

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by



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## SUMMERTIME IN THE ISLES OF THE MIST.

Drifting rain and a wind from the northern sea. Not just the weather, perhaps, which you would choose to take a "joy ride," in a strange, jolting old char-a-banc, in a country where great mountain peaks soar into the clouds, peaks where eagles dwell and from which wild cataracts dash. A drive over a hill road, made rough by the storms, a road now skirting dark echoing cliffs, now crowning the steep banks of some moorland loch, no such expedition had been in our thoughts when we started to stroll up a street in Stornoway with its low houses on one side, their windows—one and all of them—secured from within by gorgeous masses of blossoming geranium, while, on the seaward side of the street, stood rows upon rows of herring barrels, into which strong limbed fisher lassies packed the last night's harvest of the sea. Then our glance fell on the rough motor char-a-banc rapidly filling with fisherwomen and folk from the crofts which lie scattered about the Island. Did it not offer just the opportunity for adventure? On interrogating the driver we ascertained that he was setting out on a drive which was to cover fifty miles, and in a moment we were struggling for the empty seats. A ruddy old Yorkshireman brought up the rear of our party; he was heedless of the expostulations of his daughter and her reiterated reminders of his proneness to contract pneumonia. With the air of a schoolboy intent upon some particularly reckless prank, this valiant old rebel against petticoat government climbed jauntily up beside the driver, thereby scoring over the rest of his party for, when the two long seats in our chariot were packed, the remaining passengers, without an instant's hesitation, proceeded to form two fresh tiers of seats by the simple expedient of establishing themselves on the laps of those who had first got in, refraining however, much to our relief, from enforcing our hospitality in this matter. But, nevertheless, we were soon packed together as closely as the unfortunate occupants in the barrels across the street, and it was indeed a release when, after covering a distance of twenty miles or so, the car began to stop at frequent intervals to allow first one and then another of our fellow travellers to alight. But

we were to learn later that overcrowding has, on occasions, certain advantages, for the char-a-banc, in the character of a "returned empty" (or nearly so) rivalled in its vagaries the behaviour of our boat some days previously when it passed through what, to many an Englishman, is a sea of sad memories—the Mull of Kintyre.

But any discomfort was forgotten before we had lost sight of the thatched and red tiled roofs of the town of Stornoway, forgotten in the wonder that lay spread before us as we climbed the long hill track, for it was little more, which lay marked out for us, across the moorland, by occasional stacks of peat set down here and there, for convenient cartage, where the heather meets the roadland. Once more we were in that unrivalled country "where peesweep, plover and whaup cry dreary," where lie old battle-lands of the Clans and the Norsemen, where hills stand like vast giant castles of gloom, which yet, at some other time, when they are kissed by the sun, reveal the greenest of grassy slopes, corries and fells, wherein find shelter, wild flowers as delicate in form and colour as any in your Southern lands.

Ere we had gone a few miles we were in a veritable fisherman's paradise. No sooner was one inland loch passed than another lay spread to right or to left, and every time we passed one of those sheets of water, beneath the towering hills and heavily fringed by its banks of heather, a man, hugging a fishing rod, would look round at us with shining eyes and not one among us could refrain from an answering smile. Half an hour ago we were unaware of his existence but, thanks to his winsome companion, peeping from its old grey case, and to those elusive feather-bedecked little hooks in his hat, we were all of us friends in a moment. This astute looking lawyer from the Scottish capital told us in a few words half his personal history. He, a Welshman, had met his wife first in the highlands, now she was on a visit to her old home and he was going to join her, there. He was to spend three weeks among the hills. "Did not we pity him?" he asked with a laugh, which indicated that to do so would be the last absurdity. Miles farther on he jumped from the car with a shout like a schoolboy's, and gripped the hands of a stalwart highlander at the door of a roadside house. All his luggage except the fishing rod was forgotten; but Jehu was equal

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