

## FRENCH FLAG NURSING CORPS.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Hon. Treasurer of the French Flag Nursing Corps, is now in France on business connected with the work of the French Flag Nursing Corps.

Mrs. Alfred Paine, Hon. Secretary of the Bedford Centre of the St. John Ambulance Association, has sent to 431, Oxford Street, London, W., for patients in hospitals where members of the French Flag Nursing Corps are working, a further parcel, containing 100 pairs of slippers, done up in bundles of 20; 50 bed bags, done up in bundles of 10 each; and packets of fly muslins, also with twenty in each packet. This generous consignment will be warmly appreciated.

### "NURSES ANGLAISES."

Members and friends of the French Flag Nursing Corps will read with pleasure the independent testimony to the value of their work which appeared in *The Times* of Monday, from a Paris correspondent of that paper, though unfortunately the name of the Corps to which the nurses belong was omitted.

"The French people speak well of the '*Nurses Anglaises*,' and in the hospitals behind the line where British or American nursing prevails the French soldiers consider themselves lucky. The comfort and cleanliness please them, and they grow accustomed to the hospital etiquette. But there are some British nurses of whom we have heard very little, although that little is of great account. They are the nurses on the front, the French front, who are working in French military hospitals under direct orders of the French military authorities and who are paid by the French Government.

"Very quietly an Englishwoman offered to organise a staff of British nurses for this purpose, and as quietly the French military authorities accepted, so that since last December 200 British nurses have been working hard all along the French line. They have been in bombardments, they have fought with disease, they have tactfully made their methods of nursing acceptable to the French doctors, they have shown the metal of which they are made by their resourcefulness in very difficult circumstances, and they have learned not only a good deal of French, but a great deal about the French character, and their knowledge has brought them much wisdom.

### HARDSHIPS AND DANGERS.

"They are paid at the rate of £40 a year, and they pay all incidental expenses themselves. If they fall ill they are sent home, and that is all that is done for them. They rank as officers, and have their own mess and whatever privileges for personal comfort may be going. But comforts are rare in the danger zone of the armies, and the position of the British nurses has often been perilous. They work in bands of five or six, and

they have orderlies to help them and a certain number of French professional nurses. Their first heavy work was among the typhoid patients, and their value in such work may easily be imagined, particularly when we learn the dearth of modern conveniences in the hastily installed hospitals where they were called upon to do their best. One nurse writes:—'This is certainly a weird place at night. One hundred and fifty patients in this block, and only three orderlies and one of ourselves on duty. Several men are delirious, and it is a constant chasing from one ward to the other to stuff them into their little beds.'

"Later on she describes one of the privileges the nurses enjoy by their rank as officers:—'The night nurse sits in the *médecin chef's* room, a rather ghastly room with two windows and no blinds, and people peering in all the time to see the 'freak' who sits at the desk in a nursing cap, a sports coat, and an awful pair of slippers, but so comfortable. I should certainly disgrace any hospital by my garb, but, as all windows are open and the floor is of stone, it is very cold about 2 a.m., especially to the feet.'

"From another part of the line we get French tributes to British nurses, and hear of their splendid courage under bombardment. They carried their patients into the comparative safety of cellars, they stayed by those whom it was impossible to move, and in all cases they showed a calmness and cheerfulness which proved of immeasurable help to those in authority. A nurse who had been nursing typhoid for many weeks, and who was tired beyond description, tells how, one day, after some difficulty with an orderly who did not understand her very broken French, she sat down on the foot of a soldier's bed and said with a sob, 'I must go home. I can't stand it any longer. It's too awful.' At which the soldier just put his head down on his pillow and cried like a child. 'So of course,' said the nurse, 'I couldn't go. If they find us as useful as that, no sacrifice is too great to make for them.'

### DIFFICULTIES OF LANGUAGE.

"The difficulties of the language have caused many nurses to have experiences which are both comical and serious, as they make for misunderstanding. To translate from English into French is extraordinarily dangerous. '*Je veux*,' says a nurse to an orderly, and he bristles with obstinacy; whereas if she only knew enough to use the verb in another tense the orderly would be as obedient as she could wish. The food is yet another drawback, for there is no human being alive who appears to attach more importance to an "English breakfast" than the hospital nurse.

"Great praise is given to the Scotch, the Canadian, and the provincial trained English nurses for their power to adapt themselves to anything and everything, and it seems as if resourcefulness were of greater value on the French front than perfect technique. It is, indeed, rather hopeless to be technically perfect in your

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)