

02 My Week in London – The Interregnum

My moment of exultation, pride, and self-confidence was very brief. It lasted only a few minutes.

I was alone in the compartment. I stared at the passing fields, and reflected. I suppose I was experiencing the inevitable collapse following my initial excitement. I would almost swear that the wheels on the rails made the sound “what a fool, what a fool, what a fool, what a fool!”

Indeed, what had I committed to do? Nurse a man who could not be cured? Cure him? And with what knowledge and experience? I suddenly felt quite small and frail.

Had I been overtaken by my feelings for my poor dead Michael? Perhaps those feelings made Sir Reginald, a brave soldier from the same war, so appealing.

Perhaps it was a case of the heart speaking in an odd way. Or maybe it was some organ lower than my heart. He was handsome, and I did feel a twitch in a part that shouldn't do so. What had Meg called it? Oh yes, my “cock pit.”

Well, I thought, there are some in medicine who believe there are chemicals in our bodies that affect our behaviors. They may account for men showing great strength in battle; they may even account for why so many women feel cranky and out of sorts during their monthly period of the menses.

Was I motivated by the money? I thought not. If money drove me, I would have married a rich man in London years ago. Was I moved to live in the country? I should think not. London was far more interesting than Hawkinge, whether one were a baron or a bootblack.

I determined to slap down my doubts. My heart, and perhaps my neglected loins, may have affected my judgment, but the overriding truth was that I felt good about my decision to work for Sir Reginald. Further, I had a fine mind. I was well trained and truly stimulated by the challenging prospect of helping Sir Reg.

I hoped I was smart enough. I looked at my bosom and said to the “girls,” “Oh, if you were only brains!”

Since talking to one's self (or to one's breasts, particularly) may be considered a sign of madness, I quickly found a substitute activity. I followed my mother's advice: “When in doubt, plan it out.” I retrieved a small notebook from my bag and began to make an agenda for my busy week. This was a profitable distraction and calmed me considerably.

The time was scarcely half three when I arrived at Charing Cross station. What an age of speed we live in! And to think there had once been those who doubted that human beings could survive travel at twenty-five miles per hour!

Several hansom cabs awaited outside the station. I chose one, and directed the cabby to drive to my rooms in Lambeth.

We passed Whitehall and Parliament, with Big Ben of course, and turned into Bridge Street. The streets, filled with vehicles and people, marred our progress, but I didn't mind at all. Such is the nature of life in London. We crossed the Thames via the Westminster Bridge, turned into Lambeth Palace Road by St. Thomas' Hospital, and thence entered Royal Street, where I had rooms.

I looked at the building, a place that had become my home these last several years. Imagine, if you will, a series of five-story structures, joined together as row houses. They were all of stone, with a white finish darkened by the smoke of London's factories. Naturally, there was a short set of stairs for each address.

Facing the building was a lovely commons, lined with trees. I had spent many a summer's day sitting upon the grass, reading. While there were benches upon which to sit, I always favored the lawns. There was, of course, an identical set of row houses opposite the commons.

After the shortest period of musing, I entered № 28. Not seeing my landlady about, I went directly to my rooms, upstairs on the second floor.

How glad I was to remove my tight-fitting jacket, and my high-button shoes! I now had a little time to relax before tea. It gave me an excellent opportunity to further develop my plan, and so I did.

Before I knew it, the time was five o'clock. I dressed and I made my way down to tea. On my way to the dining room, I encountered Mrs. Alexandrovna.

"Good afternoon, your Imperial Highness!"

My landlady styled herself as Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna, daughter of Emperor Nicholas I of Russia. I was certainly not one to disagree with her, but I had always had a private suspicion that she really was from Manchester. I say this, because she would occasionally use the word "mumper" for beggar, "sorted" to indicate approval, and "full monty" for anything complete. These terms surely weren't in common use at the court in St. Petersburg.

Mrs. Alexandrovna was very good looking, and very wide, rather than fat. She favored velvet dresses, very off-the-shoulder, with generous scoop necks and lace trim. She reminded me of the painting "The Merchant's Wife," by Boris Kustodiev.

"*Dobryj dyen!* Good afternoon! Back from your trip to Kent, I see. All went well, *da?*"

"Yes, Duchess, very well. Good news. I am hired to be nurse to Sir Reginald Pleydell, the Earl of Radnor. But there is bad news, as well. I must give up my rooms here."

"*Da*, I understand. Well, it is still good news, dearie, and I suppose your departure can't be helped. We shall all miss you, of course. You have been a lovely boarder. When do you leave?"

"Tuesday next."

"Well, we must talk before then. Now best you hie yourself to the dining room. The samovar's full of hot water, and the *zakuski* are all set out."

I entered the dining room to eat. I nodded to several other boarders, including Mr. Piggett-Smythe, the article clerk, and Miss Elizabeth Hampstead, the telegraph operator.

The benefit of tea at the high table (or meat tea, as we sometimes call it) is that the meal is rather more substantial than afternoon tea, but more casual than dinner. Her Imperial Highness always arranged the meal *en buffet* on the sideboard.

I helped myself to a serving of steak and kidney pie, and a bit of Cheshire cheese, augmented by bread and butter. The Russian hors d'oeuvre were rather prettily done. I took a pickled herring and pickled cucumbers.

And it is, indeed, a great convenience to take tea in the Russian style, as there is a large supply of hot water available. I poured a bit of *zavarka* concentrated tea into my cup and filled it with water from the tap on the samovar.

I was more than a little hungry, as I had had nothing to eat other than Meg's scones in the late morning. However, I attempted to eat as daintily as I could.

As we ate, the other boarders and I exchanged the usual banter, but I chose not to share details of my visit to Kent. And, once sated, I returned to my room. Daylight had not yet faded, so there was no need to light the gaslight.

At last, I could remove and hang up my jacket and dress. And, mercifully, I could take off that crinolette and corset. From my corset I removed the £150 given to me by Sir Reginald and placed the money in the top drawer of my bureau.

There I stood in my chemise and pantalettes. Oh, if women could only wear outer clothes as comfortable as these, as Mrs. Amelia Bloomer in America had suggested! Certainly Dr. Alice Bunker Stockham, the American obstetrician and gynecologist from Chicago, was right to declaim against the corset, and especially against the hazards of the practice of tightlacing! But fashion, I recognized, does not listen to doctors.

I then donned a rather tattered cotton robe and began an inspection of my wardrobe. Choosing my clothing for Folkestone Manor would take some serious thinking.

In my armoire I found day dresses but no evening dresses. I had dresses in black, deep blue, and deep green. Of course, there were several simple gray dresses and starched bib aprons, the uniform peculiar to the nursing profession. Clearly, I would need new uniforms and at least three new dresses at a minimum. My shoes were adequate, in the main.

At my bureau, I found a similar situation. Oh my! My "delicate underthings" did not look at all delicate. I immediately determined to provision myself with new ones, if I were to have a fresh start in Kent. I had no quarrel with small accessories. Nor with my jewelry, as my tastes were quite simple.

In the bottom drawer of the bureau, I found my letters to Michael. As I picked up one bundle and held it, a profound sadness overcame me. How I missed my lost love! I ran my finger over Michael's handwriting and clutched the letters to my heart. My eyes filled with tears and I made no effort to wipe them away. The letters would stay with me always, of course.

Then, I had the oddest surprise. I found a leather item, and after a moment I determined it was Michael's shoulder holster.

Of course! I brought it to my breasts and held it close. I remember when I had last seen it. When we were first married, Michael and I would walk his parents' estate, carrying excellent shot guns made by W. W. Greener in Birmingham, in search of partridge and other game birds. Michael, already commissioned, carried his new military revolver in this holster!

I remembered how I, a young thing barely over eighteen years of age, had been so fearful of both the long guns and the pistol. Michael had changed all that. He had said, "Now, my demure, modest wife, you will fear no more. Why shouldn't you know such things?"

And so, as we trod the fields, he taught me all he knew about shooting. Further, in the woods, he taught his new wife another kind of “shooting,” with the target being inside me! Oh, how fearful I had been that his parents or the gamekeeper would discover us! My only regret was that I had not become pregnant.

I suddenly embraced an idea that at first seemed odd, but on further reflection struck me as very sensible. I would fill that holster again. And, indeed, why not? I was soon to travel to a rural locale, and might need a good defense. Further, Michael had told me more than once, “God made men, but Sam Colt made them equal. And that applies to women, too.”

So upon my whim, I slipped out of my robe and fitted the holster close to my body. A fine fit! And it made me feel somehow better that the item that had been so often on Michael’s body was now adjacent to my breasts.

I took the holster off, regained my robe, and sat down to do paperwork.

First, I wrote my seamstress:

Mme. Anabelle Davies
c/o Davies and Son
№ 38 Savile Row, London

My Dear, Sweet Anabelle,

I have every hope that this brief note finds you, your husband, and your father-in-law in the best of health.

I have an immediate need of your services. I am to travel to Folkestone, Kent, Tuesday next for an extended stay. I am to provide nursing to a handsome young Earl!

I am without adequate clothing. Please run up for me the following, at your earliest convenience.

One evening dress, in a bright blue brocade
Three new day dresses—one green, one blue, one cream—of the style you should choose
Three nurse’s uniforms, grey with white collar and cuffs, as we wear at St. Thomas’ Hospital.
Three new nursing aprons, in the style I have ordered from you before

You have my dimensions, of course, and you know the styles we have spoken of. Of the day and evening dresses, I will enjoy anything of the latest *mode*, provided the garments are not too uncomfortable.

