

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"A SURGEON IN BELGIUM."*

Many books have been written of personal experiences of the present war, and we suppose there are still many that will yet be written, but that under our notice this week is something beyond the recital of surface experience. The distinguished surgeon who is the author, not only himself grasps, in a manner that is perhaps an attribute of his profession, the powerful appeal that suffering in all its aspects of body, soul and spirit makes to humanity but is able to impart it. There is no undue emotionalism, and, above all, there is no flippancy. The book is evidently written by a man who felt to the full the gravity of his responsibility. "We all," he says, "at some time, have longed to go to the Front, but it is only the few who have the opportunity. When we return we bring various mementoes, and our friends are full of envy, and some of us return with scenes burnt into our brain of horror or pathos, such as no human pen can describe. Yet it is only when we sit down in the quiet of our homes that we realise the deeper meaning of all that we have seen, that we grasp the secret of the strange aspects of humanity which have passed before us.

"On the whole," he says, "I am very glad I am a mere surgeon. Human anatomy is bad enough, but after the last three months, the mere thought of an analysis of human motives fills me with terror." He goes on: "If it were only possible to bring home to the people of Britain one-hundredth part of what we saw with our own eyes, stringent laws would have to be passed to stop men and women from enlisting.

The night bombardment of Antwerp, on October 7th,—the shriek and the dull thud of the shells, the falling bricks close at hand, called for immediate steps for the removal of the hospital patients to a place of safety. "We were fortunate in having a basement large enough to accommodate all our patients. I shall never forget the scene on the great staircase, crowded with a long train of nurses, doctors and dressers, carrying the wounded as gently and as carefully as if they were in a London hospital. I saw no sign of fear in any face, only smiles and laughter. It made one proud to have English blood running in one's veins. Within an hour they were all in places of safety, and the night nurses were taking charge as if nothing had happened."

Their flight from the city later is described, and the evacuation of the hospital was a triumph of resource.

"How the patients were got ready, carried out and into the buses in the time is beyond my comprehension. But somehow it was managed. I took a last look round and drove out the last nurse who was trying to rescue some last 'hospital comfort' for a patient, and in the end I was myself driven out by two indignant dressers, who

* By H. S. Souttar, F.R.C.S. Edwin Arnold. London.

caught me trying to save the instrument steriliser. At the door of each bus was seated a nurse like a conductor to give what little attention was possible to her patients."

The night journey was full of incident, tragedy and pathos. The rows of fugitives on the road side were a piteous spectacle. "There was one row of little children which will ever live in my memory, tiny mites sitting together on the road side. We only saw them for a moment as our light fell upon them, and they disappeared in the darkness. Germany will have to pay for Louvain and Termonde. It is not with man she will have to settle for that row of little children."

The next objective for the Belgian Field Hospital was Furnes, and very interesting is the account of its equipment and organisation. A very instructive sketch is also given of the history and objects of interest of this old town.

There are a dozen and a half of illustrations in this volume all of supreme interest.

This is a book that none should miss, for there is that in its pages which must uplift and inspire.

H. H.

THE MOUNT OF DECISION.

Lord, take us up to the heights and show us the glory,
Show us a vision of Empire! Tell us its story!
Tell it plain, for our eyes and our ears have grown holden;
We have forgotten that anything other than money is golden.
Grubbing away in the valley, somehow has darkened our eyes,
Watching the ground and the crops—we've forgotten the skies.
But Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst take us to-day
To the Mount of Decision
And show us the land that we live in
With glorified Vision.

COMING EVENTS.

January 21st.—Central Midwives Board. Penal Cases. Board Room, Caxton House, S.W. 11 a.m.

January 21st.—The Matrons' Council: Annual Meeting, 431, Oxford Street, London, W. 3.45 p.m. Tea.

Meeting National Council of Trained Nurses, 5 p.m. To receive a report from Delegates to International Council Meeting and Nurses' Convention, San Francisco.

January 22nd.—League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses. The Winter General Meeting, Clinical Theatre, Medical School, 3 p.m. Social Gathering, Nurses' Sitting Room, Nurses' Home.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

Flowers are lovely! Love is flower-like,
Friendship is a sheltering tree.

—Coleridge.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)