

## PRIZE ESSAY COMPETITION.—V.

“DESCRIBE IN FULL DETAIL HOW A NURSE CAN SPEND HER HOLIDAY.”

BY MISS MARY C. LOCK.

THE old saying, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,” used to strike one in one’s childhood as both unnecessary and unjust—unnecessary, because no boy of one’s acquaintance was ever in any danger of being made dull by that method; unjust, because it did not also include girls, for whom such a warning was necessary, in days, too, when the only exercise allowed those unfortunate members of Society was a steady genteel walk, two by two, along a dull road; the only other alternative being to remain at home and lie on a flat board: the former was supposed to give health; the latter, elegant deportment; but it is needless to say that both means entirely failed in their desired objects.

Now, however, such things are altered; a girl is treated much the same as a boy, both in her studies and in her recreation. It is no longer considered improper for her to join in all outdoor games—such as cricket, rounders, tennis, fishing, boating and running—any more than to learn mathematics, to master the dead languages, to gain her degree, or thoroughly prepare, mentally and physically, for whatever her vocation in life may be. So the old saying is very little needed now, even for girls.

But it is later in life that the necessity for remembering it becomes important. It is after the school days are over, when the real work of life has begun, with all its strain and anxiety and responsibility—in these days, too, of pressure, of rush, and of close competition—that the need of a holiday is really felt. This is the case in all kinds of work, in all classes of society, and at all ages; but in no profession is it more important than in that of Nursing, where, if it is rightly and conscientiously carried out, anxiety is always present, responsibility is at times overwhelming; where sorrow and suffering are never absent, and death itself is close at hand; in a profession, too, where short holidays are proverbial, no Nurse ever getting longer than three weeks or a month at the most, in the whole year, unless she happens to be invalided.

It therefore becomes an important question, how that short holiday shall be spent to the very best advantage, so that the Nurse shall go back to her work rested and invigorated, ready to go on for another year, getting more experienced, gaining more knowledge, and undertaking greater responsibilities and higher duties than before. But this

she cannot do without health and strength, both mental and physical; and this she cannot maintain for any length of time without “play,” in the words of the old adage, or in more modern language, without a good “holiday.”

Now, a holiday, to be of the greatest service, and to do all that is required of it, should in every way be a contrast to the ordinary life and the daily work of the person who takes it. It should include entire change of scene, and of language also, if possible; it should be free from worry and anxiety; it should be spent mainly in the open air, in the enjoyment of Nature, rather than in studying the beauties of Art; and with congenial and pleasant society. It is true that it is by no means easy to meet all these requirements, especially as the purse of the hard-worked Nurse must not be drained unmercifully during her short holiday. One way that suggests itself as practicable, very pleasant, and fairly economical, is to take a walking tour in some beautiful and healthy part of England or Wales, or, if the purse will allow, in Normandy, Switzerland, or the Tyrol.

In that way, much railway travelling is avoided, which is very fatiguing as well as expensive; the greater part of the time is spent in the open air; Nature is thoroughly enjoyed; sketching can be combined with walking; botanizing indulged in to the heart’s content; and pleasant companionship and intercourse can be had by the way. A knowledge of the country can be gained far better than by any other mode of travelling. The different dialects would be noticed and compared, and the real life of the peasant understood. Luggage may be almost dispensed with, packing unheard of, and a light knapsack will soon be carried without an effort.

It may be urged that walking would be too tiring for Nurses, who are necessarily nearly always on their feet; but it is a very different thing to walk about the Wards of a Hospital, or to stand in a sick room all day, from walking steadily in the open air, with no other thought or care but to admire the scenery, and study a map. And after all, there is no necessity that the walk each day shall be of any prescribed length; it should be according to the powers of the walker. Care, however, should be taken in the choice of congenial companions—congenial, both in literary interests, in love of Nature, and in walking capacity—otherwise, the tour will fall short of perfection. With such society, combined with square-heeled, square-toed boots, and a suitable walking dress made of a single skirt, with flannel undergarments, a light knapsack, containing only necessary articles of change, and small portable sketching materials, I think a Nurse will be found to be as good a walker as most of her sex—

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)