

ARMY NURSE

THE wind hustled me past the Trentham Racecourse—on to the gates of the military encampment. I asked the guard on duty the direction of the military hospital.

He pointed to a building just inside the gates. Then he gave me a friendly inspection.

"You the new Sister?"

I shook my head smilingly.

"Sorry." His tone made the word sound nicer than it was.

On my way through I met an adjutant, spick and span in a new uniform. He led the way across to the hospital building.

"Here it is."

"So I can smell. Funny, isn't it—they all smell the same?"

He nodded.

"Are you the new Sister?"

"No. You're the second person who has asked me that."

"Sorry." He saluted. "Wish you were."

He went. I caught a flick of white in the hospital hallway.

"Matron?" I asked.

"Yes, come right in." She led the way into a small, simply furnished room. "This is not very grand, but we can be private here."

Modern Florence Nightingale

I looked at her with frank curiosity—and not a little wonderment. Where was our old-time conception of a hospital Matron—some grey-haired martinet breathing authority?

The woman who stood before me was still young. Tall, slim, brown-haired; with a friendly smile. If I told her she looked like my conception of Florence Nightingale, she would have thought me sentimental, so I left it unsaid.

We were interrupted by the entrance of an orderly.

"The Ministers have arrived, Matron."

She begged to be excused for a few minutes. Some of the Government Ministers had come out to pay a visit to the hospital. She went; slim, tall, capable.

Outside there were voices, the passage of feet, someone coughing in the distance.

A very young boy in rough camp overalls wandered in. His fair hair was rumpled. He looked at me in a funny fashion out of one eye. The other was bugged up.

"You the Sister?"

It was becoming an obsession.

"No, but Matron will be back in a minute."

"All right—doesn't matter—no hurry."

A hospital orderly darted in.

"You the chap with the eye? Come along with me."

They disappeared.

Tea with Matron

Hospital life going on its brisk, efficient way. Smell of iodoform—clean—pungent. . .

Matron returned.

"Sorry for keeping you. Come on over to the Nurses' quarters—we'll have some tea."

Over a cheery cup we chatted.

This nice, modern Florence Nightingale, I learnt, had previously been a District Nurse at —. From there she had come direct to the Military Hospital. Five years back she had put her name down on the Army Reserve List. She was among the first to be called up when war broke out.

"I suppose there was a rush for enlistment?"

"Six hundred," she nodded, "within the first week."

"Will you be leaving with the next troops?"

"Yes, I go on final leave next week. It's hard, you know, leaving one's people, but, then, it's not for always. Besides, I'm so thrilled at the idea of seeing Egypt. It will be my first long trip abroad."



Spencer Digby, photograph

MADAME POUQUET, wife of the French Consul

"And will you be stationed there permanently?"

"I think so—at the Base Hospital. Several of my friends left with the First Echelon—I have had letters from them since. They had a great trip over, though some of them feel the heat very much." She smiled. "I won't mind it so much, though, for I once nursed for two years in the tropics."

Men Preferred

She told me they had a Parade before the Governor at the Camp the day previously. He asked the nurses what they wanted most to do in Egypt. They replied—to ride a camel. Whereupon the Governor proceeded to point out to them some of the finer points of the game.

"Tell me, Matron," I asked, "I've heard it debated so often. Would you rather nurse men patients or women?"

She smiled. "Men every time. They are so very much easier to manage, and they are so helpful when they are convalescent and able to move about."

"Are you kept busy here at the hospital?"

"Not at the moment—mostly cases of influenza. Some of them are such boys—we treat them like children—they are really little more. One of our lads got up for the first time the other day after a bout of flu'. Sister told him to take it easily, and if he felt weak to go back to bed."

"Who—me?" he spluttered. "Why, I'm tough!"

Not so Tough

But before lunch-time, she saw him deposit his clothes and creep back under the bed-clothes.

Sister came across and peeped under the blankets.

"So here's our tough little boy?"

The kid's head bobbed up over the bed-clothes.

"Boo!" he barked at her.

"They are like that," she said, "little boys. . ."

"But doing a man's job," I added.

"Yes," she said, "they're fine."

She walked with me to the hospital gates where we said good-bye.

"All the luck in the world, Matron. It's a grand adventure, really, I envy you."

"I know," she answered. "I wouldn't miss it for worlds!"

New Fashion

Corset manufacturers overseas are working overtime these days. Not because we have all at once become figure-conscious, but because velvet is on its way to becoming the winter's most popular material—and to wear velvet successfully women must have what the Edwardians call "a figure." We are not being condemned, however, to the old-time bone-crushers. A trim elastic fabric foundation that zips on and has very few bones, is our destiny.

Women in Literature

The Nobel Prize for Literature, worth £8,000, added to a large slice of honour and glory, has been won only four times by a woman since it was instituted. The last woman to win it was Pearl Buck in 1938.

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