

# BAUM LYMAN FRANK

AUNT JANE'S NIECES IN  
THE RED CROSS

Лаймен Фрэнк Баум

**Aunt Jane's Nieces in the Red Cross**

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# **Edith Van Dyne**

## **Aunt Jane's Nieces in the Red Cross**

### **FOREWORD**

This is the story of how three brave American girls sacrificed the comforts and luxuries of home to go abroad and nurse the wounded soldiers of a foreign war.

I wish I might have depicted more gently the scenes in hospital and on battlefield, but it is well that my girl readers should realize something of the horrors of war, that they may unite with heart and soul in earnest appeal for universal, lasting Peace and the future abolition of all deadly strife.

Except to locate the scenes of my heroines' labors, no attempt has been made to describe technically or historically any phase of the great European war.

The character of Doctor Gys is not greatly exaggerated but had its counterpart in real life. As for the little Belgian who had no room for scruples in his active brain, his story was related to me by an American war correspondent who vouched for its truth. The other persona in the story are known to those who have followed their adventures in other books of the "Aunt Jane's Nieces" series.

*Edith van Dyne*

## CHAPTER I

### THE ARRIVAL OF THE BOY

"What's the news, Uncle?" asked Miss Patricia Doyle, as she entered the cosy breakfast room of a suite of apartments in Willing Square. Even as she spoke she pecked a little kiss on the forehead of the chubby man addressed as "Uncle" – none other, if you please, than the famous and eccentric multi-millionaire known in Wall Street as John Merrick – and sat down to pour the coffee.

There was energy in her method of doing this simple duty, an indication of suppressed vitality that conveyed the idea that here was a girl accustomed to action. And she fitted well into the homely scene: short and somewhat "squatty" of form, red-haired, freckle-faced and pug-nosed. Wholesome rather than beautiful was Patsy Doyle, but if you caught a glimpse of her dancing blue eyes you straightway forgot her lesser charms.

Quite different was the girl who entered the room a few minutes later. Hers was a dark olive complexion, face of exquisite contour, great brown eyes with a wealth of hair to match them and the flush of a rose in her rounded cheeks. The poise of her girlish figure was gracious and dignified as the bearing of a queen.

"Morning, Cousin Beth," said Patsy cheerily.

"Good morning, my dear," and then, with a trace of anxiety in her tone: "What is the news, Uncle John?"

The little man had ignored Patsy's first question, but now he answered absently, his eyes still fixed upon the newspaper:

"Why, they're going to build another huge skyscraper on Broadway, at Eleventh, and I see the political pot is beginning to bubble all through the Bronx, although –"

"Stuff and nonsense, Uncle!" exclaimed Patsy. "Beth asked for news, not for gossip."

"The news of the war, Uncle John," added Beth, buttering her toast.

"Oh; the war, of course," he said, turning over the page of the morning paper. "It ought to be the Allies' day, for the Germans won yesterday. No – by cracky, Beth – the Germans triumph again; they've captured Maubeuge. What do you think of that?"

Patsy gave a little laugh.

"Not knowing where Maubeuge is," she remarked, "my only thought is that something is wrong with the London press bureau. Perhaps the cables got crossed – or short circuited or something. They don't usually allow the Germans to win two days in succession."

"Don't interrupt, please," said Beth, earnestly. "This is too important a matter to be treated lightly. Read us the article, Uncle. I was afraid Maubeuge would be taken."

Patsy accepted her cousin's rebuke with her accustomed good nature. Indeed, she listened as intently as Beth to the thrilling account of the destruction of Maubeuge, and her blue eyes became quite as serious as the brown ones of her cousin when the tale of dead and wounded was recounted.

"Isn't it dreadful!" cried Beth, clasping her hands together impulsively.

"Yes," nodded her uncle, "the horror of it destroys the interest we naturally feel in any manly struggle for supremacy."

"This great war is no manly struggle," observed Patsy with a toss of her head. "It is merely wholesale murder by a band of selfish diplomats."

"Tut-tut!" warned Mr. Merrick; "we Americans are supposed to be neutral, my dear. We must not criticize."

"That does not prevent our sympathizing with the innocent sufferers, however," said Beth quietly. "My heart goes out, Uncle, to those poor victims of the war's cruelty, the wounded and dying. I wish I could do something to help them!"

Uncle John moved uneasily in his chair. Then he laid down his paper and applied himself to his breakfast. But his usual merry expression had faded into one of thoughtfulness.

"The wounded haunt me by day and night," went on Beth. "There are thousands upon thousands of them, left to suffer terrible pain – perhaps to die – on the spot where they fell, and each one is dear to some poor woman who is ignorant of her loved one's fate and can do nothing but moan and pray at home."

"That's the hard part of it," said Patsy, her cousin. "I think the mothers and wives and sweethearts are as much to be pitied as the fallen soldiers. The men *know* what has happened, but the women don't. It isn't so bad when they're killed outright; the family gets a medal to indicate that their hero has died for his country. But the wounded are lost sight of and must suffer in silence, with no loving hands to soothe their agony."

"My dears!" pleaded Uncle John, plaintively, "why do you insist upon flavoring our breakfast with these horrors? I – I – there! take it away; I can't eat."

The conversation halted abruptly. The girls were likewise unnerved by the mental pictures evoked by their remarks and it was now too late to restore cheerfulness to the morning meal. They sat in pensive silence for a while and were glad when Mr. Merrick pushed back his chair and rose from the table.

As Beth and Patsy followed their uncle into the cosy library where he was accustomed to smoke his morning cigar, the little man remarked:

"Let's see; this is the seventh of September."

"Quite right, Uncle," said Patsy.

"Isn't this the day Maud Stanton is due to arrive?"

"No," replied Beth; "she will come to-morrow morning. It's a good four days' trip from California to New York, you know."

"I wonder why she is coming here at this time of year," said Patsy reflectively, "and I wonder if her Aunt Jane or her sister Flo are with her."

"She did not mention them in her telegram," answered Beth. "All she said was to expect her Wednesday morning. It seems quite mysterious, that telegram, for I had no idea Maud thought of coming East."

