

gardens, the prim brightness of herbaceous borders, and all things dainty and most utterly removed from the sordid business of trench warfare. It was the source of most intimate, personal delight . . . it was, paradoxically enough, at once a consolation and an irritant; a narcotic bringing sweet dreams of the unattainable, and a tonic stimulating inconvenient faculties into a new and insistent life."

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE WARDS IN WAR TIME."*

The merit of this book lies partly in its obviously sincere attempt faithfully to set down the facts which came under the experience of this Red Cross Pro, while serving in a home hospital. She is evidently a person of considerable skill in divining human weaknesses and to this purpose she directs her chief attention. We are bound to say the nursing staff does not strike us as being composed of the type of women we should select for the purpose, and we feel sure that the authoritative mode of address which these ladies use to the men would be neither popular nor desirable. But, no doubt, they had another side to their characters which is not depicted. We can hardly credit the following incident. There was a missing shirt which had been fruitlessly sought for:—

"All this time a frail invalid, tucked away in a corner bed, had remained unnoticed. His pallor and unobtrusiveness gave him a look as if he were not long for this world.

"Have you changed your shirt, Patsy?" asked the Staff Nurse.

"A faint murmur accompanied by a feeble fumbling, and a white corner was drawn from beneath his pillow.

"I have been asleep," he began, slowly; but he said no more, for with a bound the Staff Nurse was beside him shaking his frail body vigorously in her excitement."

Is this incident indicative of a hostile attitude to the trained nurse or is it told designedly? We have heard sometimes of the harsh treatment of the wounded by nurses, but we prefer to think that such instances are rare.

The description of the Sister bustling into the ward "like the Lord High Executioner" rather favours the former conclusion.

The most amusing portion of the book is to be found in Part 2, which deals with the V.A.D. Hospital. For three long years before the war the detachment had toiled at the game of make-believe, and now their hopes were about to be realised. They had laboured over text-books and spent hours over dummy figures. They had measured imaginary medicines for imaginary patients, and every one had felt a thrill of pride when a real boy scout had been persuaded as his good deed for the day to have his face washed.

* By A Red Cross Pro. London: Blackwood & Son. 5s. net.

Now the first patients were on the point of arriving and all was excitement.

"See if the stretchers are ready," ordered the commandant, "and prepare to form a squad." But before there was time for further orders the startling truth began to dawn upon the bystanders, as the men began to jump lightly over the tail-board of the ambulance.

"They told us it was a grand Convalescent we were coming to," said the Sergeant-Major, genially.

"This is a hospital, not a convalescent home," said the Commandant icily." There were but nine patients and the staff totalled seventeen.

Night duty was the time apparently for all the noisiest work to be performed. "After a round of the wards to see if anyone was asleep, the nurses set to work to polish all the brass taps and door handles they could find. Such was the enthusiasm of the V.A.D.'s at this period that the brasses were cleaned no less than three times a day. Miss Groggs, a little later, made a round of the wards, resolutely flashing her electric torch into the faces of her patients, to make quite sure no one was awake. So effective were her methods that at the end of her round usually no one was asleep."

They then proceeded to turn out the sitting-room.

"They are at it again," said the Sergeant-Major, roused from a pleasant slumber by a resounding crash.

"And soon we shall have the searchlight in our faces again. What price life in the trenches, boys?" said Jones.

"Men, there must be silence in the wards," said Miss Groggs, putting a fraction of her head round the door.

"For an hour silence reigned and the patients endeavoured to secure some much-needed sleep, but the indefatigable nurses re-appeared, armed with thermometers and proceeded to take temperatures.

"When they had once more disappeared into the kitchen Kilbride remarked: 'I suppose she has gone to write in the report, 'Patients slept well.'"

H. H.

CONQUISTADORES.

Death, in our Day, by putting off his cloak
Of lonely terror, wherewith he went decked,
Has lost his old inscrutable aspect,
And treads familiar among fearless folk
Who greet him with a smile. His thunder-stroke
Is met by flashing eyes and limbs erect:
They only groan who suffer Time's neglect,
And bow, less willing, to Life's wearier yoke.
These proud adventurers beyond the bourne
Go, glad like swimmers breasting a strong sea,
Into the sun's light and winds blowing free.
The cliffs of home rise up to meet the morn;
True dreams come to them from the "Gates of
Horn,"

And they have sight of larger Life than we.

—From "A Sonnet-Sequence."

By Griffith Fairfax.

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