In addition, I must have the following, which I know you can obtain for me: Seven new chemises, quite plain; seven new pantalettes, and seven pairs of stockings.

I lack one pair of new shoes, and I believe that your husband in the men’s tailoring establishment can help. After all, Davies and Son make the uniforms for Sir Robert Peel’s police force and might be so gracious as to ask the cobbler to supply me.

Please do all and send the items to me at № 28 Royal Street, Lambeth. I propose to pay you £1/10/- above your charges for the clothing, for your trouble.

I remain, always and eternally, your devoted,

Mrs. Patricia Goodman

Then, I wrote my mother in Kew, to share my good news.

Mrs. Elizabeth Richardson
№ 41 Gloucester Road
Kew, Richmond

My Dearest *Maman*,

I pray to God that my brief missive finds you in the best of health!

As you well know, I have completed my education under Miss Nightingale. I had at first hoped to work with the poor in a workhouse infirmary, but an event of import has overtaken me. I shall take up residence in Hawkinge, near Folkestone, Kent, for some months.

I have been engaged by Lord Reginald Pleydell, 5th Earl of Radnor, to return him to the peak of health. This situation is complicated by his paralysis. He cannot walk, and a blush a bit to tell you this, but neither can he function as a man.

Lord love a duck, dear mother! What have I taken on here? I trust daily in all the wisdom you have imparted to me.

Tell me, have you been to the Palm House at the Royal Botanic Gardens lately? I did so love our visit there last year. Oh, what a surprise it always is to find the sweltering heat of the tropics encased in glass!

Please write me here in Lambeth for this one week. After that, your mail should go to Folkestone Manor, Hawkinge, Kent. *Nota Bene*: there is, as well, a telegraph office in the village of Hawkinge.

With the affection of an eternally-devoted daughter, I remain truly yours,

Patricia

Having completed my correspondence, I worked a bit more to refine my list of errands for the week. The sky grew dark, and so I lit the gaslight.

At last, it was time for a brief bit of reading. I read from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Harold, the Last of the Saxons*.

With a yawn, I rose to prepare for bed. I removed my robe and underthings, as I prefer to sleep in the nude. I ran my hands over my body, especially over my breasts. It was quite pleasant to feel my nipples grow taut and firm. Oh, how I missed my Michael!

I could not help but enjoy looking at myself in the mirror. "My dear Patricia, be confident! At the least, you have a lovely, trim body with a narrow waist and full hips. And did you not notice your own sizeable breasts? Consider them to be an asset, not a liability. Be confident!" It was easy to make this speech, but somewhat difficult to believe it. All women harbor some doubts about the attractiveness of their bodies.

I then perverted Lady Macbeth, to my great satisfaction. She says to Macbeth, "We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking place, and we'll not fail!" So I placed my hand firmly on my Mound of Venus and said aloud, "We fail? But stick your courage to the screwing place, and we'll not fail!" Others might not laugh, but I certainly did.

As Tam o' Shanter says in the Robert Burns poem, "Weel done, Cutty-sark! And in an instant all was dark." With that, I extinguished the gaslight. And so to bed.

Wednesday, June 7, 1865

On Wednesday morning, I awoke early and dressed. I wore my nurse's uniform, although I was under no obligation to work. Just the same, I reasoned, I was going to the hospital and might be called to duty all of a sudden.

I had a little time to pen notes to three of the merchants I would see this week—the apothecary, the purveyor of medical instruments, and my bookseller. I placed the notes, with my letters of the previous evening, in the hallway, to be picked up by the postman collecting the morning mail.

I set out for St. Thomas' hospital, an easy journey of three long blocks, made all the better by the glorious weather. London and environs was free of fog or clouds, so I enjoyed a bright sun and a blue sky.

As I began my walk, the only odd thing was that I espied a stranger on the street—a man, dressed in black, moving along the other side of the commons.

I found it odd only because over time one becomes quite accustomed to seeing the same people in one's street, and he was not one of them. Perhaps it was just my imagination, but I fancied that when he saw me looking at him, he darted into a side street. I saw him no more.

I entered the hospital, a great accumulation of many distinct buildings. I had been taught that it was founded in 1106 in Southwark and had been on its current site in Lambeth for only a few years.

By good fortune, I found Miss Nightingale to be in.

"Good morning, Miss Nightingale. How do you do?"

"Good morning, Mrs. Goodman. I'm well, thank you. I see you have returned from your trip."

"Yes, and it has turned out well. Sir Reginald Pleydell offered to employ me and I accepted."

"Very good. His letter asked me to recommend my best student, and I believe that to be you."

"Well, I appreciate your confidence. Mine is a bit eroded at the moment."

"Now Patricia, why would that be?"

"The main reason is that I'm uncertain how to address his needs."

"Dear young lady, that is true of all patients, in all nursing environments. It would be an error in judgment to begin by thinking that you were certain of his treatment."

"His plight is very touching. With due respect for the soldiers I've tended at the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, it was clear that they were permanently injured or in advanced age. By contrast, Sir Reginald is young, and his injuries may not be permanent."

"So, the young Major I met in the Crimea has not changed much? I recall his being very handsome."

“Yes. That remains very true.”

“By way of advice, I will say this: There are four things you must keep in mind. First, mind cleanliness; second, mind nutrition; third, keep your knowledge of medicine up; and fourth, provide the empathy that all patients need.”

“Very well. I’ll remember all and do as you say.”

“Good. Best of luck to you.”

I thanked Miss Nightingale and took my leave.

I looked forward to my next task, locating my friend Miss Agnes Elizabeth Jones. I found her in the wards. She was dressed, of course, in the restrained gray dress of the nurse. She wore her hair, like most of us, in a bun.

“Allo! So, colleen, are you to be the duke’s nurse?”

“Hello, yourself! He’s an earl, and the answer is yes.”

“*Ta se go maith*, as we say in County Donegal.”

“Yes, it’s Robin Hood, or a bit of good, as we say in London. Are you free? We must talk about it.”

“Certainly. My shift is over. Let’s go to tea.”

We egressed the hospital, found a hansom, and adjourned to the Twinings tea room, at No 216 Strand, London.

On the way, I filled Agnes in on the events of my trip to Folkestone Manor, and on Sir Reginald in particular. There is no need to repeat those details.

We alighted in The Strand, entered the tea room, and were immediately seated.

“Please bring us a pot of Lapsang Souchong tea.” Agnes and I loved this smoky tea from the Chinese coastal province of Fujian.

“Well, my dear Patricia. I’ve wonderful news, as well.”

The waiter brought us our pot of tea, which we allowed to steep. He then wheeled a cart with a tiered stand to the side of our table.

“Oh, Agnes! Look at these beautiful little sandwiches. I see cucumber, ham, smoked salmon, egg, and fish paste. There are scones, as well. Take a couple.”

“I’d best take me a lot, for I’m more used to me bacon and cabbage, and a good Irish pancake made from potatoes.

‘Boxty on the griddle,
boxty on the pan,
If you can’t bake boxty
sure you’ll never get a man.’”

Once Agnes and I were well provisioned, I poured tea for us both, and returned to her statement.

“And what is the wonderful news you have?”

“I am to become the first trained Nursing Superintendent of the Liverpool Workhouse Infirmary. There, me Pat, I believe I’ve said it plain as porridge.”

“That is wonderful! Oh, such an important job, and I cannot think of anyone better qualified to do it!”

“Sure it’s not bad for a no-account little Irish girl.”

“Ho! Yes, a no-account with a fine mind and a first-class nursing education. And, I’ll ignore your blarney. You have told me you were born in Cambridge before going to County Donegal as a child, and your family is wealthy.”

I sipped my tea.

“Well, perhaps I do exaggerate a little. Why Patty, I swear I’ll remain modest, despite me lofty title, though various authors will no doubt write many books about me, to inspire the young lasses of the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. I can see it now: ‘Agnes Jones, Student Nurse.’”

“You make me laugh so. I will miss you.”

“We shall write. And I’ll make ye a deal: You avoid falling off those cliffs in Dover, and I’ll avoid contracting typhus, typhoid, and cholera.”

We continued our banter and had a fine tête-à-tête sharing nursing stories.

When it was time to leave, we took separate cabs. Agnes needed to return to Lambeth and the hospital. I went in another direction, as I had an errand in mind.

I directed the cabbie to No 13 Wood Street in Cheapside, near St. Paul’s Cathedral. It took only a few minutes. I paid the cabbie, dismounted, and looked up at the sign before me.

Earnest Squibb & Sons, Firearms. The establishment was not imposing, but given that Cheapside was a well-known shopping district, I presumed that Mr. Squibb had his share of satisfied customers. I had obtained the address merely by perusing the *Times*.

As I entered, I was immediately struck by a somber quiet. There was not a soul in the store. This was such a contrast from my experiences when Michael was alive. When his family purchased hunting guns from W. W. Greener, the staff were prolific in their number and practically effusive with their helpfulness.

After a short time, a young man of about 25 years, with a pallid complexion, emerged from a door behind the counter. His excessive use of macassar oil on his hair was a bit off-putting.

“Hello, young lady.”

“Good morning, sir. I am Mrs. Goodman.”

“Waiting for your husband?”

