

not the Matron, simply because we had no Matron. But if she was not in that responsible position, we all felt she ought to be; as there was no more motherly nurse in all the hospitals under General Smuts. So we called her Matron. You must not imagine that she was an old woman; by no means. Conjecture put her down as thirty-five, more on account of her grave ways and quiet habit of command. If we saw her out of her professional garb and on the Pier in Adderley street, we might have deducted ten from that figure.

'Read that, Tom!' she said, when she became aware of my presence, holding out the letter that had been in her lap.

It was a bold and business-like communication from the British War Office, telling her that her brother had been killed in France and sending her the respectful sympathy of the Commander-in-Chief.

'He was my only brother,' she said quietly, but an irrepresible tear stood in her eye.

The Matron passed with us as a gentle Stoic. It had always been her function to keep our spirits up, and it was no joke to see her thus overcome. I did not feel the man to bring balm to Gilead, and there was silence in the tent for an eternal minute.

It was broken by the stentorian tones of the Sergeant Major, whose voice was like the sound of many cart wheels. No man could plead, with any sense of decency, that he had not heard this gentleman's orders. And now he was calling upon the stretcher-bearers to 'fall in'. There was evidently work ahead.

I returned the letter to the Matron with a heart full to the brim. One word would have made a fool of me. All that a self-respecting soldier could do, I did, that is to say, I shook her warmly by the hand. It was my business to see that the men fell in, and to await their return, with all arrangements made for putting the wounded to bed. The Sergeant marched them off with a swing. Clearly this was not parade drill, but real business.

In half an hour the men were back; but this time the march was slower. Only one stretcher was occupied. There had been an affair of outposts, and the leader of the German scouting party had fallen; the rest had got away.

He was a fine specimen of the Saxon that lay upon this stretcher—six foot at least, and bearded like the pard. But in spite of his bushy beard he was little more than a boy.

His first words were a surprise. Though he evidently suffered, as we took him from the stretcher to a camp bed, he murmured anxiously.

'Is there a Catholic priest here?'

We looked at one another—the Matron and I. The Catholic chaplain of our contingent was busy with the main body, and no one in the ambulance knew just where he was just then. We had that morning passed a small native mission station, where a Belgian priest was in charge. It was ten miles away. Besides, not being Catholics, we thought that he would hardly do.

'There's only a Belgian priest,' I answered, but he would

'Please,' answered the young fellow very earnestly, 'send for him—he must come.'

We did not know at the time that a Belgian priest had any special obligation to attend a dying German, especially after the newspaper reports published about the war. But we were anxious to soothe our patient, for he had a dangerous wound in the thorax, which any excitement would aggravate. And it was wonderful how soon his condition improved, when I promised that the priest should be called. He lay back tranquilly, like a humored child, with closed eyes, perfectly tractable, and only the occasional movement of his lips showed that he was fully conscious.

A Suahili runner, who had been added to our establishment since we left Nauch, sped to the mission station with the note that was to summon the priest. And how they managed it I do not know, but just before sunset the little spectacled missionary arrived and was ushered into the presence of his friend the enemy.

It is not for me to say what happened between

these 'enemies,' when they met on the common ground of the spiritual comforts of their Church, but it was very touching and very marvellous in its effects. The priest had hardly left him when the Matron found the young officer a new man. A new life came to him and brightened his whole being, and he became talkative.

Then she noticed the quality of his English, which he spoke with ease, but with the unmistakable accent of Connemara. The mystery was cleared up by himself. The son of a country squire (junkie is the more common way of expressing it) he had learned English from an Irish governess.

'I know I'm booked,' he said to the Matron, 'but heaven is nearer to Germany than this African swamp.'

Her patient had no delusions about getting better; that the Matron rejoiced to see. His satisfaction had nothing to do with such false hopes.

'Nurse!' he said after a pause.

'Yes!' answered the Matron, 'here I am!'

'Will you write me a short letter?' he begged.

The Matron knew that there was not much time to be lost, if any letter was to be written. So she quietly arranged the writing materials on a small table and set down, pen in hand, near the pillow.

'To whom shall I write?' she asked.

'To my sister near Dresden,' he replied.

Then, in broken accents, as the weakness grew upon him, he explained that she was the only one of his family left. His mother had died in his early youth. His father and his five brothers had fallen one by one, either in the Eastern or Western fronts of the fight in Europe. The young woman of twenty was now alone in their large country mansion, the last of a race of warriors.

'Tell her,' he said, 'that I had the priest; it will give her a glimpse of Paradise. And say that her blue cornflower is on my grave.'

'But where is it,' asked the Matron, fearing that he was beginning to rave.

'Here! in this crucifix,' and he pointed to the mother of pearl crucifix, which he wore about his neck.

With his failing strength, he was just about able to press a spring at the foot of the cross, which opened a small cavity, where, dry and faded, were the remains of a small, blue cornflower, many years old. Only its safe position could have preserved it so long.

'You will put that on my grave, nurse?'

The Matron could only nod assent.

Then the floodgates of memory were opened for the last time, and the fine aristocratic features of the dying officer were animated as he recalled the memories of the past. How his sister had gone with him to the station when he was appointed to East Africa; how they had walked through the corn fields, and she had given him this little flower as a souvenir.

'And she shall walk to the station again, to get this letter,' he murmured. 'But we shall never walk there together again.'

They were the last intelligible words he uttered. Afterwards there were only starts of reason, with phrases that entangled the distant days of his boyhood at home with the bitter memories of recent days and nights in the African field. Pen in hand, the Matron watched the flickering of the splendid life that was soon to be ended.

She watched and waited in silence until the very end. Her brother, too, had died a prisoner in the hands of the Germans on French soil. And she knew instinctively that some sisterly woman must have heard his last whispers, and she blessed that sisterly heart.

Next day we buried the young soldier, because the heat of equatorial Africa does not permit a long wake. We fashioned a gentle sloping mound over his grave. The cross with the faded cornflower in it, we placed upon his breast. Overground there was a bunch of blue wildflowers, from the sister of the other soldier lad who died among the Saxons in France.

And when the ritual prayers were ended, the little Belgian missionary placed a plain wooden cross upon the mound. It had no inscription except the name of the buried officer; but any one who knew could read the invisible inscription: 'Test we forget.'—Exchange.