

Over the Hospital Tea-cups.

"THANK goodness," said the energetic Pro, "that we can count on at least ten minutes for our tea. After the 'heat and burden' of the day—especially when the thermometer outside stands at 89°—one needs a 'refresher,' and I can promise to consume at least *six* cups."

"Regardless of complexion and hygiene? Didn't a large-waisted woman who wrote to the RECORD trace the degeneracy of the Pro to tight waists and tea? Can't you just imagine what that large-waisted woman looks like? I quite shuddered when I read her letter. It seems as if a woman must have lost all sense of the fitnesses of femininity when she can confess to her inches in such a cold-blooded way," said the Staff-Nurse, whose tiny waist was the admiration and pride of the whole Hospital.

"If I were that woman I should emigrate to the 'Adamless Eden' and——"

"In the name of all that's up-to-date, what is the 'Adamless Eden'?" and eight enquiring eyes rested on the Pro, whose information was always unique and racy. In fact, there was a strong suspicion that she must be a secret member of the Pioneer, or some other club where women meet in mysterious conclave, and hatch mysterious plots against the continuance of Farcical Man.

"Why, haven't you heard? It's a colony just started by Dr. Mary Walker; and is aimed at the total suppression of flirting! Every woman who joins the colony must swear a direful oath of celibacy, and pledge herself to wither every man she meets——"

"Why, that's just what some people think we do in Hospitals, although——"

"Don't interrupt the exponent of the New Paradise by talking 'shop.' That's what you Staff-Nurses always do—you *must* bring every argument down to ward level, or else you're not interested. Why, one day I was talking of some marvellous scientific discoveries that had been made about the Cliff Dwellers, and I was thick in ethical and psychological speculations, when I was brought down to the lowest depths of practicality by Staff here asking quite seriously if I thought the Cliff Dwellers used tow for poultices!"

"And if they had Probationers and Boards of Guardians and other luxuries, and whether any of the Guardians insisted on going to tea with the Nurses, as some in the East End do—and heaps of things. *Wouldn't* it be interesting to know?" and the second-year Nurse, in her enthusiasm, forgot that hers was the important mission of making toast for the kitchen tea;

until a sudden blaze, caused by the slice of bread falling into the fire, recalled her to her prosaic task.

"Well, as I was saying when I was so rudely interrupted," said the Pro, severely, "this new colony is the latest thing out. And it is intended for the production of 'creditable specimens of the New Woman,' a creature Dr. Mary Walker thinks which stands in urgent need of cultivation. All the colonists are to wear Bloomers."

"And no tight waists?"

"And no small waists. The constriction of the waist is the Hall Mark of the old woman who wants to appeal to the morbid and distorted taste of man, who holds up his hands in horror when he reads of the tortures inflicted on the feet of the Chinese, but doesn't mind the agonies endured by *his* womenkind, in their efforts to narrow the grand lines of Nature to his pigmy ideal."

"Well, you can't say a large-waisted woman ever looks 'smart,'" retorted the well-braced Staff.

"No, I can't, and I imagine it was the last thing intended in the manufacture of Woman. But to return to our colony; they are going to live on a fruit farm, under the 'immediate supervision of Dr. Mary Walker and two lady officers,' and all the colonists must be between fifteen and thirty-five, and 'abjure frivolities.'"

"Has St. Patrick been invoked as the Patron Saint?" said the "new guinea," a quiet looking girl in the corner.

"Don't be irreligious! Do you suppose a Roman Catholic Saint would be allowed to——?"

"But see how useful he would be to banish snakes. Where there is fruit and women, a serpent is sure to come and what will Dr. Mary Walker do then, poor thing?"

"Well, anyway, they're going to have something masculine about the place. The programme says they will indulge in 'manly sports'; I wonder they condescend to import anything with a flavour of the 'inferior sex' about it, don't you? The place is to be in Oswego, New York. I suppose that's where they invented the biscuits. Wouldn't it be fun to go and see them all with Dr. Mary—who always dresses in trousers and a silk hat—leading the procession, all on bicycles, I suppose? I'm going to suggest to Mr. Cook to run special excursions out just to see them. But what I want to know is why these enterprising women think it the highest form of advancement to imitate men, as if women hadn't plenty of individuality of their own. It's easy to shut yourself in a wood and 'abjure flirtation.' The real heroine is the woman who refuses in the face of *fearful* temptations to yield to the love of admiration which I once heard a crusty old

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