“No, I am not.”

“Perhaps you’d care to look at a firearm for your husband?”

“I think not. I require a firearm for myself.”

“Indeed! That’s most unusual.”

“Perhaps. Will you show me what you have?”

“Well, I will, but I doubt that you will understand the operation of the device.”

I was beginning, just beginning, to take offense at this young man’s attitude.

“Indeed? Let us see.”

“Here is a Smith & Wesson pocket revolver in .22 calibre. It is from America.”

“That will not do.”

“I cannot think of a revolver that would be suitable.”

“I can. Please show me a Colt 1861 Navy Revolver, in .36 calibre.”

“You would not be able to operate it.”

Now Mr. Fahrenheit tells us that water boils at 212 degrees. I was finding that my blood had a much lower boiling point.

“Thank you. I would, I can, and I have.”

“That is quite silly woman talk.”

“Enough!” I sent my voice up considerably in force and pitch. I made sure to introduce a screeching nasal quality, as well.

“YOU ARE AN IGNORANT, INSOLENT MAN! NOW, please show me that revolver instantly or I’ll go to Beaumont-Adams for a .442 calibre British Army Revolver in a London heartbeat. They will accept my money as cheerfully as you apparently will not.”

I waited.

“Now, shall we do business?”

Hesitation. Sigh. He brought forth a wooden case.

“I will be happy to explain its operation.”

“That will *not* be necessary.”

I removed the pistol from its case, cocked it back to full cock, and pointed it at the wall. I then did something no one should ever do: I pointed it at his chest. He stiffened, much as I hoped he would. I spoke quite evenly.

“This is, as you certainly know, a six-shot, single-action percussion weapon. The .36 calibre round lead ball weighs 86 grains, the conical Minié ball somewhat more. You can count on a muzzle velocity of 800-1,000 feet per second, depending upon the load.

“I have nursed many a soldier. Would you like to discuss terminal ballistics, penetration, and soft tissue damage?”

The man’s pale face was, if it were possible, even paler than when I had entered the store. It appeared he did not want to explore such topics.

I de-cocked the revolver and laid it on the counter. “We must be careful, mustn’t we? Many people are killed each year with ‘unloaded’ pistols.”

He croaked, “It comes with a case, a bullet mould, and a powder flask.”

“Good. Now please listen carefully. I shall also require a screwdriver, one box containing 100 nitrated paper cartridges with conical bullets, one pound of good powder, one box of 100 conical bullets with patches, two tins of 100 percussion caps each, loading grease to cover the seated bullets, and lubricating oil. The sum, please.”

He took a moment to add up my score. “That will be £6 for the pistol, and £6/18/- for all. Shall I have it delivered?”

I set my money down on the counter. “No, I’ll take the items with me. Please wrap them up.”

And so he did, with a great deal of haste. I smiled inwardly. I do believe he was eager for me to leave his store.

As I left the shoppe, I felt renewed courage and confidence on two counts: first, for having dealt with that unpleasant young man, and secondly, for having the pistol in my possession. My behavior had been shameful, but I had no regrets. The “School of Manners” sometimes requires that unpleasantness be met with unpleasantness. And perhaps that young cockerel would be more respectful of women customers in the future.

I hailed a hansom cab and stepped in. As I did, I noticed a man in black lounging on the other side of the street.

Back at my rooms, I saw that it was just after three o’clock. What a day it had been, and it wasn’t nearly over!

Although the day was, as I have said, quite glorious, I judged it a bit too chilly to sit and read on the commons in front of my rooms. Besides, I had a concern that I might again see a strange man in black and begin imagining conspiracies. Instead, I sat down to grow familiar with my new revolver.

I unwrapped the package carefully, like a child determined to extend the pleasure of receiving a gift. I lined up each item in a row and then opened the pistol case.

It was a pleasure to remove the revolver and run my hands over it. What a lovely piece of engineering! Not as well done as a British product, for I recalled that Michael had bought the best—British, of course—for his trip to the Crimea. But we must give Mr. Samuel Colt and mass production its due.

In addition to the steel of the barrel, and a case-hardened frame, there was a brass trigger guard and a silver plated back strap. Lovely! Even the wooden grips were lovely.

I fetched Michael's shoulder holster and inserted the revolver. It fit perfectly. Dear me! I cannot explain the workings of my mind, but I was somehow reminded of Michael's long barrel inserted into my holster, if the metaphor isn't too obscure. I recalled that the barrel of the Colt M1861 Navy was exactly 7.5" long, identical to my Michael's "barrel."

Ah! Inspiration! I removed the pistol from the holster. I rose and stood in front of my writing desk.

"Ah, pistol! I dub thee 'Sir Michael!' May you be my trustworthy companion! And, when I carry you, please do not make my left bubby sore with your wooden grips."

Now that my behavior included talking to handguns as well as my breasts, I had to laugh at myself. I then sat down to learn more. First, I inspected Sir Michael. All chambers in the cylinder were empty. I then commenced to "dry fire" the pistol, feeling its heft, and using its sights.

I donned the holster. I was very happy that the leather consisted of crossed straps for the back and no front strap. It would hardly do for me to have a leather band across my chest. In went the pistol. I then spent a little time drawing and firing the empty handgun.

I loaded the pistol, using paper cartridges with conical bullets. Very convenient, but I was glad of having bullets, patches, and loose powder as well. I tamped each cartridge firmly into place with the rammer. I then covered each bullet with loading grease and capped each nipple with a percussion cap. Done!

It is a well-known practice that one carries a percussion revolver with the hammer down between chambers, employing a protuberance on the hammer to engage a notch in the rear of the cylinder. Having set the hammer down in such a notch, I was quite ready to use my new device.

Now it was time for tea. I donned my shoes and went downstairs. Tea was much the same as the previous day, and that was quite satisfactory. There was a potato soup, pickled herring, cucumbers, and fresh bread. The food was tasty and the company pleasant. I contented myself to listen to the events spoken of by my fellow boarders.

And just as I had yesterday, I repaired to my room after eating. I occupied myself with sorting my clothing and effects for packing, but most of the evening was spent in reading various good books. These were novels, as I had no appetite—yet—for a detailed study of medical works.

At bedtime, I again ran my hands over my body. I missed my Michael, but tonight I had a companion—*Sir Michael*. Without a blush, I confess that I put the shoulder holster with my new pistol on, in order to wear it to bed. My! I felt like an Amazon warrior!

With that, I extinguished the gaslight. And so to bed.

Thursday, June 8, 1865

I arose on Thursday morning in high spirits. I had no goal but to visit two purveyors of goods I needed for Sir Reginald. Today, I wore no nurse's uniform. Instead, I donned one of my very reliable dark blue day dresses, replete with white lace trim, blue jacket, and a cocky hat.

I was determined to get the "feel" of my new weapon, "Sir Michael." So I strapped it on over my blouse and under my jacket. I required a moment to accustom myself to the presence of my new "friend."

As a precaution against the weather, which seemed to be turning cold, I selected a simple wool cape to go over all.

I left my rooms at 9:30 AM. In my street, I saw no "black strangers." Excellent! I simply hailed a cab and embarked for the apothecary. This journey took me to № 39 Black Friars Lane, located close to Apothecaries Hall.

I studied the sign over the shoppe of my old friend. It read, "Rexford Aull, Apothecary/Chemist." I entered. The elderly man occupied with his work.

His counter featured a ceramic mortar and pestle, and a scale. There were jars, both clear and opaque, with such labels as Tincture Rhubarb, Powdered Rhubarb, Subnitrate of Bismuth, Aqueous Extract of Ergot, *Nux vomica* (Strychnine), Tincture of Opium Camphorated, and Tincture of Opium Deodorized. Of course, he had an impressive apothecary cabinet, with many drawers, behind the counter.

"Hello, Mr. Aull. Do you remember me?"

He looked up and studied me a moment. "Why, yes! Mrs. Goodly, I believe."

"Close, Mr. Aull. It is Goodman. Mrs. Patricia Goodman, one of Florence Nightingale's nurses."

"Oh, yes, yes, yes! Of course! Please forgive me. I cannot but wonder, as I age, if there is not some form of senile dementia at work here."

"Who can say, Mr. Aull? We scarcely live long enough to test the theory. My mother is relatively young, at age 49, and seems to be quite *compos mentis*."

"Well, young lady, I am nearly twenty years her senior. Let me share with you what competence I still have."

"Yes, sir. Please do."

"You will find here your order, entirely as you specified it to me, and I have added an extra substance or two for you, as I anticipate that your plan is to provide pain management."

"That is exactly correct. What is here?"

"I have prepared for you opium and its derivatives, mainly in pill form. That is, there is morphine and codeine. Neither of these substances should exhibit the negative effects of laudanum. And why, you ask? Because I have removed the influence of noscapine in the compound. This is the source, I believe, of most troubles with laudanum, and your patient will be all the better off for it.

"In addition to pills, there is also the standard tincture of opium, but it must be dispensed with care, as it is quite potent. I've also made up morphine in powdered form, so you may reconstitute it and inject it to treat acute pain locally.

“There is cocaine, as well, derived from coca leaves, imported from South America, and refined by me. I think you will find this drug to be superior. I recommend that the powder be ground finely with a mortar and pestle. Your patient should inhale it through the nose, as one would snuff, but you are free to administer it as you will. A seven percent solution, injected, will be quite satisfactory.