"Well, we will know all about it when she arrives," observed Uncle John. "I will be glad to see Maud again, for she is one of my especial favorites."

"She's a very dear girl!" exclaimed Patsy, with emphasis. "It will be simply glorious to –"

The doorbell rang sharply. There was a moment's questioning pause, for it was too early for visitors. The pattering feet of the little maid, Mary, approached the door and next moment a boyish voice demanded:

"Is Mr. Merrick at home, or the young ladies, or –"

"Why, it's Ajo!" shouted Patsy, springing to her feet and making a dive for the hallway.

"Jones?" said Mr. Merrick, looking incredulous.

"It must be," declared Beth, for now Patsy's voice was blended with that of the boy in a rapid interchange of question and answer. Then in she came, dragging him joyously by the arm.

"This is certainly a surprise!" said Mr. Merrick, shaking the tall, slender youth by the hand with evident pleasure.

"When did you get to town?" asked Beth, greeting the boy cordially. "And why didn't you let us know you were on the way from far-off Los Angeles?"

"Well," said Jones, seating himself facing them and softly rubbing his lean hands together to indicate his satisfaction at this warm reception, "it's a long, long story and I may as well tell it methodically or you'll never appreciate the adventurous spirit that led me again to New York – the one place I heartily detest."

"Oh, Ajo!" protested Patsy. "Is this the way to retain the friendship of New Yorkers?"

"Isn't honesty appreciated here?" he wanted to know.

"Go ahead with your story," said Uncle John. "We left you some months ago at the harbor of Los Angeles, wondering what you were going to do with that big ship of yours that lay anchored in the Pacific. If I remember aright, you were considering whether you dared board it to return to that mysterious island home of yours at – at – "

"Sangoa," said Patsy.

"Thank you for giving me a starting-point," returned the boy, with a smile. "You may remember that when I landed in your country from Sangoa I was a miserable invalid. The voyage had ruined my stomach and wrecked my constitution. I crossed the continent to New York and consulted the best specialists – and they nearly put an end to me. I returned to the Pacific coast to die as near home as possible, and – and there I met you."

"And Patsy saved your life," added Beth.

"She did. First, however, Maud Stanton saved me from drowning. Then Patsy Doyle doctored me and made me well and strong. And now – "

"And now you look like a modern Hercules," asserted Patsy, gazing with some pride at the bronzed cheeks and clear eyes of the former invalid and ignoring his slight proportions. "Whatever have you been doing with yourself since then?"

"Taking a sea voyage," he affirmed.

"Really?"

"An absolute fact. For months I dared not board the *Arabella*, my sea yacht, for fear of a return of my old malady; but after you deserted me and came to this – this artificial, dreary, bewildering – "

"Never mind insulting my birthplace, sir!"

"Oh! were you born here, Patsy? Then I'll give the town credit. So, after you deserted me at Los Angeles – "

"You still had Mrs. Montrose and her nieces, Maud and Flo Stanton."

"I know, and I love them all. But they became so tremendously busy that I scarcely saw them, and finally I began to feel lonely. Those Stanton girls are chock full of business energy and they hadn't the time to devote to me that you people did. So I stood on the shore and looked at the *Arabella* until I mustered up courage to go aboard. Surviving that, I made Captain Carg steam slowly along the coast for a few miles. Nothing dreadful happened. So I made a day's voyage, and still ate my three squares a day. That was encouraging."

"I knew all the time it wasn't the voyage that wrecked your stomach," said Patsy confidently.

"What was it, then?"

"Ptomaine poisoning, or something like that."

"Well, anyhow, I found I could stand ocean travel again, so I determined on a voyage. The Panama Canal was just opened and I passed through it, came up the Atlantic coast, and – the *Arabella* is at this moment safely anchored in the North River!"

"And how do you feel?" inquired Uncle John.

"Glorious – magnificent! The trip has sealed my recovery for good."

"But why didn't you go home, to your Island of Sangoa?" asked Beth.

He looked at her reproachfully.

"*You* were not there, Beth; nor was Patsy, or Uncle John. On the other hand, there is no one in Sangoa who cares a rap whether I come home or not. I'm the last of the Joneses of Sangoa, and while it is still my island and the entire population is in my employ, the life there flows on just as smoothly without me as if I were present."

"But don't they need the ship – the *Arabella*?" questioned Beth.

"Not now. I sent a cargo of supplies by Captain Carg when he made his last voyage to the island, and there will not be enough pearls found in the fisheries for four or five months to come to warrant

my shipping them to market. Even then, they would keep. So I'm a free lance at present and I had an idea that if I once managed to get the boat around here you folks might find a use for it."

"In what way?" inquired Patsy, with interest.

"We might all make a trip to Barbadoes, Bermuda and Cuba. Brazil is said to be an interesting country. I'd prefer Europe, were it not for the war."

"Oh, Ajo, isn't this war terrible?"

"No other word expresses it. Yet it all seems like a fairy tale to me, for I've never been in any other country than the United States since I made my first voyage here from Sangoa – the island where my eyes first opened to the world."

"It isn't a fairy tale," said Beth with a shudder. "It's more like a horrible nightmare."

"I can't bear to read about it any more," he returned, musingly. "In fact, I've only been able to catch rumors of the progress of the war in the various ports at which I've touched, and I came right here from my ship. But I've no sympathy with either side. The whole thing annoys me, somehow – the utter uselessness and folly of it all."

"Maubeuge has fallen," said Beth, and went on to give him the latest tidings. Finding that the war was the absorbing topic in this little household, the boy developed new interest in it and the morning passed quickly away.

Jones stayed to lunch and then Mr. Merrick's automobile took them all to the river to visit the beautiful yacht *Arabella*, which was already, they found, attracting a good deal of attention in the harbor, where beautiful yachts are no rarity.

The *Arabella* was intended by her builders for deep sea transit and as Patsy admiringly declared, "looked like a baby liner." While she was yacht-built in all her lines and fittings, she was far from being merely a pleasure craft, but had been designed by the elder Jones, the boy's father, to afford communication between the Island of Sangoa, in the lower South Seas, and the continent of America.

