

Baby Farmers!

I was nursing a complicated obstetric case, which entailed my residence for two months with my patient, and for a long time I was up a considerable part of most nights. Although we were in London, the house was in a road where nearly all the neighbours were known to one another, and many of them were on the most intimate terms.

Our next door neighbours, however, my patient knew nothing about; they seemed strange people, never went out by day, kept their blinds mostly down, and their garden a wilderness. The only visitor to the house seemed to be the milkman. He deposited his can on the step.

Imagine my surprise one night when I was passing a back window, in which the blind was not drawn, to see somebody with a storm lantern beneath a tree digging a pit! What was happening in our neighbour's garden? I extinguished my candle, and watched, breathless with amazement. I saw him deposit a parcel in the hole and cover it with turf, pat it all smoothly down, and return to the house with the lantern. I debated in my own mind as to what could have been in the parcel, and decided the people must be baby farmers, and I would watch at night if anything else happened. I heard a baby cry sometimes, and felt more and more convinced something strange was happening in that house.

Some nights later I saw exactly the same performance, and again and again; and I was uncertain whether to inform the police first or to try to unearth one of the parcels myself and then determine what to do. I had almost decided on the latter course, when, to my surprise, one morning as I was in our garden picking a few flowers, a pretty fair-haired woman sped quickly down the wilderness garden next door, and addressed me over the hedge.

"Nurse, I fear my husband is dying. Will you come in and see him? Our doctor is away for the day, and he would be so angry if I fetched another to him."

A word of explanation to my patient, and I was off. I found the man suffering intense colic pains, but quite amenable to the pleasures of castor oil and turpentine stupes, and the wife seemed to be a really nice, sensible little woman. She told me she had a baby nearly two years old, and the house was prettily arranged, though inexpensively furnished and scrupulously clean.

I found the man's work took him out at night, and his wife preferred to make darkness her day, too. By the time the doctor came he

was quite comfortable, and both he and his wife were grateful for my ministrations.

Now, how should I broach the subject of the burials I had seen? Were they misers, and would they be angry at my having spied on them? But those parcels could not have contained coins—they were too large. The idea of baby farmers I had dropped since I knew the couple. Mr. B— however saved me the trouble of asking. He informed me one day that since he had lived in that house he had killed over a hundred cats with a noiseless gun he possessed, and they were all buried in the garden; and then I told him what I had seen.

"By Jove! if I hadn't got ill, nurse, you might have got me into a pretty scrape, or might even now if you had not been who you are. I'll give up the funerals, and chuck them into the street in future."

ALEXIA.

The Military Nursing Service Reserve.

Some disappointment has been caused to British nurses resident abroad that this fact has disqualified them from membership of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve. Such nurses will be glad to learn that the decision that members of this Service must be resident in the United Kingdom has now been annulled, and applications from eligible nurses resident abroad will, therefore, be considered. Candidates must have had three years' training and service in a civil general hospital, or a Poor Law Infirmary recognised by the Local Government Board as a Nurse Training School, and must be between 26 and 45 years of age, and must agree to serve either at home or abroad in time of war. They are enrolled for a period of three years, and must report once a year in writing to the Matron-in-Chief at the War Office. Sisters and Staff Nurses are paid a retaining fee of £2 per annum, and when actually employed, the rates of pay per annum are—Matrons, £75, rising to £150; Sisters, £50, rising to £60; and Staff Nurses, £40, rising to £45. Added to this, if their services have been satisfactory, the following gratuities will be paid on the cessation of service: Matrons £15, Sisters £10, and Staff Nurses £7 10s. It will thus be seen that the Nursing Service Reserve offers an opportunity for patriotic work for the sick and wounded of the Regular Forces, of which we believe many nurses who are not able to join the Q.A.I.M.N.S. will be glad to avail themselves, under conditions which compare favourably with those obtaining in any other branch of nursing.

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