“Now, here is a bonus for you! I have compounded a new substance, acetylsalicylic acid. It is derived from the bark of the willow tree, and has great promise in the realm of pain relief. Its action is that it reduces inflammation, the cause of many pains. Now mark you, the tablets contain five grains each, and generally a physician would give two as a single dose. Be careful, as well, of upset stomach, for the drug disagrees mightily with some people.”

“Oh, my dear Mr. Aull! You are quite complete in your explanations! And you are very accurate in your assessment! This is wonderful, and I will personally attest that you have *no* symptoms of senile dementia.”

“Then, my dear Mrs. Goodman, I am quite satisfied with the service I have rendered. Your bill is £3/6/-.”

I laid my money down and made arrangement for the delivery of all the compounds to my rooms. My work being concluded, I determined to make my way directly to a special engagement in an unsavoury part of town.

The cabby took me from Mr. Aull’s shop to the church of St Anne’s, Limehouse. I was not prepared to give the driver any directions more explicit, as Limehouse had quite a bad reputation and he might have refused the fare. I only hoped that in Limehouse I would see both bobbies (Robert Peel’s policemen) to maintain order and cabs to return me to home.

The journey was not more than four miles and a half from the apothecary, traveling along Commercial Road East to Church Row. There I disembarked, glanced at the church, gave a nod to God, and made my way to Oak Lane.

Oak Lane was, to be generous, an untidy, dirty street. Cramped and dark, even in the late morning, it contained grimy-looking pubs, evil-smelling fish stalls—much as Mr. Dickens described in *Oliver Twist*—and a number of dingy shoppes. Nevertheless, I was quite fascinated by the population in the street—foreigners, sailors, bargemen, and women in garish dresses.

The women no doubt worked in knocking shops above the stores, while opium dens were the rule in the basements.

I paused at № 6 Oak Lane, “Wong Kei, Herbal Remedies.” With a swallow, I stepped in.

The dimly-lit shop was fascinating to me. All furnishings were of the darkest wood. The counter had only a scale and an abacus, but behind the counter was the largest apothecary cabinet I had ever seen! It ran from floor to ceiling and across the full width of the store! There were hundreds of tiny drawers, each one containing, I was sure, a special and arcane substance.

I knew Mr. Wong, but had never visited his establishment before. Inside, I found him, a Han Chinese of extreme old age, behind the counter. He wore an elaborate changshan of brocaded silk. On his head was a black close-fitting cap of black silk.

He was speaking with two men whose age easily equaled his.

I made a small bow. "Good morning. Excuse me."

All three turned and stared. I was met with silence. I spoke again.

"Jo san. Chéngmahñ."

Mr. Wong uttered a short phrase to his friends and made a gesture. They nodded and left for the back of the store through a doorway behind the counter. He turned to me.

"Ah, so. Good morning, missy. You want ginger, maybe? Make you all good. Velly velly good!"

"No, Doctor Wong, for that, I believe, is your correct title. I require something different."

"Where you learn 'doctor' part, missy?"

"I am Mrs. Patricia Goodman of the Florence Nightingale School of Nursing. We met when you lectured at St. Thomas' Hospital."

Dr. Wong's manner changed immediately. He replied using the King's English, and without a trace of accent.

"Ah, Mrs. Goodman. Yes, now I remember you. It was a pleasure to meet such a bright student. You honor me by your visit to my shoppe."

"It is a pleasure to be here, doctor. I learned a great deal from your presentation about herbal remedies."

"Then you apparently learned a great deal more than my physician colleagues. My findings were rather deprecated, and I determined not to lecture again. It is most odd, since a conventional London apothecary uses many herbs."

"Ah, sir, as I recall, your lecture named many herbs not known to our physicians."

"Yes, and there is a shocking unwillingness to examine them. Perhaps you know of a syndrome called 'not invented here.' The British make it their *principium*, even to the point of ignoring the folk remedies of Europe and India. For example, did you know that one can apply bread with a blue mold on it to suppurating wounds and have the pus and infection disappear?"

"A mold capable of stopping an infection? No, doctor, I did not."

"Remember that, Mrs. Goodman, in both the particular and the general."

"Perhaps the aversion to your teaching was, if I may be bold, because of your race."

"Indeed. To the British, my countrymen and I are yellow, slant-eyed heathens, useful only for exporting tea and importing opium. I find this to be quite ludicrous, since my people were using moveable type and paper money when the British were painting their bodies blue and worshiping trees. Well, Mrs. Goodman, you British have no monopoly on intolerance. We Chinese consider the Japanese to be primitive, and we call you round-eyes 'gweilo', or 'foreign devil.' Well, despite all, I was privileged to get a British education in medicine, both in Hong Kong and here."

"But then, sir, if I may inquire, if you are not well-received here, what causes you to remain in London?"

“My youngest son is studying at the University of Edinburgh medical school. He is learning surgery from Dr. Joseph Lister. When his studies are complete, I will take my family back to Hong Kong, and there I will practice both western and eastern medicine. And, if I may inquire, what causes you to visit me today?”

“I am hired to restore the health of a young nobleman, a former officer in the army. He suffered a shrapnel wound in the Crimean War. As a result, he has both constant pain and no use of his lower limbs.”

“Yes, that condition is not unknown. I have seen it before. Tell me, can your nobleman get the *tsat*? It is a vulgar term in my language, but a Chinese word is more delicate in communicating with you.”

“Can he get...? Oh! No, I believe he cannot. This condition no doubt causes considerable frustration for him.”

“And so it would in any young man. Well, I will supply you with two types of useful medications, perhaps three. With your kind permission, I will orate for a minute or two.”

“Yes, doctor. Of course.”

“From the world of pain management, I will set out two opium items.”

“But I have such things from the apothecary.”

“Yes, but not these items, which you will find to be highly useful alternatives to tinctures, pills, and injections.

“First, here is opium to smoke. The body ingests it quite rapidly. Smoking requires a small pipe, which I will supply to you. Second, here are opium buds for tea. The value of tea is that the drug is ingested gently, and can be pleasant to drink.”

“Do you not have some concern about addiction?”

“Nurse Goodman, the opium dens on Oak Lane are filled with addicts. Yes, I do have concerns, but tell me, does your young man drink whiskey?”

“Yes, sir. Irish whiskey, and, I’m led to believe, a great deal of it.”

“Alcohol is addictive, too. Now to go on: This next herb is to be smoked. It is called *Cannabis sativa*, also known as *marijuana*. It comes from Mexico in the Americas. You will find that it is an excellent pain reliever. It may also stimulate appetite, and cause the *diu* to get the *tsat*. That is, it may help to restore your young man’s vigor.”

“My! How did you hear of it?”

“I lived in San Francisco during the California Gold Rush. There, it is smoked regularly.”

“And you think it could help with ‘vigor,’ as you call it?”

“I have used it myself, and have no complaints, Nurse Goodman. I am father to six children, five of them sons. I have been blessed. It is my #5 son, my youngest, who is at university. The other children have given me 22 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren so far.”

I gave the good doctor a long, appraising look. This man must be close to eighty years of age! Indeed, he was the right person to talk with about “vigor.”

“Now, about inflammation. Here are my recommendations: To begin, I will say that your Nicholas Culpeper published an extensive herbal pharmacology in 1653, but I fear that it is completely ignored. So we will look to the East.

“First, ginger. The anti-inflammatory properties of ginger have been known and valued for centuries. Curcumin spice could act as an anti-inflammatory supplement. Frankincense is an herb that has been used as an anti-inflammatory agent, and the indigo plant is used in Chinese medicine for the same purpose.

“Sir, you have been generous with your explanations. Please provide me with those substances and label them.”

“Yes, of course.

“And the third class of items may help with the stimulation of a man’s eagerness. I have mentioned the cannabis, and I encourage you to purchase cocaine. There are cautions, the first being that some herbs increase arousal, but do not guarantee performance. The second caution is that some of them increase the pressure of the blood within the body excessively. Nevertheless, I will include a parcel of ginseng root. In addition, here is catuaba, from the Amazon rain forest—used in traditional Brazilian medicine as an aphrodisiac and central nervous system stimulant. It is a bark and you should infuse it with water to make a tea. Our purpose is to stimulate the *qi*, the energy flow.

“Excellent, doctor. I shall keep all of this in mind. Also, I must ask you, what about powder made from rhinoceros horns and powder from the, er, member, or *diu* as you call it, of the tiger? Are they not Chinese medicines?”

“They are, I am embarrassed to say. Our country doctors persist in prescribing them, but using these substances is just so much *hùnzàng*, if you catch my drift. Now, please allow me to compute your sum. I will use the device we Chinese call an abacus.”

Dr. Wong worked his machine with fervor. My! He was much faster than a British accounting clerk.

“You owe me £8/6/6.”

I gladly laid my money down. Then I spoke. “Now, if you will, sir, please indulge me in a whim. Where in Limehouse might I get a Japanese kimono?”

“Ah, a kimono, Mrs. Goodman. I know well that London has a romantic interest in the Japanese, primitive as they are. I have no doubt that we will someday see a light opera on the subject. I will pass your request immediately to my daughter. She will create a wonderful garment for you in silk brocade. It will be quite lovely, I’m sure, and will cost you a mere 10 shillings.”

“Thank you, sir.” I laid down a full £9. “Please keep the change, as I must have this garment before Tuesday.”

