, in turn, to wheel pig-pail barrows with their unsavoury contents to the adjacent farm. This was a daily performance. But one woman's poison proved a quadruped's delight, and the orderlies were doubtless repaid by the vocal gratification of the *rossignols de la boue*. Furthermore, the many stoves had to be supplied day and night with the necessary kindling-wood and coal. The mere cleaning of these stoves must have proved a grimy experience to dainty hands. For the first seven or eight months, almost every new-comer was obliged to pass three or four weeks in the kitchen. The duties there have already been enumerated, and must still be fresh in the memory of the reader. Since the expansion of the hospital it has become necessary to place the scrubbing work in the hands of young French girls secured from the neighbourhood. In consequence, only a few of the orderlies are now obliged to pass through these ordeals. Their present station is similar to that of a hospital probationer, and their duties consist in beginning their day's work in the wards at 7.30 a.m.: cleaning, dusting, bed-making, helping the wounded men, fetching and carrying for the doctors

during the ward visits, serving the men's breakfasts, dinners, and suppers, finally refreshing the beds for the night's sleep. These many tasks last until 9 p.m., when they go off duty. Each day they are accorded three hours' rest or recreation. Until hardened to the work, these off-duty hours are usually spent in bed—a hurried retreat from the wards to their rooms, where sound sleep promptly rewards their overtaxed forces.

The night orderlies are on duty from 9 p.m. until 8 o'clock the following morning, under supervision of the Night Sister.

The special orderlies, such as hall-porters, chauffeuses, *vêtement*-helpers, pharmacy, X-ray, and theatre assistants, have in most cases graduated from the most ordinary duties coincident with their first arrival. Apart from their special work, all the orderlies help to carry the stretchers upstairs on arrival of the patients, and subsequently from the different wards to the X-ray-room and operating theatre. In this task the chauffeuses give a helping hand. Having performed the feat myself, I can affirm that successive stretcher-journeys to the upper wards, which entail mounting six or seven flights of stairs, are tasks that excite the resentment of the stoutest heart and lungs. For heavy patients, four orderlies are deputed to transport each stretcher. This severe work has been a source of amazement to French lady-visitors, who invariably ask to see the operation before believing it possible.

Perhaps the most admirable characteristic of this body of young women is an invariable light-heartedness which has survived their many months of grinding work. Their frank, free—I had almost said brotherly—attitude to the wounded is, at first, surprising to the French. The most intelligent of the *blessés*, catching its true meaning and value, respond with easy comprehension; but it is equally a fact that at first some



BLANCHE DE CASTILLE WARD.

of the new-comers misunderstood this *camaraderie*. It is not long, however, before these also discover that respect is compatible with comradeship. This surprise on the part of the French is but natural. The independence of the English girl would be an overflow of a compromising nature if indulged in by her French sister. Of this the wounded at Royaumont become fully aware ; and if they are at first chary in accepting the friendly attitude of the English attendants, or, misreading its nature, respond with intemperate zeal, both hesitation and overflow cease automatically when they begin to understand the true character of the English young woman.

As the work of the orderlies is of so constant a nature, any definite arrangement for their entertainment is out of the question. When, however, there are no bad cases, the solicitous Head Surgeon organizes occasional dances for their recreation. These are indeed *sauteries* in the most active sense of the term. To see these happy young women, suddenly released from work or responsibility, playing at leap-frog after the dances (often in fancy dress) is a sight not to be expected in hospitals, and only possible among sport-loving British women. And so Royaumont is now a little corner of Britain ; and without leaving their own country, the French wounded are breathing the free restorative air of England.

CHAPTER IX

CHIEF CLERK

No one who has ever seen military papers could possibly belittle the courage and perseverance necessary to cope with the clerical work of a large hospital. Every day copious notes are recorded concerning every man in hospital—arrival or *évacué*. The details are more military than medical, and offer no interest to the compiler. Miss Cicely Hamilton has been responsible not only for the greater part of these tiresome but indispensable labours, but has assisted the Administrator with all the accounts and office-work associated with the Abbey. In addition, the Chief Clerk is expected to send reports of interesting occurrences at the hospital to the Home Committee sitting at Edinburgh.

Perhaps the only relieving feature of all this drudgery is the occasional creation and supervision of tableaux, concerts, and fêtes—a task which discovers in Miss Hamilton's distinguished attainments a felicitous and welcome scope.

The Chief Clerk is also called upon to make extempore speeches in French at concerts, or at the presentation of military decorations; and never has Miss Hamilton failed to delight her audiences, French and English, by her resourcefulness on these occasions.

CHAPTER X

VÊTEMENTS

ONE of the most interesting features of the hospital is the Vêtement Department, where the clothes and uniforms of the wounded are stored pending their recovery. It is under the management of efficient orderlies, who have brought to bear a far-sighted ingenuity in their important and hidden work. On the arrival of the *blessés* and after their removal from the ambulances, these ladies are in attendance with as many large canvas sacks as there are patients. Into these are placed the portable belongings of the soldier, all carefully labelled. After the men have been washed, the underclothing and uniforms, etc., are added, and the sacks are inscribed with the names and wards of the owners. When necessary, the clothes are disinfected, after which the underwear is sent to the laundry.¹

The torn and bespattered *capotes* and trousers are cleaned, mended, or reconstructed, with the aid of the uniforms of those who have joined the eternal ranks. A surgery of unrelenting pathos. Torn and weather-stained at their début, they assume in time a cohesive appearance, and if eventually they resemble a Joseph's coat of many colours, they serve at least to keep warm the reconstructed bodies of those destined to adventure

¹ During the early months all the washing, etc., was carried out at the hospital; but as time passed and the number of wounded greatly increased, it became an impossibility, and recourse was had to neighbouring laundries.

their lives a second time in the trenches. A sound example of Scotch thrift, in accordance with the French disregard for that stylish appearance of uniform and accoutrement so characteristic of the armies of other nations. If eventually the clothes are found to be beyond repair, they are destroyed, and others in their place are supplied by the hospital—it being an invariable rule that the soldiers are to be dispatched from the Abbey recovered not only of their bodily wounds, but from those which have mutilated beyond repair their military raiment. In this the hospital authorities are assisted by the *Secours aux Blessés*, one of whose objects is to supply clothes and uniforms to destitute soldiers. This provision, however, is limited to a single consignment to each hospital during the period of the war. The one appeal is, in consequence, made large enough to cover prospective needs.

As might be expected in a hospital run by women, the cleaning and renovation of the soldiers' clothes receive exceptional attention. This special care includes the under-garments, which are often tainted or crumbling from over-use, or soaked with blood. The happy result is that the men leave the hospital proudly conscious that their under-wear is as irreproachable as their outer garments. This self-imposed task on the part of the hospital in the early days soon assumed proportions beyond the powers of the *vêtement* staff, and recourse was had to outside voluntary help. A French lady, Madame Fox, from the neighbouring village of Asnières, soon came to the rescue. This kind sympathizer offered a large room in her house, where a sewing-club was promptly organized, which she herself supervised. Many were the *tours de force* performed there: arms becoming legs, trousers sutured chests, etc.—human anatomy resulting in a triumph of dislocation. To aid Madame Fox, M. Delacoste, head of the rubber-factory at Asnières, sent daily a

number of workgirls, to whom he paid their accustomed full wages.

Clothes beyond repair were supplemented from large consignments dispatched by charitable donors in Great Britain; and when cotton rose to sixpence a reel in France, thread and buttons were sent in abundance through Edinburgh headquarters by sympathizers throughout the kingdom.

It is pathetic to discover the almost naked condition of some of the wounded on arrival: hatless, bare-footed, a pair of ragged pants or a tattered shirt alone covering the shattered bodies—a removal of the warm ambulance blankets from the stretchers revealing unexpectedly their destitution. Wounded—perhaps mortally—for their country, their maimed and unclad bodies further exposed to the torment of railway travel and the rigours of merciless weather! Yet never a word of complaint or distress as they lie there in rows, waiting, wild-eyed, upon the Abbey floor.

The labelled sacks containing the collection of clothes and belongings of the soldiers are hoisted by means of a pulley to the third-floor dormitory, where they are emptied of their contents. Every article is there marked in a book, and a list is signed by the soldier-owners. This avoids all possible confusion on the day of restoration.

It is a strange sight, this long dormitory: the exposed rafters of the roof, like hands joined in prayer, sheltering the precious contents (the soldiers' only possessions); four long rows of neatly folded clothes and uniforms at companionable distances, their numbers recorded in chalk on the walls or on the spotless floor, each pile awaiting patiently its bed-ridden owner, slowly recovering from his disablement in the ward below. Perhaps the most touching feature is a little adjoining cupboard-room, where are placed any accoutrements smuggled through the Gare Régulatrice at M—,

where all arms are removed from the wounded soldiers. The day I visited this little sanctuary, I found several pet knapsacks (*musettes*) and water-bottles (*bidons*) which had successfully escaped the searcher's eye, also several rifles. The latter the soldiers are eager to part with, knowing that a new one will be forthcoming. But when an affection has sprung up between a soldier and his principal weapon, he is loath to be separated from it. This is promptly realized when one discovers the delicate parts—lock, magazine, or sight—carefully wrapped in an old sock, handkerchief, or even in the uniform cravat. Ample opportunity here for the imagination to determine the nature and reason for such fidelity. A rifle: the soldier's companion (the enemy of the enemy), with often the added importance of having saved the owner's life or that of a comrade, contributed to the arrest of invading numbers; whose work with bullet or bayonet may have secured the longed-for Croix de Guerre or Médaille Militaire—what greater reasons for a tenacious comradeship!

The adjacent large room is a scene of pandemonium on the day of evacuation, when the reconstructed soldiers present themselves in brave and excited numbers to claim their belongings from the *vêtement* orderlies. "Where are my trousers? My braces—what has become of them? And my old cap!"

The loud laughter, the satisfaction of seeing again their little possessions, the surprise and unrestrained joy at finding their dreaded uniforms—tattered and war-stained—transformed into respectable garments! A moment of supreme gratification—pride to the rescue of the depression that invariably precedes the day of departure.

No sooner dressed than the men scatter precipitately all over the Abbey: to their respective wards in search of their beloved "Seesters" (soldiers, no longer

patients !), in their hearts perhaps the intuition that *debout*, accoutred in the regalia of war, the transformation may impress on their faithful nurses the success of all their labours, and the gratitude of those who from the jaws of death have been called back to the activities of life.

CHAPTER XI

MEALS

SPECIAL care was taken that the wounded should be well nourished, and in accordance with the food to which they were accustomed. During the warm months the mid-day meal was an out-of-door event for those whose wards adjoined the cloisters. The inmates of the more remote *Jeanne d'Arc* and *Marguerite d'Ecosse* were served under a canopy of chestnut-trees near the parallel wards.

After due consideration, a French woman-cook was procured from the neighbourhood to cope with the condiment subtleties of soups, stews, etc., indispensable to the French palate. Later, one of the wounded—Michelet by name—was discovered to be a *chef*. Once released from his bed, he eagerly joined the kitchen staff, and there cooked assiduously day and night, apparently without rest or damage to himself. He proved himself a savoury acquisition to the men; and the Staff, with epicurean accommodation, surrendered to the appeal of his culinary creations. His voracity for work, however, and a power of endurance that soon proclaimed him a re-established patient, pre-occupied daily many of the official members of the community. I cannot affirm that his precarious sojourn as a *blesse* at the hospital increased official appetites, but it is certain that all secretly regretted the menacingly rapid recovery of their *cordons bleus*. I fully realize that post-mortem revelations should alone

occupy the attention of the conscientious historian, but I cannot resist here the temptation of committing one little indiscretion. I count upon the forbearance of the Royaumont Staff.

It was well known that the Service de Santé had a list of the wounded at the Abbey and a record of their progressive recovery; but having become an *habitué* of the kitchen, Michelet's customary disappearances from the wards resulted in a forgetfulness of his *status* as a patient. This fortunate failure of memory was largely assisted by the devoted co-operation of a number of the personnel, who entered conscientiously into a conspiracy to retard his departure. An occasional remembrance of his eventual evacuation was promptly relegated to the limbo of remote possibilities.

While in this subconscious state of suspense at having one day to part with their *chef*, a Visite d'Inspection was announced. This event, expected though it was, reawakened all dormant alarm. A friend at once warned Michelet of his danger of removal, and jestingly asked him if he could not manage some illness that would prolong his stay at the hospital. The resourceful *chef* was equal to the occasion. "Yes," he answered without hesitation, "I have a deep burn" (a *rencontre* with the kitchen range!); "I shall retire at once to bed!" The opportune inspiration was promptly carried out, and when the Inspecteur asked to see the two convalescent men on his list—Michelet, and Happ, a washer of the wounded—great delay was experienced in locating them. Eventually they were both discovered in their beds—close together—deeply hidden beneath blankets, with only their top hair protruding from the coverlets. The wily official was not long in detecting robust health in the suddenly afflicted faces (expressions that would have done justice to the great Talma); and, feeling for damaged bodies, discovered in both men a muscular development whose

compromising growth could only have been acquired over a kitchen range, or in scrubbing infected wounded.

The climax of the humorous situation proved to be the Inspecteur's instant comprehension of the little conspiracy, and his hearty enjoyment of the clandestine efforts to keep Michelet at the Abbey.

Secret efforts having failed, a petition was presented at Headquarters, setting forth Michelet's special usefulness at the hospital, and requesting that he should, as an incapacitated soldier, be allowed to remain as an indispensable member of the staff. All possible influence was exercised, but without success.

In due course the *cordon bleu* left, amid the starving regrets of the daintily nourished patients and personnel.

Sic transit gloria culinæ.

