

more so in their weakness than in the strength in which they went out. The only time the smile leaves their faces is when they inquire anxiously whether their comrades are holding the ground and whether the regiment is upholding its proud traditions. It is just the same as their wounds are dressed. No complaints, no peevishness, no regrets. It strikes the onlooker as something more than human, and he feels that there is something almost divine in a race that can produce such men as these from factory and office, field and market-place.

"The R.A.M.C. is just as wonderful. All the livelong day these splendid men work on without rest or food, they have a smile and a cheery word for each, and they are as gentle, in spite of the rush, as the gentlest woman."

THE SHORTAGE OF V.A.D.'S.

Mrs. Milnes Gaskell, Lady of Justice, and Vice-President under the Military for District 10, of Thornes House, Wakefield, is appealing in the press to young women to offer for nursing work in the large military hospitals. They will receive a salary of £20 and £4 for uniform, but must be willing after a month's probation, to sign on for six months if they hold certificates from the St. John Ambulance Association or British Red Cross Society, or for one year if they hold no certificates. Members of St. John Ambulance or Red Cross must be willing to go where required, and to submit to the rules of the hospital, and to consider themselves absolutely under the control of the Matron where they are sent, and they will have to take the duties of ordinary probationers.

A V.A.D., in a letter addressed to a contemporary, referring to the appeal of the Joint War Committee for more V.A.D. volunteers for service in military hospitals, as the demand for them exceeds the supply, states that if the Joint War Committee would "procure fairer conditions for V.A.D.'s serving in military hospitals they would have no difficulty in getting the right kind of women to volunteer. As it is now, when a V.A.D. enters a hospital she has to fight the antagonism of the trained staff, from the matron downwards, alone, it being perfectly futile to appeal to Devonshire House for support of any kind. One of the conditions of signing on for six months is that the V.A.D. may be discharged at a moment's notice without any reason being given. Obviously this makes it perfectly easy for a ward sister, jealous perhaps of the success in nursing of the V.A.D., to bring her career to an abrupt termination. Devonshire House has refused to re-appoint many a capable and experienced V.A.D. because of an indifferent report of a vindictive matron. For this reason there are V.A.D.'s of nearly two years' actual nursing experience doing nothing. And yet they are calling for more women." She concludes by saying, "If Devonshire House will not or cannot procure us fairer conditions, they should not be surprised if volunteers are not forthcoming."

"WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN."

The Outlook of August 9th publishes some interesting "War Letters of an American Woman."

The writer says in part:—

No wounded from the Verdun front have been brought here; they all go to the Midi. The only echoes of the combat we have had were the coming of one hundred-and-fifty men from one of the hospitals near the front, evacuated to make room for the more seriously wounded, and little groups of men marching away. These latter are laden down with their accoutrements, their blankets in a long roll under one arm and over the other shoulder; and the tramp they make is heavier than that of soldiers out for only a day's march. You learn to know it, and you run to the window to see them pass. The other day some went by, and by their sides ran many peasant women in their white *coiffes*—the mothers and sisters and sweethearts. One old woman held her son's hand, as far as my eye could follow, and though she was just in front of the officer commanding (he was by the side of the column), he did not in any way interfere. It was very pathetic. But the men's faces were all cheerful, and once in a while one would give a farewell nod or salute to some face in a window. Their courage seems to me the greater because they know now to what they are going; while those who went in the beginning were borne up by the unknown. But that they go like whipped animals, as the Germans would have you believe, is too absurd to refute!

Every day I admire the straightforward and quiet way in which the news is given to the public. If a position is lost, it is frankly admitted; if it is gained, that, too, is stated, but without exaggeration. One feels that one can rely implicitly on the bulletins from the front, and I have no doubt that the general calmness that one notices at this very moment [regarding Verdun] is due to the confidence those bulletins have inspired.

Brittany, March 28th, 1916.

You will realize how busy I have been in my new work of delivering bales, re-addressing many which must go by local railways to tiny towns, and hunting for others that have gone astray. I usually deliver the bales for the small towns in person, since to some there are no railways whatsoever, and to others the communication is very uncertain. The bales for the hospitals in large towns and cities are now delivered by the military authorities themselves, as it is becoming more and more difficult to find gasoline for private use, whereas the military authorities always have it. Their delivering the bales does not prevent my going afterwards to the various hospitals to see whether the *médecin-chefs* have received what they should. You can imagine that I am received with open arms! Such pleasure, such almost embarrassing gratitude!

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)