“Very well. It will be done. I will alert my daughter that you are of British proportions and have big *zhàn jiàn*—that is, big battleships or big chimneys—as we say in my language. She will understand and make any needed adjustments. All will be well.

I blushed a bit, and said, “Then, Dr. Wong, I bid you *joi gin*. Goodbye.”

I exited the shop. I had expected no incident, but an obviously drunken sailor provided me with one.

“Ello, tart! ‘Ow about a go?”

I was startled, and struck dumb for a moment. Then I found my voice.

“My good man, if you want a tart, go to a bakery. If you want trouble, you have met your match.”

“Ar, that’s rich! Come on, luv, let’s get to your rooms!”

“Please, sir. I assure you that I am not for sale. Let us part peacefully.”

He advanced, making me exceedingly uncomfortable. I glanced over his shoulder. There was no bobby in sight.

“Well, then, give me a feel. I’ll give ye a groat and buy ye a gin.”

“Thank you, no. Now please forbear.”

He continued to close the distance between us.

“Ye’ll not snub me! I’ll show *you*!”

I saw him remove a wicked-looking knife from his belt. He was now far too close. Enough! I might lose my life! My right hand went under my cape, and closed around the grips of “Sir Michael.”

Dear me, I must report that I was feeling a bit stressed. Perhaps I had been undertaking too many errands. Perhaps I had seen too many men in black garb. I had developed what they call a “short fuse.” It was quite easy for me to draw the weapon, cock it, and point it directly at his forehead. This action fully stopped my assailant in his tracks.

Shame on me! One should never point a pistol at anything one does not intend to destroy! Although, I was quite “hot,” I forced myself to speak slowly and with deliberate force. “Now... you friggin’... frappin’... freakin’... piece of shit, get yer bloomin’ arse hence! HOP IT! I’m quite fatigued and don’t wish to kill a man today. The next thing you will show me is the back of your head as you move your sorry bum down Oak Lane. Then pray that you will not be dead before you reach the end of the street. Do you catch my drift, or would you like me to be less subtle?”

He apparently caught my drift. He turned quickly, ran to the end of the street, and disappeared. After a long moment, I returned my firearm to its holster.

I must confess that I was shaking and breathing very rapidly. I hailed a hansom, which blessedly had just entered Oak Lane. I felt great relief as we sped off to Lambeth.

I took deep breaths. As I calmed myself, I had three insights. The first: I must keep myself to more savory neighborhoods. The second: anything can happen to anyone at any time. The third: it’s amazing what an interesting and useful vocabulary one can acquire when nursing soldiers and the poor.

Big Ben chimed as my cab crossed the river. It was but a few minutes after one o’clock when I arrived at my rooms. What a morning!

My shaking was considerably reduced, and my breathing now approximated normal. In the front hallway, I found a telegram addressed to me. I tore it open. Ah! From my dear mother.

“Come to dinner on Sunday. Come early. We shall go to Kew Gardens. Mama.”

This message had a calming effect. I consulted a copy of the *Times* to confirm the Sunday trains. I quickly wrote a response in the affirmative, and left it for the afternoon telegram pickup.

Although I remained a little disturbed, I determined to go into the dining room for dinner. After that, I would have to plan my afternoon. Of course, I first went to my rooms to shed my cape and my “gat,” as the Americans call a revolver.

Dinner was available to all boarders, but with our changing times, the dining room had grown less crowded and the meals much simpler. My fellow boarders, such as my accounting clerk and telegraph clerk friends, were all but chained to their desks, and could not come to dinner. Still, I greeted five other people and sat down to eat.

Dinner was simple, yet tasty, and it had a kind of elegance, derived perhaps from the Duchess’ perception of herself as royalty. I enjoyed cock-a-leekie, the simple Scots soup made of leeks and chicken stock. I had, as well, a chop of mutton, a roasted potato, and boiled leaves of spinach. For dessert, the Duchess served what she called *varenyky*, a kind of stuffed dumpling, filled with cherries, sour cream, and sugar. Of course, there was tea from the ever-present samovar.

I found that eating had the marvelous effect of soothing my nerves. I enthusiastically availed myself of the repast, silently thanking Mrs. Alexandrovna.

After dinner, I was free for the afternoon and went up the stairs to my rooms. In my bedroom, I located two barrel-stave Saratoga trunks, one for my clothing and one for the goods I had purchased. I moved one of them to my sitting room.

I spent a brief amount of time packing various items of memorabilia. I went to my bedroom, and packed some items of clothing I deemed non-essential for the rest of my week in London.

I now had little to do, except for drawing upon my medical knowledge to make some notes. I thought of all I knew about Sir Reginald’s paraplegia, and possible therapies to restore movement.

Just after five o’clock, I dashed downstairs for a simple supper. I made a meal of hearty lentil soup with fresh bread and butter.

I returned to my rooms, quite exhausted, obviously not without cause, given the stresses of the day.

With my clothing on, I fell directly into a nap. A little later, I got up long enough to remove my clothing and promptly fell back asleep.

Friday, June 9, 1865

Friday began quite well, and again I was in high spirits. The good weather was holding up, although I knew it could not last. An excellent day for a green dress!

I confess that I had paid but scant attention to fashionable clothing. My main mode of dress was a nurse’s uniform for learning and work at St. Thomas’ Hospital. Other than that, I had, I have mentioned, a limited

selection of day dresses, and it would be accurate to say that I had virtually social life that would require a dress with an “evening” bodice with a low neckline and short sleeves.

I stepped from my apartment building. Mercifully, there were no men in black or drunken sailors in the street. I signaled to a hansom and told the cabby I wished to go to Old Compton Street in Soho.

I so enjoy every ride in a cab! We crossed the Thames, traveled upon Whitehall, and passed № 10 Downing Street and Admiralty House. We entered Trafalgar Square, gained Charing Cross Road, and then, by a series of turns, found Old Compton Street. London’s streets are quite impossible, and I was very grateful that the cabby had “the knowledge,” as it is called, to navigate all the roadways.

I dismounted in front of № 1 Old Compton Street, at the corner, and saw the sign for the shoppe of my old friends.

Leonard & Bruce, Book Sellers
L. Leonard & B. Bruce

I entered. I had been here many times before, and it was always a pleasure to visit. Quite a contrast from the firearms merchant!

The store was by no means dark. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Abundant light flowed in from several large windows on two walls facing the street. The interior walls, and the many shelves of books in various nooks, positively glowed with fresh whiteness. The store was cozy without being cramped.

There were thousands of volumes. Several customers occupied themselves in comfortable chairs and divans, their principal occupation being to read the books, whether or not they intended to purchase.

I saw Mr. Leonard enter from the back of the store. He was sporting a white shirt, a pearl gray waistcoat over black trousers, and a bold purple cravat. He wore no jacket, as his daily routine required a great deal of unpacking of books and putting them up upon shelves.

“Hello, Mr. Leonard! How are you?”

“Ah, Mrs. Goodman! Lovely to see you again! I’m quite fine. And you?”

“I am in excellent spirits, having looked forward to this visit. I must comment again, as I have in the past, on how wonderful your store is. Perhaps you should expand to a larger space?”

“Ah, but Mrs. Goodman, Mr. Bruce and I have discussed this. We feel that such an expansion would not be to our benefit or to that of our customers. If we were in a shoppe as big as a barn, our mission would not be as noble as it currently is. And we might border on bankruptcy, as well. Then, where would we be? Mr. Bruce and I would have to move to the Amazon and sell books by mail.”

“Oh! That change would be too dramatic. I believe I understand. And where is Mr. Bruce?”

“He is upstairs, not quite ready for today’s work. Miz Patricia, I tell you confidentially that my dear friend, whom I fondly call ‘Squiggy,’ had too many cups of punch at the Admiral Duncan pub last night. We were, as usual, upstairs, in the private men’s club.”

“Oh! Well, I wish him a speedy recovery. Well, I must ask you. Did you receive my letter?”

"Yes. I have your books for you. Everything is as it should be. In addition, I have a few extra suggestions. Here, I will show you."

From below the counter he brought forth a tidy stack of bound volumes.

"Firstly, the medical book, *Anatomy Descriptive and Surgical*, by Henry Gray. Excellent reference.

"Secondly, by M. Verne of Paris, an English translation of *Voyage au Centre de la Terre*, Journey to the Center of the Earth. A fine choice!"

"I hope so. I am an enthusiastic reader of Verne."

"Thirdly, we have the two blank journals you requested. I believe you will enjoy the leather binding, the tooling, and the quality of the paper. I hope the sizes are neither too large nor too small for your needs."

"Very nice! I shall use one as a professional notebook and the other will record my personal experiences."

"And fourthly, if there is such a word, an edition of the *Kama Sutra*, translated by Mr. Forster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot. My dear Mrs. Goodman, are you sure that a young woman should be reading such a guide?"

"Will I be shocked?"

"I should be shocked if you were *not* shocked."

"Were *you* shocked by the book?"

"Well, er, actually, there is a great deal in the book with which Mr. Bruce and I are already familiar."

"Why, you young rake! Where did you gain that familiarity?"

"Why, at the men's club, of course."

"Mr. Leonard, you are a bold and wicked man. I love you very much, I should say!"

"The feeling is mutual, you may be assured. And, of course, I hope you are able to put the book to good use. But wait, there's more! You may want to read this: *A Strange Story*, by Edward Bulwer-Lytton."