Sangoa is noted for its remarkable pearl fisheries, which were now owned and controlled entirely by this youth; but his father, an experienced man of affairs, had so thoroughly established the business of production and sale that little remained for his only son and heir to do, more than to invest the profits that steadily accrued and to care for the great fortune left him. Whether he was doing this wisely or not no one – not even his closest friends – could tell. But he was frank and friendly about everything else.

They went aboard the *Arabella* and were received by that grim and grizzled old salt, Captain Carg, with the same wooden indifference he always exhibited. But Patsy detected a slight twinkle in the shrewd gray eyes that made her feel they were welcome. Carg, a seaman of vast experience, was wholly devoted to his young master. Indeed, the girls suspected that young Jones was a veritable autocrat in his island, as well as aboard his ship. Everyone of the Sangoans seemed to accept his dictation, however imperative it might be, as a matter of course, and the gray old captain – who had seen much of the world – was not the least subservient to his young master.

On the other hand, Jones was a gentle and considerate autocrat, unconsciously imitating his lately deceased father in his kindly interest in the welfare of all his dependents. These had formerly been free-born Americans, for when the Island of Sangoa was purchased it had no inhabitants.

This fortunate – or perhaps unfortunate – youth had never been blessed with a given name, more than the simple initial "A." The failure of his mother and father to agree upon a baptismal name for their only child had resulted in a deadlock; and, as the family claimed a direct descent from the famous John Paul Jones, the proud father declared that to be "a Jones" was sufficient honor for any boy; hence he should be known merely as "A. Jones." The mother called her child by the usual endearing pet names until her death, after which the islanders dubbed the master's son – then toddling around in his first trousers – "Ajo," and the name had stuck to him ever since for want of a better one.

With the Bohemian indifference to household routine so characteristic of New Yorkers, the party decided to dine at a down-town restaurant before returning to Willing Square, and it was during

this entertainment that young Jones first learned of the expected arrival of Maud Stanton on the following morning. But he was no wiser than the others as to what mission could have brought the girl to New York so suddenly that a telegram was required to announce her coming.

"You see, I left Los Angeles weeks ago," the boy explained, "and at that time Mrs. Montrose and her nieces were busy as bees and much too occupied to pay attention to a drone like me. There was no hint then of their coming East, but of course many things may have happened in the meantime."

The young fellow was so congenial a companion and the girls were so well aware of his loneliness, through lack of acquaintances, that they carried him home with them to spend the evening. When he finally left them, at a late hour, it was with the promise to be at the station next morning to meet Maud Stanton on her arrival.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ARRIVAL OF THE GIRL

A sweet-faced girl, very attractive but with a sad and anxious expression, descended from the Pullman and brightened as she found her friends standing with outstretched arms to greet her.

"Oh, Maud!" cried Patsy, usurping the first hug, "how glad I am to see you again!"

Beth looked in Maud Stanton's face and forbore to speak as she embraced her friend. Then Jones shook both hands of the new arrival and Uncle John kissed her with the same tenderness he showed his own nieces.

This reception seemed to cheer Maud Stanton immensely. She even smiled during the drive to Willing Square – a winning, gracious smile that would have caused her to be instantly recognized in almost any community of our vast country; for this beautiful young girl was a famous motion picture actress, possessing qualities that had endeared her to every patron of the better class photo-dramas.

At first she had been forced to adopt this occupation by the stern necessity of earning a livelihood, and under the careful guidance of her aunt – Mrs. Jane Montrose, a widow who had at one time been a favorite in New York social circles – Maud and her sister Florence had applied themselves so intelligently to their art that their compensation had become liberal enough to enable them to save a modest competence.

One cause of surprise at Maud's sudden journey east was the fact that her services were in eager demand by the managers of the best producing companies on the Pacific Coast, where nearly all the American pictures are now made. Another cause for surprise was that she came alone, leaving her Aunt Jane and her sister Flo – usually her inseparable companion – in Los Angeles.

But they did not question her until the cosy home at Willing Square was reached, luncheon served and Maud installed in the "Guest Room." Then the three girls had "a good, long talk" and presently came trooping into the library to enlighten Uncle John and Ajo.

"Oh, Uncle! What do you think?" cried Patsy. "Maud is going to the war!"

"The war!" echoed Mr. Merrick in a bewildered voice. "What on earth can – "

"She is going to be a nurse," explained Beth, a soft glow of enthusiasm mantling her pretty face. "Isn't it splendid, Uncle!"

"H-m," said Uncle John, regarding the girl with wonder. "It is certainly a – a – surprising venture."

"But – see here, Maud – it's mighty dangerous," protested young Jones. "It's a tremendous undertaking, and – what can one girl do in the midst of all those horrors?"

Maud seated herself quietly between them. Her face was grave and thoughtful.

"I have had to answer many such arguments before now, as you may suspect," she began in even tones, "but the fact that I am here, well on my journey, is proof that I have convinced my aunt, my sister and all my western friends that I am at least determined on my mission, whether it be wise or foolish. I do not think I shall incur danger by caring for the wounded; the Red Cross is highly respected everywhere, these days."

"The Red Cross?" quoth Uncle John.

"Yes; I shall wear the Red Cross," she continued. "You know that I am a trained nurse; it was part of my education before – before – "

"I had not known that until now," said Mr. Merrick, "but I am glad you have had that training. Beth began a course at the school here, but I took her away to Europe before she graduated. However, I wish more girls could be trained for nursing, as it is a more useful and admirable accomplishment than most of them now acquire."

"Fox-Trots and Bunny-Hugs, for instance," said Patricia with fine disdain.

"Patsy is a splendid nurse," declared Ajo, with a grateful look toward that chubby miss.

"But untrained," she answered laughingly. "It was just common sense that enabled me to cure your malady, Ajo. I couldn't bandage a cut or a bullet wound to save me."

"Fortunately," said Maud, "I have a diploma which will gain for me the endorsement of the American Red Cross Society. I am counting on that to enable me to get an appointment at the seat of war, where I can be of most use."

"Where will you go?" asked the boy. "To Germany, Austria, Russia, Belgium, or –"

"I shall go to France," she replied. "I speak French, but understand little of German, although once I studied the language."

