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EDITORIAL.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RED CROSS.

There are many members of the nursing profession to whom the work of the International Red Cross Society as conceived and interpreted by Henri Dunant has been an inspiration and an incentive to endeavour, and who regard the red cross adopted by the Geneva Convention as the pledge of an international agreement—adhered to by practically all the civilized States for the purpose of ameliorating the condition of the sick and wounded in war—as a sacred symbol.

It has therefore been a grief to nurses to see that symbol cheapened, travestied, vulgarised, for the Red Cross is a banner under which they fain would fight, yet to-day it too often represents to them honourable work stripped of its dignity, thoroughness replaced by superficiality, steadfastness by triviality.

It was therefore a happy inspiration when Mr. James Kerr-Lawson conceived the idea of presenting us with a picture of the Red Cross; the idea has been finely carried out, and he has restored to us this Cross as the symbol of dignity, of courage, of devotion, of compassion, of self oblation.

This autolithograph with the words "What I gave I have," appended by the artist, now exhibited in shop windows at the West End, causes many a passer-by to pause. It is an arresting picture of a nurse tending a wounded soldier. It matters little that her method of applying the bandage in her hand is open to professional criticism; the artist has caught and portrayed for us the spirit of devotion to an ideal. Equally with the wounded man who lies on the bed, having given his health, his strength, his all to his country, the nurse who is tending him is giving her best,

risking her life and health and spending laborious days in order that she may translate her ideals into action, and, in the pursuance of her duty, may bring healing, help and comfort to those who pass her way. The serious nobility of her face as she bends over the pain-stricken man is far removed from any hint of cheap emotionalism, or the notoriety of the foot-lights. Her whole heart is in her work, her whole desire the welfare of her patient, and we can well imagine that the sick and wounded coming under her care find in her solace in pain, and strength in weakness. The Army cap which she wears, gleaming white against the background of the cross of a warm shade of umber, symbolizes her consecration to the sick and suffering, her remoteness from sensationalism and excitement. She has seen the tragedy of war, its cruelty, its sordidness; she has seen, too, men fighting for an ideal ennobled by their sacrifice, broken yet triumphant; and serene she moves amongst them content if she may but bring some ease and comfort to those under her care, may help to heal the gaping wounds which greed, ambition, and inordinate love of power have cleaved on the fair face of the earth. It is no small part that trained nurses are called upon to play in this war. We may estimate it in some small degree if we for a moment try to imagine what conditions would have been without them.

The picture with its message of healing, of hope, of tenderness, of strength, of inspiration to duty—the duty of service and sacrifice—must prove—has proved—a comfort to many who in these dark days are called upon to make the supreme sacrifice of all that they hold most dear. It is published by the Medici Society, Ltd., 7, Grafton St., Bond St., W., at 5s. a copy, in aid of the funds of the British Red Cross Society.

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