

Professional Review.

THE PART OF WOMAN IN THE CARE OF SICK AND WOUNDED SOLDIERS.

Under this title Dr. Roger Colomb, of Bordeaux, has written a most interesting summary on the above subject, which is of special interest at the present moment.

INTRODUCTION.

At this time, says the writer, when many in France are concerned as to how they may give the most careful assistance to the sick and wounded in time of war, I have thought that it would be of interest to consider similar efforts in other countries and to appraise the practical results obtained.

It is, besides, recognised by modern civilisation that the most devoted and enlightened care should be given to those who devote their lives to the service of their country. "If nothing has been attempted to prevent men from methodical slaughter with the help of scientific usages, they have made progress in the art of alleviating the evils which war brings in its train. If humanity has not intervened to stop the noise of battles, she is lavish to-day in affording assistance to the victims of war."

At first, the author points out, the public concerned themselves mainly in collecting surgical stores, and neglected the question of *personnel*, believing that the good offices of the charitable would be forthcoming in the hour of peril; but little by little it became clear that devotion and private initiative did not suffice. Recent wars have proved the insufficiency of measures taken by the various Governments to give adequate care to the sick and wounded in war. The necessity of having a trained and disciplined staff became acutely felt, and a definite movement to this end produced in nearly all countries the formation of a corps of trained attendants.

The object of the book under consideration is to show the results of the movement initiated by the Geneva Convention, and the scope of the Red Cross Societies. In studying the means employed in the different countries to organise these corps it is necessary, says the author, to emphasise the importance of the part played by woman.

If there is a profession in which woman, and woman only, is supreme, it is in that of nursing the sick. From all time she has been attracted towards benevolence and charity, and there is nothing which appeals to her so much as the precious qualities of devotion, goodness, and solicitude for sufferers. "Who is there," says Dr. Morache, "who, having been seriously ill for a long time, does not feel that the presence of a woman gives pleasure at the bedside of the sick? There, whether as mother, wife, sister, or a stranger ministering to his needs, woman finds her place, and the patient experiences an indescribable pleasure which the most devoted of his friends could never have procured for him. Such is, briefly, the part played by the ideal *garde-malade*, who in England is known by the sweet name of 'nurse.' This placing of the sick person in the same category as the child is psychically more correct than at first sight appears."

It is well to remember that women have special qualifications for this work. The English say, with

reason, one woman nurse is worth more than twenty men, and they have proved it by the results obtained from the excellent organisation of nurses.

Maxime du Camp has also demonstrated the difference between male and female nurses. In the hospitals, or when occupying the provisional beds in ambulances, the wounded man turns to the Sister, or the charitable lady; it is from her that he asks help, it is by her he hopes to be dressed. He endures the male nurse, he begs for the female one; it is the business of the former to help him, the latter is charitable by instinct. The wounded man, fresh from the battlefield, maimed and bleeding, makes no mistake, and naturally invokes her whose touch is light, whose heart is compassionate, and whose speech is gentle. To bandage a fractured arm, to remove the splinter which appears at the edge of a wound, to give the injection of morphia which relieves acute suffering, is not enough. It is necessary to speak to the patient, to revive his fainting spirit, to quiet his illusions, as one would those of a sick child, to revive his drooping hope, to speak of recovery, and to remind him of the rewards of heroism. In a word, it is necessary to cheer him up mentally. In this capacity women are admirable. In fulfilling these duties they display their charm, their delicacy; they recognise that falsehood, or at least a complaisant interpretation of the truth, is often the best assistant of medical science, and they never hesitate to have recourse to it.

[Let us hope the last characteristic is not attributed by the author to English nurses. It cannot justly be imputed to them.]

A patient who is irritated by the male nurse, and excites and injures himself, submissively obeys the softest whisper of a woman. Chrysi wrote to her husband, Marco Botzaris, emphatically, but truly: "Women are the mysterious geniuses who pour a healing balm into the wounded hearts of warriors."

The author then reviews briefly the important part played by women in the care of the sick in all times and countries. In this connection he attributes the first inspiration towards the compassionate care of the sick and wounded to Christianity. "While it is unquestionable that Christianity has done much to give an impetus to this duty, there is well-authenticated evidence that provision for the care of the sick was made before the Christian era. Hospitals built by the Buddhist kings of Ceylon and Cashmere existed centuries before the birth of Christ, and the Hindus had "sick houses" for animals as well as men at a corresponding period.

Christian women in all ages have, however, made the care of the sick their special charge. Thus we learn that in the Roman conquest of Gaul they followed the armies of both combatants, and after a battle cared for the wounded, carried them under shelter, and lavished their care upon them.

At the time of the Crusades, women followed their husbands on their distant expeditions, and, if they were wounded, dressed them with balms and herbs possessing marvellous healing virtues. It is asserted that they possessed draughts so potent that three drops sufficed to make a man mortally wounded as sound as a bird of the air!

The records of the time relate:—"The daughter of King Lycurgus and her damsels took under their care Tydée, who was treacherously wounded. They placed him on a bed, his beautiful body covered with blood.

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