"Are you fully resolved upon this course, Maud?" asked Mr. Merrick in a tone of regret.

"Fully decided, sir. I am going to Washington to-morrow, to get my credentials, and then I shall take the first steamer to Europe."

There was no use arguing with Maud Stanton when she assumed that tone. It was neither obstinate nor defiant, yet it conveyed a quiet resolve that was unanswerable.

For a time they sat in silence, musing on the many phases of this curious project; then Beth came to Mr. Merrick's side and asked pleadingly:

"May I go with her, Uncle?"

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, with a nervous jump. "*You, Beth?*"

"Yes, Uncle. I so long to be of help to those poor fellows who are being so cruelly sacrificed; and I know I can soothe much suffering, if I have the opportunity."

He stared at her, not knowing what to reply. This quaint little man was so erratic himself, in his sudden resolves and eccentric actions, that he could scarcely quarrel with his niece for imitating an example he had frequently set. Still, he was shrewd enough to comprehend the reckless daring of the proposition.

"Two unprotected girls in the midst of war and carnage, surrounded by foreigners, inspired to noble sacrifice through ignorance and inexperience, and hardly old enough to travel alone from Hoboken to Brooklyn! Why, the thing's absurd," he said.

"Quite impractical," added Ajo, nodding wisely. "You're both too pretty, my dears, to undertake such an adventure. Why, the wounded men would all fall in love with their nurses and follow you back to America in a flock; and that might put a stop to the war for lack of men to fight it."

"Don't be silly, Ajo," said Patsy, severely. "I've decided to go with Maud and Beth, and you know very well that the sight of my freckled face would certainly chill any romance that might arise."

"That's nonsense, Patsy!"

"Then you consider me beautiful, Uncle John?"

"I mean it's nonsense about your going with Maud and Beth. I won't allow it."

"Oh, Uncle! You know I can twine you around my little finger, if I choose. So don't, for goodness' sake, start a rumpus by trying to set your will against mine."

"Then side with me, dear. I'm quite right, I assure you."

"You're always right, Nunkie, dear," she cried, giving him a resounding smack of a kiss on his chubby cheek as she sat on the arm of his chair, "but I'm going with the girls, just the same, and you may as well make up your mind to it."

Uncle John coughed. He left his chair and trotted up and down the room a moment. Then he carefully adjusted his spectacles, took a long look at Patsy's face, and heaved a deep sigh of resignation.

"Thank goodness, that's settled," said Patsy cheerfully.

Uncle John turned to the boy, saying dismally:

"I've done everything in my power for these girls, and now they defy me. They've declared a thousand times they love me, and yet they'd trot off to bandage a lot of unknown foreigners and leave me alone to worry my heart out."

"Why don't you go along?" asked Jones. "I'm going."

"You!"

"Of course. I've a suspicion our girls have the right instinct, sir – the tender, womanly instinct that makes us love them. At any rate, I'm going to stand by them. It strikes me as the noblest and grandest idea a girl ever conceived, and if anything could draw me closer to these three young ladies, who had me pretty well snared before, it is this very proposition."

"I don't see why," muttered Uncle John, wavering.

"I'll tell you why, sir. For themselves, they have all the good things of life at their command. They could bask in luxury to the end of their days, if they so desired. Yet their wonderful womanly sympathy goes out to the helpless and suffering – the victims of the cruellest war the world has ever known – and they promptly propose to sacrifice their ease and brave whatever dangers may befall, that they may relieve to some extent the pain and agony of those wounded and dying fellow creatures."

"Foreigners," said Uncle John weakly.

"Human beings," said the boy.

Patsy marched over to Ajo and gave him a sturdy whack upon the back that nearly knocked him over.

"The spirit of John Paul Jones still goes marching on!" she cried. "My boy, you're the right stuff, and I'm glad I doctored you."

He smiled, looking from one to another of the three girls questioningly.

"Then I'm to go along?" he asked.

"We shall be grateful," answered Maud, after a moment's hesitation. "This is all very sudden to me, for I had planned to go alone."

"That wouldn't do at all," asserted Uncle John briskly. "I'm astonished and – and grieved – that my nieces should want to go with you, but perhaps the trip will prove interesting. Tell me what steamer you want to catch, Maud, and I'll reserve rooms for our entire party."

"No," said Jones, "don't do it, sir."

"Why not?"

"There's the *Arabella*. Let's use her."

"To cross the ocean?"

"She has done that before. It will assist our enterprise, I'm sure, to have our own boat. These are troublous times on the high seas."

Patsy clapped her hands gleefully.

"That's it; a hospital ship!" she exclaimed.

They regarded her with various expressions: startled, doubtful, admiring, approving. Presently, with added thought on the matter, the approval became unanimous.

"It's an amazing suggestion," said Maud, her eyes sparkling.

"Think how greatly it will extend our usefulness," said Beth.

Uncle John was again trotting up and down the room, this time in a state of barely repressed excitement.

"The very thing!" he cried. "Clever, practical, and – eh – eh – tremendously interesting. Now, then, listen carefully – all of you! It's up to you, Jones, to accompany Maud on the night express to Washington. Get the Red Cross Society to back our scheme and supply us with proper credentials. The *Arabella* must be rated as a hospital ship and our party endorsed as a distinct private branch of the Red Cross – what they call a 'unit.' I'll give you a letter to our senator and he will look after our passports and all necessary papers. I – I helped elect him, you know. And while you're gone it shall be my business to fit the ship with all the supplies we shall need to promote our mission of mercy."

"I'll share the expense," proposed the boy.

"No, you won't. You've done enough in furnishing the ship and crew. I'll attend to the rest."

"And Beth and I will be Uncle John's assistants," said Patsy. "We shall want heaps of lint and bandages, drugs and liniments and –"

"And, above all, a doctor," advised Ajo. "One of the mates on my yacht, Kelsey by name, is a half-way physician, having studied medicine in his youth and practiced it on the crew for the last dozen years; but what we really need on a hospital ship is a bang-up surgeon."

