

A NURSE'S TALE

THIS incident happened over twenty years ago when I was a probationer in one of Australia's largest city hospitals. I was in my second year and was sent for to "special" an accident case in the men's surgical ward. The case proved to be attempted suicide, and the patient was the son, in his early twenties, of a big business man well known and highly respected. The injuries were terrible, as a revolver had been exploded in the mouth, with the consequence that half the head was blown away. Careful handaging was necessary to make the boy fit to be visited by his people. A burly constable shared my twelve-hour vigil, and little hope was given of the patient's recovery. Mother and fiancée, both very smart and fashionable, came in frequently, and the mother tearfully exclaimed each time that she could not understand how the accident happened, as Don was so careful when cleaning a gun.

Several days went past. The patient's condition remained unchanged. One morning eight days after the accident he became rapidly worse and his people were notified and stayed till the end.

The Girl in Black

Ten minutes after their departure a message was sent that a lady was to be admitted to see the dead man. She came, a quiet pale-faced little girl in black, obviously approaching motherhood. The visitor didn't stay long, and on leaving gave me her name and address saying, "You looked after him nurse, so would you come and see me, and let me talk to you as I have no people here." I promised, and full of curiosity as to her connection with the boy, determined to go at the first opportunity.

The funeral was a huge one as you can imagine, and pathetic notices of thanks appeared in the paper from the bereaved bride-to-be. Weeks went by and I hadn't been to see the girl as I promised, and my conscience pricked me; so one afternoon I set out to look her up and found her just home from the maternity hospital with a son a fortnight old. This is the story she told me.

Secret Marriage

Mary, we will call her, had left England to visit relatives in Melbourne, but on the boat had met and learned to love the boy Don, who married her on arrival at Sydney. After a week's honeymooning he gave her a sum of money and left to

see his parents whose name and address she did not know. He did not return and months afterwards she saw his photo, and that of his fiancée in an illustrated paper.

Mary wrote, but the only reply was an envelope containing money. Her position was desperate and a week before his proposed marriage she called at his office and begged him to tell his parents of her existence and the impossibility of the proposed marriage. He was very tender and very penitent and promised to make a clean breast of it all that night. Mary left feeling confident that, although there would be a tremendous row, and a probable break for a while, everything would be all right, and that her husband would make a home for her and their baby. The poor child, who was only eighteen, next read in the paper of the dreadful accident, and waited every day for news of him, hoping he had told everything. The day of his death she received through a solicitor a letter from her husband enclosing £100. In this letter he explained that cowardice kept him from speaking, and that he was taking the only way out. It was too big a problem for me to solve so I enlisted my mother's help, with the consequence that Mary and her baby came to our home until the little mother was stronger.

Too Proud to Tell

We discussed the position many times and my father begged to be allowed to

acquaint the boy's parents of the situation, of the existence of a grandson. But quiet, sad-faced, little Mary proved adamant, even though we pointed out that she owed it to her son that he should have all the advantages due to him. Her reason was that if Don was too proud to acknowledge her as his wife she was too proud to touch his money for herself or her son.

She eventually went to a good position and her baby was well cared for.

The last we saw of her was when she returned to England with her two-year-old boy.

This boy is probably serving his country now in happy ignorance of the fact that he could claim relationship with one of Australia's leading men.

War Songs Sell Well

If the war of 1914-18 did nothing else, it gave birth to a number of looking-on-the-bright-side songs which have retained their popularity through the intervening years. "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" and "Keep the Home Fires Burning" are two which will probably be sung as long as songs are sung in the English language.

World War II. has so far produced a remarkably popular patriotic song in "There'll Always Be An England," of which, in New Zealand alone, over 12,000 copies have been sold so far.

Another success has been scored by the "Maori Battalion Marching Song," which was written by a corporal in the Maori Battalion itself. A stirring, lively march, the song has been heard frequently over the air, and is already selling well.

APPLICATIONS (to be made on P.S.C. Form 17A, obtainable at principal Post Offices) with Copies Only of testimonials, will be received up till noon on the 20th December, 1940, for the full-time position of woman writer "New Zealand Listener," Wellington. It is desired that applicants should have good educational qualifications, and it will be a recommendation to have had charge of papers for women and children. The position provides scope for organising ability. Commencing salary, £5 per week. The successful applicant will be required to bear any expenses incurred in travelling to take up appointment. Secretary, Public Service Commissioner, Wellington, C.I.

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