

THE RED CROSS GIRL---By RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

WHEN Spencer Flagg laid the foundation stone for the million dollar wing he was adding to the Flagg Home for Convalescents on the hills above Greenwich the New York *Republic* sent Sam Ward to cover the story, and with him Redding to take photographs. It was a crisp, beautiful day in October, full of sunshine and the joy of living, and from the great lawn in front of the home you could see half over Connecticut and across the waters of the Sound to Oyster Bay.

Upon Sam Ward, however, the beauty of nature were wasted. When, the night previous, he had been given the assignment he had sukked, and he was still sulking. Only a year before he had graduated into New York from a small up-State college and a small weekly newspaper, but already he was a "smart" man, and Hewitt, the city editor, humored him.

"When I was a reporter," declared the city editor, "I used to be glad to get a day in the country."

"Because you never lived in the country," returned Sam. "If you'd stayed twenty-six years in the backwoods as I did you'd know that every minute you spend outside of New York is robbing yourself."

The city editor sighed. "How young you are!"

Sam Ward sat at the outer edge of a crowd of overdressed females and a few men, and with a sad smile he turned to Flagg, telling his assistant, Redding, and a young man who had been there to see him give away a million dollars.

"Aren't you going to get his speech?" asked Redding, the staff photographer.

"Get his speech?" said Sam. "They are Pinkertons all over the grounds. See that you don't escape with less than three copies. I'm waiting to hear if you can't see how they have and then I'm going to sprint for the first train back to the centre of civilization."

"There's going to be a fine lunch," said Redding, "and reporters are expected. I asked the policeman if we were and he said we were."

Sam rose, shook his trousers into place, struck his stick under his arm, and smoothed his yellow gloves. He was very thoughtful of his clothes and always treated them with courtesy.

"You can have my share," he said. "I cannot forget that I am fifty-five minutes from Broadway. And even if I were starving I would rather have a club sandwich in New York than a Thanksgiving turkey dinner in New Rochelle."

He nodded and with eager athletic strides started toward the iron gates, but he did not reach the iron gates, for the instant touch barred his way. Trouble came to him wearing the blue lambré uniform of a nursing sister, with a red cross on her arm, and with a white collar turned down, white cuffs turned back, and a tiny black velvet hat with a white bow. She looked at him impudently under the chin, and had hair like goldenrod and eyes as blue as flax, and a complexion of such health and cleanliness and dewiness as seems only on trained nurses.

She was so lovely that Redding swung his hooded camera at her as softly as a cowboy could have covered her with a gun.

Reporters become star reporters because they observe things that other people miss and because they do not let it appear that they have observed them. When the great man who is being interviewed blurts out that which is indiscreet but most important, the star reporter says: "That's most interesting. Sir! I'll make a note of that," and so warns the great man into silence. But the star reporter receives his indiscreet utterance as though it were his, and the great man does not know he has blundered until he reads of it the next morning under screaming headlines.

Other men, on being suddenly confronted by Sister Anne, which was the name of the nursing sister, would have fallen backward, or swooned, or gazed at her with soulful, worshipping eyes, or were they that sort of beast, would have ogled her with impudent approval. Now Sam, because he was a star reporter, observed that the lady before him was the most beautiful young woman he had ever seen, but he would have guessed that he observed that least of all. Sister Anne stood in her way and lifted his hat, and even looked into the eyes of blue as flax, and as calmly as though his heart was not beating so fast that it throbbed him.

"I am from the *Republic*," he said. "Everybody is so busy here to-day that I'm not able to get what I need about the home. It seems a pity," he added disappointedly, "because it's so well done that people ought to know about it."

He frowned at the big hospital buildings. It was apparent that the ignorance of the public concerning their excellence greatly annoyed him.

When again he looked at Sister Anne he was regarding him in alarm—obviously she was upon the point of instant flight.

"You are a reporter?" she said.

Some people like to place themselves in the hands of a reporter because they know he will print their names in black letters, a few others—only reporters know how few—would as soon place themselves in the hands of a dentist.

"A reporter from the *Republic*," repeated Sam.

"But why ask me?" demanded Sister Anne.

"I am sorry," said Sam. "I mistake you for one of the nurses here; and as you didn't seem busy, I thought you might give me some statistics about the home—really statistics, you know, not local color."

Sister Anne returned his look with one as steady as his own. Apparently she was weighing his statement. She seemed to disbelieve it. Inwardly he was asking himself what could be the dark secret in the past of this young woman that at the mere approach of a reporter—even of such a nice looking reporter as himself—she should shake and quiver.

