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978-1-108-06985-4 - *Women as Army Surgeons: Being the History of the Women's Hospital Corps in Paris, Wimereux and Endell Street, September 1914–October 1919*

Flora Murray

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It is sobering to realise that as recently as the year in which *On the Origin of Species* was published, learned opinion was that diseases such as typhus and cholera were spread by a 'miasma', and suggestions that doctors should wash their hands before examining patients were greeted with mockery by the profession. The Cambridge Library Collection reissues milestone publications in the history of Western medicine as well as studies of other medical traditions. Its coverage ranges from Galen on anatomical procedures to Florence Nightingale's common-sense advice to nurses, and includes early research into genetics and mental health, colonial reports on tropical diseases, documents on public health and military medicine, and publications on spa culture and medicinal plants.

### Women as Army Surgeons

After training to be a doctor at the London School of Medicine for Women, Flora Murray (1869–1923) became an active member of the Women's Social and Political Union. At the outbreak of the First World War, she and her fellow suffragists laid down their banners and sought to aid the Allied war effort. Working within the newly formed Women's Hospital Corps, Murray and her colleague Louisa Garrett Anderson (1873–1943) overcame initial prejudice and established two military hospitals in France in the period 1914–15. Their success prompted an invitation from the War Office to open the Endell Street Military Hospital in London, staffed entirely by women. First published in 1920, Murray's account, illustrated with numerous photographs, records important steps in furthering the acceptance of women in the medical profession. For female doctors, surgeons and nurses, the war provided not only the 'occasion for service' but also 'great professional opportunities'.

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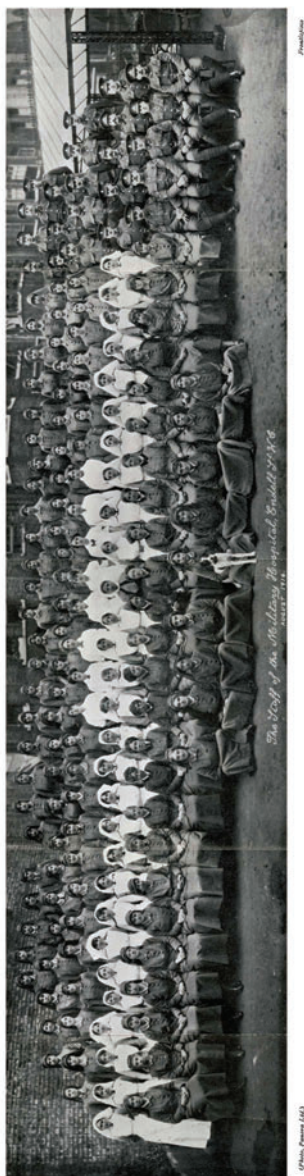
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# WOMEN AS ARMY SURGEONS

BEING THE HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S  
HOSPITAL CORPS IN PARIS, WIMEREUX  
AND ENDELL STREET

SEPTEMBER 1914—OCTOBER 1919

BY

FLORA MURRAY

C.B.E., M.D., D.P.H.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LIMITED                      LONDON

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TO

LOUISA GARRETT ANDERSON

'Bold, cautious, true and my loving comrade

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## TO THE WOMEN'S HOSPITAL CORPS

DEAR FELLOW MEMBERS—This little book has been written for you and for your pleasure.

Your work was too good to be left unrecorded; and though in these pages I have said little in praise, yet if you will read between the lines you will find there a very genuine affection for each one of you, and admiration and pride for your courage and endurance. I ask you to accept *Women as Army Surgeons* in memory of 'Endell Street.'

FLORA MURRAY.

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## PREFACE

THIS record of the work of the Women's Hospital Corps in France, and especially at the Military Hospital, Endell Street, is a valuable contribution to the literature of the Woman Movement. Dr. Flora Murray and Dr. Garrett Anderson made history at Endell Street. Through their initiative, endeavour, and efficiency they opened the doors to further fields of opportunity for women physicians and surgeons, and not only for medical women, but for all women who are setting out, or have already set out to conquer fresh territory. We owe them a debt of gratitude, the recognition of which will become even more accentuated as the years go on.

It would be difficult to put into words the pride with which the members of the Women's Hospital Corps served their country in the Great War under the only woman Lieutenant-Colonel in the British Army. For this was the rank of Dr. Flora Murray when acting as Doctor-in-Charge at the Military Hospital, Endell Street. The War Office withheld from her both the title and the outward and

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visible signs of authority. But the position, with its responsibilities, pains, and penalties, was hers, and it is well known how she and the Chief Surgeon, Dr. Louisa Garrett Anderson, rose to the demands of the occasion.

It is only on reading these pages that many of us who worked with them at Endell Street will realise even partially the difficulties and anxieties through which they passed during the four years and more that the Hospital remained open. They had a double responsibility all through: firstly, for the lives and welfare of the soldiers entrusted to their care, and secondly, for the demonstration of women's efficiency and vindication of the confidence placed in their professional and administrative abilities. If they had failed to satisfy the Authorities even in the slightest detail, there is not much doubt but that the charge of the Hospital would have been handed over to a man, and that more than one military official would have had the joy and triumph of saying: '*There—I told you so. The women have failed medically and administratively, and have been unable to maintain discipline.*'

But the opportunity did not occur. The weeks, the months, the years went on. Thousands of soldiers poured in and out of that Hospital. A

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## PREFACE

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year after Armistice found it still open. The women had succeeded—not failed, and had set a living example of what trained and disciplined women could do in the service of their country.

Perhaps our C.O. will forgive me for being personal enough to refer to one of her characteristics which was greatly appreciated by all—the trust she reposed in those working under her. You were given your task, your opportunity, your department, and you went ahead with it. It was yours—your own. If you could not do it, you went. If you could, you stayed. She interfered with no details, and harassed you with no unnecessary restrictions. She took it for granted that you were carrying on in the right way and in the right spirit—and judged by results whether it were desirable that you should continue to carry on. In this way you became and remained a living part of the administration. Work and personality alike were benefited, and the young received a baptism of responsibility, destined to influence them favourably for the rest of their lives.

This is surely a great characteristic—and rare.

It is not to be wondered at that the success of this Military Hospital, officered, staffed, and run entirely by women, became a source of immense

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satisfaction and pride to all women, but more especially to those who had taken an active part in the struggle for the Suffrage, and had shared, with Dr. Flora Murray and Dr. Garrett Anderson, the ups and downs, the hopes and fears, the disappointments, disillusion, and encouragements, and all the stress and strain of a long-drawn-out political campaign. To these, Endell Street represented work for the country and work for the woman movement combined, and to the members of the Women's Hospital Corps itself it meant, in addition, a double chance of service, a double devotion, a double inspiration, a double reason for carrying on with undiminished enthusiasm and faithfulness to the end.

BEATRICE HARRADEN.

*4th August 1920.*



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