"This promises to become an expensive undertaking," remarked Maud, with a sigh. "Perhaps it will be better to let me go alone, as I originally expected to do. But, if we take along the hospital ship, do not be extravagant, Mr. Merrick, in equipping it. I feel that I have been the innocent cause of drawing you all into this venture and I do not want it to prove a hardship to my friends."

"All right, Maud," returned Uncle John, with a cheerful grin, "I'll try to economize, now that you've warned me."

Ajo smiled and Patsy Doyle laughed outright. They knew it would not inconvenience the little rich man, in the slightest degree, to fit out a dozen hospital ships.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DECISION OF DOCTOR GYS

Uncle John was up bright and early next morning, and directly after breakfast he called upon his old friend and physician, Dr. Barlow. After explaining the undertaking on which he had embarked, Mr. Merrick added:

"You see, we need a surgeon with us; a clever, keen chap who understands his business thoroughly, a sawbones with all the modern scientific discoveries saturating him to his finger-tips. Tell me where to get him."

Dr. Barlow, recovering somewhat from his astonishment, smiled deprecatingly.

"The sort of man you describe," said he, "would cost you a fortune, for you would oblige him to abandon a large and lucrative practice in order to accompany you. I doubt, indeed, if any price would tempt him to abandon his patients."

"Isn't there some young fellow with these requirements?"

"Mr. Merrick, you need a physician and surgeon combined. Wounds lead to fever and other serious ailments, which need skillful handling. You might secure a young man, fresh from his clinics, who would prove a good surgeon, but to master the science of medicine, experience and long practice are absolutely necessary."

"We've got a half-way medicine man on the ship now – a fellow who has doctored the crew for years and kept 'em pretty healthy. So I guess a surgeon will about fill our bill."

"H-m, I know these ship's doctors, Mr. Merrick, and I wouldn't care to have you and your nieces trust your lives to one, in case you become ill. Believe me, a good physician is as necessary to you as a good surgeon. Do you know that disease will kill as many of those soldiers as bullets?"

"No."

"It is true; else the history of wars has taught us nothing. We haven't heard much of plagues and epidemics yet, in the carefully censored reports from London, but it won't be long before disease will devastate whole armies."

Uncle John frowned. The thing was growing complicated.

"Do you consider this a wild goose chase, Doctor?" he asked.

"Not with your fortune, your girls and your fine ship to back it. I think Miss Stanton's idea of venturing abroad unattended, to nurse the wounded, was Quixotic in the extreme. Some American women are doing it, I know, but I don't approve of it. On the other hand, your present plan is worthy of admiration and applause, for it is eminently practical if properly handled."

Dr. Barlow drummed upon the table with his fingers, musingly. Then he looked up.

"I wonder," said he, "if Gys would go. If you could win him over, he would fill the bill."

"Who is Gys?" inquired Uncle John.

"An eccentric; a character. But clever and competent. He has just returned from Yucatan, where he accompanied an expedition of exploration sent out by the Geographical Society – and, by the way, nearly lost his life in the venture. Before that, he made a trip to the frozen North with a rescue party. Between times, he works in the hospitals, or acts as consulting surgeon with men of greater fame than he has won; but Gys is a rolling stone, erratic and whimsical, and with all his talent can never settle down to a steady practice."

"Seems like the very man I want," said Uncle John, much interested. "Where can I find him?"

"I've no idea. But I'll call up Collins and inquire."

He took up the telephone receiver and got his number.

"Collins? Say, I'm anxious to find Gys. Have you any idea – Eh? Sitting with you now? How lucky. Ask him if he will come to my office at once; it's important."

Uncle John's face was beaming with satisfaction. The doctor waited, the receiver at his ear.

"What's that, Collins?.. He won't come?.. Why not?.. Absurd!.. I've a fine proposition for him... Eh? He isn't interested in propositions? What in thunder *is* he interested in?.. Pshaw! Hold the phone a minute."

Turning to Mr. Merrick, he said:

"Gys wants to go on a fishing trip. He plans to start to-night for the Maine woods. But I've an idea if you could get him face to face you might convince him."

"See if he'll stay where he is till I can get there."

The doctor turned to the telephone and asked the question. There was a long pause. Gys wanted to know who it was that proposed to visit him. John Merrick, the retired millionaire? All right; Gys would wait in Collins' office for twenty minutes.

Uncle John lost no time in rushing to his motor car, where he ordered the driver to hasten to the address Dr. Barlow had given him.

The offices of Dr. Collins were impressive. Mr. Merrick entered a luxurious reception room and gave his name to a businesslike young woman who advanced to meet him. He had called to see Dr. Gys.

The young woman smothered a smile that crept to her lips, and led Uncle John through an examination room and an operating room – both vacant just now – and so into a laboratory that was calculated to give a well person the shivers. Here was but one individual, a man in his shirt-sleeves who was smoking a corn-cob pipe and bending over a test tube.

Uncle John coughed to announce his presence, for the woman had slipped away as she closed the door. The man's back was turned partially toward his visitor. He did not alter his position as he said:

"Sit down. There's a chair in the southwest corner."

Uncle John found the chair. He waited patiently a few moments and then his choler began to rise.

"If you're in such a blamed hurry to go fishing, why don't you get rid of me now?" he asked.

The shoulders shook gently and there was a chuckling laugh. The man laid down his test tube and swung around on his stool.

For a moment Mr. Merrick recoiled. The face was seared with livid scars, the nose crushed to one side, the mouth crooked and set in a sneering grin. One eye was nearly closed and the other round and wide open. A more forbidding and ghastly countenance Mr. Merrick had never beheld and in his surprise he muttered a low exclamation.

"Exactly," said Gys, his voice quiet and pleasant. "I don't blame you and I'm not offended. Do you wonder I hesitate to meet strangers?"

"I – I was not – prepared," stammered Uncle John.

"That was Barlow's fault. He knows me and should have told you. And now I'll tell you why I consented to see you. No! never mind your own proposition, whatever it is. Listen to mine first. I want to go fishing, and I haven't the money. None of my brother physicians will lend me another sou, for I owe them all. You are John Merrick, to whom money is of little consequence. May I venture to ask you for an advance of a couple of hundred for a few weeks? When I return I'll take up your proposition, whatever it may be, and recompense you in services."