"I don't know what you really want to know," said Sister Anne doubtfully. "I'll try and help you, but," she added, looking at him as one who issues an ultimatum, "you must not say anything about me."

Sister Anne fell into step beside him and led him through the wards of the hospital. He found that he expected for and entirely about one person, a young man that a million dollars and some acres of buildings, containing sun rooms and hundreds of rigid white beds, had been donated by Spencer Flagg and his family to the Flagg Home for Convalescents. The background for Sister Anne was the death of her father, the kindness of her heart, the loss of her father.

"I don't really scrub the floors?" he demanded. "I mean you yourself—

down on your knees, with a pall and water and scrubbing brush?"

Sister Anne raised her beautiful eyebrows and laughed at him.

"We do that when we first come here," she said, "when we are probationers; is there a newer way of scrubbing floors?"

"And those awful patients," demanded Sam—"do you wait on them? Do you have to submit to their complaints and whinings and ingratitude?" He glared at the unhappy convalescents as though by that glance he would annihilate them. "It's not fair!" exclaimed Sam. "It's ridiculous. I'd like to choke them!"

"One must live," said Sister Anne.

"They had passed through the last cold corridor, between the last rows of rigid white beds, and had come out into the sunshine. Below them stretched Connecticut, painted in an immense color. Sister Anne seated herself upon the marble railing of the terrace and looked down upon the flashing waters of the Sound.

"If you do it because you must live, then it can easily be arranged; for there are other ways of earning a living."

The girl looked at him quickly, but he was quite sincere—and again she smiled.

"Now what would you suggest?" she asked.

Sam did not at once answer. He was calculating hastily how far his salary would go toward supporting a wife. He was trying to remember which of the men in the office were married, and whether they were those whose salaries were smaller than his own. Collins, one of the copy editors, he knew was very ill paid; but Sam also knew that Collins was married, because his wife used to wait for him in the office to take her to the theatre, and often Sam had thought she was extremely well dressed.

Of course Sister Anne was so beautiful that what she might wear would be a matter of indifference; but then women did not always look at it that way. Sam was so long considering off ring Sister Anne a life position that his silence had become significant, and to cover his real thoughts he said hurriedly:

"Take typewriting, for instance. That pays very well. The hours are not difficult."

"And manuring?" suggested Sister Anne.

Sam exclaimed in horror.

"You!" he cried roughly—"For you! Quite impossible!"

"Why for me?" said the girl.

"You!" protested Sam—"You in a barbers' shop washing men's fingers who are not fit to wash the streets you walk on! Good Lord!"

His vehemence was quite honest. The girl ceased smiling. Sam was still jabbing at the gravel walk, his profile toward her—and, unobserved, she could study his face. It was an attractive face—strong, clever, almost illegally good looking. It explained why, as he had complained to the city editor, his chief trouble in New York was with the women. With his eyes full of concern, Sam turned to her abruptly.

"I think you are working too hard," he said, smiling happily—"I think you ought to have a change. You ought to take a day off! Do they ever give you a day off?"

"Next Saturday," said Sister Anne. "Why?"

"Because," explained Sam, "if you won't think it too presumptuous, I was going to prescribe a day off for you—a day entirely away from holoform and white enamelled coats. It is what you

need, a day in the city and a lunch where they have music; and a matinee, where you can laugh—or cry, if you like that better—and then, maybe, some fresh air in the park in a taxi; and after that dinner and more theatre—and then I'll see you safe on the train for Greenwich."

"Before you answer," he added hurriedly, "I want to explain that I contemplate taking a day off myself and doing all these things with you—and that if you want to bring any of the other forty nurses along as a chaperon, I hope you will. Only, honestly, I hope you won't."

The proposal apparently gave Sister Anne much pleasure. She did not say so, but her eyes shone and when she looked at Sam she was almost laughing with happiness.

"I think that would be quite delightful," said Sister Anne—"quite delightful! Only it would be frightfully expensive; even if I don't bring another girl, which I certainly would not, it would cost a great deal of money. I think we might cut out the taxi and walk in the park and feed the squirrels."

Sam's heart was singing with pleasure.

"It's so kind of you to consent," he cried. "Indeed, you are the kindest person in all the world. I thought so when I saw you bending over these sick people and now I know."

"It is you who are kind," protested Sister Anne, "to take pity on me."

"Pity on you?" laughed Sam. "You can't pity a person who can do more with a smile than an old man Flagg can do with all his millions. Now," he demanded in happy anticipation, "where are we to meet?"

"That's it," said Sister Anne. "Where are we to meet?"