"I should certainly be interested, Mr. Leonard. I've read many, but not all, of his novels. Some are quite good!"

"I agree. Certainly *Pelham* and *The Last Days of Pompeii*. However, I've always been troubled by *Paul Clifford*."

"Why is that?"

"The opening sentence, chiefly. 'It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents, except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the house-tops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness.' Oh, Mary! That is quite lengthy and tedious."

"Yes, I'm afraid I must agree. Well, let us not fret. In a hundred years, that sentence will be totally forgotten."

"There is one more thing. Here is this week's copy of 'All the Year Round'"

“Oh, yes. The magazine produced by Charles Dickens. I’ll take it.”

“Have you heard about Charles Dickens?”

“No, nothing new. What is it?”

“The South Eastern Railway Folkestone to London boat train has derailed at Staplehurst in Kent. Ten were killed and forty-nine injured. Dickens was on the train.”

“Oh, my! I was on a South Eastern Railway train on Tuesday. Is Mr. Dickens... dead?”

“No, he is quite alive, and helped the various injured people. I hope the experience has not affected him too greatly.”

“Yes, we should mourn the dead, and hope the injured recover. As for Dickens, I share your hope. Now, I have bought far too much and I must pay you.”

“I’m afraid your bill is for £4/16/4, chiefly due to the cost of the reference books.”

I laid my money down. “Not a problem. I need the references for my professional work. Please send the books to my rooms in Lambeth. By the way, I shall depart next week to work in Folkestone, Kent. The village of Hawkinge, actually.”

“Ah! I wish you well! Well, within a fortnight, we will close the shop for the summer. Every summer we rent a cottage in the Isle of Wight.”

“I hope that’s not too dear!”

“We scrimp and save. Being a book seller doesn’t make one rich. But the cottage is well worth the expense.”

“Are you fond of the seaside?”

“Yes, but principally we go because we are *not* fond of the heat in London in the summertime. It can be as hot as 40 degrees centigrade in the new Metropolitan Railway underground trains. In addition, Alfred Tennyson lives in Freshwater, where we stay.”

“But will you not lack a men’s club in Freshwater?”

“Yes, but other young blades make the same journey each summer, so we shall meet old friends and make new ones. I look forward to seeing Verne, Charles, and David again.”

“Well, then, all is well. Please enclose your Freshwater address with the books and I will write you from Folkestone.”

I thanked Mr. Bruce and took my leave.

I then went directly by cab to the medical instrument purveyor.

We returned to Lambeth over Westminster Bridge and turned left into York Road, toward the South Western Railroad terminus.

Then we drove right, into Addington Street, past the General Lying-in Hospital. It is said that thousands of babies have been born there. I knew that Miss Nightingale took a personal interest in the associated midwifery training school.

Just past the hospital we pulled up at No 11, a shoppe whose sign read, "Arthur Bunsen, Medical Equipment."

The store was not crowded—not with people, at least. Rather, it was filled with the paraphernalia of the medical profession. Instead of employing a single counter, Mr. Bunsen's equipment establishment was a medical emporium. There were various display cases with glass fronts along all the walls. In one corner, I saw a complete skeleton hanging on a stand. And there was, as well, a large, central table in the middle of the room, holding glass cases filled with small devices.

At the counter was a sprightly gentleman in his middle years, conspicuous by his moderate crop of grey hair. I say moderate, as the central portion of his skull had not a single hair. As if in compensation, the hair at the edges of his bald pate was quite long and wild. I speculated that if a theatrical production needed to fill the role of a mad scientist, Mr. Bunsen would be their man!

He sported a pleasant suit in a rich, burnt umber corduroy, with a green waistcoat, a surprisingly effective combination. Mercifully, his cravat was black, as a third bold color would not have enhanced the effect.

"Good afternoon, Sir!"

"And good afternoon, Miss. You are...?"

"Mrs. Patricia Goodman, of St. Thomas' Hospital. I wrote you requesting a supply of medical equipment. Do you recall my letter?"

"Why yes, Mrs. Goodman. I do recall it. I have your requested items in readiness. While I get them from the back, please feel quite free to look around my establishment." With that, he disappeared into the back of the store, and I took a tour of the cases.

I was fascinated by two cases. One contained the most beautiful brass microscopes; the other was a collection of glass and wooden eyes. I attempted to take in everything, since I had determined that I might have to order additional items from Mr. Bunsen at a later date.

Mr. Bunsen returned with a tray. "Here is the equipment. With your permission, I will describe it all to you. First, here is an excellent binaural stethoscope, whose design is latest to be had. You will be able to diagnose your patients by auscultation—listening to internal sounds."

"Very good, sir, but I fear that my skills are insufficient."

"Well, I have included a treatise by George Cammann, the perfector. The stethoscope will tell you everything about a man's heart, except whether he loves you. Second, here is a Thomas Clifford Allbutt thermometer, a convenient, portable six-inch model. You can record an internal body temperature in five minutes."

"Yes. I recall that 98.6° is ideal, while temperatures below 97° and above 100° suggest disease."

"Now, here is a tendon hammer for testing patellar response."

“Excellent! I know how to use one. My client, however, is paralyzed, so I’m uncertain whether I ever will have the chance to use it.”

“To go on, I have here for you, as you requested, a kit for surgeries. Be careful, as the scalpels are very sharp. I must apologize, but knowing that you are not a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, I assumed that you would favor an economical collection of instruments. This is a field amputation kit from the American Civil War. It has a trephine for boring bones, a Hey’s bone saw, a trochar, scalpels, amputation knives, and a bullet scoop.”

“Oh! I do thank you, but I must say the outfit represents a rather grisly aspect of surgery. I’ve no doubt that my client was the victim of similar instruments in the Crimea after he was wounded! At least, no amputation was required.”

“Yes, Mrs. Goodman, I do not disagree. The war required rather brutal surgical techniques. The situation is worse on naval vessels.”

“Is there anything else you have for me?”

“Yes. You see here an assortment of syringes and vials to hold reconstituted medications for injection. Now, will there be anything else?”

“Yes, Mr. Bunsen. I have thought of two things more. Would you provide me with three white laboratory coats and a mortar and pestle?”

“Yes, of course. I’ll then add up the price of all your goods for you.”

He took several moments with paper and pencil. “That will come to £21/6/-.”

I laid my money down. I thanked Mr. Bunsen profusely, and gave him my address for delivery of the equipment.

I left the shoppe, and set out in the direction of St. Thomas’ hospital, only two long blocks away. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a man in black. Another one? The same one? It didn’t matter. I realized that I was no longer imagining such things. Clearly, someone was following me. I was curious about this, of course, but oddly I felt undisturbed. I was simply satisfied that my imagination was not playing tricks.

My walk to the hospital took only a few minutes. There, I was lucky to locate Agnes Jones. I invited her to accompany me to the theater on Saturday, and she was, fortunately, free to attend a matinee.

Thereafter, I walked to my rooms, keeping my “eyes peeled,” as they say, for any suspicious strangers. I crossed Palace Road, and entered Paris Street, where I stopped at a tiny wine shoppe and purchased a bottle of decent port wine. From the wine shoppe, it was but one short block to my rooms.

In my front room, I set down my wine. I saw that packages containing my Thursday purchases had arrived. There were large bundles from the Mr. Aull, the apothecary, and Dr. Wong, the herbalist. I spent one-half hour looking over my purchases. I then packed the items into one of my trunks.

It being merely 1:30 in the afternoon, I had time to go to the dining room. There, we diners ate *shchi*—cabbage soup—which the Duchess said had been the predominant first course in Russian cuisine for over a thousand years.

We were then treated to a hearty scouse, the traditional meal of the working class in Liverpool. This was a thick stew of mutton with potatoes, onions, carrots, and other vegetables. There was plenty of fresh bread and butter, too.

Again, I surmised that the Duchess did *not* come from the Russian court, given her skill in preparing Liverpoolian food. I also recalled that Londoners use “scouse” to label workers from Liverpool, based on what they eat—much as we Brits call the French “frogs” and they call us “rosbifs.” Citizens of Liverpool are called “scousers.”

Sated, I went to my rooms. The afternoon and evening were now settling into my regular rhythm of activity. I began my afternoon by making notes that I would soon copy into my new journal, when it arrived. I contented myself, as well, with lying on my bed, and meditating over Sir Reginald’s condition. Soon, I drifted off into a wonderful nap.

Upon waking, I determined to walk the commons in front of my building, to take the air before going in to high tea. It was so very nice to do so. I walked from my rooms down to Carlisle Street, and back up to Upper Marsh.

I went in to the dining room for high tea, which was pleasant but unremarkable. Thence to my rooms.

In my room, I stripped off my clothing, got into my tattered dressing gown, and let down my hair. I enjoyed a glass of port, and then curled up, as they say, with a novel. What a pleasant and simple pleasure!

With a laugh, I remembered a piece I had read: “Novel Reading, a Cause of Female Depravity.”

“Without the poison instilled by novels into the blood, females in ordinary life would never have been so much the slaves of vice.”

And:

“The free access which many young people have to romance novels and plays has poisoned the mind and corrupted the morals of many a promising youth; and prevented others from improving their minds in useful knowledge.”