He refilled and relighted the corn-cob while Mr. Merrick stared at him in thoughtful silence. As a matter of fact, Uncle John was pleased with the fellow. A whimsical, irrational, unconventional appeal of this sort went straight to his heart, for the queer little man hated the commonplace most cordially.

"I'll give you the money on one condition," he said.

"I object to the condition," said Gys firmly. "Conditions are dangerous."

"My proposition," went on Uncle John, "won't wait for weeks. When you hear it, if you are not anxious to take it up, I don't want you. Indeed, I'm not sure I want you, anyhow."

"Ah; you're frightened by my features. Most people with propositions are. I'm an unlucky dog, sir. They say it's good luck to touch a hunchback; to touch me is the reverse. Way up North in a frozen sea a poor fellow went overboard. I didn't get him and he drowned; but I got caught between two cakes of floating ice that jammed my nose out of its former perfect contour. In Yucatan I tumbled into a hedge of poisoned cactus and had to operate on myself – quickly, too – to save my life. Wild with pain, I slashed my face to get the poisoned tips of thorn out of the flesh. Parts of my body are like my face, but fortunately I can cover them. It was bad surgery. On another I could have operated without leaving a scar, but I was frantic with pain. Don't stare at that big eye, sir; it's glass. I lost that optic in Pernambuco and couldn't find a glass substitute to fit my face. Indeed, this was the only one in town, made for a fat Spanish lady who turned it down because it was not exactly the right color."

"You certainly have been – eh – unfortunate," murmured Uncle John.

"See here," said Gys, taking a leather book from an inside pocket of the coat that hung on a peg beside him, and proceeding to open it. "Here is a photograph of me, taken before I embarked upon my adventures."

Uncle John put on his glasses and examined the photograph curiously. It was a fine face, clean-cut, manly and expressive. The eyes were especially frank and winning.

"How old were you then?" he asked.

"Twenty-four."

"And now?"

"Thirty-eight. A good deal happened in that fourteen years, as you may guess. And now," reaching for the photograph and putting it carefully back in the book, "state your proposition and I'll listen to it, because you have listened so patiently to me."

Mr. Merrick in simple words explained the plan to take a hospital ship to Europe, relating the incidents that led up to the enterprise and urging the need of prompt action. His voice dwelt tenderly on his girls and the loyal support of young Jones.

Dr. Gys smoked and listened silently. Then he picked up the telephone and called a number.

"Tell Hawkins I've abandoned that fishing trip," he said. "I've got another job." Then he faced Mr. Merrick. His smile was not pretty, but it was a smile.

"That's my answer, sir."

"But we haven't talked salary yet."

"Bother the salary. I'm not mercenary."

"And I'm not sure –"

"Yes, you are. I'm going with you. Do you know why?"

"It's a novel project, very appealing from a humanitarian standpoint and –"

"I hadn't thought of that. I'm going because you're headed for the biggest war the world has ever known; because I foresee danger ahead, for all of us; but mainly because –"

"Well?"

"Because I'm a coward – a natural born coward – and I can have a lot of fun forcing myself to face the shell and shrapnel. That's the truth; I'm not a liar. And for a long time I've been wondering – wondering –" His voice died away in a murmur.

"Well, sir?"

Dr. Gys roused himself.

"Oh; do you want a full confession? For a long time, then, I've been wondering what's the easiest way for a man to die. No, I'm not morbid. I'm simply ruined, physically, for the practice of a profession I love, a profession I have fully mastered, and – I'll be happier when I can shake off this horrible envelope of disfigurement."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HOSPITAL SHIP

The energy of Doctor Gys was marvelous. He knew exactly what supplies would be needed to fit the *Arabella* thoroughly for her important mission, and with unlimited funds at his command to foot the bills, he quickly converted the handsome yacht into a model hospital ship. Gys from the first developed a liking for Kelsey, the mate, whom he found a valuable assistant, and the two came to understand each other perfectly. Kelsey was a quiet man, more thoughtful than experienced in medical matters, but his common sense often guided him aright when his technical knowledge was at fault.

Captain Carg accepted the novel conditions thrust upon him, without a word of protest. He might secretly resent the uses to which his ship was being put, but his young master's commands were law and his duty was to obey. The same feeling prevailed among the other members of the crew, all of whom were Sangoans.

In three days Jones and Maud Stanton returned from Washington. They were jubilant over their success.

"We've secured everything we wanted," the boy told Uncle John, Beth and Patsy, with evident enthusiasm. "Not only have we the full sanction of the American Red Cross Society, but I have letters to the different branches in the war zone, asking for us every consideration. Not only that, but your senator proved himself a brick. What do you think? Here's a letter from our secretary of state – another from the French charge d'affairs – half a dozen from prominent ambassadors of other countries! We've a free field in all Europe, practically, that will enable us to work to the best advantage."

"It's wonderful!" cried Patsy.

"Mr. Merrick is so well known as a philanthropist that his name was a magic talisman for us," said Maud. "Moreover, our enterprise commands the sympathy of everyone. We had numerous offers of financial assistance, too."

"I hope you didn't accept them," said Uncle John nervously.

"No," answered the boy, "I claimed this expedition to be our private and individual property. We can now do as we please, being under no obligations to any but ourselves."

"That's right," said Uncle John. "We don't want to be hampered by the necessity of advising with others."

"By the way, have you found a doctor?"

"Yes."

"A good one?" asked Maud quickly.

"Highly recommended, but homely as a rail fence," continued Patsy, as her uncle hesitated.

"That's nothing," said Ajo lightly.

"Nothing, eh? Well, wait till you see him," she replied. "You'll never look Doctor Gys in the face more than once, I assure you. After that, you'll be glad to keep your eyes on his vest buttons."

"I like him immensely, though," said Beth. "He is clever, honest and earnest. The poor man can't help his mutilations, which are the result of many unfortunate adventures."

"Sounds like just the man we wanted," declared Ajo, and afterward he had no reason to recall that assertion.

A week is a small time in which to equip a big ship, but money and energy can accomplish much and the news from the seat of war was so eventful that they felt every moment to be precious and so they worked with feverish haste. The tide of German success had turned and their great army, from Paris to Vitry, was now in full retreat, fighting every inch of the way and leaving thousands of dead and wounded in its wake.

