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EDITORIAL.

NERVE STRAIN.

We suppose there are few people in the United Kingdom who do not wish to be of use at the present time, there are many who are disturbed because indifferent health, or other conditions, prevent their undertaking regular work as munition workers, on the land, in canteens, or in the multitude of other ways that women are serving their country.

One way in which practical service may be rendered has recently forced itself on our attention. Hundreds of soldiers return from the front on a few weeks' leave, with nerves jangled by the terrible experience of exposure in the firing line to imminent death, to the roar of the guns, and the strain of bombardment. One soldier recently wrote home of a bombardment:—

"I want to forget those days and nights; my hands often bloody, and I saw many a man killed, or watched him die. It seems now but a nightmare. Several comrades of mine are in 'blighty' with shell shock and shattered nerves; war lovers should see some of these cases when they are here, and then you see some of the horror, the awful madness, and torture of war's worst. . . .

"Sir John French in his long report remarked that in his visits to most of the field hospitals, &c., the optimism of the wounded was remarkable. It is not. What is remarkably, wonderfully impressive is the self-control of many men under a bombardment—the grand self-restraint, the heroic self-pride that keeps you (some of you) calm and steady in the won't-give-in spirit, the won't appear frightened resolve—that's what saves the line. It's awfully testing to be right up to death time after time. The concussion is enough to kill you if you are close enough. H.E. is awful stuff

when it explodes; one's inside gets an awful lift. After a series of such strains one jumps at the crack of a rifle, and the ping, pong of a bullet, and bombs are then as loud as shells. Yes, 'tis the afterwards, too. You don't look much different, I suppose, but if you have a few months of such liveliness—and we have had a fair all round experience—one's nerves are far different from what they were in Angleterre. One good thing is, I have (I now know) quite strong nerves, and was able to do, as much as was possible, my duty."

Many of the men who are comporting themselves as heroes in France and elsewhere have not been trained to soldiery as their work in life. They are those who to serve their country in its need have laid down the pen in the office, have left the farm, and the quiet countryside, and on the other side of the Channel have descended into hell. We know them well. We taught them perhaps in our Sunday School classes, or met them daily in the ordinary business of life.

When these lads return home on leave, for the rest they have so well earned, we have our opportunity. Let us help them to forget. During the brief weeks they spend at home let us so far as is in our power surround them with an atmosphere of rest, let us make their lives easy and pleasant where we can—not with the rest which enervates, but that which will comfort and fortify them, before they return to face not the unknown, but a far harder thing—war, as they now know it, with all its horrors.

There are many men uncomplaining, reserved, who are not hospital cases, who yet need all the warmth with which friendship can surround them, and the strength which faith can give them, to rest their souls and fortify their nerves. Let us be watchful lest we miss any opportunity of giving them such help as we may.

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