

A SERIOUS BREACH OF DUTY.

Should V.A.D.'s sleep on night duty? That is a question we have been invited to answer by more than one distracted Night Superintendent. This week we received the following letter from a Red Cross Hospital: "I should be so glad if you will sometime write on the moral obligation of keeping awake on night duty. I find it quite the thing for the quiet hours to be slept through, with no attempt to keep awake. When I remonstrate, the reply is, 'We are not trained nurses but V.A.D.'s, and so are not able to keep awake, as we are not strong and not used to it.' These V.A.D.'s do not seem to realise that a trained nurse has to make *an effort* to keep awake night after night, as it is a matter of honour that they should do so. I do not wish to be hard on V.A.D.'s—many of them are very superior to bad and lazy 'Pros' I have known. We enjoy working together for the common good, but a word from Headquarters to these volunteers when they are deputed to service, that to sleep on duty is a very serious breach of duty and of honour, might do good."

We are officially informed that the report of the Departmental Committee relative to the supply of nurses for the Army (which should have been appointed two years ago) is not yet available by the public. Nurses are anxious to know if untrained Commandants are to go. No peace until they do. Unfortunately independent nursing opinion was not represented on the Committee, nearly all the Matrons on it being officially associated with the present system at the War Office, and therefore more or less responsible for its present defects in organisation in so far as auxiliary military hospitals are concerned.

NURSING AT LA PANNE.

One of the most interesting of war hospitals is the Hôpital de l'Océan at La Panne, planted on the little strip of Belgian soil undesecrated by the foot of the invader, and only six miles from the German lines. Not only a hospital, but a university, with a cosmopolitan staff—the nursing staff including English, Scotch and Irish, French, Belgian, and Canadian nurses—the work under the control of Dr. Depage, with Miss Violetta Thurstan as Matron, is of a very fine order.

As an instance of the scientific character of the work, it may be mentioned that in the case of wounds a "microbe chart" is kept, in addition to those with which every nurse is familiar. If the chart does not show a regular diminution, the reason why is thoroughly investigated. The result is that the majority of wounds speedily become microbe free, they are then sutured and treated as aseptic wounds.

The nurses have their own club, maintained by a small subscription from each member. Formerly an ordinary wayside inn, it stands close to the Plage, over which sweep the health-giving winds from the North Sea. It is a centre of social

life, and its activities include gymnasium classes, an Arts Club, and concerts. There is also a very useful Mortuary Society, to which forty people—doctors, nurses and orderlies—belong. Each pays 50 centimes a month, and the little chapel has been adequately equipped and is reverently cared for by the members.

It is difficult to realise that all this well-organised professional and social life goes on within range of the German guns. The protection of the hospital is that the enemy has also a hospital some six miles from the frontier, and they have received notice that any attack on the Hôpital de l'Océan would at once mean reprisals. So, though shells whistle overhead, the hospital has been safe, and with its *avant poste* close to the frontier, carries on its invaluable work.

Just now some very interesting people seem to be gravitating to La Panne. Last week Lady Hermione Blackwood, and Miss C. C. du Sautoy (formerly Inspector, and County Superintendent of Queen's Nurses respectively) left England for the Hôpital de l'Océan, and on Monday last Miss E. M. Cancellor, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the National Union of Trained Nurses, also left for the same destination. Miss Cancellor's special work will be the care of the sick nurses.

Mrs. Maxwell St. John, R.R.C., who has returned from Macedonia where she has been Matron of the Serbian Relief Fund Hospital will be greatly missed there. She resigns this delightful post with much regret, as her relations with the Committee in London have been of the happiest nature, and the unit she has worked with is one of the keenest possible. She has an able successor in Miss Steuart Donaldson whom we last week notified has been appointed to the position.

Mme. A. Louise van Bevervoorde van Rappard has passed through London with a unit of Dutch nurses for service in France, others hope to follow. They will no doubt receive a courteous welcome. Regulations are now very strict for foreign nurses working in France, and quite rightly so. They are not permitted to write any details of their surroundings.

JOINT WAR COMMITTEE.

ABROAD.

The following Sisters have been deputed to duty abroad:—

Scottish Women's Hospital, Salonika.—Miss I. Macdonald, Miss M. G. Holden.

Madame O'Gorman's Barge, Bergues.—Miss C. Farrell.

Serbian Relief Fund, Salonika.—Miss M. S. Donaldson (Matron), Miss S. Richards.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)