

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

A TEXT-BOOK OF WAR NURSING.*

(Continued from page 244.)

Miss Thurstan has a necessary word to say on the qualities needed by nurses on active service. "Wild rushes of work generally alternate with periods of inaction. What is most needed now is the courage of endurance that can bear routine and the tiresome exactitude of necessary and unnecessary red tape.

"Almost anyone can get through 'a rush' creditably when convoys of wounded are pouring in; the feeling that one is doing one's utmost to help, that one is playing ever so small a part in the great drama now being acted, will carry most people on, however tired. Sisters, like everyone else, find it much harder to bear patiently the sometimes long period of inaction, when there are few wounded coming in, no guns to be heard, apparently nothing being done and no progress made. This is a real test of endurance, and a few, but not very many on the whole, fail under the test. But, it is all part of the war; and certainly the medical and nursing staff are not the only people who tire of inaction sometimes. . . There cannot be a battle every day, and no one really wishes men to be wounded so that they may have the pleasure of nursing them, though one might almost imagine they did if one listened to some people's moans at a slack time."

Miss Thurstan strongly insists on the importance of every Sister learning as thoroughly as possible the language of the country she is in. "Some nurses are rather lazy about this, particularly if their patients are British. . . . Nurses have been heard to say that 'a well-trained nurse can nurse her patient in any language,' and to a certain very limited extent this is true. But if a patient is very ill, it is most fatiguing for him to have to explain by signs what he wants, and nothing is more distressing for a nurse than to have her patient trying hard to explain something, and she *cannot* understand what it is he wants.

"One day a very badly wounded French soldier was calling for 'lait, lait.' An English Sister was with him, trying to soothe him 'Yes, yes, you will soon be better,' she kept repeating. The man got nearly frantic trying to explain what he wanted, and presently a passer-by interpreted the simple need."

Another point on which Miss Thurstan insists is that "one has to remember when working amongst foreigners that one has gone to *help* them, not to *teach* them, and that in their countries it is *we* who are the foreigners, and therefore it is for us to conform to their customs as far as possible, and not expect them to conform to ours. In this way sisters can do their share towards the *entente* of nations, which is a real little bit of work for England.

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

"Sisters should study psychology, and the knowledge of men. The three or four years spent in the training school give a wonderful opportunity for studying various types of humanity, but sometimes people are so busy getting through their training that they lose sight of the importance of cultivating the gift of "understanding," which is one of the most precious a nurse can have. Imagination and tact are other names for it. Almost the only rule is that patients must be treated as individuals, and not as cases."

"Circumstances rarely permit Sisters working near the front to see much of the country they are in. 'Days off,' in the sense of sight-seeing or expeditions hardly exist. Ten minutes in one direction, and you come to a sentry-box beyond which it is forbidden to pass, a quarter of an hour in another direction and you are brought up against a fence of barbed wire. There are other compensations, though. There are often ambulance or transport horses to be petted and made friends with, a refugee dog to be looked after, flowers unknown in England to be found, wild birds to be observed, wonderful sunsets, the beauty of shell stars and the orange flame of the guns at night—hundreds of mind pictures that will never fade make every day interesting.

GRUMBLING THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN.

"And Sisters should remember always that the nearer the front, the stricter the rules, and grumbling is the unforgivable sin. Avoid it like the plague. The smallest grudge must be carefully repressed, for it grows on one more rapidly than any other disease; it is, moreover, highly infectious to others. What if the coffee is cold and your bed damp? Get them rectified another time if possible, but never cherish a grievance. Remember how many people there are who would cheerfully give all they possess to be in your place. Remember how much you wanted to go to the front, how you felt you could endure any discomforts, any dangers, if only you could be accepted for the post of honour. Remember with what high ideals of service you started out. Perhaps you thought being 'at the front' would mean being up to the elbows in blood for nights and days, helping at operations and dressing wounds, bombs and shells dropping all round you, sleeping when you slept at all on straw on the ground. Some or all of these things may happen, and if they do, you will find them much easier to bear than the small grievances, the long days with nothing to do but stand by and be ready, as sometimes happens, or sleeping in a room or tent with several others who do not share your views on ventilation. A cheerful spirit is the greatest asset that a Sister on active service can take with her."

CARE OF HEALTH.

Miss Thurstan rightly insists on the importance of Sisters taking reasonable care of their own health, and gives useful advice as to clothing, water, diet, sleep and personal hygiene. Concerning water, she writes:—"Be very careful

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