

in the first week of next month. 'Why? Where? She doesn't know, but only smiles at my impatience. She knows life—hospital life.'

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"Impermanency. . . I don't wonder the Sisters grow so secret, so uneager. How often stifled! How often torn apart."

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"Far down the corridor a slim figure in white approaches, dwarfed by the smoky distance—her nun-like cap floating, her scarlet cape—the 'cape of pride'—slipped round her narrow shoulders.

"How intent and silent they are.

"I watched this one pass with a look, half reverence, half envy. One should never aspire to know a Sister intimately. They are disappointing people—without candour, without imagination. Yet what a look of personality hangs about them. . . ."

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"The new Sister has come, and at present she is absolutely without personality, beyond her medal. She appears to be deaf."

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"To be a Sister is to have a nationality. As there are Icelanders, urbane, witty, lazy . . . and yet they are all Icelanders . . . so there are cold, uproarious, observant, subservient, slangy, sympathetic, indifferent, and Scotch Sisters, and yet. . . ."

"Sister said of a patient to-day, 'He was a funny man.'

"A funny man is a man who is a dark horse: who is neither friendly nor antagonistic; who is witty, who is preoccupied; who is whimsical or erratic—funny qualities, unsafe qualities.

"No Sister could like a funny man.

"In our ward there are three sorts of men—'Nothing much,' 'nice boys,' and Mr. Wicks. The last looms ever to the mind of the Sister as a Biblical figure, a pillar of salt, a witness to God's wrath.

"The Sister is a pastmistress of such phrases as 'Indeed!' 'That is a matter of opinion,' 'We shall see,' 'It is possible.'"

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"A gentleman . . . a gentleman. . . . I am so tired of this cry for a 'gentleman.'

"Why can't they do very well with what they've got?"

"Here in the wards the Sisters have the stuff the world is made of laid out, bedded, before their eyes; the ups and downs of man from the four corners of the Empire, and the hundred corners of Social life, helpless and in pyjamas, and they are not satisfied, but must cry for a 'gentleman'!

"'I couldn't make a friend of that man,' the youngest Sister loves to add to her criticism of a patient.

"It isn't my part, as a V.A.D., to cry, 'Who wants you to?'

"'I couldn't trust that man,' the youngest Sister will say equally often.

"This goes deeper. . . ."

"But whom need one trust? Brother, lover, friend . . . no more. Why wish to trust all the world?"

"'They are not real men,' she says; 'not men through and through.'

"That's where she goes wrong; they are men through and through—patchy, ordinary, human. She means they are not men after her pattern.

"Something will happen in the ward. Once I have touched this bedrock in her I shall be forever touching it till it gets sore!

"One should seek for no response. They are not elastic, these nuns."

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Of articles sent up from the dispensary and labelled by a careful dispenser, "To be returned at once," Miss Bagnold remarks, "I never knew a Sister fail to toss her head when she saw this message."

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But though she condemns the Sisters, this V.A.D. does not scruple to use their honourably won title. "How wonderful to be called Sister! Every time the uncommon name is used towards me I feel the glow of an implied relationship."

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She is no nun.

"Charme de l'amour. . . . The ward is changed! The eldest Sister and the youngest Sister are my enemies; the patients are my enemies—even Mr. Wicks." But it is rather a strain on our credulity that because she has a flirtation with a patient that he should be moved to another hospital. Had we been the Matron the erring V.A.D. would have been moved to another ward. It would have been so much simpler, and quite as efficacious.

When will some one write a book describing the trained nurse as she really is?

ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

COURSE OF LECTURES.

No. 3.

ASTRONOMY FOR NURSES.

Why not? Do not the lives of professional nurses tend to become a little too "cramped, cabined and confined"? No branch of education could possibly come amiss to them if they are to be (as they should be) pleasant, congenial companions and friends to their patients. To get away from the "blood and muscle" side of nursing was evidently in the mind of the Secretary of the Royal British Nurses' Association, when she arranged such an attractive programme of fortnightly lectures, which members of the profession—not merely of the Association—are obviously enjoying, to judge from the good attendance.

"I'm sick of gruel and the dietetics,
I'm sick of pills, and sicker of emetics;
I'm sick of pulse's tardiness and quickness,
I'm sick of blood, its thinness and its thickness—
In short, within a word, I'm sick of sickness."

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