

members of the Corps awoke to face a wild scramble and much running to and fro, arising from lack of adequately thought-out detail." There were, for instance, two cars, a 42 h.p. Daimler with pneumatic tyres, for passenger service, and a 40 h.p. Fiat with solid tyres suitable for carrying baggage, but no one had thought of petrol, and as it seemed unprocurable in Ostend it was suggested that the cars should be put on a truck and taken to Ghent, but this proved impracticable, as the cars, being very large, refused to go on the trucks. Finally the military authorities lent them enough petrol to take them to Bruges, where the ambulance was attached to the Military Hospital at the Flandria Palace Hotel, but Gipsy Knocker and Mairi Chisholm found the next two days dreadfully trying. "They could not help in nursing the wounded, for there were plenty of nurses—besides, that was not their job; their part was to go out to the firing line to fetch the wounded and render first aid, and bring them in, but no one had sent for them, and they had no permission to go.

Some of the ambulance party helped with the feeding of the refugees—an enormous task, which, to the credit of the people of Ghent, was well tackled; but "even this was denied them, for they were recalled by authority, for fear they might carry germs to the wounded when they handled them."

Three days after their arrival in Ghent, Gipsy found a job in driving the car of the Belgian Colonel, whose own chauffeur had disappeared. This was somewhat of an innovation in war time, though the Belgian Army

was not nearly so much swathed about with red tape as some of the older countries.

The preliminaries settled, she took the Colonel on his rounds to various outposts the next day, picking up a wounded man on the way. "She had coffee with her new employer before he went on to the actual front, and she concluded that he was 'a dear, so kind and considerate'; he had not taken any advantage of the unusual position.

"Already it was beginning to be apparent that there was a fatal lack of organization in the ambulance corps. The men part of it were rushing hither and thither bravely enough, but in a most haphazard manner, wasting much precious petrol; and even joy rides were not unknown; whereas much real ability and energy was running to waste."

The waiting time was a time of great strain.

"We mouched around," says Mairi, miserably. "I felt bored with life. Another day of waiting! One must have patience beyond everything!" Then there swam into their ken the gay and gallant figure of a young Belgian officer; he was slim and tall, with fair hair, showing up in contrast with his well-fitting dark-green uniform. They nicknamed him, 'Gilbert the Filbert!' . . . he had accounted for forty-eight Germans in the weeks preceding, so his presence was inspiring. He was to be very closely associated with them in their work, but at the time he was merely a passer-by."

Their work began when they met the trainloads of wounded at the station. "There was a dramatic moment when a trainload of terribly smashed and maimed Belgians came in at one platform of the station just as a trainload of self-confident, clean, fresh British 'Tommies' was going out from another. The little Belgians had



THE CELLAR HOUSE, PERVYSE, FROM THE BACK.

not as yet seen such assurances of help, and one and all, exhausted and faint as they were, cheered and waved their poor bandaged hands."

"The girls had the most discouraging of all experiences, that of seeing their allies obliged to retreat. In one place they passed through one of those experiences which remain like a hurt on the heart. Fifty men had been left to guard the retreat of the rest, left to what was almost certain death. Theirs to hold up the flood tide so long as they might before going under. There was a look on the faces of these men seen only on the faces of the dead who have died in peace. There was no uncertainty, no disquietude. They awaited their fate as if they had already met it, not lightly or discounting what it meant, but with the calm willingness of those who had seen all they loved in the world swept away. The clear blue eyes of every rough soldier had in them something of the

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