CHAPTER XII

SURGERY

THE importance of the surgery at Royaumont demands a record of the history of the operating theatre. During the first few weeks, only *malades* were sent to the Abbey, and in consequence the nurses in charge had a comparatively easy, though not an idle time. Much had to be done in the way of arranging instruments, sterilizing apparatus and dressings, and keeping the walls, floor, and table in spotless condition. The new stove and hot-water installation had to be constantly tested, that in case of a sudden call it might be found equal to all requirements. When at last an emergency did occur, events so shaped themselves that one could well have believed that some mischievous Puck had pre-arranged a counter-plan of frustration. A medical case unexpectedly developed grave abdominal symptoms, necessitating immediate operation. The Head Surgeon had retired to bed with a severe cold ; the Head Nurse had in her off-duty hours gone for a long walk ; the boiler of the theatre stove refused point-blank to work, and no water was to be had but from the distant kitchen range. All the available Staff set immediately to work, carrying kettles of boiled water from the kitchen—a long walk down one side of the cloisters, then up a number of staircases. The kettles were placed in the X-ray-room and pharmacy fire-places, and at boiling-point were carried to the theatre door. Meanwhile, a number of important visitors had unfortunately

arrived: a group of officers from a neighbouring town who had heard of the fame of the Abbey and of the installation there of a hospital under the auspices of the "Dames Ecossaises." A hawk in a columbarium could not have been more unexpected or inopportune than the sudden arrival of these notabilities. But necessity took prompt control of the situation. The entire Staff already occupied in peremptory work, the Chief Clerk was hastily deputed to act as hostess to the visitors. She soon found her powers taxed to dislocating limits, having not only to entertain and show them the Abbey and hospital, but at unexpected moments to rush to the kitchen for hot water necessary for the inevitable tea. In the meantime the theatre stove had come off strike, the Head Surgeon had given her cold to some one else, and the afternoon walk of the Head Nurse of the *salle d'opération* had opportunely ended at the theatre door.

When in due course the wards were filled with surgical cases, the dressings took place in the early morning, from 9 o'clock until midday, each doctor making the round of her particular ward. The operations began at 11 o'clock and lasted until 4 or 6 p.m. During the great rush in May (1915), consequent upon the carnage at Hébuterne, in August, and again in September after the great offensive in Champagne, the operations continued for several successive days until midnight or 4 a.m. During these sudden and abnormal times the physical powers of the surgeons were taxed to extraordinary limits, and by the end of the third day, lack of sleep made imperative a temporary cessation of their efforts in the early hours of the morning. On these occasions the kindly Administrator would thoughtfully have prepared a cup of tea at 11 p.m., to refresh the flagging energy of the overworked surgeons. The theatre nurses, however, and the orderlies had to struggle on even after the late operations had ceased. Floor,

walls, operating-table, and instruments had to be cleaned for work the following day, or, to be more accurate, the same morning. Their invariable interest, patience, and energy proved of priceless value to the surgeons in preserving a serenity of temper and atmosphere which the most unexpected accumulation of work seemed unable to disturb.

Complications often conspired to make seemingly impossible the peremptory tasks of the moment. On several occasions all the electric lights of the hospital suddenly failed, and more than one major operation had to be performed with the aid of an automobile head-light. An added lamp and a bunch of candles, clutched in the hands of an assistant, had to supply the necessary illumination for the important work of the surgeon. Despite the difficulties, these operations were completely successful—a proof of the *sang-froid* and resourcefulness of the Head Surgeon under complications that might well have postponed the operations, and perhaps precipitated dangerous consequences.

By January 1916 about 1,500 patients had been received at the hospital, and 1,469 operations performed. The number of arrivals will adequately suggest the confidence of the Service de Santé in the Staff of the hospital. The number of operations was rendered necessary by the fact that hardly a day passed without changes of patients (arrivals and *sortis*), and that many of these reached the Abbey within six to twenty-four hours after having been wounded, when immediate operations were plainly indicated.

In the early days there was an impression that the installation of a hospital in France was an easy matter, largely due to the idea that as much aid as possible from allied or neutral countries was necessary to supplement the resources of overburdened France. Whatever truth may have originated such an impression, the severe test of the installation at Royaumont (which

also included financial guarantees exacted by the owner of the Abbey) is sufficient to dispel any suggestion that the Scottish Women profited by fortuitous circumstances. The same severity was exercised in the supervision of the treatment of the wounded entrusted to their care. As already stated, the first *blessés* were in reality *malades*, and on the success of their treatment depended the eventual dispatch of wounded to the Abbey. This progressive test imposed upon the capacity of the Scottish Staff added a further proof of the solicitous care of France for her disabled soldiers. In due time the seriously wounded found their way to the new hospital. This unsparing vigilance included a stripping of the evacuated patients under the eagle-eye of the medical authorities at M——, who passed judgment upon the success of their treatment. In addition, a Médecin-Inspecteur arrived from Paris every fortnight to determine the condition of the men while at the hospital; and this visit was followed by lengthy interviews with the Head Surgeon. Furthermore, the medical authorities at M—— paid occasional visits to the theatre during operations, and—it should be added—invariably expressed full satisfaction with the work of the surgeons. It must be remembered that the hospital was a foreign and untried organization, and that the Staff was composed entirely of professional women—a situation unknown in France, where prejudice had to be overcome by superior results. That there was never any disappointment on the part of the medical authorities is amply proved by the fact that the original one hundred beds was, by the spring, increased to two hundred at the request of the Service de Santé.

A further proof of French confidence in the work of British women was a request from Headquarters that the Scottish Women's Hospitals Committee should establish another unit at Troyes. This, in turn, proved



OPERATING THEATRE.

so satisfactory, that when the winter months were at hand, and the tent-hospital there was considered too exposed for the cold weather, the Committee was again asked by the military authorities if they would be willing to accompany the French Army to Algiers, where the open-air treatment would find a more genial climate. They consented willingly; but in the end it was decided that there was need for more immediate help at Salonica. Already prepared for the north coast of Africa, they accepted the sudden change of plan with characteristic equanimity and dispatch.

The unit reached Greece in October 1915, and after a few weeks on the Serbian frontier, accompanied the retreating army to Salonica, where the hospital is still doing excellent work.

The much-dreaded Inspecteur-Général who had in the first days condemned the original plan of the hospital paid two surprise visits during the spring, and on both occasions his congratulations were of so sincere a nature that even the lingering memory of the initial labours of reorganization disappeared automatically with his final approval. Even the critical architect, after expressing his admiration of all the work achieved, added a note in the visitors' book to the effect that what pleased him most was "the happy visages of the soldiers."

Here should be recorded the Head Surgeon's devotion to her—at times—superhuman work, and her never failing serenity in times of unexpected complications. One could not but feel that any vacillation, lack of courage or initiative on her part might have affected at critical moments the security of the institution itself. Happily, she issued from them all with invariable composure. It should be added that the unsparing co-operation of her assistants—surgeons and doctors alike—has been a notable feature in the unimpeachable success of the Medical Staff at Royaumont.

During the two years of the hospital's existence (January 1915 to January 1917), 2,508 patients have been received and 2,872 operations performed. In that long list of sufferers there have been but 48 deaths. During "slack" moments, medical and surgical aid has been generously bestowed on the civilian populations surrounding the Abbey, and this has in the majority of cases been supplemented by X-ray examinations and photography.

CHAPTER XIII

X-RAY DEPARTMENT

IN the early days, when financial enthusiasm was in its infancy and the exact location of the French hospital still undecided, the purchase of the X-ray apparatus was confined to what was indispensable, and at lowest possible prices. The arrival of all the complicated and delicate instruments at Royaumont without a single breakage was not only a welcome surprise to the Staff, but a credit to the British packers. When the strong young orderlies had emptied the voluminous cases, their contents presented an accumulation bewildering even to the professional eye. Fortunately, the radiologist was equal to the occasion, and promptly coaxed the heterogeneous collection into harmonious combination—putting up couch, coil, switchboard, and tubes in a single morning. A *tour de force*. An arrangement having been planned the previous afternoon, after a careful examination of the many parts, all fitted magically in their appointed places. Such packing-cases as were not necessary for furnishing the X-ray-room were promptly snatched for bedroom furniture. The dark-room proved a stubborn resister. There was no convenient place near the X-ray apparatus, and recourse was had to a cupboard on the floor below. The only available water there for photographic work was from a large fish-kettle; and for final washing, the plates had again to be carried upstairs. It is clear what patience and perseverance were necessary, parti-

cularly during the rushes of work, to endure these peripatetic excursions. Fortunately, before the great offensive in September 1915 a plumber who had known the Abbey while in the hands of the nuns suggested a cupboard on the half-landing above, which was found to contain a cold-water tap. Possessed of this essential, a useful though cramped dark-room was prepared in a few days' time. At the end of the first year, twelve hundred photographs had been taken and many more screen examinations had been carried out. By the autumn of 1916 the number of photographs had exceeded 3,000. Rapid localization of the depth of projectiles was made in every instance, and in complicated cases the French compasses were used.

Electrical treatment was also administered daily for stiffness after wounds and fractures, rheumatism, "trench-backs," "trench feet," sluggish wounds, paralysis and atrophy of muscles from disuse.

The consideration and sympathy of the French soldier for his suffering comrades were never absent but in cases when pain was due to electrical treatment. At all times, and in all the wards, the same phenomenon was observed: a revel of delight on the part of the convalescents when witnessing oversensitiveness under electrical applications. A crowd would invariably gather round the patient's bed, and at the slightest manifestation of fear or suffering, jests and laughter would delightedly break out from the interested audience. A convalescent was never more pleased than when placed in charge of a comrade undergoing such treatment; particularly when told to watch the measuring needle, and shown how to reduce the current gently in the event of the pain becoming intolerable.

The importance of the X-ray work will be evident to the lay mind when it is realized that an X-ray examination is a necessary preliminary to the successful removal of foreign bodies. In many cases the reason

of long-continued discharges from wounds was discovered by the "eagle-eye" to be the presence of deep-seated projectiles. During the early days of the present conflict, the surgical teaching resulting from the experience of the Boer War—that foreign bodies should be left *in situ* unless causing trouble—was universally accepted. It proved, however, of short observance. Before long each case was treated according to individual indications. Countless instances were observed where metal fragments, considered harmless, were left in the afflicted members, with the result that after weeks or even months, when the recovered patient resumed active life, these embedded foreign bodies gave rise to deep-seated abscesses or other painful conditions. In the end the irritating fragments had to be removed.

In the spring of 1915 an X-ray car was offered to the Scottish organization at the Abbey by the London Branch of the N.U.W.S.S., if it were required by the French authorities, and on condition that it would be managed by women. At that particular time, the proposition had been mooted that the Scottish Women's Hospital should supply an *ambulance volante*¹ of fifty beds. It was considered that the X-ray car would be an invaluable addition to such an organization; and the later assurance from the M— authorities that the offer of the car would be acceptable brought the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

The London unit worked assiduously to prepare the car, and invited Dr. Savill to go to England for the purpose of selecting the X-ray apparatus. The car arrived at Royaumont during the month of September 1915. As the *ambulance volante* could not ultimately be materialized, on account of the trench-warfare, which had introduced a novel and unexpected condition of immobility on both fronts, the car was used opportunely

¹ Tent hospital.

for the smaller hospitals in the neighbouring villages of Chantilly, Chambly, Laversine, and Louvieux, where no electric installations existed.

The car represents a feat of combined ingenuity and resource. In outward appearance one might mistake it for an ordinary motor-ambulance. But its interior! A miracle of compactness, containing the engine for generating electricity, the complicated apparatus, an X-ray couch, a dark-room for developing, and the wherewithal for a black canvas tent twelve feet square. Pandora's box would have burst with such alarming contents. The tent and X-ray installation can, by expert hands, be removed and fixed ready for use in three-quarters of an hour, and replaced in considerably less time.

The radiographic installation at the Abbey, even before the advent of the X-ray car, was so highly thought of, and so opportune, that the most complicated cases from the surrounding hospitals were constantly sent to Royaumont for X-ray examination.

CHAPTER XIV

RUSHES OF WORK

DURING the rushes of work which succeeded the great battles in May, August, and September 1915, and the Somme operations of July 1916, the three ambulances of the hospital were always on the road between M—— and Royaumont. Day and night for the four or five succeeding days there was no rest for cars or chauffeurs. At the moment when the X-ray workers and surgeons were congratulating themselves that in another hour or two they would be abreast of the cases in hand, the rumble of another approaching car and the sound of the horn announcing its arrival would be heard, and a further batch of wounded would be deposited on the floor of the entrance hall.

The tired orderlies would hurry down from the X-ray-room and wards to ascertain and report to their respective chiefs the number of patients. A surgeon on duty examined each wound on arrival, sent a specimen to the bacteriologist, and indicated to the X-ray department and Head Surgeon the comparative urgency of the case. By this system, necessary arrangements were made if immediate surgery were required. During those terrible days of strain and horror, the dispensary and X-ray rooms were overflowing with stretchers and chairs containing newly wounded awaiting their respective turns.

In the X-ray-room they were examined for fractures and foreign bodies. Rapid localization was then made

of the position and depth of shell, bullet, or grenade fragments. Photographs followed when necessary, and the reports were at once prepared for the surgeon. Most of the cases came direct from the trenches, the wounds having been received from six to twenty hours before arrival. The most distressing of all the horrors connected with the work of those momentous days were the dirt and smell emanating from the foulness of the germs infecting the wounds—a bacillus which discovered itself in the early stages of the war. For days this stench would linger about the entire hospital: X-ray-room, operating theatre, and wards—wherever the poor sufferers had remained for the shortest time. Forty-eight hours were often necessary before these wounds were free from malodour, so rapid and polluting was the work of the contaminating germs. And this process of disinfection was only successful after progressive care and determination.