Ho! Yes. Of course. Yes, yes, indeed! As Doctor Wong would say, that was just so much *hùnzàng*,

Now, tiring of reading, I found that I had a wonderful opportunity to assess my body. I stripped off my dressing gown and undergarments, and studied myself in a full-length mirror.

I found myself looking at a pleasantly-built, relatively young woman, with a narrow rib cage, a very small waist, and a generously flaring set of hips. Atop that narrow rib cage sat a pair of formidable breasts. What I had surmised on my train journey to Kent was reinforced by this inspection.

To what good end, I thought, as I held up my breasts with my hands? To provide pleasure for a man and nourishment for a baby. I had done the former, and had hoped to do the latter. As I stroked them, my nipples grew taught, which was something my Michael had taught me when we were first married.

Oh, I despaired of how Victorian women deny their bodies. We have been trained to be subservient to men, and to serve only as baby factories!

I fondled my breasts, lifting them up and letting them fall. Fortunately, they still exhibited a great deal of firmness. It would be a long time, I hoped, before they were saggy, each one dangling “like a croquet ball in a sweatsock,” as some say.

It was quite easy to pleasure myself, although that act was by no means commonly attributed to Victorian women. It was largely presumed that we had no need of gratification other than that provided by our husbands. I reached down low into my nether regions and found the “button” that would cause me to moan. Again, I had to thank my dear Michael for showing me this mechanism.

Moan I did. Groan I did, and after having moaned and groaned, I lay quietly for a while. I then doused the gas light. And so to bed.

Saturday, June 10, 1865

Saturday arrived, and the day was lovely! Most people in the United Kingdom work six-days per week—all days but the Sabbath—but as a nurse, I often worked fewer days in a week than did others. Of course, I had often worked many more hours in a single day than a typical laborer. And when attending to those in hospital, illness and injury were no respecters of Sabbaths or holidays. Knowing this, I anticipated being busy every day in my work with Sir Reginald.

I performed my ablutions and dressed. I had barely completed grooming when Mrs. Alexandrovna informed me that three packages had arrived. I went downstairs and in the front hall were my books from Leonard & Bruce, my medical equipment from Mr. Bunsen, and my kimono from the daughter of Dr. Wong Kei.

I brought the packages to my rooms and spent a little time inspecting my purchases. I packed the medical gear right away, but hesitated over the books. Certainly I must not yet pack the anatomy book, and I was determined to start the Verne novel.

As for the kimono, I was very taken with its beauty! A marvelous creation in a bold red and black brocaded silk! I yearned to try it on immediately, but judged it a poor use of time to shed my clothing only to dress again. The kimono would have to wait for evening.

My first order of business was to draft a letter to the drayage company. I determined that the porters should come for my goods on Monday. I also wrote a second letter, to Meg at Folkestone Manor. In it, I requested the use of a room for a day room. I realized that I needed a place for medical equipment and clothing. Given the great number of unused rooms at the manor I was confident that this request would not inconvenience her.

Now, I reflected happily that most things were done, and that there was nothing scheduled for today.

An inspiration! I should buy myself a new hat! This purchase would hardly be a necessity, but rather an indulgence, and I knew just the milliner to visit.

I left my rooms and hailed a cabbie. I directed him to No 6 Fish Street Hill. We drove over London Bridge and past the monument to the Great Fire of London.

We pulled up in front of the hattery of Richard “Conversation” Sharp. I entered the store and was greeted by Maria Drummond, his adopted daughter.

Mrs. Drummond always looked energetic and lovely, although she was surely in her late fifties. She had been married to the politician Thomas Drummond, but he had died in 1840. She was so well connected with writers, authors, and scientists that I was frankly quite surprised to see her in the shoppe.

“Hello, young lady! I seem to recall your face, but not your name.”

“I am Mrs. Patricia Goodman, Mrs. Drummond.”

“Oh, yes. You work with Nurse Florence Nightingale. Well, tell me, how may I help you?”

“Am I to be helped by the most educated and talented ‘shoppe girl’ in London?”

“Indeed you are! I am in the shoppe this morning only to see to some matters of money, but I believe I can be an adequate sales attendant.”

We looked over several numbers and I decided upon a jaunty hat for the country—a straw boater, with a pink band, and a clever floral adornment.

“Yes! This suits you well, dear. You should buy it.”

“Very well. Also, as an afterthought, would you have a head covering much like those Miss Nightingale wears?”

“Yes I do, although it will make you look a bit like a grandmother. Such a cap is reminiscent of a painting by the American James McNeill Whistler of his mother. It is quite *not* the fashion. Nevertheless, here is something in lace, made of fine white Dutch linen. Try it on.

“Well, I must say, it rather crowns your head. If you avoid wearing your hair with a severe center part, as is Miss Nightingale’s habit, you will look reasonably pleasant in it.”

Completely satisfied, I paid the 2/6/- requested. Mrs. Drummond wrapped up the lace head covering, and I went home wearing my new summer straw hat. Mrs. Drummond left the shoppe at the same time to return to Hyde Park Gardens, where she was to entertain Mr. Charles Babbage, Mr. Michael Faraday, and Professor Charles Wheatstone. I blushed when I thought that she had taken the time to wait upon me.

Saturday dinner reflected the Duchess’ table at its hearty best. We began with a clear broth, but went on to bangers and mash with onion gravy, and a mixture of carrots and peas. Our dessert was a spotted dick, the very popular custard and currant pudding.

At two o’clock, Agnes popped in, ready for the theatre. We had a choice. We might see the premier showing of a new play, *Sweeney Todd, the Barber of Fleet Street: or the String of Pearls*, at the Old Bower Saloon in nearby Stangate Street. Charles Kean was the star. But also, there was a revival of *Fashion*, by the American woman Anna Cora Mowatt, at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, Covent Garden. Mrs. Ellen Terry was the star.

Agnes and I quickly determined that we had no interest in seeing a piece about a barber who kills his customers and bakes their flesh into pies. We opted for *Fashion*.

Our cabbie took us a mere 1.2 miles, over Waterloo Bridge, to Drury Lane. We alighted, entered the theatre, and spent the most delightful three hours there.

Fashion; or, Life in New York, was wonderful! What pretensions! What folly! It featured a Mrs. Tiffany, a woman obsessed with fashion, whose fractured French was impossible. There were, as well, a larcenous clerk named Snobson, an upright country fellow named Adam Trueman, and a false count named Count Jolimaitre!

Thoroughly satisfied, we returned to my rooms, chatting all along the way. After promises to write each other, I bid farewell to Agnes. She set out, once again, for St. Thomas' Hospital.

I went in to supper, and was quite content to eat nothing but two small, sweet biscuits with a cup of tea.

In my rooms, I removed all my clothing except for my chemise and pantalettes. What a blessed relief! I poured a glass of port.

I tried on my new kimono. It was stunning! What excellent cloth and what a fine, simple cut—a T-shape with all straight lines, with the hem falling to the ankle. And all made from cloth only fourteen inches wide! Further, Wong Kei's daughter had included an *obi*, the sash to be worn over the kimono.

I glanced at the magazine *All the Year Round* but then began reading my new Verne novel, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, in earnest. In time, I tore myself away, to begin writing in my personal journal and to transfer some loose notes to my new medical journal.

I spent some scant time reading Gray's anatomy book. I soon grew quite tired of such dry reading. I doused the light. And so to bed.

Sunday, June 11, 1865

Ah, Sunday morning, and a beautiful morning it was! I arose early, dressed myself in blue, and set off for Kew in the Borough of Richmond—that is to say, to my mother's home.

I determined to avoid any possibility of being followed. I didn't care to share my mother's address with a dark-clad stranger. I first took a cab to Charing Cross Station. Once in the station, I kept near the doors. After only a minute, I left and took a cab to the Waterloo Station in Lambeth. Yes, I deliberately went away from Lambeth and then returned to it.

The train departed within five minutes of my arrival at the station and I was on my way to Kew. It is a distance of only 8.2 miles to the Kew Bridge Station in Hounslow, and I was there in a mere twenty minutes.

My mother stood on the platform, looking as lively and vigorous as ever. She rushed forward to give me a long, tight embrace.

"Welcome home, little Pitty-Pat!"

"Mother! Wonderful to see you! And could you find a more grown-up name for me?"

"I think not. The name served you well when you were eight years old, and I believe it still serves, although you have acquired your womanly curves. Now, let's walk."

She moved quickly and I hurried to keep up. We walked Kew Road across the bridge over the Thames, and entered Kew Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew Green. This was a distance of perhaps half a mile.

Our first stop was the Palm House, the centerpiece of the gardens. What a marvelous structure of wrought iron arches, cables, and glass panes! We entered, and were practically bowled over by a wave of very hot, humid air. Oh, my! No wonder large palms and other tropical plants could thrive here! Our tour was interesting, but deliberately brief, or our dresses would have been soaked with perspiration.

We now embarked on a long, leisurely walk to the southeast corner of the gardens, to see the Great Pagoda. It comprises ten octagonal stories, towering 164 feet. A plaque reminded us that it had been erected in 1762. As was our tradition, we hiked the 253 steps to the top to take in the view.

We had exhausted the morning, and nearly exhausted ourselves. We now set out for my mother's home in the Gloucester Road, near Kew Green.

I spoke. "Tell me, what will you serve for dinner today, *maman*?"

"My dear Pitty... er, Patricia, as much as I would love to have some of those new dishes from the Indian subcontinent, I will tell you that we are having a traditional English Sunday dinner—a joint, Yorkshire pudding, roasted potatoes, parsnips with butter and parsley, and French *haricots verts*."

