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EDITORIAL.

CARRYING ON.

We are realizing day by day that the munition workers at home are rendering as valuable service to the State as the Army in the Field, for even its superb gallantry is powerless without the ammunition which the workers at home are straining every nerve to supply.

A somewhat analogous position is to be found in the nursing profession. We are proud of our colleagues on active service, who are giving their best to the sick and wounded, who so sorely need their ministrations, but no less patriotic are those who stay at home, and quietly shoulder a double burden to set other nurses free. Their service to our sick soldiers is vicarious, for them there is no change of scene, no added interest of novel and uncommon cases, no personal work for the soldiers whom all desire to serve, but just the acceptance of harder work in a life which seemed already full; an increased number of visits to pay because the staff of the District Nurses' Home is depleted, a longer tramp to take on hot pavements in the airless streets with the sun blazing down, and the increased effort to inculcate the need of special hygienic precautions, and the strict observance of sanitary laws—instructions which must be given over and over again, line upon line, precept upon precept, lest plague and pestilence be added to the horrors of war.

In the schools, at treatment centres, and in the homes of the children the school nurse is also working on the same lines. Well she knows how easily infectious diseases are spread, and how necessary special precautions are at the present time; and in season and out of season, by precept and practice, she proclaims the need for constant care. It is paradoxical that

the more successful her work the less the public hears of it. Everyone knows when an epidemic is spreading through a town or village, taking its toll in the lives of the innocents, but few realize when the health of the community is good, when epidemics are averted, and the infant mortality rate brought down, that this is largely due to the vigilance of the Medical Officer of Health aided by the Trained Nurse, who pursues her calling, for the most part alone but with a maintained enthusiasm and professional skill, often amid dull surroundings — which compel admiration, and which are services as valuable in their degree to the nation as those which are more conspicuous, and performed under the observation of the world.

The same may be said of work in civil hospital and infirmary wards. It is inevitable that it should be more difficult, conditions more arduous, because of the depletions of the staffs for service in naval and military hospitals at home and abroad; and the nurse who "does her bit" cheerfully, conscientiously, and thoroughly, is an indispensable worker whose service is of the highest quality.

After all it takes some strength of character to resist the appeal which clamours for a hearing to offer for active service. Some nurses must stay at home to do work which is often uninteresting and dull, and those who so decide are frequently of sterling worth.

When at last the war is over, and it is possible to appraise the value of services willingly rendered it will be found that a debt of gratitude is due not only to the nurses who went overseas, but to those who materially helped the prevention and cure of disease by carrying on the routine work at home in circumstances of exceptional difficulty.

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