The stench was in most cases discovered to be due to gas infection or gas gangrene. For the unprofessional reader it may be well to state that, contrary to popular misconception, this has nothing to do with the poisonous fumes introduced by the Germans for their gas attacks. It is a gas formed in the tissues by foul germs which enter the body through wounds which have been contaminated by the soil. These multiply and extend quickly along the body, and if allowed to reach an advanced stage (as in gangrene), death rapidly supervenes. The saving of life, therefore, depends upon an early and thorough cleansing of the affected parts. The presence, position, nature, and extent of the gas in the wounds are discoverable on the X-ray plates, and their characteristic appearances (gas bubbles or streaks, according to the species of the microbe) help the surgeon to decide the nature of the treatment required. The frequent visits to the Abbey of Professor Weinburg, of the Pasteur Institute, and of the

highly original radiologist, Dr. Pech, of the neighbouring evacuation station, have been of great assistance in this research.

The Somme rush of wounded began on July 2nd (1916), continued to July 12th, lasted more or less until July 25th. During the first weeks over 300 cases were admitted, nearly all gravely wounded. The large theatre, and a smaller one improvised in a convenient ward, were kept busy all day long—the larger one for twenty-two hours out of the twenty-four during the first three days. The X-ray department organized a day and night shift, and worked without intermission from 7.30 a.m. until 5.30 the following morning. Plates, arranged in order all along the minstrel-gallery of the Refectory, were placed there to dry, the hospital supply of racks being inadequate to the required number.

A letter from one of the Staff will afford the reader a realistic idea of the conditions under which the work was accomplished.

“We were warned that an offensive would begin late in June (1916), and when we heard the great guns thundering by day and by night twenty-five miles to the east, we held ourselves in readiness for our share of the heavy labour entailed by military activity. Day and night our chauffeuses were on the road, conveying the wounded men from the military evacuating station. Day and night our band of surgeons and nurses worked under the unwearying example of our chief, Dr. Frances Ivens. During the succeeding eight days several of these women had no more than sixteen hours' sleep all told. During that first week in July, three hours' consecutive sleep was an inconceivable luxury, yet no one regarded her share in such work at such a time as other than a privilege. Certain it is that only by such assiduous labour were saved the lives and limbs of many of these gas-infected men. Twelve hours of waiting,

whilst the Staff slept, would have cost many a life and limb amongst the hundreds of soldiers entrusted to our care."

Of 464 cases of gas infection (at Royaumont), 42 proved fatal, 25 dying from gas gangrene, 4 from tetanus, and the remainder from severe fractures, brain, or abdominal injuries.

The Service de Santé always warns the hospitals of oncoming rushes, and in response, as many as possible of the *blessés* are evacuated to make room for the expected new-comers. A pathetic measure: for dire necessity thus cuts short the happy stay in hospital of the wounded, who have become habituated to the friendly devotion of their nurses and comrades. This *camaraderie* contributes a feeling of home-life which, after the strain and battering of the trenches, is of important psychological benefit to the patients. Of all my experience of hospital-life, these sudden and unexpected communications—that the sufferers must prepare themselves for departure—are undoubtedly the most cruel. I can recall cases of strong men who, brave under acute and continuous pain, burst into tears at the first intimation of having to leave their happy home.

During the rushes, the work of the orderlies is at fever pitch, and the removal of the wounded to the X-ray and operating rooms is assisted by such of the *blessés* as are able to bear the physical strain.

It is a strange sight to watch these volunteers in red pyjamas—with bandaged heads and arms in splints—bearing excitedly their helpless comrades to the X-ray and operating rooms—the wild-eyed occupants of the stretchers obsessed with the thought of the surgeon's knife. Four men to every *blessé*, they grimly represent coffin-bearers on their way to some mortuary chamber. But their visible excitement, and the words of encouragement lavished upon their alarmed charges—

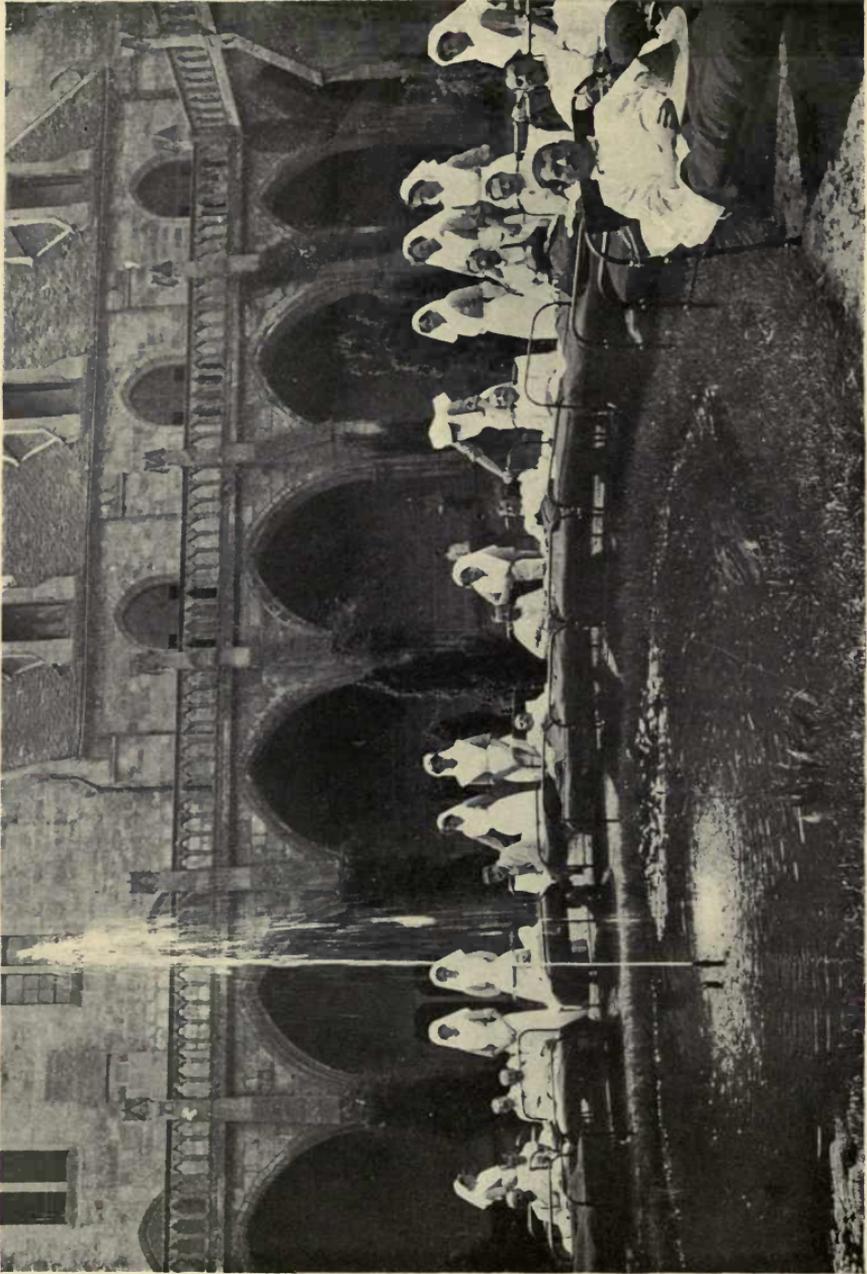
reassurance which they themselves have acquired from their own operations—invariably create an atmosphere of confidence and resolution. Of all the occupations of the convalescents, the carrying of the stretchers is what they enjoy most. Often a competitive rivalry enters into the task, and many a scene of amicable scuffling have I witnessed on the removal of the wounded from their beds to the awaiting stretchers.

Apart from the welcome opportunity of helping the overworked ward orderlies and so repaying them in a measure their devotion—above the novelty and importance of the work, and the sense of satisfaction in haunting the X-ray and operating rooms without having to retaste their horrors—the enthusiasm of these “chair-men” is unquestionably due to the satisfaction of being able to do something of importance for their bed-ridden comrades. Their reward is an exhilarating sense of importance, that from stretcher-cases themselves they have graduated to stretcher-bearers.

As can well be imagined, the constant arrival of new patients every few hours of the day and night, cases requiring frequent dressing, immediate or prospective operation, made the strain prolonged and severe. Late in the small hours of the morning, the exhausted surgeons, nurses, and orderlies would creep to their impatient beds. Their first thought, first question, on awakening revealed the nature of their sleep: “Any more *blessés* during the night?” “Yes,” was almost invariably the answer of the night orderlies. And, hardly uttered, the rumble of approaching cars and the sound of the warning horn announced still further arrivals. Hardly awake, the Staff would hurry precipitately to their new labours, another day of strenuous work already begun.

The most pitiable feature of these rushes was the nervous collapse of many of the wounded. Often for

days on end the monastic repose of Royaumont was torn by shrieks and groans : brave men screaming with fear at the sight of a bandage or dressing-trolley, their suffering cries continuing intermittently throughout the night. And in the morning—the exhausted voices still protesting, moaning attenuated laments !



OPEN-AIR TREATMENT.

CHAPTER XV

OPEN-AIR TREATMENT

THE importance of the "open-air treatment" has long been recognized for cases of consumption and other forms of tuberculous disease. Of recent years it has been found to be highly beneficial for many forms of acute disorders and for chronic conditions of ill-health. Even in smoky manufacturing towns, where children's hospitals have used their balconies and roofs for the treatment, a far greater improvement in the exposed cases has been realized than in those remaining in well ventilated wards. As the buildings at Royaumont offered specially favourable conditions for sunlight and pure air, with protection from excessive exposure to sun and rain, it was decided to commence the open-air treatment as soon as spring weather was at hand. The first severe cases which were installed in the cloisters showed such rapid amelioration that the Head Surgeon increased each day the number of out-door patients. In process of time, two sides of the cloisters were lined with beds, which remained there day and night. Many of the chronic septic cases with high temperatures and profusely discharging wounds dated their convalescence from the first day of exposure. *Per contra*, it was remarked that during the winter months similar cases treated indoors in the equable temperature of the wards did not make the same progress. The general health of the less serious cases also showed a decided improvement with the

out-door life, and their wounds shared in the amelioration. A thin layer of gauze was placed over the lightly dressed wounds, and a muslin cage afforded protection from flies and dust. Most of the dressings were saturated from time to time with the hypertonic salt solution introduced by Sir Almroth Wright.

From early May until late in October the cloisters were filled with beds; and only the difficulty of providing the necessary service for the bed-ridden sufferers, and the impossibility of keeping warm either personnel or patients, made it imperative to remove the wounded indoors when the chill of autumn finally set in.

During the summer, sunlight methods were fully tested. The patient was wheeled out in his bed to the cloistered court—head and chest protected by a large straw hat or umbrella—and the wounds exposed for several hours to the direct rays of the sun. Careful experiment had resulted in the precise knowledge of the duration of the exposure required for varying cases. Prompt and satisfactory benefit for all was obtained. Many of the wounds, which had sluggishly resisted improvement in the wards, mended their ways accommodatingly when once exposed to the sunlight. Patients who could walk about, encouraged by the daily progress of the serious cases, soon interested themselves in the arrangement of their own daily sun-baths.

French visitors were always surprised that the cloister wards were in full swing after the midsummer months; but the constantly open windows in the wards excited equal astonishment and comment. It could not enter their comprehension that the nationally dreaded *courant d'air* could be a legitimate feature of medical or surgical treatment. Their own badly concealed evasion of the open windows amply proved an unbelief in the "prescription." With the patients also, the rule for constant open windows involved at first much persuasive reasoning. They agreed with their sound compatriots

that the English love of draughts was in all probability a national disease. In the end, however, it proved amusing to watch the converted wounded helping assiduously the nurses and orderlies to carry out the inflexible rule which before long they had remarked to be of unexpected advantage to all. Another of the many smaller but unexpected benefits of a war which, despite its universal carnage, has contributed, in the *rapprochement* of nations, a beneficial interchange of customs, experiences, manners, and ethics that decades of peace could never have achieved.

Those of the patients who spent the twenty-four hours in the cloisters were sheltered from rain and wind; and the exposure to damp and to occasional cold air produced no injurious results.

In addition to hygienic advantages, the beautiful Gothic cloisters and box-bordered court offered a habitation that for picturesque repose was unobtainable even by millionaire sanatoria: by day, a harbour of unaccustomed novelty and enchantment; and when evening was come, a night of silence and of stars—the soothing babble of the fountain lulling the nerve-racked sufferers to peaceful sleep.

On moonlit evenings the scene was one of indescribable beauty. The old grey masonry, assuming then a ghostly pallor, shone like marble in the dark shimmering sky.

High above the cloister-terrace, a row of circular paneless windows in the old chapel wall twinkled with imprisoned stars. Tops of acacias fringed the decorated parapet, and the delicately pointed steeple of the ruined transept rose into the night like a sentinel of antiquity. A scene of starry tranquillity. Not a leaf stirring, not a murmur of the wind, only the silvery voice of the fountain, “dropping, ever dropping,” and the peaceful breathing of the men, asleep in their cloistered beds.

Autres temps autres mœurs. This same octagonal shaft of stone which seems yet to contain the maimed spirit of the ruined church served in early days as a landmark for enemy and Allied aeroplanes. Each day these winged wanderers were to be seen; and in the late days of March 1915 the Zeppelins passed over the hospital on their way to Paris. The sleepers were suddenly awakened in the small hours of the morning by the panting of enemy engines; searchlights flashed in all directions from vigilant Paris; and those on night-duty, rushing out to the terrace, saw at last their first Zeppelin. Repeatedly heard of and never seen, the sinister airship had become as mythical as the *Flying Dutchman*.