"Let it be at the Grand Central Station. The day can't begin too soon."

Sam said, "and before then telephone me what theatre and restaurants you want and I'll reserve seats and tables."

"Oh," exclaimed Sam joyfully, "it will be a wonderful day—a wonderful day!"

Sister Anne looked at him curiously, and so it seemed, a little wistfully, she held out her hand.

"I must go back to my duties," she said. "Good-by."

"Not good-by," said Sam heartily—"Only until Saturday—and my name's Sam Ward and my address is the city room of the *Republic*. What's your name?"

"Sister Anne," said the girl. "In the nursing order to which I belong we have no last names."

"So," asked Sam, "I'll call you Sister Anne?"

"No, just sister," said the girl.

"Sister," repeated Sam—"Sister!" He breathed the word rather than spoke it; and the way he said it and the way he looked when he said it made curvy almost the touch of a caress. It was as if he had said "stave-hearted" or "beloved." "I'll not forget," said Sam.

Sister Anne gave an impatient, annoyed laugh.

"Nor I," she said.

Sam returned to New York in the smoking car, putting feverishly at his cigar and glaring dreamily at the smoke. He was living the day off again and, in anticipation, the day off still to come. He rehearsed his next meeting at the station; he considered whether or not he would meet her with a huge bunch of violets or would have it brought to her when they were at luncheon by the head waiter. He decided the latter

way would be more of a pleasant surprise. He planned the luncheon. It was to be the most marvellous repast he could evolve; and, lest there should be the slightest error, he would have it prepared in advance and it should cost half his week's salary.

He calculated that the whole day ought to cost about \$80, which, as star reporter, was what he was then earning each week. That was little enough to give for a day that would be the birthday of his life! No, he contradicted—the day he had first met her must always be the birthday of his life; for never had he met one like her and he was sure there never would be one like her—she was so entirely superior to all the others, so fine, so difficult—in her manner there was something that rendered her unapproachable.

When he reached New York, from the speculators he bought front row seats at \$5 for the two most popular plays in town. He put them away carefully in his wastebag pocket. Possession of them made him feel that already he had obtained an option on six hours of complete happiness.

After she left Sam, Sister Anne passed hurriedly through the hospital to the matron's room and, wrapping herself in a racoon coat, made her way to a waiting motor car and said "Home!" to the chauffeur. He drove her to the Flagg family vault, as Flagg's expensive millionaire neighbors called the pile of white marble that topped the highest hill above Greenwich, and which for years had served as a landfill for mariners on the Sound.

There were a number of people at tea when she arrived and they greeted her nobly.

"I have had a most splendid adventure," said Sister Anne. "There were six of us, you know, dressed up as Red Cross nurses, and we gave away programmes. Well, one of the New York reporters thought I was a real nurse and interviewed me about the home, of course I knew enough about it to keep it up, and I kept it up so well that he was terribly sorry for me; and—"

"One of the tea drinkers was little Helen Halloworthy, who prided herself on knowing who's who in New York. He had met Sam Ward at first nights and prize fights. He laughed scornfully."

"Don't you believe it!" he interrupted. "That man who was talking to you was Sam Ward. He's the smartest newspaper man in New York! He was just leading you on. Do you suppose there's a reporter in America who wouldn't know you in the dark? Wait until you see the Sunday paper."

Sister Anne exclaimed indignantly.

"He did not know me!" she protested. "It quite upset him that I should be wasting my life measuring out medicines and making beds."

There was a shriek of disbelief and laughter. "I told him," continued Sister Anne, "that I got \$30 a month, and he said I could make more as a typewriter, and I said I preferred to be a manicurist!"

"Oh, Anita!" protested the admiring chorus.

"And he was most indignant. He absolutely refused to allow me to be a manicurist. And he asked me to take a day off with him and let him show me New York. And he offered as attractions, moving picture shows and a drive on a Fifth avenue bus, and feeding peanuts to the animals in the park. And if I insisted upon a chaperon I might bring one of the nurses. We're to meet at the soda water fountain



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at the Grand Central Station. He said, 'The day cannot begin too soon!'

"Oh, Anita!" shrieked the chorus.

Lord Duffport, who as the newspapers had repeatedly informed the American public, had come to the Flagg's country place to try to marry Anita Flagg, was amused.

"What an awfully jolly rag!" he cried. "And what are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing," said Anita Flagg. "The reporters have been making me ridiculous for the last three years; now I have got back at one of them! And," she added, "that's all there is to that!"

Later Helen Page, who came to her room to ask her about a horse she was to ride in the morning, found her ready for bed, but standing by the open window looking out toward the great city to the south.

