

workers work long hours, and how generous are the public, rich and poor, and the publishers and booksellers with gifts.

We have a Rudyard Kipling scrap-book department, invaluable for the very sick—brought to our notice by Mr. Kipling himself.

We have also quite lately started a games department, urgently asked for everywhere and sorely needed where cases are long and hours hot and weary.

But our hearts have grown anxious again lately, our supplies of literature decreasing. The 7d. size of books is sent more rarely and is the one most needed. Paper is dearer. The cheaper books are less printed owing to the cost of material.

Practice has much improved our choice of literature, and experience has led us into a strange land of books which was unknown before to most of us. Originally I went to the Tube booksellers and said, "Give me the papers bought by a soldier on a Saturday afternoon, and the books." He grinned. "You had better take *London Opinion*, *London Mail*, *The Passing Show*, and *John Bull*, but if you can't take the lot then buy 10 to 1 of *London Opinion* and *London Mail*." And then books! Take Nat Gould into the wards, and every hand is stretched out, every face brightens. Tom Gallon, Gervice, Kipling, Harold Begbie, Guy Thorne, Conan Doyle, &c., and over and over again we are asked to send Miss Dell's books. Suddenly we realised that Nick Carter was a favourite. Who is he? I inquired; and found that Nick Carter's detective stories are a weekly joy to masses of people, that the "John Bull Series of Tales" are eagerly waited for. We have bought 15,000 and I cherish them as a miser does gold.

But a spirit of change is to be seen, brought in by the higher education of the New Army. Long cases grow weary of novels. In every foreign parcel goes that wonderful sixpenny edition of the 100 best poems, travel, biographies, a book of maps, two or three volumes of Everyman's precious books, 6s. novels, Dickens, a book on social problems; food for thought, not only for a sedative. Our visitors in the English centres that we have organised send us many special requests for books on trades, professions, &c.; some even sketch a course of reading. From Carey's translation of Dante to the Encyclopædia Britannica in 40 volumes no request has been unsatisfied so far, but times are hard. Books are not bought so freely, owing to the larger calls on our incomes. And yet the sick and wounded stretch out their hands for Nat Gould, and lose the sense of time playing cards, in larger and larger quantities.

Ladies, please let our work be known as widely as you can. Gifts come to us from America, California, Canada, South America, South Africa, Canary Islands, Japan, India, Honolulu, Siam, Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand. They come from the uttermost ends of the earth, to be scattered once more over the wide ocean of suffering we try so feebly to help.

MORE HOME TRUTHS.

The current issue of *The Red Cross* contains an open letter to V.A.D. officers and members over the signature Katharine Furse, Commandant-in-Chief, Women's V.A.D., which begins by stating that it "is not going to be a nice letter, not tactful, nor conciliatory, nor complimentary—not even literary or grammatical. It has nothing in its favour except a frank, kindly meant wish to see the right spirit in our V.A.D. officers and members." Mrs. Furse continues:—

"Will all those with good consciences please forgive me if I address this letter to the few who seem to think that the real reason of this horrible war is to provide *wounded* to be *nursed* by V.A.D.'s."

After saying that probably "not a single member's papers have been sent in without that member thinking that she is anxious to help her country in our great struggle," Mrs. Furse states, "In spite of this, there is left on my mind a certain slight impression of selfishness. This is mainly due to the fact that the very few selfish members are the ones who show most. . . . The few I refer to seem to think that all the conditions of service must be arranged to suit their particular conditions and wishes.

"Another thing which makes us desperate is the fact that our selected members behave somewhat like the hedgehog croquet balls of 'Alice in Wonderland.' While we have slack times and no requisitions coming in, the V.A.D. member safely selected 'awaiting appointment' wanders away to agriculture, or munitions, or canteen work, without ever letting us know.

"For once we do not blame the member. Here her officers are to blame. Certain commandants seem to lose sight of their tremendous responsibilities, and fail to realize the huge possibilities if only they will learn the art of being officers. . . .

"Many of you are probably dependent on your work for your living. Go on with it, letting us know what notice you require, and we will try to warn you in time if you are wanted, though it is not always possible to do this.

"So cheer up and be ready. Give generously. Don't only want 'to nurse.' Be willing to cook, if necessary. There might be hundreds of trained nurses ready, and not a cook available. And when you do at last get an appointment as a nursing member, be ready to scrub wards, if needful; better this than that they should be dirty through lack of willing helpers. . . .

"We get complaints from members that they have no dressings to do, but are put to scrub lockers, and this is not what they volunteered for. My goodness—as though three years' training counted for nothing and the V.A.D. member with a few weeks' experience were superior to a second year 'pro.' in a general hospital! We are out to help—to do the work which needs doing, not the work we enjoy necessarily.

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