CHAPTER XVI

DISCIPLINE

THE happy expression on the faces of the patients was always remarked by the visitors ; and the queries : " How is discipline maintained here ? " " What methods have you for enforcing order—regulations ? " at first puzzled the Staff. Their invariable reply was that the question had never entered their minds. The problem had never presented itself. Indeed, the men were so constantly well behaved that the necessity for framing rules had never been considered. At one time a few undesirable friends of the men began to introduce forbidden food and wine, and with their secret plotting there entered for the first time in the hospital a spirit of concealment and insubordination which before long threatened the serenity of certain wards. The doctors said but little, and quietly determined upon a plan of action. Without explanation, the guilty men were confined to their beds the following day. Without remonstrance, they promptly understood the situation, submitted to their mattress-jail, and awaited further developments. These were not long in asserting themselves. The innocent parties, having taken in the novel retribution, collectively boycotted their guilty comrades—an eloquent proof of the *esprit de corps* reigning among the wounded, a silent testimony of their unanimous approval. And yet it is proverbially asserted that the tongue is woman's most active member. Not a word had been spoken by the Staff !

From that day discipline reasserted itself automatically. A few words to the effect that a day in bed would be an advisable proposition, or a subtle hint to the culprit that he would be expected at the Bureau the following morning, proved quietly effective in the few cases of further insubordination. On the contrary, when rebellious spirits maintained any stubbornness against "the unwritten law," and, in consequence, presented themselves before M. le Directeur, their papers were immediately signed, and they were sent back to M—— by the evening ambulance. Indeed, the sound interest of the men in maintaining the irreproachable spirit of the hospital resulted in the patients themselves framing subconsciously a code of honour for their own behaviour. This went so far that even coarse or rude language was taboo, and a prompt boycott launched against the offending parties.

In the matter of liberty of movement for convalescents, it was decided that the men should not fare beyond the Abbey grounds. The ample gardens were considered sufficiently extensive for all purposes of exercise. The surrounding country being thickly wooded, it would have been an easy matter to lose one's bearings, and the wineshops in the neighbouring villages were considered to offer attractions too seductive to be easily resisted. It may be said that scarcely any infractions of the boundary rule ever occurred; and only four of the fifteen hundred patients who had passed through Royaumont in the early months ever reached the nearest wineshop, a mile distant from the Abbey. On one occasion a patient was seen bidding adieu to his wife half a mile away on the main road. A reprimand proved unnecessary. He promptly reported himself on his return, tearfully admitted his disobedience, explained that he had not seen his wife for close upon a year, and wishing to retard the good-bye, had walked with her part of the way to the station.

He had not realized how far he had ventured beyond boundary limits, but was quite prepared to pay the penalty and be deported to M—— the following morning. Unnecessary to say, this remarkable culprit was instantly forgiven.

The only other rule was that enjoining silence during the surgeon's daily visit. As a matter of course, whenever any of the Medical Staff entered a ward, the convalescent men immediately arose and remained "at attention" until released by a sign from the Head Sister. Smoking and talking ceased *de rigueur* during the morning dressings. There was no need of any rule to initiate such a measure, a certain fineness of instinct in the French character suggesting the forbearance.

There is perhaps no place more opportune for the study of character than the ward of a hospital. The trials of suffering and the joys of recovery comprehend a wide range of man's emotions. The distress of the one, and the exuberance of the other, reveal the soul of the man. Pathos, courage, surprises, disillusion, manifest themselves in degree and succession. The adage *Plus ça change plus c'est la même chose* is not applicable to hospitals. The infinite gradations in character supply endless cases of complication and contradiction; and these afford a valuable guide to surgeon and nurse. Courage in a patient is doubtless the most admirable of qualities, but at times the most puzzling, for it often includes the mysteries of silent endurance. On the contrary, the unconscious self-revelation of sensitive souls, which covers a field of ever-changing experience, is of psychological importance to both sufferer and ministrant. But it is not in supreme moments alone that the hospital patient reveals himself. During the morning dressings at Royaumont, every head in the ward would turn upon its pillow, and watchful eyes follow every movement of the surgeon

and nurses. This was invariable, except when the case under treatment was of a particularly painful nature. Then, when the patient would cry aloud in agony, his comrades would deliberately look in the opposite direction. Often a convalescent would step forward and hold the sufferer's hand, murmuring "*Patience!*" "*Courage!*" in a voice of persuasive gentleness; and the same kindly impulse soon initiated a self-imposed habit among the convalescents of assisting in the daily work of the wards: light tasks at first, in accordance with their new strength, such as helping to serve the food at meal-times; later, of heavier importance, whenever moving beds, carrying coals, or lifting weighty objects seemed to them too severe for the physical powers of the nurses or orderlies. The most touching of these self-imposed tasks were the *petits soins* which those who were up and about volunteered in all gentleness and solicitude to their bed-ridden comrades: a word of welcome to a shy late-arrival, a cigarette or tobacco to a time-wearied sufferer, a few words of distracting conversation to a comrade after a painful dressing, a customary daily visit to one needing progressive encouragement. It was pathetic as well as gratifying to overhear on many occasions the half-expressed question of a frightened new-arrival answered by the reassurance of the convalescents who crowded about to receive him—perhaps by comforting words from an old sufferer in an adjoining bed. War, the fraternity of numbers, the common lot of trial, suffering, endurance, the interminable days and nights of unrelaxed discipline, had transformed the stricken men. The habit of great deeds on the field of battle had awakened them to the value of the small amenities of life.

When these loving workers were considered fit to leave the hospital, without a word of request, far less of command, other newly convalescent men would

immediately step forward to fulfil the tasks which they from their beds had long observed, and perhaps envied.

To leave Royaumont was invariably a dreaded experience for both *blessés* and nurses. But some of these occasions were not without a rescuing note of humour. When the patient's time of convalescence was far advanced and the doctors were of opinion that he was fit to leave the hospital, it was strange how many obscure aches and pains suddenly manifested themselves. I remember a humorous-featured man of middle age protesting so volubly against his "premature evacuation" that in the end he was allowed to remain until the evening of a concert that was then being arranged by the patients of ward *Millicent*. He himself sang the principal song that evening. As the verses became more and more humorous, more and still more excited grew the gestures of the singer, until in the climax of the last verse, forgetting his indispensable stick, he gyrated madly round the ward amid the wild laughter and applause of his comrades.

The next morning he left—cured. Aches, no doubt, about him still; if not in his repaired limbs, then assuredly in his saddened heart.

CHAPTER XVII

RECREATION

DURING the warm weather the wounded men walked about the extensive grounds, lay in groups reading under the trees or about the *pièces d'eau*, played cards, dominoes, and draughts, or juggled with jig-saw puzzles. Unlike British Tommies (even those handicapped by afflicted limbs), the French *poilu* seldom indulges in any physical exercises. During the month of July the Staff resolved to initiate the large number of convalescents into the mysteries of mock sports. In a spacious green field adjoining the garden, sack and spoon races were organized. One of the favourite competitions that afternoon was a race run to a rope line, along which lay ill-assorted garments in heaps. These the men hastily donned, and clad in motley array fled on to the finishing post. The wildest flights of imagination were gratified in the selection of absurd and amusing games, and no notice was taken of any irregularities committed for achieving victory. Prizes were showered on victor and vanquished alike, and the novelty of these "British Sports" proved as beneficial to the sluggards in health or wounds as any *bona fide* change of scene or occupation.

During the winter months, besides card-games and dominoes, the chief source of enjoyment was the gramophone. When serious cases were not present, "His Master's Voice" was to be heard for hours daily in each ward. Had the original singers and reciters been

able to hear their own voices, strained, diminished, and out of tune through overwork, they would scarcely have recognized their vocal remains. Some of the most amusing memories of winter evenings are those connected with musical and dramatic programmes arranged and performed by the men themselves. No sooner had one ward given an entertainment to which had been invited all the convalescents in hospital, than another ward would organize a similar "evening," and with the express determination of surpassing the last. This spirit of rivalry added competitive interest to the successive entertainments, and called into play any dormant talent of the patients. The preceding days of conspiracy, of secret hatching, of preparation, of final rehearsal, diverted their minds from all worries. The concert itself prolonged the distraction, and the days of proud satisfaction which followed transformed painful or monotonous weeks into periods of health-giving interest and recovery.

As was natural, the preparation for these entertainments often proved abortive. Unexpected illness, aggravation of wounds, unlooked-for operations, were frequently the cause ; but the performers always accepted the inevitable with resignation, and often devoted their frustrated energies to the relief of those who had caused their disappointment. It was touching to remark their cheerful patience : day after day, sometimes week after week, passing by without the proposed entertainment, and without a murmur. The reward of these long waits took the form of accrued interest, excitement, a further elaboration of programmes, all of which revealed the measure of their bottled impatience.

On a particular Friday evening a concert was announced by the patients of *Ward Millicent*, just before a large batch of *sortis* was due to leave the hospital. Written invitations were sent to the Staff, and prominent seats reserved for them. The leader was a French

Canadian, whose command of the two languages rendered him invaluable for the position. A carefully hand-written programme proved a masterpiece of amusing ingenuity. It informed the Staff that the costumes were designed by a celebrated Parisian firm, and that the orchestra had been drawn from a number of distinguished artists, newly discovered among the wounded of *Ward Millicent*. The *chef d'orchestre* was the French Canadian himself, who introduced and translated each successive item, adding where necessary parenthetical explanations. At the mention of each singer's name, all eyes were turned to discover the announced artist. Then followed an experience unique to the privileged audience. Several songs came from a thin pallid youth, who sat up in bed and produced a resonant voice out of all proportion to his spectral body. He had never been strong enough to be allowed in the forefront of battle, but no songs that night were as vociferously patriotic as those of this young frustrated warrior. Another deep musical organ discovered a patient lying flat on his back, interpreting beautiful romantic songs. The most amusing turn was a solemn sentimental ditty entitled "To a Woman's Eyes," sung by a rosy-cheeked, fair-haired youth with one arm in a sling, who stood in the centre of the ward in pale blue pyjamas, his eyes steadfastly glued to the ceiling throughout the interminable couplets. How he would ever reconcile his optics to their proper level after the endless song was a constant preoccupation of the solicitous Staff.

Whenever a failure of memory occurred in words or melody, an unhesitating excuse was volunteered by the unrattled singers, or the break made good by some convalescent or bed-ridden comrade. The concerts invariably ended with a gramophone rendering of the Marseillaise.

"God Save the King" and "Tipperary" were always

requested by the *blessés*, and the whole-souled manner in which they joined in the rousing strains should assuredly have echoed in England the proud friendship of the French Allies.

The pianola was often requisitioned on these occasions. It proved a favourite pastime for several of the men, who mastered its subtle difficulties with unexpected facility, and interpreted the caged compositions with remarkable taste. The latter was all the more to their credit, since sentiment on the part of the player can alone humanize these usually soulless instruments.

During the summer months the concerts were held in the great Refectory. Under its groined roof, between the tall central pillars, would be drawn up thirty—forty beds with their impatient occupants under picturesque red coverlets, all ranged in carefully considered rows. Scarcely anything is ever done by Frenchmen without that innate sense of order which is the foundation of their appreciation of the beautiful. The concerts usually took place in the afternoon, and for many half-hours after the midday meal the lower hospital floors squealed with the bedlam of castored beds on their way to the Refectory. Nurses, orderlies, and most of the hobbling wounded, pushed and pulled the beds from ward to corridor, lifted them up and down frowning steps, raced each other along level spaces—the wounded forgetting their incapacities, the frightened occupants of the beds surrendering at last to the wild excitement of the moment. Collisions, hair-breadth escapes, runaway beds, and yells of rivalry and delight were the order of the day, and no attempt was made to stem the tide of universal enthusiasm. Every man in the hospital had suddenly turned into a boy.

Finally, the calm which preceded the concert: the breathless men in their seats, the excited wounded lying on their backs, tide upon tide of red-blanketed



beds awaiting impatiently the arrival of the artists—from Paris, the provinces, on several occasions from distant England.¹ The applause was always generous, often discriminating, for even the uneducated Frenchman is able to discover and appreciate things of beauty without always understanding them. Great effects need little explanation, but those of a delicate nature require a sensitive temperament for their comprehension. The Frenchman possesses that. He is instinctively alive to the subtleties of nuance, and his capacity for enjoyment is in consequence greatly increased.

One could not but feel at these happy reunions that had St. Louis been present, the interest of the performers, the gratification of the Staff, and the joy written upon the faces of his brave bed-ridden compatriots would have reconciled the Founder to the dismemberment of his monastery at Royaumont.

The concert over, tea and cakes were carried round to the men by the members of the Staff, and the convalescents, congregated in groups about their bed-ridden comrades, discussed excitedly the success of their combined efforts. The tension of attentive silence relieved, all abandoned their places. The visitors, released also from all formality, wandered in and out the beds, conversing with the patients; the artists, their duties ended, descended from their artistic heights and became simple human beings—to the evident gratification of the wounded. The waving of some magic wand had

¹ Prominent artists from the Opéra, Comédie Française, etc., journeyed down from Paris to contribute to the special entertainment—and recovery—of their suffering compatriots. It must be admitted that, although deeply touched by such distinguished attention, enthusiasm never reached so high a pitch as when aroused by home efforts. That was but natural. But had the Parisian “stars” on any of these domestic occasions figured among the home talent, it is safe to believe that the tact of the French *blessés* would have accorded the visitors the greater share of enthusiasm.

transformed the Refectory into a beehive of animation and articulate delight.

The return journey of the many beds to their wards, though a *diminuendo* of the pandemonium of preparation, revealed touching characteristics of the "bed-racers." The entertainment a thing of the past, the former somewhat reckless handling of the beds now gave way to the habitual solicitude of the convalescents for their more stricken comrades. A certain busy excitement still prevailed, but the pace of all things had relaxed. The comfortable moving of the wounded was then uppermost in their minds.

