

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,570.

SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1918.

Vol. LX

EDITORIAL.

NURSING AT SEA.

Adaptability and versatility are primary needs of the trained nurse. She is but poorly equipped for her special work in the world, after certification, if her horizon is bounded by the walls of a ward, its orderly routine, and precision, although these are fundamental, and all good nursing must be built up on the sure foundation of prolonged training in hospital wards under the expert supervision of experienced Sisters.

But the nurse who obtains this valuable knowledge must lose no opportunity of learning to apply it under different conditions. Duty may take her far afield into strange places where she will need readiness and resourcefulness in circumstances totally different from any she has met with.

Take the case of a nurse travelling by sea with a patient who is seriously ill. For the moment we are not considering the hospital ship with which war has familiarized us, and whose wards approximate in organization to those of a well-ordered hospital, but a nurse who leaves a foreign port in charge of a patient so seriously ill that his arrival alive in his native land is extremely doubtful.

The position of the cabin, the food obtainable, the unskilled help upon which she must depend for assistance, are all points to be considered, for, however seriously ill the patient, it is unlikely that more than one nurse will be detailed to travel with him. Night duty is the crucial problem, for then the patient is at his worst—perhaps lightheaded and wandering. The nurse will therefore do well to determine to be alert and on full duty during the night hours, and to take such sleep as she can in the daytime, when some kindly friend can be trusted to stay with the patient, and to

call her if occasion arises. Happy is she if the ship carries a doctor keen on his work and up-to-date in his methods. Sometimes a ship's doctor will go to the extreme length of wishing to put the patient ashore at a port, in the interests presumably of other passengers who dislike sickness, and possibly a death, on board; the nurse must strenuously resist such a proposition.

One of the compensations of such an anxious spell of night duty is the peace and grandeur of sea and sky. This is wonderfully described by a member of the City of Westminster Hendon League in its *League Journal* just issued, on duty in a hospital ship.

She writes:—"My attention was attracted by a most wonderful streak of light on the horizon appearing suddenly out of the dense darkness which precedes the dawn. At once I realized that this was the first streak of Easter dawn, and the scene which followed did full justice to an Easter day-break far out at sea in the tropics. . . ."

"I stood alone on the deck, watching with solemn admiration, as the streak emerged into most glorious colourings of pale blue, pale green, yellow, and various tints of gold, patches of clouds intermingled; looking like mountains on the skyline, and reflecting on the vast expanse of black rippling waters in the dim light of early dawn, resemble an enchanted island into which our ship was fast steering. It was a picture no tongue or pen could do justice to, it was almost divine, and while gazing at it I seemed to be translated into another world. The sound of the three bells (5.30) roused me from my reverie, reminding me that I was still 'in the flesh' and had a duty to perform to many of the sick men who lay close by under my care."

Truly night nursing at sea has its compensations.

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