"How long will it take us to reach Calais?" they asked Captain Carg eagerly.

"Eight or nine days," said he.

"We are not as fast as the big passenger steamers," explained young Jones, "but with good weather the *Arabella* may be depended upon to make the trip in good shape and fair time."

On the nineteenth of September, fully equipped and with her papers in order, the beautiful yacht left her anchorage and began her voyage. The weather proved exceptionally favorable. During the voyage the girls busied themselves preparing their modest uniforms and pumping Dr. Gys for all sorts of information, from scratches to amputations. He gave them much practical and therefore valuable advice to guide them in whatever emergencies might arise, and this was conveyed in the whimsical, half humorous manner that seemed characteristic of him. At first Gys had shrunk involuntarily from facing this bevy of young girls, but they had so frankly ignored his physical blemishes and exhibited so true a comradeship to all concerned in the expedition, that the doctor soon felt perfectly at ease in their society.

During the evenings he gave them practical demonstrations of the application of tourniquets, bandages and the like, while Uncle John and Ajo by turns posed as wounded soldiers. Gys was extraordinarily deft in all his manipulations and although Maud Stanton was a graduate nurse – with little experience, however – and Beth De Graf had studied the art for a year or more, it was Patsy Doyle who showed the most dexterity in assisting the doctor on these occasions.

"I don't know whether I'll faint at the sight of real blood," she said, "but I shall know pretty well what to do if I can keep my nerve."

The application of anaesthetics was another thing fully explained by Gys, but this could not be demonstrated. Patsy, however, was taught the use of the hypodermic needle, which Maud and Beth quite understood.

"We've a big stock of morphia, in its various forms," said the doctor, "and I expect it to prove of tremendous value in comforting our patients."

"I'm not sure I approve the use of that drug," remarked Uncle John.

"But think of the suffering we can allay by its use," exclaimed Maud. "If ever morphia is justifiable, it is in war, where it can save many a life by conquering unendurable pain. I believe the discovery of morphine was the greatest blessing that humanity has ever enjoyed. Don't you, Doctor Gys?"

The one good eye of Gys had a queer way of twinkling when he was amused. It twinkled as the girl asked this question.

"Morphine," he replied, "has destroyed more people than it has saved. You play with fire when you feed it to anyone, under any circumstances. Nevertheless, I believe in its value on an expedition of this sort, and that is why I loaded up on the stuff. Let me advise you never to tell a patient that we are administering morphine. The result is all that he is concerned with and it is better he should not know what has relieved him."

On a sunny day when the sea was calm they slung a scaffold over the bow and painted a big red cross on either side of the white ship. Everyone aboard wore the Red Cross emblem on an arm band, even the sailors being so decorated. Uncle John was very proud of the insignia and loved to watch his girls moving around the deck in their sober uniforms and white caps.

Jones endured the voyage splendidly and by this time had convinced himself that he was not again to be subject to the mal-de-mer of his first ocean trip. As they drew near to their destination an atmosphere of subdued excitement pervaded the *Arabella*, for even the sailors had caught the infection of the girls' eagerness and were anxious to get into action at the earliest moment.

It was now that Uncle John began to busy himself with his especial prize, a huge motor ambulance he had purchased in New York and which had been fully equipped for the requirements of war. Indeed, an enterprising manufacturer had prepared it with the expectation that some of the belligerent governments would purchase it, and Mr. Merrick considered himself fortunate in

securing it. It would accommodate six seriously wounded, on swinging beds, and twelve others, slightly wounded, who might be able to sit upon cushioned seats. The motor was very powerful and the driver was protected from stray bullets by an armored hood.

In addition to this splendid machine, Mr. Merrick had secured a smaller ambulance that had not the advantage of the swinging beds but could be rushed more swiftly to any desired location. Both ambulances were decorated on all sides with the emblem of the Red Cross and would be invaluable in bringing the wounded to the *Arabella*. The ship carried a couple of small motor launches for connecting the shore with her anchorage.

They had purposely brought no chauffeurs with them, as Uncle John believed foreign drivers, who were thoroughly acquainted with the country, would prove more useful than the American variety, and from experience he knew that a French chauffeur is the king of his profession.

During the last days of the voyage Mr. Merrick busied himself in carefully inspecting every detail of his precious vehicles and explaining their operation to everyone on board. Even the girls would be able to run an ambulance on occasion, and the boy developed quite a mechanical talent in mastering the machines.

"I feel," said young Jones, "that I have had a rather insignificant part in preparing this expedition, for all I have furnished – aside from the boat itself – consists of two lots of luxuries that may or may not be needed."

"And what may they be?" asked Dr. Gys, who was standing in the group beside him.

"Thermos flasks and cigarettes."

"Cigarettes!" exclaimed Beth, in horror.

The doctor nodded approvingly.

"Capital!" said he. "Next to our anodynes and anaesthetics, nothing will prove so comforting to the wounded as cigarettes. They are supplied by nurses in all the hospitals in Europe. How many did you bring?"

"Ten cases of about twenty-five thousand each."

"A quarter of a million cigarettes!" gasped Beth.

"Too few," asserted the doctor in a tone of raillery, "but we'll make them go as far as possible. And the thermos cases are also valuable. Cool water to parched lips means a glimpse of heaven. Hot coffee will save many from exhaustion. You've done well, my boy."

## CHAPTER V

### NEARING THE FRAY

On September twenty-eighth they entered the English Channel and were promptly signalled by a British warship, so they were obliged to lay to while a party of officers came aboard. The *Arabella* was flying the American flag and the Red Cross flag, but the English officer courteously but firmly persisted in searching the ship. What he found seemed to interest him, as did the papers and credentials presented for his perusal.

"And which side have you come to assist?" he asked.

"No side at all, sir," replied Jones, as master of the *Arabella*. "The wounded, the sick and helpless, whatever uniform they chance to wear, will receive our best attention. But we are bound for Calais and intend to follow the French army."

The officer nodded gravely.