Perhaps the most impressive of all these entertainments was the song-recital organized by the men for the French National Fête on the 14th of July. Patriotism was the inspiring impulse, and this roused the men to extraordinary efforts in the matter of decoration and dramatic selection. Admirable to relate, the former resulted in generous ornamentation, but was kept within the bounds of simplicity and good taste. It was more than interesting to observe their prompt repudiation of anything that approached over-decoration. Flags, pennons, festoons of ivy, leaves, and flowers, arranged with picturesque inspiration, transformed the Refectory, and accorded harmoniously with its delicate architectural beauty. A supreme note of tact, and an eloquent proof of gratitude to their Allies, found expression in a prominent display of the English Union Jack on all occasions.

A certain formality in the well-considered location of the audience added to the interest of the scene. On a low decorated dais below the beautiful south window of the Refectory were placed, at one side, the piano and artists; in companionable proximity, the Staff and distinguished invited guests. Facing the dais ranged the row upon row of blanketed beds, feet foremost, lines of eager heads rising impatiently on the low pillows.

Behind the blue group of orderlies were located the assistants and nurses. The latter did not always keep their allotted places. An occasional white-veiled figure seated at the foot of a bed contributed a note of picturesqueness to the formal arrangement—revealed an affecting maternal devotion of the nurse to her patient.

The programme, cleverly composed by the men themselves, included a combination of comic, romantic, and patriotic songs and recitations, and culminated with a rousing "call to battle" sung by the entire assembly. A truly pathetic note was the joining in, with attenuated voices, of those lying helplessly in their beds.

Touches of character there were in abundance. One of the most amusing was afforded by a low comedian who, having been previously informed by one of the Staff that his comic ditties coasted perilously near the boundaries of impropriety, sang at the concert repeated religious melodies: "To Heavenly Pity," etc., with a sentiment obviously borrowed from his condemned songs. The effect was delightfully grotesque. The accompaniments were all played by one of the men, who for time, rhythm, and dexterity of fingers might have given points to many tutored amateurs. He proved so indispensable that everything was done to retard his convalescence at the Abbey. A magnificent baritone voice was revealed by a *poilu* engineer: a superb specimen of humanity, a keen lover of robust music, whose singing of the Marseillaise equalled vocally anything of the kind I had ever heard. One marvelled that the possession of such an organ had not led him into operatic fields. An occasional false note, followed by a total loss of key, ultimately explained the mystery. What was the cause of this sudden defect of ear was as unaccountable as his continuing contentedly to sing out of tune when once astray of the key.

Another form of quiet distraction for the wounded, inspired by the ever-thoughtful Staff, was boating in the safe, winding river. Many a summer afternoon was spent fishing in the friendly stream, and many an exquisite picture might have suggested itself there to artistic eyes: the men standing silently in their flat-bottomed boats, clad in the red pyjama uniform of the hospital, a low canopy of tender green branches stretching across the gliding tributary. What a soothing comfort must have been that Walton silence after the shrieking pandemonium of the trenches! I cannot forget strolling one sunlit afternoon along the narrow stream embowered in a young wood within the Abbey enclosure, coming across several of these silent figures, rod in hand, their red shirts patching the tangle of green foliage, a slanting sun rippling along the bosom of the running river.

"Well!—how many prisoners?" I called out to one of them. Without looking up, the roused fisherman answered, "Eight." "Boches?" I asked. "No," he retorted, still undisturbed—"too small . . . and too easily caught."¹

Issuing from the little wood, the Abbey grounds revealed themselves in all their old-world rectangular formality, the red shirts of strolling convalescents again contributing a note of animation to the hour of approaching sunset.

In the early days, the men who were up and about wore black, grey, and nondescript dark-coloured suits, but these soon proved so out of tune with the ancient and distinguished building, that the Médecin-Chef determined that such discordant notes should no longer be tolerated. Only picturesque costumes would be

¹ Prizes were offered to the most successful fishermen, and before long the battered condition of the boats and the mysterious hiding of oars revealed how popular had become this pastime and how keen the competition.

allowed. Eventually, an appealing tone of red—also blue and white—was decided upon: to harmonize with the blanketed beds and to enliven the natural severity of stone walls and ceilings. The shape and character of the costumes were also determined: a pyjama “creation,” which so appealed by its novelty to the wounded, that at their earnest request it was finally decided to allow them to wear them out of doors as well as in the wards.

The Scottish Women in their uniforms (a soft grey material with tartan facings), the orderlies clad in blue cotton caps and frocks, the busy nurses with their flowing white veils flitting in and out the sunlit avenues of the gardens, all combined to create a picture of singular charm and animation.

During the summer months the men would sit for hours about the sun-bathed cloisters, busily engaged in filing rings from squares of enemy aluminium; those in bed, reading, knitting, making baskets, tasteful embroideries, etc.—again a scene of picturesque occupation, the splash of the central fountain contributing a rhythmic note to the ever-busy fingers.

From a corbel within the groined cloisters a statue of St. Louis watched his recovering compatriots. *Vis-à-vis*, a thirteenth-century figure of Notre-Dame de Royaumont—in former days adorning the façade of the Refectory—might have added a spiritual note to the picture, sympathetic to the wounded, and gratifying to the saintly builder himself.

CHAPTER XVIII

PATIENTS AND PERSONALITIES

FRENCH soldiers are almost invariably cheerful ; but quiet in their gaiety. At Royaumont loud jests are never heard, rough horse-play never seen. It is to be presumed that a natural consideration for others restrains them in their moments of exuberance. Drawn from a country which has borne conscription since the French Revolution, all classes are to be found in the ranks. Clerks and professional men fight side by side, artists and labourers share the same trench. A comradeship naturally follows, and those of rougher fibre are refined by contact with superior minds. But this does not discount the truth that all Frenchmen are courteous by nature—a fact that is substantiated by a language possessed of delicate and picturesque *tours de phrases* common to the large majority. In truth, they are gifted with a natural dignity which in other less sensitive races would ensure them the status of *gentlemen*. To know France *à fond* is to disengage oneself from the belief that the over-civilized or degenerate town specimen is typical of the race.

Among the 2,508 patients who have passed through the hospital there have been many amusing and admirable characters. An introduction to the reader of some of these personalities will put him in possession of experiences at the Abbey which on many occasions relieved with unexpected interest or amusement the strain of its hard-worked personnel. Some trifling,

it may be argued, others more remarkable; but all serving to stamp the man, and to introduce occasionally a note of humour in a world of tears.

During the Somme offensive the first important batch of Senegalese arrived at Royaumont (thirty odd in number). It may be said that these people are a race apart. If the precious orchid is by some trick of nature a weird combination of flower and insect, these formidable blacks are an irreconcilable mixture of animal and child. Their grim exterior, which alarms by its swarthy and proportions, contains an interior of nursery impulsiveness and irresponsibility.

Black heads on white pillows—the Senegalese Ward seemed at first sight a hospital for zoological patients. That was one's first impression, which was, however, dispelled by the prompt realization that whether black or white, Christian or Infidel, the most diverging races are at last one in their joint struggle to safeguard justice and civilization. Civilization! That was a difficult matter to realize in the "Elsie" Ward, with its strange and—to the inexperienced mind—*uncivilized* occupants. The prattle of weird tongues—guttural, staccato, words more often of articulate thought than of conversation—did but add to the mystery.

It was soon discovered that a perfect understanding of these "rebels" must precede a successful exercise of hospital ministrations. The application of scientific methods which disregards nationality was not possible without a familiarity with the characteristics of a race which instinctively rebels against Western practices. Fortunate it is that these blacks are but grown-up children, and that, once relieved of their suspicion of unfamiliar methods, a childlike confidence makes docile patients of them all. With the Arab tribes it is different. Among ignorant Mohammedans there is an idea that Heaven bars its doors to all who cannot account for a full complement of limbs. This belief

makes amputation extremely difficult, sometimes impossible. Precious time is lost in preliminary persuasion; the ultimate consent of the patient may be obtained when too late for surgical intervention.

Among the Senegalese, the most curious and alarming experiences are the moments of recovered consciousness when the patient, curious as a child, tears off bandages, tubes, and splints to see the effect of a missing limb or the result of a minor operation—the combined strength of surgeons and nurses ridiculously inadequate against the savage determination of the patient. One giant black who had three times in succession torn off his splints (six bad wounds on his two legs), murmured each time with satisfaction, “Bon! très bon!” Curling into favourable positions to watch the daily dressings, he would stretch out his hand to touch the wound, then as quickly withdraw it to exclaim proudly, “N’ai pas touché! N’ai pas touché!” Another sufferer with a ghastly abdominal wound and fractured pelvis groaned continually—his one consolation being to extend his arm and shake hands with the surgeons as they passed his bed. Still another victim lay all day pretending to read English newspapers—always upside down. On occasion, some of the older black patients, recovering from operations or treatment, would suddenly spring from their beds, rush to the rebellious comrade, and in bewildering negro language scold or threaten him for his conduct. A quaint instance of self-treatment was another giant who to relieve a headache shaved off all his hair.

Despite their impulsiveness and irresponsibility, these blacks possess a quiet dignity characteristic of their race. A most noticeable example was an alarming negro (a king), who was discovered one day seated in his bed, head bowed, weeping copiously. Beside him lay the body of a young Senegalese who had just breathed his last. Later, while the body was being

prepared for burial, the king appeared suddenly within the screened enclosure (still weeping), explained that the deceased was one of his subjects, and expressed a wish that a ring on the young man's finger should be given him as a memento. The nurses suggested showing him the face of the deceased. "Non!" he answered, with arresting dignity, "Non, laissez-le! C'est un grand guerrier!" At night the king was still weeping—the ring of his beloved subject on his finger.

It was always delightful to observe their manifestations of affection—also a characteristic of their race. Suspicious at first of their nurses, these kind women soon became "Maman," uttered in soft, caressing tones. One in particular had grown so fond of his nurse that in the end he confidently offered her, in exchange for marriage, a hut all to herself and a daily supply of fish and meat. The surgeons and nurses were always "Maman," the Head Surgeon, "Grande Maman." This was during acute suffering; later, when convalescent, the House Surgeon became "Madame la Capitaine," the Head Surgeon, "Madame la Colonelle."

Even after a comprehension of Eastern practices, the cleanliness of these dark-skinned warriors was always a matter of surprise. Ablutions were regularly and ceremoniously performed; the tidying of their individual beds was a daily edification.

Conjurors they were—one and all. Often they were strapped to their beds to avoid self-violence after operations, but no Western device for immobility was ever able to frustrate a natural talent for contortion and escape. Once familiar with the effects of the drug, all begged for morphia, to deaden pain and induce sleep. "Piqûre, Maman! Piqûre, Maman!" in plaintive tones—often in chorus—would be heard from many beds as the surgeon entered the ward each night. A hypodermic of sterilized water promptly silenced the

clamouring voices ; a turn on their pillows, and they were in the Paradise of Sleep.

As patients they were remarkable in their rapid recovery from wounds that with Europeans would have been of protracted duration. As comrades and fighters they fully justified the *poilu's* high opinion of them in hospital and on the battlefield. In a short time the Senegalese grew to be the pets of Royaumont, and delightful it was to remark the numbers of French wounded paying daily visits to their African comrades.

It seemed natural to believe that their participation in a European War was the outcome of colonial rule. One had but to listen to their intelligent understanding of the great struggle, their sympathy with its cause and object, to learn the contrary. Although of a primitive race—fighters by nature—they resembled their European comrades in never boasting of their deeds in the trenches. Two sentiments stood out prominently : their hatred of the enemy and an affection for France. The first was rarely expressed without provocation ; the second found utterance on all possible occasions. In all that concerned France they were children, looking upon her as their mother-country. A touching example of this affectionate devotion occurred on the occasion of the official visit of President Poincaré to Royaumont in September 1916. When the officials had all left the Senegalese Ward after a long and interested visit, one of the blacks was observed to be weeping quietly. Asked what was the reason of his tears, he answered, " Oh ! to think that the King of France has shaken me by the hand ! "

N—— was, during his period of extreme suffering with a wounded right hand, one of the most attractive and consequently most spoilt patients of the *Blanche* ward. He was born in Turkey, but was never weary of explaining that he was not a Turk, but only an

Ottoman subject. At the outbreak of the war he had been working in France as an electric tramway driver. He at once joined the Foreign Legion, and in January (1915) was severely wounded by a piece of shrapnel which entered his right wrist. Careful nursing and constant watchfulness on the part of the surgeon alone saved the hand when widespread inflammation set in. N—— was duly appreciative and grateful for the care which resulted in the complete restoration of so important a member. In the midst of agonizing pain, he would bestow not only a fascinating smile but a facetiously worded expression of gratitude on the nurse attending him. When the General who in the first days had condemned the hospital paid a third congratulatory visit, he paused by N——'s bedside to watch the application of a dressing. N—— looked up, mastered his pain to murmur impressively and with his most captivating smile, "On est très bien soigné ici!" Commonplace words, but, as N—— pronounced them, a testimonial of supreme value. With convalescence, the invalid, so fascinating during his days of suffering, became exacting and jealously resentful of attentions shown to subsequent arrivals. In answer to reproaches accusing him of disregarding the regulations of the ward, he had invariably a ready and disarming reply. One day a physician endeavoured to reason with him, saying that as anarchy was injurious to the well-being of the State, so disobedience and lack of discipline disorganized the harmonious working of the wards. With a deprecating smile he explained, in justification of his behaviour, "But you must realize that all the nurses here have not the beautiful character of the doctors." As usual, his further witty evasions were drowned in the laughter of his audience.

D—— was a cheery, fair-haired, blue-eyed youth, who always looked the merrier and rounder-cheeked because of a voluminous white bandage which encircled

his chin and head. For all the world he looked as if his halo had slipped, and that at any moment his face would escape through the swollen nimbus. He was long remembered for his many amusing songs, which he sang half-speaking, very gently, and with graceful explanatory gestures, equally restrained. His *crescendos* were always *diminuendos*, and by the inversion he obtained sly effects, full of mischievous nuance.

