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## Editorial.

### THE ADVANCE GUARD.

As mankind gains the mastery of those territories which have been regarded as unfit for human habitation, by reason of their unhealthiness, the world recognises the debt of civilisation to those pioneers who, by their self-sacrifice—a sacrifice often involving even life itself—make the world more habitable for succeeding generations. It is not so universally recognised that amongst these pioneers the trained nurse is now constantly to be found, quietly, effectively, and as part of the day's work, taking the risks, enduring the discomforts, and sharing the hardships inseparable from life in an unhealthy and undeveloped country, with a cheery optimism which puts heart into all with whom she comes in contact.

One of the latest territories to be reclaimed, as all the world knows, is the Isthmus of Panama, formerly a mosquito-ridden swamp and a white man's grave. Now, according to Mr. W. H. Magee, who describes, in the *Daily Telegraph*, a recent visit after an absence of thirty-four years, "a veritable inferno has been changed into a paradise, where white men can work and live with their wives and families in peace and comfort. Many look forward with regret to the time when the work shall be finished and they are forced to seek new homes, new occupations, and perchance less kindly climates."

But this change has not been accomplished without sacrifice; and what has greatly impressed the writer of the article—though they, no doubt, would be the first to repudiate it—is the heroism of the many young doctors and nurses who so nobly risked their lives in the first taking hold of the country by the Americans. "In the face

of the enormous death-rate in the French camps, where hundreds and even thousands were swept off by small-pox, chagree fever, yellow fever, and pernicious anæmia, they came," he writes, "and the few devoted survivors are here still. Those who have taken vacations to northern lands come back looking well, but those who have remained constant show the pallor and wasting-away due to a system charged with malaria." He describes the work of one young nurse, newly graduated, whose first task was the charge of a ward of forty negro small-pox patients, with only an adjoining tent to sleep in. "Many such instances could be repeated, and it is only to the untiring constancy of these ministering angels that numberless poor fellows have lived to tell the tale. The respect and love that is shown for the whole medical forces—doctors, nurses, and orderlies—are witnesses of the good work they have done and are doing."

We acclaim the courage and endorse the honour bestowed upon those medical men and nurses who have shown conspicuous gallantry and devotion in the care of the sick and wounded when serving with armies in the field, or during naval warfare; but the civilian Services also have their heroes and heroines, and those who work on cheerfully and maintain the courage of those around them, when their health is undermined by malaria, and inertia, depression, and constant weariness follow in its train, display courage of an unusually high order. None but those who have worked in a mosquito-ridden country know how hard it is always to keep a brave front, to discharge the monotonous round of daily duties efficiently. But it is qualities such as these which gain for the nurse on pioneer duty the esteem and respect of those amongst whom she works.

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