"Well, that's quite lovely, but why not Indian food?"

"Because Bridget, God bless her, cannot grasp the idea of chicken tikka masala. We are eating what she knows how to cook."

We turned into mother's street and her house was before us.

"Now, before we eat, you must fill me in on everything, and I do mean *everything*."

We entered the house, and mother learned from Bridget when dinner would be served. Then she returned and we retired to her study. From behind a shelf of temperance books, she removed a bottle of Jameson Irish whiskey.

"Now, my dear, are you ready for a couple of 'jolts' before dinner?"

"Oh, mother! You are too bold. A young Victorian lady would never drink distilled spirits."

"God help me, Patricia, if I have raised any ladies. You would be far too stuffy as a lady. Besides, this poison was good enough for your father, for me, for your wonderful Lt. Goodman, and for you, too, as I recall."

"Very well, mother. You are right again. You are quite outrageous, you know!"

She poured and we both drank.

"My dear daughter, this tonic will keep you young. And, I suspect, it accounts for why our good Queen Victoria had nine children. Albert couldn't have been sober all the time."

"Mother, an alternate theory is that she charmed Albert with her alluring undergarments."

"Ah! Indeed, that could be Victoria's secret. Now, please update me on all things."

I was full of stories and more than willing to share all with my mother. I even ventured to tell her of my encounter with that drunken sailor in Limehouse.

"Ho! Now, Patricia, it is *you* who are quite outrageous! I am quite glad that you survived to tell the tale."

At this point, Bridget came to tell us that all was in readiness. We adjourned to the dining room and had a wonderful meal.

We were quite full, and both my mother and I declined dessert. It was a lovely Bakewell tart, comprising a shortcrust pastry with a layer of jam and a sponge using ground almonds. Our reluctance to eat puzzled Bridget considerably, but she brightened when we suggested that she eat our slices as well as the one she had cut for herself.

After dinner, there was little to do but walk to the train station. We both welcomed the walk, as an English Sunday dinner can be a bit heavy. Mother gave me a big hug and many kisses. Naturally, she wished me every success in Folkestone. I assured her that I would take all her wisdom with me. And with that, I boarded a train for a quick return to Lambeth.

When I arrived at my rooms, there was a chance to partake of supper. This was fine, except that I had no inclination to eat.

The supper featured some left-over bits of meat from Duchess Olga's Sunday joint, left-over potatoes, and a soup with beetroot as the main ingredient. It is called "borscht," and I took a small cup of it. At first, I hadn't cared for borscht, but after several years of living under the Duchess' roof, I had become quite fond of it.

What I did eat, and with some enthusiasm, were *blini*, rolled Russian pancakes which the Jews call *blintzes*. These were filled with jam and the Duchess had provided butter and sour cream as toppings. I now concluded that I had today eaten enough food for two sturdy stevedores.

I repaired to my rooms, where I determined to pursue three tasks. The first was to make a few entries in my personal journal. The second was to use my medical journal to record various facts from my research into Sir Reginald's conditions and their treatment. The third was of greatest importance—to study Gray's anatomy book.

I accomplished the first two journaling tasks without difficulty. I then poured myself a glass of port and settled in with Gray's.

At first, I attended to questions of the anatomy of the spine, but after a short while, I abandoned that in pursuit of an intriguing subject area—female anatomy.

Oh! How little we women know about our own bodies! I fear to state that we Victorians have been duped into denying most knowledge of ourselves—although we become mothers, and are sometimes called the "seat of civilization." We are unfamiliar with our organs, and why they function as they do. This may be, I theorized, due to the many expectations placed upon us and our domestic duties. As a result, we women have little time to learn about ourselves. Although we "make babies" we are not expected to have a clue as to how the process works.

I studied the female organs for a bit, and was able to find them as the anatomy directed. This was an excellent exercise, as I quickly equated the terms "vagina," "clitoris," and "uterus," with my own body's counterparts.

My evening was perfect. Finally, lying in bed, I drifted away, more educated and satisfied. And so to bed.

Monday, June 12, 1865

Monday morning dawned sunny, but was a little chillier than I had expected. As usual, I was up early to dress and groom.

The Duchess knocked at my door and alerted me to the delivery of several large parcels. I went downstairs, and was very happy to discover that my new clothing had arrived. At last!

In my rooms, I looked the items over. Wonderful! I quickly wrote out a cheque for the bill and prepared a letter for the afternoon mail.

It was now quite easy to finish packing, leaving out only my clothing for Tuesday. I chose a new dress and new undergarments. All else went into my trunks.

There remained of my belongings only a few small items to put in my lady's traveling bag on the morrow.

At 11:00 AM precisely, the Duchess alerted me that the porters had come for my trunks. I asked her to direct them to my rooms.

Two rather large, muscular men came to my door. The larger one spoke. "Ello, Miz. We're 'ere to fetch your things."

"Excellent. There you see my trunks. They are to go to the Folkestone East station via the South Eastern Railway, and you should find them correctly marked."

"Right, Miz. If you will give me 10/6, that will pay the freight."

"Here is 14/-, a bit extra for you and your assistant."

"Thank you, Miz! Life ain't easy for a working man who must use his back. Maybe me and Alfred 'ere will have a gay and frisky—a whisky, you know. Yer trunks will arrive in Folkestone by six o'clock today."

And with that, the draymen left. I looked out my front window into the street below. There, the men were hoisting my trunks into a trolley. It was pulled by two large Shire horses. They mounted their vehicle and drove away. With this action, I got the full sense of the finality of my decision.

I turned and looked at my rooms. They were quite pleasant, although they now lacked any personal effects. I was glad to have lived here.

Ah! In addition to my letter to my seamstress, Mme. Anabelle Davies, I also crafted a telegram for Jack Bates, telling him of both my arrival and the arrival of my goods. The personal trunk was to go to my rooms in Hawkinge, while the equipment trunk was to go straight to Folkestone Manor.

This was a perfect time to consult a train schedule, as I was looking for the earliest possible Tuesday train to Folkestone. All my tasks being concluded, I went downstairs in search of Mrs. Alexandrovna. I found her in the kitchen.

"Hello, Duchess! Am I interrupting?"

"*Nyet, nyet*, darling. Come sit at the table and have some tea."

We had a lovely goodbye talk over tea, accompanied by crumpets and jam. Naturally, I provided her with my address and promised to write her as well.

So, after this pleasant chat, I repaired to the commons, this time with the intention of reading upon the grass, whether it be chilly or not. Mercifully, there were no strangers lounging in the street. My reading comprised a wonderful two hours. After that, I returned for Monday dinner.

As always, Monday dinner at my boarding house was predictable. There was always a hash made of cooked beef from the Sunday joint and coarsely chopped potatoes, onions, carrots, and spices. I suspect that almost every dinner table in England featured this dish on Mondays. One addition to our table was Scottish oatcakes.

I went to my rooms, and made it a point to do as little as possible. Even reading, I judged, was not restful. I napped until it was time for tea.

My supper was quite simple. I had tea from the samovar, of course, and a generous serving of all the *zakuski* Mrs. Alexandrovna had set out. I had good English cheddar cheese, freshly baked bread, small samples of cured meats and fishes, and various pickled vegetables. There was also a special treat—a little caviar.

In my room, I “settled in,” as they say. First, I was obliged, I felt, to read more of Gray’s anatomy and make notes in my medical journal.

Then I stripped myself entirely naked. I was determined, once again, to confront a kind of self-loathing women sometimes have for their bodies. This was especially true of women of my age, given that we were required to always remain pretty, but often had no clue as to what “pretty” meant. I was not immune from this condition. A modern wife relies upon her husband to tell her that she is pretty. What with my husband being taken from me at such a young age, I had no choice but to define “pretty” in my own terms.

I fondled myself, saying quietly, “Oh, yes, Reginald.” I quickly corrected myself. I said, as I had meant to say, “Oh, yes, Michael.” I slipped into my bed. I read a few pages of my novels, and, feeling quite drowsy, doused the gas light. And so to bed.

Tuesday, June 13, 1865

On Tuesday I awakened quite early; indeed, I rose earlier than any day in the previous week. It was barely light outside. I was determined to leave on the cars for Folkestone at 8:00 AM.

I dressed in the new day dress that I had laid out, a green print with a tiny treatment of black polka dots and restrained lace trim at the collar and cuffs. In addition, I wore my jaunty new boater. I felt no need to strap on my revolver; however, I carried it in my lady’s bag.

There were no goodbyes to be said. I merely descended the stairs in the house and those leading to the street from the building. It was now a bright sunny day, with a good deal of morning chill. I was glad of my cape. At the curb, I found a cab.

Was there a man in black in the street? Yes, of course. However, I found my attitude had evolved from trepidation to calm to a kind of boldness. As my hansom pulled up, I gave my pursuer a hearty wave. He shrank back into an alley.

As I had done exactly one week before, I rode to Charing Cross Station, and as before, I purchased a ticket for the cars to Folkestone. I settled into my compartment. In so many ways, it was a blessed relief. Preparations were complete, and it remained only to travel to Folkestone Manor.

The cars started up and I was on my way! From my traveling bag, I removed my new personal journal. I began to write down some of my final impressions of my recent activities. The week in London had been an adventure, but now a greater adventure was to begin.