The following are a few worth recording :—

I

A la suite d'un fameux feuilleton,
Après avoir bouffé comme quatre,
Sébastien Caure et le père Drumont
Se disputaient prêts à se battre.
C'était à propos d'un petit,
D'un fort petit fromage à la crème,
Il était si frais et si gentil
Que chacun voulait bouffer soi-même.

2

Quand le père Drumont s'écrie soudain
Pour que la discussion s'achève :
" Le fromage sera demain matin
A celui qui aura fait le plus beau rêve."
Ils s'endormirent ; mais dans la nuit
Sébastien trouva bien plus sage
De se lever seul et sans bruit,
Et d'aller boulotter le fromage.

3

Le lendemain quand le père Drumont
S'éveilla dès la première heure,
Il trouva son compagnon
Qui ronflait comme un sénateur.
Il lui dit d'un air important :
" Mon cher, tu as perdu d'avance,
Je viens de faire un rêve important :
Ecoute-moi ça—je commence.

4

“ Je rêvais, quand je vis le ciel s'entrouvrir
 Et le bon Dieu, parmi ses anges,
 Me faisant signe de venir,
 Afin de chanter ses louanges.
 Sur un gros nuage de feu,
 Deux aigles royaux magnifiques
 M'emportèrent vers le ciel bleu
 Au son d'une douce musique.”

5

“ Ça par exemple c'est épatant,”
 Dit Sébastien d'une voix brève ;
 “ Précisément à cet instant
 Je commençai aussi mon rêve.
 Mais lorsque je t'ai vu partir
 Sous le ciel bleu sur un nuage,
 J'ai cru que tu n'allais plus revenir,
 Alors j'ai tout bouloité le fromage.”

Not a point was missed when he sang the following :—

LE RÉGIMENT MODERNE

Mes chers parents, mon régiment
 Est un régiment bien moderne,
 Et qui n'est pas assurément
 Commandé par une vieille baderne.
 D'abord quand on est arrivé,
 Le ministre est venu à la gare ;
 Il nous a offert le café,
 Le pousse-café et les cigares.

Puis, comme sur le quai du chemin de fer
 Il soufflait une brise aigrette,
 Et qu'il y avait des courants d'air,
 On nous a donné des chaufferettes.
 Ensuite on nous a présenté
 Les officiers suivant leur grade,
 Nous suppliant de les traiter
 Comme si c'était des camarades.

On gagna le chemin du quartier,
 Mais comme pour traverser la ville
 Fallait faire trois cents mètres à pied,
 On a pris des automobiles.
 Le Colonel disait d'un air ému,
 En pleurant dans sa barbe grise,
 "C'est tout de même gentil d'être venu,
 C'est ça qu'est une bonne surprise !

" Ici, messieurs, vous êtes chez vous,
 Et j'entends vous mettre à votre aise,
 Près de moi ne restez pas debout ;
 Attendez, je vais chercher des chaises."
 Puis le Major, un gros très laid,
 Vient nous examiner d'office,
 Et nous demanda si l'on voulait
 Aller passer l'hiver à Nice.

Le soir venu, avant d'aller
 Se fourrer dans nos lits de plumes
 (Histoire de rigoler un peu),
 On nous mène voir les femmes qui fument.
 Le ministre ayant décidé
 Dans sa solitude profonde
 Qu'il fallait, en leur société,
 Qu'on apprenne les manières du monde.

Aussi je vous jure que je ne suis pas prêt
 De revenir vous voir, mes Pères et Mères ;
 Il n'y a que si l'ennemi s'en allait,
 Alors le Ministre de la Guerre
 Nous obligerait probablement
 (Afin de fuir des "économies")
 A retourner chez nos parents
 Jusqu'à ce que la guerre soit finie.

P— was the *grand seigneur* of the hospital: a commercial traveller by profession. Tall, fair, finely built, his grey, intelligent eyes shone in a face of singular

attraction. To an irreproachable manner and refined voice, he added a distinguished mastery of the French language. Of humble origin, he was either a delightful freak of nature or the survival of some ancestral adventure with blue blood. Both Staff and wounded soon fell under his charm, a certain geniality of manner, of quiet mental excellence, making him a general and respected favourite. While in business he had travelled widely, and had quietly harvested the experience of years. "St. P——" he was ultimately named, for, added to his social gifts, he was possessed of a spiritual nature which found expression in a correspondence with all the duties of his religion. The nickname was not one of familiar disrespect; on the contrary, his religious habits were so much a part of the man, and indulged with such natural dignity, that even those who sought to give themselves importance by repudiating everything that was of a supernatural nature, in the end learned to respect the man and restrain their profanity. Severely wounded, he became in time the idol of the hospital; and great was always the satisfaction of the Staff in presenting him to distinguished visitors. Unnecessary to say, these constantly recurring attentions never affected his characteristic modesty.

It may be well to state here, parenthetically, that the transformation of the abandoned Abbey into a hospital by the Scottish women thoughtfully included a chapel for the use of the men. This has always been served by the distinguished Abbé of Asnières—a remarkable personality.

"Joseph" was a youth of nineteen, gravely wounded in the elbow joint. His illness was long, and so painful that the dressings had often to be carried out under chloroform. At one time his life was despaired of. It was pathetic in the extreme to see the poor wistful face, with great, appealing brown eyes full of despair,

lying helplessly upon the pillow day after day during his long fight for life. He feared himself that he must die; but despite the harassing thought, his invariable gentleness and consideration soon endeared him to nurses and comrades alike. To distract him in his moments of mental anguish, his attendants would often ask him about the letter from his colonel. Unable to move, he would indicate with his eyes where it lay on the little table beside the bed. Then would follow a reading of the precious document: a panegyric from his commanding officer, congratulating him on his bravery, stating in admiring terms how by his deeds of valour (and only nineteen years old!) he had saved the lives of many of his comrades. The modest joy of the boy, and the passing distraction from pain at each of these readings, was a source of constant satisfaction to all about him. I clearly recall what a stamp of death he wore upon his emaciated face the first time I saw him in his ward. Months passed; and when I saw him again, he was in the cloisters—still abed, but a changed man. His poor face had regained its roundness, had taken on the colour and firmness of health; his great brown eyes sparkled with interest and recognition of visitors. He was usually half-seated in his bed, the wounded arm suspended in one of Dr. Blake's wonderful splints, and there was no longer the remotest thought of death in his mind. The surgeon's superb work and the unremitting care of his nurses had won the battle; the pure and reviving air of the cloisters day and night had achieved the rest.

An Algerian *tirailleur* was a somewhat sulky young man, but tall and very dignified in bearing, as befitted the important personage he was when at home. His long musical name was soon shortened to "Sala," and many were the anecdotes told of him during his stay at Royaumont. One of the most characteristic was furnished by the occasion when he was found

moodily seated at the head of the cold staircase on a chilly February afternoon, his dressing-gown tightly wrapped round his naked legs. From this position of vantage he refused to move; and the Head Surgeon was accordingly summoned to cope with the situation. Sala stood against the wall surrounded by six nurses and orderlies, gloomily resisting all attempts to take him back to his bed in the ward. To the Head Surgeon he excitedly explained, half in Arabic, half in French, that the patient in the neighbouring bed had called him a pig, and he would not return to his accustomed place near such a contemptible Frenchman. With sympathetic agreement, Miss Ivens tactfully promised to remove the offender to a remote corner; and with the further inducement of a stick of chocolate, Sala eventually allowed himself to be coaxed back to the warm bed which he had quitted half-an-hour before. His devoted Algerian servant followed him to the new position, and from afar they both ignored with Oriental dignity the teasing French lad whose jests had occasioned the feud. Later on, Sala was removed to a ward on another floor; but even when out of sight of his enemy he had not forgotten their quarrel. One night, soon after, he was caught with a knife, which he confided was to be employed on his former neighbour as soon as he could steal an opportunity to reach his ward. But the opportunity never came. The doctor finally decided that he was "well enough" to proceed to his *depôt*. During his period of treatment, Sala manifested frequent headaches. While suffering he would lie with his face under the sheets, exceedingly sorry for himself, murmuring "Fatigué, fatigué" to all inquirers—his round, merry-faced servitor petting him and massaging his scalp by the hour. Stubborn as a child, proud as a peacock, dangerous as a black.

His servant left the same day, weeping profusely, eagerly offering to forsake his wife and children if

allowed to remain as a servant for life at the hospital.

Contradictory cases there were in number. Two will suffice to illustrate how similar conditions often reveal opposite mental attitudes on the part of the patients. Among a number of stretcher-cases awaiting their turn for X-ray examination was a man of middle age, whose nervousness and anxiety increased with every moment. The X-ray work in his case was somewhat prolonged, as it involved searching for a foreign body in the leg, the location of a fracture, and the taking of the necessary photograph. The usual kindly conversation carried on by the radiologist as a means of distracting the patient did not in this case reduce in any way the wounded man's fast growing alarm. His pallor increased visibly; the words of panic, long held back, broke out at last: "Madame! Madame! On va couper la jambe!" An expression of infinite relief, with a returning flood of colour and happy light in the eyes, followed the immediate assurance that amputation had not for a moment been under consideration. Chided because he had not long before given expression to his alarm and so saved himself an hour of unnecessary suspense, he explained shamefacedly that he had a wife and three children and was harassed about their future in the hands of a one-legged man.

Per contra, D— was a young lad who arrived during the great September attack with a seriously septic arm complicated by a shattered bone. Anxiously he watched the surgeon's faces after their examination, but thankfully accepted the respite of a twelve hours' observation of his condition. When the time-limit had expired, and the morning light revealed an increase of the inflammation, he dumbly accepted the final decision in favour of amputation. M. le Directeur hastened to his bedside to greet him with encouragement on his recovery from the chloroform. But the

patient was the first to speak. And such unexpected words! "Eh bien, nous avançons toujours!"¹

Royaumont was far from ideal as an abode for those afflicted with rheumatism. Even in summer, great white evening mists rose from the surrounding plains and hovered above them like a suspended sea. Patients subject to chronic rheumatism usually made little progress under these adverse conditions.

T—— arrived at the Abbey in the spring, afflicted with many wounds, and as many stiff joints. The wounds steadily improved, but the joints deteriorated progressively. When his injuries had healed and he was ready to be moved to a drier climate, he was carried to the Abbey door on a stretcher, totally crippled. It was a perfect early summer evening, and a crowd of convalescent men in red pyjamas, white-coated doctors, and blue-frocked nurses and orderlies had gathered to bid farewell to the *sortis* in the ambulances. Among the repeated and grateful cries of "Merci—merci pour vos bons soins" which came from the reconstructed men, none were louder or more sincere than those which broke from the poor cripple lying on his stretcher within the departing ambulance.

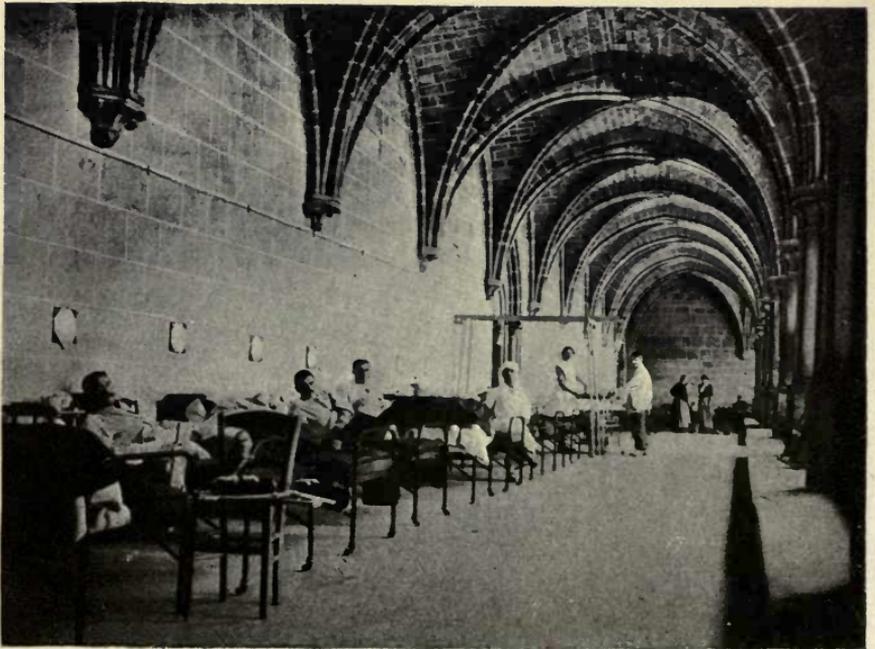
An attractive but primitive young Russian, who spoke scarcely a word of French, reached the hospital with a shattered septic hand. One morning he was told that it was advisable to amputate one of the broken fingers. At breakfast he was missing from his ward, and inquiry elicited only the vague information that some one had seen a man clad in pyjamas and dressing-gown on the wall adjoining the garden at some indefinite hour of the forenoon. A prolonged search was at once begun. At twilight, emerging from the neighbouring woods, the escaped patient gladly surrendered to a passing peasant, who conveyed him safely back to

¹ He referred to the "advance" in Champagne, not to his own progress after the operation.

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ON THE TERRACE.



CLOISTER-WARD IN WARM MONTHS.

Royaumont in a cart. He explained that he intended to return as soon as the *doctresses* were safely out of the wards after their evening visit, and that he hoped to disappear again in like manner the following morning. Apparently it was to be a daily programme. Subsequently, it transpired that his ignorance of the English language had led him to imagine that the surgeon wished to amputate his entire hand, and that he was equally determined not to part with it. Then followed slow days of torture, which he stoically, even smilingly, endured. Finally, surgical skill and nursing succeeded in saving the hand. He was troublesome as a naughty child, but "When are you going to spend another day in the woods?" was a question which never failed to reduce him to laughter and submission in his stormiest moods.

