

# FIVE GUINEAS A WEEK AND FOUND

—But A U.S. Army Nurse Took Some Finding

"**D**ID you notice those two girls in the navy and red uniform while you were out at lunch time?" the Editor asked us on his return from his mid-day stroll. "Run them to earth and get their story."

From his description we guessed they were probably Americans wearing the same uniform we'd seen in the films recently. After hastily grabbing coats and notebooks we started off on our hunt with a picture in our mind of two smartly dressed girls wearing navy costumes, light-blue shirts, black ties, a jaunty navy glengarry piped in red, and the U.S. badge on their lapels. We expected to have a choice of girls to interview, but after patrolling the streets for over an hour hadn't sighted one. Inquiries at shops, hotels, and from odd acquaintances we met proved fruitless, and just as we were wondering if it was all a hopeless chase, we spotted the uniform across the street.

Regardless of trams and traffic we dashed across and hailed the wearers. The girls were just as charming as we'd expected, and looked well in their distinctive uniform. Our high hopes, however, were soon dashed when their polite officer-companion regretfully informed us that they couldn't talk. Feeling like Fifth Columnists we meekly said we quite understood and left them with a copy of *The Listener* as a souvenir.

## Still No Story

But we weren't completely discouraged. Maybe the Post Office would be a likely place. It was. Our "find" there was wearing the Australian Air Force uniform with commissioned rank. In the few seconds she could spare us she told us she was a qualified nurse on escort duty with the boys. Unfortunately the "boys" insisted on having her company, so we were left without a story.

Our next venture was to stop an American officer in the hope that a smile might persuade him to help us in our quest. And he did try to help, too, but the hotel he sent us to could give us no information. Five o'clock found us still without a story, a permanent wave ruined, foot-weary, cold and disappointed. It was, you see, our first assignment as reporters and it worried us to



United States Army Nurses—"frank, friendly, unassuming"

think that we were perhaps failing where a more experienced journalist would have succeeded.

## Last Attempt

Then after dinner we had a brain-wave. Why not try all the hotels to see if any American girls had booked in for the night? After our fourth attempt we struck gold—a suggestion that we ring Army Headquarters, who referred us to the American Legation Office. A very patient and understanding officer, with a fascinating drawl, listened to our story and promised to do all he could if we'd "call him back" in fifteen minutes. He had good news for us when he rang again and directed us to a certain hotel. But by the time one of us had travelled from an outer suburb and the other had been interrupted during a First Aid lecture, our lady had been whisked away in a similar fashion to our Australian nurse. We did manage to contact her, escort by telephone and through him were advised to see the lady in charge of all the nurses, who would be able to give a more representative interview. But how to contact the lady? We decided to make this to-morrow's problem.

So next morning we approached the Legation Office again, and our kindly officer there spent half-an-hour trying to locate the lady we wanted. But even he failed.

The only thing left to do seemed to be to go down to the wharf gates and accost every woman either going aboard or leaving ship, as all efforts to get a pass were futile. We filled in an amusing hour chatting with Australian airmen and a jovial police officer, who would have if he could have, but "the law's the law you know, and who'll look after my wife and children if I let you through?" We just couldn't insist any longer, and the cold southerly almost won the day.

Then just as we'd left the gates a cheery whistle behind us called us back to a waiting car in which was the lady we'd spent the last twenty-four hours trying to locate. Time with her was precious, as she was then on her way to an important engagement, but we were invited to "hop in" and ride to the city with her. "Hop" was the word.

Then we let loose our questions. What type of work did women do on board, and what were the qualifications necessary?

They were all, we were told, trained nurses, with High School and preferably University education. "We had training in the camps for about two months looking after the boys. After that overseas service. Girls with the necessary qualifications volunteer from all over the country to join our Red Cross Unit, and from this organisation we are selected for overseas service."

"Pay? Well, we get 70 dollars a month, that is, about £21 in your money. And then we get travelling allowance and expenses paid. Our clothes are all supplied—shoes, tunics, hats, etc. But underwear and stockings and cosmetics we have to buy ourselves. When our clothes wear out the Government replaces them."

"And what if you get married?"

"We are all single girls. If we get married we have to leave the Army."

"Yes, we get promotion just like the regular officers. We enter the Army as Second Lieutenants and then work our way up. There is actually one girl holding the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and drawing the same pay, plus travelling expenses, as an officer with the same rank."

## "Frank, Friendly, Unassuming"

The type of entertainment arranged for the boys "back home" seemed to be on the same lines as here. Each camp has its own appointed hostess, we were told, and it is her duty to arrange dances and bring to the camp parties of girls as partners.

As it happened these particular girls we talked to had been on duty overseas since war broke out, and they stressed the fact that a lot more would have been done since they left home. But at the time they trained there was nothing under way comparable with our V.A.D. system or our W.W.S.A. organisation.

By this time the taxi had reached the city. Our three minutes had slipped by so quickly that the things we most wanted to know had not yet been asked. Some of them, however, were forbidden topics; perhaps most of them; and we did not require longer time to discover how frank, and friendly, and unassuming the nursing sisters of America clearly are.

—Mary and Martha



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