When she turned Miss Page saw something in her eyes that caused that young woman to shriek with amazement.

"Anita!" she exclaimed. "You crying? What in heaven's name can make you cry?"

It was not a kind speech, nor did Miss Flagg receive it kindly. She turned upon the tearful intruder.

"Suppose," cried Anita fiercely, "a man thought you were worth \$10 a month—honestly didn't know!—honestly believed you were poor and worked for your living, and still said you-smile was worth more than all of old man Flagg's millions, not knowing they were your millions. Suppose he didn't ask any money of you, but just to take care of you, to save for you—only wanted to keep your pretty hands from working, and your pretty eyes from seeing sickness and pain. Suppose you met that man among this rotten lot, what would you do? What wouldn't you do?"

"Why, Anita?" exclaimed Miss Page.

"What would you do?" demanded Anita Flagg. "This is what you'd do: you'd sit down on your knees to that man and say, 'Take me away! Take me away from them, and pity me, and be sorry for me, and love me, and love me, and love me!'

"And why don't you?" cried Helen Page.

"Because I'm as rotten as the rest of

them!" cried Anita Flagg. "Because I'm a coward. And that's why I'm crying. Haven't I the right to cry?"

II.

At the exact moment Miss Flagg was proclaiming herself a moral coward, in the local room of the *Republic* Collins, the copy editor, was editing Sam's story of the laying of the cornerstone. His copy editor's cigar was tilted near his left eyebrow, his blue pencil, like a guillotine ready to fall upon the guilty word or paragraph, was suspended in midair; and continually, like a hawk preparing to strike, the blue pencil swooped and circled. But page after page fell softly to the desk and the blue pencil remained inactive. As he read the voice of Collins rose in muttered ejaculations, and, as he continued to read, these exclamations grew louder and more amazed. At last he could endure no more and, swinging swiftly in his revolving chair, his glance swept the office.

"In the name of Mike!" he shouted. "What is this?"

"What's what?" Sam demanded.

At that moment Elliott, the managing editor, was passing through the room, his hands filled with freshly polished proofs. He swung toward Collins quickly and snatched up Sam's copy. The story already was late—and it was important.

"What's wrong?" he demanded.

Over the room there fell a sudden hush.

"The eyes of the managing editor, masked by his green-tinted spectacles, were racing over Sam's written words. He thrust the first page back at Collins.

"Is it all like that?"

"There's a column like that!"

"Run it just as it is!" commanded the managing editor. "Use it for your introduction and get your story from the fifteen. And in your head, cut out Flagg entirely. Call it 'The Red Cross Girl.' And play it up strong with pictures!"

He turned on Sam and eyed him curiously.

"It's not news," said Elliott shortly; "but it's the kind of story that made Frank O'Malley famous. It's the kind of story that drives men out of this business into the arms of what Kipling calls 'the illegitimate sister.'"

It seldom granted to a man on the same day to give his whole heart to a girl and to be carried on the heels by his managing editor; and it was this combination, and not the drinks he dispensed to the staff in return for its congratulations, that sent Sam home walking on air.

The next morning she would know that it was she of whom he had written, and between the lines she would read that the man who wrote them loved her. So he fell asleep, impatient for the morning.

In the hotel at which he lived the *Republic* was always passed promptly outside his door, and after many excursions into the hall, he at last found it. On the front page was his story, "The Red Cross Girl." It had the place of honor, right-hand column; but more conspicuous than the headlines of his own story was one of Redding's photographs. It was the one he had taken of Sister Anne when first she had approached them, in her uniform of mercy, advancing across the lawn, walking straight into the focus of the camera. There was no mistaking her for any other living woman; but beneath the picture, in bold, staring, uncompromising type, was a strange and grotesque legend:

"Daughter of Millionaire Flagg" it read, "in a New Book, Miss Anita Flagg as 'The Red Cross Girl.'"

For a long time Sam looked at the picture, and then, folding the paper so that the picture was hidden, he walked to the open window. From below, Broadway sent up a tumultuous groaning, cable cars puffed, taxis tooted, and on the sidewalks, on their way to work, a procession of men in striped coats and bowlers. It was the street and the city and the life he had found fascinating, but now it gazed and gaped and stared. A girl he knew had just passed out of his life forever, and yet that had never existed, and yet the city went on just as though that made no difference, or just as though difference at all would have made. And Sister Anne really had not been there. At the same party had not been there too early for the rest of the night.

PETER PAN ENJOYS PITTSBURG---As the Artist Caught Sir James M. Barrie When the Famous Author Visited America Recently



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