Only one instance of objection to the personnel by a patient can be recorded.

L—, a young lad with severe abdominal wounds, arrived with a large batch of *blessés* late one evening, and was terrified to find that he was to be in the hands of women surgeons. Immediate operation was indicated. When the anæsthetist presented herself, he waved her off, crying piteously that they would kill him, that they had not the proper apparatus for chloroform, that he had no confidence in women and would certainly die under their hands. "It is the Scotch method—the Scotch apparatus!" they assured him. He then took the anæsthetic with instant docility. A few days later he was one of the most amusing of the ward inmates, and confided to his doctor that he had been "*très découragé*" when he had discovered that the operator was a woman; but that "he had since become completely reconciled and grateful for her constant devotion and good care."

B— was severely wounded by a hand-grenade, which had so thoroughly damaged his limbs that life

was almost despaired of. At first, conservative operations were performed, but as the temperature refused to fall and the general condition of the patient deteriorated, it was decided to amputate. The pain of the complicated and multiple dressings of his many wounds was a daily torture to him in his enfeebled condition. In reality he had become a "mental case." Every moment of his waking hours was spent in weeping, uttering piteous groans whenever sympathetic eyes dwelt upon him. Imagine the amazement of the nurses when one day he was heard to ejaculate between his many groans, "When the war is finished, I will go to England. I will go to England to find a wife!" ("J'irai en Angleterre chercher une femme").

The process of washing the newly arrived men who were not severely enough wounded to be immediately put to bed, and there undergo their ablutions, afforded many humorous situations.

For a considerable time, a fairly sound member of the convalescent community—Happ by name—was assigned the task. From the beginning he evinced an uncanny enjoyment of his job; and before long developed an extraordinary muscular growth in his daily "*chasse aux poux*."

It was most humorous to see Happ, on the arrival of the wounded in the entrance hall, skulking behind the doctors and orderlies, spotting his grimy victims. A sinister satisfaction then illumined his long, thin, melancholy face at the sight of prospective patients. His own combination of stomach and bronchial troubles was promptly forgotten, or in abeyance at the prospect of further pugilistic encounters. His early enthusiasm gained force with daily washings, and developed in addition a cheer which he devoted solely to the reassurance of the new arrivals.

Had Happ been a Britisher, there might well have been a concerted protest on the part of the soldiers

against rigorous ablutions, which in France were considered, in conjunction with fresh air, symptoms of an insular derangement. But if Happ's fist was of merciless purpose, his heart was as tender as a woman's. During the long washings and scrubblings, it was affecting to overhear his unfailing *obbligato* of conversation to each soldier—yells of delight breaking from him whenever any game was added to the bag.

The ablutions ended, his next (self-imposed) task, which he particularly enjoyed, was to gladden the hearts of the now spotless victims with glowing praises of the hospital. The beauty of the place, the care and kindness of the personnel, the delicious food, the unspeakable peace of the wards and cloisters, all were dwelt upon with such enthusiasm and effect that even before turning into bed the newly arrived were already in love with their unfamiliar surroundings. His kindly solicitude was not confined to those entrusted to his soapy legerdemain. Any one in distress among the new arrivals caught at once his searching eye, and untiring were his efforts to help, amuse, or reassure his stricken brothers. He was an inveterate worker, and to his *hammam* obligations he added the business of helping in the wards—dusting and cleaning with thoroughness and enjoyment.

His ultimate evacuation after many months at the Abbey proved a long-dreaded misfortune to both patients and Staff.

In the early days an English "blue-blood" had volunteered as chauffeur, and was installed at Royaumont. His services were often requisitioned after his transportation of the wounded at night from M—— to help Happ in his soap-and-water *battues*. It was interesting to watch the maiden efforts of this Belgrave native, arrayed in high rubber boots and long mackintosh apron from head to feet, scrubbing vigorously the writhing French *blessés*. The removal of cutaneous properties

accumulated in the trenches not only taxed his University muscles, but occasioned much beneficial discomfort to the infected wounded. His bit resulted doubtless in many a bite ; but apparently insect resentment did not relax his efforts ; for, to the end, constant were the complaints from the French soldiers of his Keating ferocity of fist. The most placid and willing of men—tall, rosy, distinguished—his courtesy was never failing except to the elusive “ small game.” Between chauffeuring and scrubbing, he fulfilled several months’ work at the hospital, and left regretted by all.

T—— was the most remarkable individuality among the wounded of Royaumont. He had not the distinguished polish of P—— in personality or manner, but under a rougher exterior possessed a surprising taste in literature which stamped him not only as a wide reader, but as a lover of the finer elements of poetry and prose. Tall, swarthy, athletic of figure, a face of faded bronze lit by pale grey eyes which seemed to grow yet paler under suffering, there was nothing in the exterior man to suggest the soul of an artist. A native of Dordogne, his rough muffled voice (handling the delicacies of literary art) seemed to come from the marshes of his distant country. I remember a conversation I had with him one day, sitting at the foot of his bed in the Refectory after a concert, during which he revealed the surprising *finesse* of a hidden mind. He had been impressed by the music—particularly by the romantic songs—and spoke at once of the old Provençal troubadours. I asked him (with little expectation of a favourable answer) if by chance he knew Rostand’s *Princesse Lointaine*. “ Oh yes,” he responded eagerly (his eyes sparkling with pleasure) ; and then quoted from the idyllic poem some of its most exquisite lines. From *Méïssande* to *Cyrano* was the next step, and then again his quotations were chosen from what was most subtle and delicate in Rostand’s

masterpiece. I asked him if he had heard the *on dit* that the wife of the eminent French Academician was responsible for some of the most felicitous verse in her husband's Gascon drama. He answered in the negative; then posed to me the question: "Are you acquainted with the poems of Rosamonde Gérard—her assumed name," he explained. "Ah! they are indeed beautiful," he added, "and what I find most touching are the opening lines of her poem, 'The Eternal Song.'" Lifting his head from the pillow, eyes beaming with the joy of imparting beloved lines, he quoted slowly the quatrain—not the smallest nuance of beauty or grace escaping the caress of his hoarse, muffled voice:

Lorsque tu sera vieux et je serai vieille,
Lorsque mes cheveux blonds seront des cheveux blancs,
Au mois de mai, dans le jardin qui s'ensoleille,
Nous irons rechauffer nos vieux membres tremblants.

"Voilà la vie heureuse!" he exclaimed with relish.

A short dissertation on Verhaeren, and when I left him, his face was beaming with hidden things brought to light.

"Thank you, thank you for the conversation. It has been a delightful half-hour!" were his parting words.

During all those weeks of acquaintance, he had never revealed to me the fact that he had been decorated in hospital with the Croix de Guerre and the Médaille Militaire. *Homme de guerre*—that he did represent in outward appearance; but *homme de lettres* was the business of a hidden soul.

* * * * *

If the opportunities of conversation disclose the nature of the man, a further note of self-revelation is often afforded by the medium of correspondence—distance

lending a confidence often absent in personal intercourse.

I append several (of many) letters received by the hospital Staff from wounded men after their cure and evacuation. They will divulge not only *finesse d'esprit* , but an appreciation and gratitude which in many cases ended only when a return to the trenches had silenced forever their friendly voices.¹ A letter addressed to *M. le Directeur* runs thus :—

Excusez-moi de l'impolitesse que j'ai commise en ne vous remerciant pas de vive voix des soins dont j'ai été l'objet dans l'établissement (modèle) dont vous êtes le directeur (modèle). J'étais très occupé par mes affaires que j'avais à arranger, par les adresses que je devais prendre, et surtout, j'étais triste, très triste, infiniment triste !

Il fallait quitter deux excellentes camarades. Il fallait quitter la Salle *Blanche de Castille*, d'où je n'ai emporté que de doux souvenirs. Il fallait quitter ces excellents médecins dont la haute compétence est indiscutable, et dont la bonté et la douceur semblent semer du baume sur la mire présente ; le personnel infatigable qui se sacrifie avec le désintéressement le plus complet. Enfin il fallait quitter Royaumont ! Cette Abbaye qui semble s'isoler du reste du monde pour n'aspirer de la civilisation que les plus douces senteurs.

Permettez-moi, M. le Directeur, de vous dire ce que je pense de Royaumont. Quant au Service de Santé, je crois qu'il est confié à un des médecins les plus capables : Miss Ivens, la bonté même. D'ailleurs, cet excellent médecin est admirablement secondé par des dames qui sont animées du plus pur esprit de sacrifice.

Quant à la nourriture, je puis dire, et pour cause, qu'elle est très bien ordonnée, et plus que suffisante.

¹ I have purposely abstained from translating the following letters. To render them into English would be to sacrifice the charm of their polish or illiteracy. And these are the only reasons for their appearance here.

Quant au confortable, inutile de répéter ce que d'autres plus autorisés que moi vous ont dit, et vous diront encore.

Non, le soleil a beau sourire, colorer un paysage des plus pittoresque, faire chanter les oiseaux ; il ne pourra faire pénétrer la joie dans le cœur d'un voyageur qui vient de quitter Royaumont ! qui y avait rencontré des amis ! qui a eu pour médecins de bienveillantes dames !

Votre on ne peut plus obligé,

C—

Letter from an educated man after he had left the hospital :—

Je m'acquitte d'une obligation bien douce en vous exprimant aujourd'hui mes remerciements pour les soins attentifs et empressés que j'ai reçus pendant mon séjour à l'hôpital de Royaumont. J'ai trouvé une égale bienveillance, un égal dévouement toujours souriant, dans les doctresses, les Sisters, et les Misses qui se sont occupées de moi. Aussi, j'emporte et je garderai de Royaumont le très agréable souvenir des deux semaines de délicieuse quiétude, au sortir des violentes émotions et des dures fatigues de la tranchée.

Je ne puis que souhaiter à nos blessés la chance de trouver, pour les soigner, des mains aussi douces et en même temps aussi expertes, qu'à Royaumont. Et puisque c'est une éventualité toujours possible tant que dure cette terrible guerre, je me souhaite à moi-même, si j'étais de nouveau blessé, la faveur de bénéficier encore de vos soins.

From a bereaved mother :—

Le 1^{er} janvier 1916.

MADAME LE MÉDECIN-CHEF,

Permettez à mon mari et moi d'offrir en le jour de l'an à Madame le Médecin-Chef nos souhaits et nos vœux les plus sincères et les plus respectueuses, et malgré tout notre chagrin de la séparation de notre cher fils et de ses chers camarades nous sommes heureux de lui témoigner en ce jour béni ainsi qu'à toutes les bonnes dames de l'hôpital l'hommage

de notre plus respectueuse reconnaissance pour les soins si dévoués qu'elles ont donnés si généreusement à notre cher Gilbert, et à tous ceux qui ont le bonheur de rentrer à Royaumont. Merci, et encore merci, Madame le Médecin-Chef, pour tant de bienfaits et tant de bontés de sa part pour une si belle cause. Je ne l'oublierai jamais, Madame le Médecin-Chef, que je vois toujours avec son gracieux et si doux sourire. Vraiment il n'y a que Dieu, Madame, qui puisse récompenser un si sublime dévouement. Je serai bien reconnaissante à Madame le Médecin-Chef si elle voulait bien me donner l'adresse et le nom du digne officier qui a été si bon pour mon pauvre Défunt.

Et avec nos plus respectueux remerciements nous prions Madame le Médecin-Chef et toutes les bonnes Dames de bien vouloir recevoir l'expression de nos sentiments les plus respectueux.

La très reconnaissante

SALLES NOBILLON.

It is pathetic to remark here a mother's grief which found expression only in gratitude for the devoted but fruitless care of her lost son.

I reserve for the last the most remarkable letter of the little collection offered to the reader: from the venerable Curé d'Asnières, Chaplain of the Royaumont Hospital.

It has reference to the deceased Gilbert Salles, mentioned in the last letter.

ASNIÈRES-SUR-OISE,

20/x/15.

BONNE ET CHÈRE MADAME,

J'ai vu, hier, le cher petit Salles, que vous disputez avec tant de dévouement à la mort. J'ai pensé qu'il serait peut-être très utile de transférer dans ses veines un peu de sang régénérateur qui pourrait lui donner, avec la force de guérir, le moyen de reprendre toute son énergie et toute son activité intellectuelle.

Je me mets, en toute simplicité et toute franchise, à votre



IN THE CLOISTERS.



AN ORDERLY,

entière disposition. Je vous offre tout le sang qui coule dans mes veines. Usez-en, je vous en supplie, sans compter. Je suis tout à vos ordres. Vous me rendrez heureux, bien heureux, en acceptant mon offre. Soyez assez bonne, chère et bonne Madame, je vous prie, d'agréer, avec mes hommages très respectueux, l'assurance de tout mon dévouement en N.S.

B—

I fear to disfigure this memorable letter by translation. One feels that the task should be performed . . . on one's knees.

ASNIÈRES-SUR-OISE,

20/x/15.

GOOD AND DEAR LADY,

I have to-day seen dear little Salles, for whom you are fighting Death with such unsparing devotion. I have been thinking that it might be well to transfuse into his veins some regenerating blood which might give him the strength necessary for convalescence and ultimate recovery.

I place myself in all humbleness and sincerity at your disposal. I offer you all the blood that runs through my body. Use it, I entreat you, to its fullest limit. You will make me happy, supremely happy, by accepting my offer.

I beg of you, dear and good Lady, to accept, with my respectful homage, the assurance of my fidelity in Our Lord.

B—

True Shepherd of Souls, ready to give his life for his sheep—there is an added pathos when (having known him) one realizes that what he was offering for regeneration was the attenuated blood of an over-spent heart. But of that he had no thought. The eternal youth of self-sacrifice was in his veins; in his Christ-like mind, an eagerness to give, to give all he had—to exchange even life for death.

