

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

A TEXT-BOOK OF WAR NURSING*

The books published in connection with the war are numerous. Poetry and prose, grave and gay, pathetic and humorous, records of personal experiences, of valour, of hardships bravely endured, their name is legion. But the book before us is unique, inasmuch as it is the first which provides the trained nurse on war service with a professional text-book dealing with the special branch in which she is engaged, which has developed so much during the present war that, if she is to render the most efficient service of which she is capable to the sick and wounded, she must take pains to acquaint herself with the most recent methods of the nursing art in relation to medical science, with the special problems which will confront her on active service, with the duties of Sisters in Military Hospitals and much besides.

Messrs. Putnam's are much to be congratulated on having realised this need, and on giving to the nursing profession a book on War Nursing by Miss Violetta Thurstan, who is not only a highly qualified nurse, and a former Superintendent under Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, but from the beginning of the war, when she saw the German Army march into Brussels, has had a varied experience of war nursing, in Belgium, in Russia, and France, and, in addition to practical knowledge, has the literary skill which enables her to record what she knows for the benefit of her colleagues. As she tells us in her preface, "the work has been written under pressure of heavy neutral work, and the strain of active service." Indeed, she corrected the proofs at a dressing station, shortly afterwards shelled out of existence, and received injuries during the bombardment from which she is now convalescing, which necessitated hospital treatment. The book so produced deals with realities, and every word is of value. Every nurse should include it in her outfit for active service.

The book is divided into five sections. Part 1 deals with Active Service, the transport of the wounded, camping and camp hospitals. Part 2 with the probationer, and Part 3 with the Sister in a military hospital. Part 4 is devoted to notes on nursing in special cases, and Part 5 to infectious diseases. An Appendix includes some very useful cooking recipes, and a table of French and English money.

ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

"Since the war," writes Miss Thurstan, "times and seasons have lost their meaning; sometimes half one's life seems to have been crushed into a space of a very few hours, sometimes each day is so drawn out that it is an eternity in itself. August, 1914, seems a dim, far-away epoch, and those who played their part in the early days are

veterans now. In many ways nursing was more interesting in the early days of the war, when everything had to be improvised or adapted, than later on when the excitement and the first rush were over, organisation brought to an undreamt-of pitch of perfection, and all necessaries amply and even lavishly supplied. In those first months the individual had unlimited scope for resourcefulness and quickness of perception, and who shall say how many lives and limbs were saved by the nurses' ready inventiveness and clever fingers?"

On the other hand, there was the tragedy of seeing precious lives ebbing away for want of some necessary that might have saved them. "Who that was in Belgium during the first months of the war will ever forget the terrible tetanus and gas gangrene cases that occurred so frequently, or the 'trench feet' in muddy Flanders that caused so much misery that first winter? Who that was in Russia during the winter of 1914-1915 can ever forget the horror of those hopeless battles, when hundreds of thousands of men lost their lives in facing an enemy better prepared, better equipped, better munitioned than themselves, one could see men in hospital writhing in the agony of tetanus because for months there was no anti-tetanic serum on the Eastern front, when there was an almost constant shortage of chloroform, dressings, and the most elementary medical comforts and even necessaries, and when first the transport difficulties and then the great retreat in Poland, caused lack of food, lack of coal, lack of everything but courage? Who can forget the noble fight with typhus in Serbia, when so many devoted workers lost their lives in the struggle to save others? That fight with the louse was one of the sternest battles, the conquering it one of the finest victories of the war. Now we have begun to garner the seed sown in those terrible days, in the shape of increased knowledge and experience which have enabled us to evolve order out of chaos. One after another the evils were conquered, mistakes rectified. New discoveries, surgical, bacteriological, chemical, mechanical, were made. Typhus was finally conquered, trench feet practically a nightmare past, great, gaping wounds into which a bath towel can be stuffed now become sterile in a remarkably short time, wonderful plastic operations, quite unknown before the war, remove disfigurements that would have formerly made men wish to hide from their fellow men; the making of artificial arms and legs has been brought to such a high state of perfection that the loss of limb no longer debars anyone from following an occupation."

Thus Miss Thurstan sums up the general situation. Next week we hope to review the book in its relation to the special problems which confront the nurse.

A WORD FOR THE WEEK.

A country owes much to human beings whose bodies she has worn out and whose immortal part she has left undeveloped or debased.—*Hawthorne.*

* Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 24, Bedford Street, London, W.C. 3s. 6d.

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