"Of course," said he, "you are aware that the channel is full of mines and that progress is dangerous unless you have our maps to guide you. I will furnish your pilot with a diagram, provided you agree to keep our secret and deliver the diagram to the English officer you will meet at Calais."

They agreed to this and after the formalities were concluded the officer prepared to depart.

"I must congratulate you," he remarked on leaving, "on having the best equipped hospital ship it has been my fortune to see. There are many in the service, as you know, but the boats are often mere tubs and the fittings of the simplest description. The wounded who come under your care will indeed be fortunate. It is wonderful to realize that you have come all the way from America, and at so great an expense, to help the victims of this sad war. For the Allies I thank you, and – good-bye!"

They remembered this kindly officer long afterward, for he proved more generous than many of the English they met.

Captain Carg now steamed ahead, watching his chart carefully to avoid the fields of mines, but within two hours he was again hailed, this time by an armored cruiser. The first officer having vided the ship's papers, they were spared the delay of another search and after a brief examination were allowed to proceed. They found the channel well patrolled by war craft and no sooner had they lost sight of one, than another quickly appeared.

At Cherbourg a French dreadnaught halted them and an officer came aboard to give them a new chart of the mine fields between there and Calais and full instructions how to proceed safely. This officer, who spoke excellent English, asked a thousand questions and seemed grateful for their charitable assistance to his countrymen.

"You have chosen a dangerous post," said he, "but the Red Cross is respected everywhere – even by the Germans. Have you heard the latest news? We have driven them back to the Aisne and are holding the enemy well in check. Antwerp is under siege, to be sure, but it can hold out indefinitely. The fighting will be all in Belgium soon, and then in Germany. Our watchword is 'On to Berlin!'"

"Perhaps we ought to proceed directly to Ostend," said Uncle John.

"The Germans still hold it, monsieur. In a few days, perhaps, when Belgium is free of the invaders, you will find work enough to occupy you at Ostend; but I advise you not to attempt to go there now."

In spite of the friendly attitude of this officer and of the authorities at Cherbourg, they were detained at this port for several days before finally receiving permission to proceed. The delay was galling but had to be endured until the infinite maze of red tape was at an end. They reached Calais in the early evening and just managed to secure an anchorage among the fleet of warships in the harbor.

Again they were obliged to show their papers and passports, now vided by representatives of both the English and French navies, but this formality being over they were given a cordial welcome.

Uncle John and Ajo decided to go ashore for the latest news and arrived in the city between nine and ten o'clock that same evening. They found Calais in a state of intense excitement. The streets were filled with British and French soldiery, with whom were mingled groups of citizens, all eagerly discussing the war and casting uneasy glances at the black sky overhead for signs of the dreaded German Zeppelins.

"How about Antwerp?" Jones asked an Englishman they found in the lobby of one of the overcrowded hotels.

The man turned to stare at him; he looked his questioner up and down with such insolence that the boy's fists involuntarily doubled; then he turned his back and walked away. A bystander laughed with amusement. He also was an Englishman, but wore the uniform of a subaltern.

"What can you expect, without a formal introduction?" he asked young Jones. "But I'll answer your question, sir; Antwerp is doomed."

"Oh; do you really think so?" inquired Uncle John uneasily.

"It's a certainty, although I hate to admit it. We at the rear are not very well posted on what is taking place over in Belgium, but it's said the bombardment of Antwerp began yesterday and it's impossible for the place to hold out for long. Perhaps even now the city has fallen under the terrific bombardment."

There was something thrilling in the suggestion.

"And then?" asked Jones, almost breathlessly.

The man gave a typical British shrug.

"Then we fellows will find work to do," he replied. "But it is better to fight than to eat our hearts out by watching and waiting. We're the reserves, you know, and we've hardly smelled powder yet."

After conversing with several of the soldiers and civilians – the latter being mostly too unnerved to talk coherently – the Americans made their way back to the quay with heavy hearts. They threaded lanes filled with sobbing women, many of whom had frightened children clinging to their skirts, passed groups of old men and boys who were visibly trembling with trepidation and stood aside for ranks of brisk soldiery who marched with an alertness that was in strong contrast with the terrified attitude of the citizens. There was war in the air – fierce, relentless war in every word and action they encountered – and it had the effect of depressing the newcomers.

That night an earnest conference was held aboard the *Arabella*.

"As I understand it, here is the gist of the situation," began Ajo. "The line of battle along the Aisne is stationary – for the present, at least. Both sides are firmly entrenched and it's going to be a long, hard fight. Antwerp is being bombarded, and although it's a powerful fortress, the general opinion is that it can't hold out for long. If it falls, there will be a rush of Germans down this coast, first to capture Dunkirk, a few miles above here, and then Calais itself."

"In other words," continued Uncle John, "this is likely to be the most important battleground for the next few weeks. Now, the question to decide is this: Shall we disembark our ambulances and run them across to Arras, beginning our work behind the French trenches, or go on to Dunkirk, where we are likely to plunge into the thickest of the war? We're not fighters, you know, but noncombatants, bent on an errand of mercy. There are wounded everywhere."

They considered this for a long time without reaching a decision, for there were some in the party to argue on either side of the question. Uncle John continued to favor the trenches, as the safest position for his girls to work; but the girls themselves, realizing little of the dangers to be encountered, preferred to follow the fortunes of the Belgians.

"They've been so brave and noble, these people of Belgium," said Beth, "that I would take more pleasure in helping them than any other branch of the allied armies."

"But, my dear, there's a mere handful of them left," protested her uncle. "I'm told that at Dunkirk there is still a remnant of the Belgian army – very badly equipped – but most of the remaining force is with King Albert in Antwerp. If the place falls they will either be made prisoners by the

Germans or they may escape into Holland, where their fighting days will be ended for the rest of the war. However, there is no need to decide this important question to-night. To-morrow I am to see the French commandant and I will get his advice."

The interview with the French commandant of Calais, which was readily accorded the Americans, proved very unsatisfactory. The general had just received reports that Antwerp was in flames and the greater part of the city already demolished by the huge forty-two-centimetre guns of the Germans. The fate of King Albert's army was worrying him exceedingly and he was therefore in little mood for conversation.

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