And it was not the sudden impulse of a prodigal moment. His unsparing devotion, cheer, unselfishness

to the wounded at the hospital since its début, the extravagant use of his forces for their mental and spiritual alleviation, is a matter of record in the memory of all who have known him at Royaumont. Perhaps one little hidden fact may assure the reader how in small as well as in great matters the venerable Abbé was always prepared to buy the comfort of the wounded at his own unqualified expense. Aged in years, and in residence of the damp district, he had succumbed to the scourge of the locality. His limbs were stiffened by rheumatism, his one luxury was a fire in his study. During the long winters no coals ever burned on his hearth. With the money saved, he bought tobacco and cigars for his "dear children."

In considering the hundreds of sufferers who have sojourned at this happy hospital home, the brotherly comradeship existing among the men is a striking characteristic. This is due not only to a simplicity and joyousness of character natural to the French, but to a racial sense of equality which makes brothers of them all. The fact is never more evident, or more touching, than in the intercourse between the soldier and his officer. Here we have no gold-braided arrogance, no machine-made authority, no maltreatment of man by beast. Officers and men meet on the common ground of humanity and patriotic conscription. Authority is maintained, not maimed by imperious persecution: *capitaine* and *poilu* are veritable brothers-in-arms. This mutual sympathy ensures a respect for discipline, and stimulates a quick racial comprehension of the possibilities of individual initiative. No occasions reveal more convincingly this military comradeship than the visits of French officers to their wounded in hospital. The filial pride and affection of the *poilu* for his kind *commandant*, the latter's unconcealed interest, his invariable greeting "Mon enfant," reveal a brotherly love which, added to a profound patriotism,

constitutes a combination of invincible importance. The numerous visits of Generals to the Abbey have been of touching gratification to patients and personnel alike. Solicitude from Headquarters, and the tonic of occasional *etiquette* in the presence of officers, have been of constant psychological benefit to the ununiformed soldiers.

CHAPTER XIX

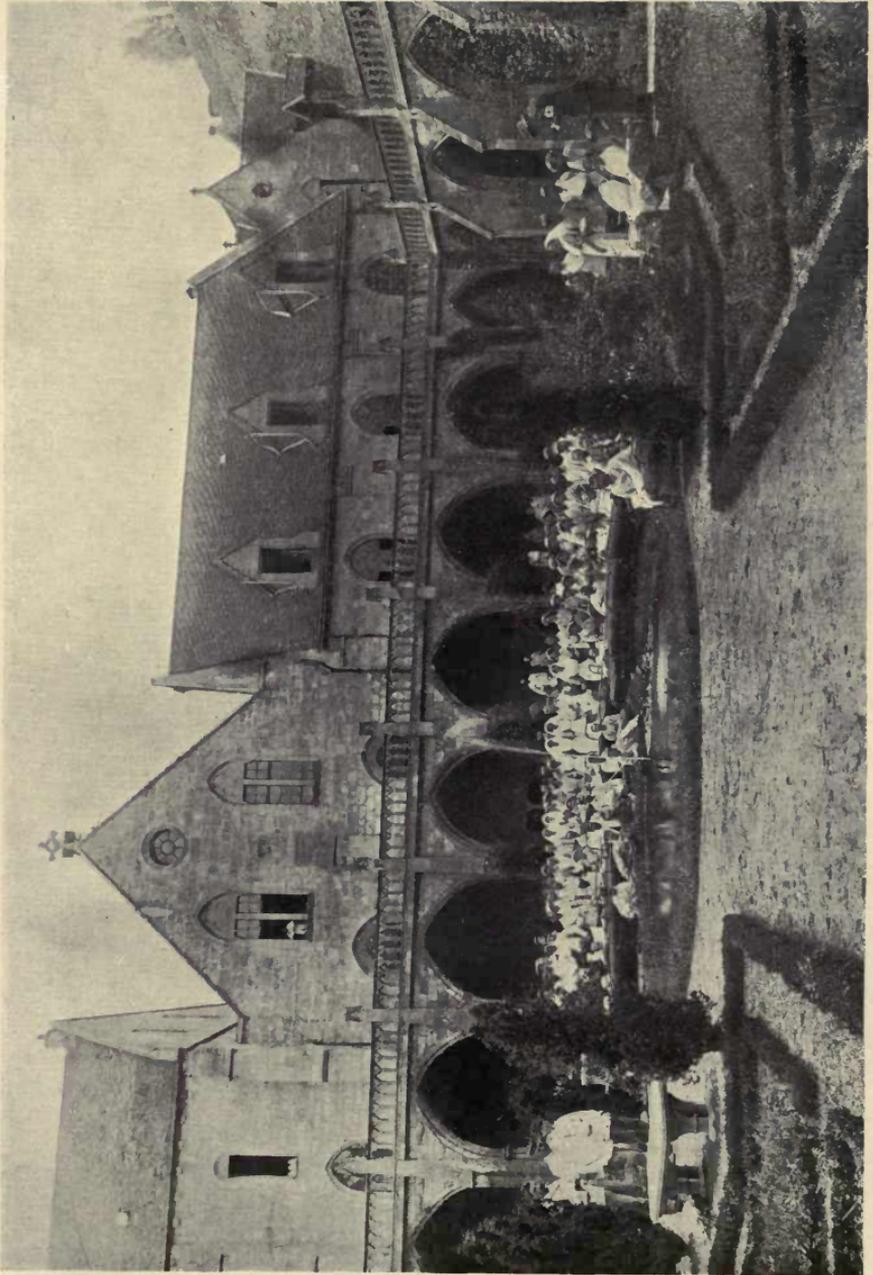
“ GOOD-BYE ”

AFTER the arrival of the wounded at the entrance hall of the Abbey, where a spontaneous welcome always awaits them, the most touching scene is the hour of their departure: repaired, recovered, on their way to possible release from service, often *en route* again to the trenches.

It was late afternoon when I last saw them leave—the cloisters in shadow, a sunset glow bathing the incurable wounds of the ruined church, a hooded ambulance transformed into a char-à-banc standing before the great Abbey door. A large crowd had congregated there: nurses, orderlies, convalescents, a great part of the hospital Staff—all assembled to speed the departing “ guests ” (for that is what the wounded are at Royaumont) on their momentous journey.

An animated scene, a restless *va-et-vient* of orderlies carrying the soldiers' luggage; orders, counter-orders, commanding voices of officials—of affected resonance. A veritable din. But through it all, a feeling of suspense, of sadness held in determined check.

Suddenly “ the wounded ” appeared (twelve): once more in their picturesque blue uniforms (brushed, burnished by their faithful nurses), bare-headed, cap in hand. Accoutred again for war! Yet . . . hanging back sorrow-eyed, suddenly shy as they searched the crowd for their comrades, called timidly the names



CLOISTER.

of their beloved “Seesters”—retarding thus as long as possible the dreaded departure.

It was a heart-rending scene: tears, affected laughter, hand held long in hand, a few words in English from the men, perhaps learned and secretly treasured for the parting moment—and they were away.

Then—above the loud panting of the Darracq—a flutter of hands and handkerchiefs, cries of God-speed from nurses, orderlies, and Staff; above all the pandemonium of farewell, a chorus of cheers from the retreating ambulance:

“Merci pour tous les bons soins.”

“Vive l’Angleterre!”

“Vive les Dames Ecossaïses!!”

“Vive Royaumont!!!”

And from one solitary voice—charged with tears:

“Au revoir!”

“*Au revoir!*” broke from every throat in spontaneous agreement; again and again—from the gardens, the avenue, the outer-gate, from the distant highway, the last cry . . . a murmur in the whispering wind.

The heart’s full measure of affection and gratitude in the parting words. And in their hidden meaning—an unexpressed willingness to be again wounded, and so return to their beloved Royaumont.

“Au revoir!”

APPENDIX

NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES

SCOTTISH WOMEN'S HOSPITALS FOR FOREIGN SERVICE

Headquarters Office : 2 ST. ANDREW'S SQUARE, EDINBURGH.

SUMMARY TO DATE, OCTOBER 1914—JANUARY 1917

ABBAY DE ROYAUMONT

<i>C.M.O.</i>	DR. FRANCES IVENS
<i>Administrator</i>	MISS CICELY HAMILTON
<i>Accommodation</i>	400 beds

This Hospital was established in December 1914, and is directly under the French Red Cross. In September the French President paid it an official visit of inspection and spoke most highly of its excellent organization and administration. Up to the 20th of September 1916, 2,250 patients had been admitted. The large majority were surgical cases. Attached to this Hospital is a well-equipped X-ray Department and Laboratory.

SALONIKA

(Girton and Newnham Unit)

<i>C.M.O.</i>	DR. LOUISE McILROY
<i>Administrator</i>	
<i>Accommodation</i>	300 beds

This Unit was formerly at Troyes, in France, where it was established by the express wish of the French Military

Authorities. On the departure of the French Military Force for Salonika, it was ordered by the Minister of War to accompany the army. This is one of the few occasions upon which a voluntary hospital has been attached to an Expeditionary Force. During the months of July and August 1916 alone, 1,000 cases were admitted and treated. The majority of cases during the summer were medical, comprising principally cases of malaria and dysentery. During the later months of the year, however, surgical cases in a considerable number were admitted. The French, to show their appreciation of the services rendered by this Unit, decorated its C.M.O., Dr. Louise McIlroy, with the Croix de Guerre.

SERBIAN REFUGEE HOSPITAL, CORSICA

(Manchester and District Federation Unit)

C.M.O. DR. MARY PHILLIPS
Administrator MISS CULBARD

This Unit is in charge of the medical affairs of the Serbian Refugee Colony in the Island of Corsica. It consists of the main Hospital at the Villa Niot, Ajaccio, the Isolation Hospital at the Lazaret, and out-patient Dispensaries at the Refugee Houses at Chiavari and St. Antoine, as well as an out-patient department attached to the Main Hospital. Daily visits are also paid by the Staff to patients in Ajaccio, as well as to the Refugee Centre at Salines.

UNITS ATTACHED TO THE SERBIAN ARMY

("America" Unit)

C.M.O. DR. AGNES BENNETT
Administrator MISS FLORENCE JACK
Accommodation 250 beds

After the reorganization of the Serbian Army, the Government asked the Scottish Women's Hospitals for two fully equipped Units. The first of these left for the East in

August 1916. On arrival at Salonika it proceeded in the wake of the Serbian Army to Ostrovo, where it worked day and night during the severe fighting for Monastir. The Ambulance Corps of this Unit rendered splendid service on the dangerous mountain roads. Dr. Bennett, writing from Macedonia and commenting on the work, said: "As long as there are wounded men on the hills our cars will go to bring them in, if it is humanly possible to manage it, and our girls are most wonderful—no praise is too high for their nerve and skill." Owing to the severe nature of the fighting, all the cases admitted have been surgical.

MOTOR TRANSPORT COLUMN

At the same time as the "America" Unit left this country, a Transport Column consisting of six Ford ambulances, two vans, and a motor kitchen was sent to do transport work for the Serbians. The aid given by the ambulances has been invaluable in bringing the wounded into hospital. This column has now been attached to the "America" Unit, and the two, working together, make a very efficient and useful combination. The late Commandant of the Column, Mrs. Harley, has been decorated by the French with the Croix de Guerre. She met her death in March 1917 from the explosion of an enemy shell in the unfortified town of Monastir.

LONDON UNITS

(With the Serbian Division of the Russian Army)

<i>C.M.O.</i>	DR. ELSIE INGLIS
<i>Administrator</i>	MISS HENDERSON
<i>Accommodation</i>	Two Field Hospitals of 100 beds each and Motor Trans- port Column

The arrival of the London Units in Russia coincided with Rumania's entrance into the war. They immediately proceeded to the Dobrudja with the Serbian Division. Dressing stations were organized and strenuous work was

done by the main body of the Unit at Medjidji. The entire Staff took part in the retreat, giving whatever aid it was possible to render. Since then they have been working where help was most necessary, and Serbs, Rumanians, and Russians have been under their care.

TRANSPORT COLUMN

Attached to this Unit, under the Hon. Mrs. Haverfield, is a Motor Transport Column, consisting of a number of Ford ambulances, two field kitchens, two motor lorries, a touring car, and a workshop car. With a column such as this the Unit is easily moved and is not dependent upon outside transport.

PREVIOUS WORK

CALAIS

C.M.O. . . . DR. ALICE HUTCHISON

The first Hospital, or rather contingent, sent out by the Scottish Women's Hospitals was undertaken at the request of Dr. Depage, the Belgian surgeon, who applied to the Scottish Women's Hospitals for two doctors and ten fully trained nurses to take charge of a typhoid Annexe at Calais.

SERBIA

Commissioner . . . DR. ELSIE INGLIS

KRAGUIEVATZ

C.M.O. . . . DR. ELEANOR SOLTAU

This Unit worked all through the great typhus epidemic and was responsible during that time for 570 beds.

MLADANOVATZ

(*Neill Fraser Memorial*)

C.M.O. . . . DR. BEATRICE MCGREGOR
Administrator . . . MISS GERTRUDE PARES
Accommodation . . . 400 beds

VALJEVO

(London Wales Unit)

<i>C.M.O.</i>	.	.	.	.	DR. ALICE HUTCHISON
<i>Administrator</i>	.	.	.	.	MISS FLORENCE JACK
<i>Accommodation</i>	.	.	.	.	250 beds

LAZAROVATZ

<i>C.M.O.</i>	.	.	.	.	DR. HOLLWAY
<i>Administrator</i>	.	.	.	.	HON. MRS. HAVERFIELD
<i>Accommodation</i>	.	.	.	.	300 beds

All the foregoing Units continued to work in Serbia until the autumn of 1915, when they had to retreat with the Serbian Army. Dr. Elsie Inglis and Dr. Alice Hutchison, with their Units, were made prisoners. By March 1916 all the members of the Serbian Unit had reached this country.

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