

character of the individual is the real key to the matter. In our Boer war, as in the Russo-Japanese one, the question of untrained nursing was much discussed. Personally, I have always thought that volunteer nurses would be advantageous only when they consented to work under the trained ones. If they are only under the doctor's orders, harmony in work can never exist. The lady who has the right spirit, who cares only to best help the sick or wounded, is the woman who will be thankful to be guided by the experienced nurse, and will be happy in doing the less showy parts of nursing. Those who go for the excitement, or from what we will term the flirting instinct, which draws them to go where they will be in contact with doctors and with men patients—this type of woman would give up after a few days of probationer's work under the Sister's supervision.

But to refuse all volunteer aid in times of emergency would be, I always believed, scarcely a smaller evil than that of encountering a few undesirable elements; and our experience of the last fortnight has absolutely proved the truth of this conviction.

The "Croce Azzurra" decided to accept the help of a few young girls, resident in Naples, known to be serious and accustomed to occupy themselves in philanthropic ways. These have been quite invaluable not only in helping to wash and comb and feed the patients, but in taking over the department of clothing and providing the luxuries which the hospital does not provide. Thus we have obtained everything we wanted from their friends or from the societies formed for the distribution of "corredi" (trousseaux). This left our pupil nurses—few in number—free to devote their time entirely to actual nursing. The food was brought—consommé, strong coffee, sugar, brandy, etc., etc.—to our "office," and the nurse only had to fetch and administer it. Patients needed warm vests or jackets; the articles were packed in our cupboard, and only had to be asked for.

But we have had still further to thank our volunteer nurses. Last spring there was a sort of epidemic of Red Cross nursing schools in Italy. I wrote about the Roman one, but the one in Florence seems to have been carried out on more thorough lines. In Rome the teaching was good only so far as regarded theory; the pupils were too many, and the instructors, in the fine art of bedside nursing were, I think, non-existent, except as far as doctors could instruct by demonstration classes. The consequence is that only those ladies who had experience in some other way are at all fitted for active service now in this national misfortune. The Florentine school has combined practice with theory all through the course of instruction, and seems also to have inculcated the right spirit of discipline, so that the five "Croce Rossa Fiorentina" who came at a few hours' notice to work with the "Croce Azzurra" have been entirely satisfactory. Instead of only caring to help at medicature or operations, they cheerfully obey the order to wash, comb, to rub backs, and to feed. Instead of arriving at 10 o'clock or not coming at all, they arranged to take it in turns

to dine early and come straight to hospital for night duty, a point of great use to us, as Miss Baxter's pupils are needed in the day, and only one "senior" and myself take alternate nights, needing a probationer as assistant.

But to return to the point; it is really the character of the individual "volunteer" nurse which makes her a blessing or a bane, and there should be only one consensus of opinion as to the necessity of dismissing those who have not the right spirit, a thing which will never be done except by the experienced Matron, never by the medical authorities.

Our patients are progressing with a very few exceptions, towards recovery; three only have we lost, each of them old. The exposure to rain and wind after release from the débris of the houses which buried them, joined to infection of wounds which were dressed late (after three or four days), seems to have been the cause of their death. The stories we hear are most wonderful—how some escaped and others have disappeared. We have several husbands and wives with and without their children, but the large majority now do not know if anyone belonging to them still is in existence. In falling from the third or second floors people in the same room even got separated, or else one of them rushed to a door or window which protected them from the falling stones and litter, whilst the other ran through another door, and plunged, in the darkness, through fallen floors. One daughter saw her mother thus disappear (there seems to have been a ray of light), and was with difficulty held back by her brother from jumping after her. Happily they found a stair railing holding firmly and scrambled down into the street by it; then they obtained help, and the mother was extricated without any fracture, but with contusions and "commozione generale," which has resulted in several complications. Her head is perfectly clear, however, and she expresses constantly her sincere gratitude to the Madonna Immacolata for having saved her by a miracle and all her family. Perhaps the saddest case we have is that of a most lovely little girl of five, whom the surgeons are fighting to save from the still spreading gangrene in her tiny leg, but, as it is apparently eating away the urethra, one does not even dare to wish that she should live. She has lost all her family except her aunt, whom she calls mother, and who simply adores her. They sleep in the same bed, tight in each other's arms, and the poor woman helped to hold the little creature during the dressings, until she nearly fainted yesterday from misery, when she was persuaded to sit by the table without looking on the terrible cavities. To-day, the chief expressed hopes of yet saving her, and ordered iodine instead of iodoform.

M. A. T.

(To be continued.)

It is reported from Calabria that four English nuns of the Little Company of Mary, known as the Blue Sisters, are arousing the admiration of the authorities by the way in which they nurse the wounded, help the needy, and look after the children.

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