

A WAR ROMANCE.

THE CELLAR HOUSE OF PERVYSE.*

Those who were in London in the early days of the war will remember the seething mass of women, trained and untrained, who besieged the War Office and the British Red Cross Society—located for the time being at Devonshire House—with the object of offering their services to the sick and wounded, and *bien entendu* of going "to the front." For the spirit of adventure is high in the young, and many young women were

amongst this miscellaneous assemblage. Amongst the number of those who successfully achieved their desire—through the Women's Emergency Corps—were Mrs. Knocker (now the Baroness T'Serclaes) and Miss Mairi Chisholm, whose journals have now been edited by Miss G. E. Mitton. Miss Mitton describes "the heroic Two of Pervyse," or, for short, "The Two," as "both young hem-selves, one very young. They lived at first for

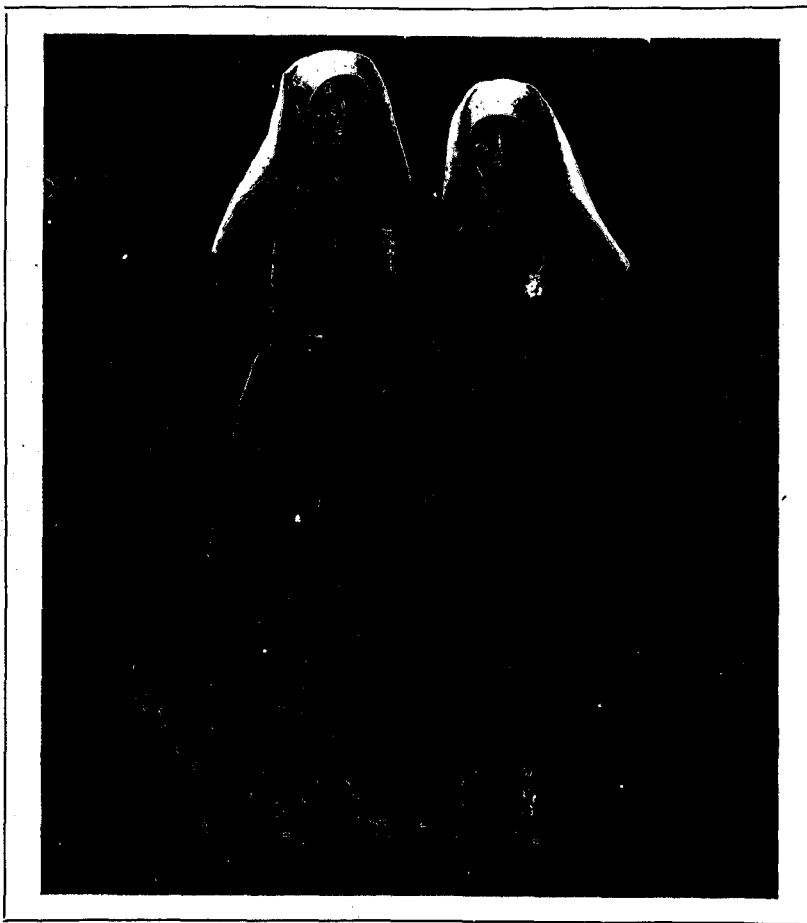
long months in a cellar twelve feet by ten, they slept on straw, and of necessity used foul water from a citch. As the village they were in was under constant shell fire, the chauffeurs, and sometimes wounded soldiers, had to sleep in that cellar too. There was, of course, no possibility of changing clothes; they lay down as they were, and were often called up in the middle of the night to attend to ghastly wounds."

Given this setting for two young, and from all accounts charming women, it was

inevitable that romance should enter in, and the book concludes with the chimes of wedding bells.

Mrs. Knocker, known to her friend as Gipsy, is described as a fully trained nurse, as well as an excellent mechanic and chauffeur. Mairi, aged 18, had had no training as a nurse, nor had she any money, "but possessed with a burning fervour to help, she sold her beloved motor-cycle to provide the funds for her expenses." Other members of the Corps started "by a fluke" by Dr. Munro, who entrusted their selection to Mrs. Knocker, were "a golden-haired American lady, also

untrained, but very willing and eager (she turned out to be a beautiful pianist); Miss May Sinclair the novelist (who went as Secretary), and Lady Dorothy Feilding. We are told that "the British Red Cross Society had scoffed at this amateur band, but the Belgian Red Cross was willing enough to accept their useful services; and when the British one found this out it actually rose at length to giving them two cars, which necessitated the



MRS. KNOCKER AND MISS MAIRI CHISHOLM.
"THE TWO."

addition of two working chauffeurs to the party, and furthermore it eventually gave them their passages to Belgium."

The party left England at the end of September and slept at Ostend. "The next morning the

* "The Cellar House of Pervyse: A Tale of Uncommon Things from the Journals and Letters of the Baroness T'Serclaes and Mairi Chisholm." A. & C. Black, Ltd., 4, 5 and 6, Soho Square, London, W. 6s. net.

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