

FRENCH FLAG NURSING CORPS.

The following very sympathetic and graphic account of incidents in the recent crisis on the Western Front, described by a Sister, is far too interesting to be "hidden under a bushel."

She writes:—

"You would like to hear how we passed through this crisis. I hardly know how to begin to tell you of that week, when, for the first time we saw the war, we felt the war, and we lived at the war. The impression that it left is a numbed, indescribable feeling, a depth of sorrow, an accumulation of fury that such things are possible; a heart-breaking pity for all who have suffered and an infinite regret that we could not do more.

"Shall I ever forget that week when the cannons boomed day and night without ceasing—a sickening, vibrating thunder which daily came nearer, when our hearts were torn with anxiety as every day the news came, 'the Germans are advancing'; when the wounded poured in, both English and French; when the roads were filled with refugees, old men and women, young women and little children; when the days and nights became as one; we operated all night and spent the day amongst the patients?

"If I am quiet now, the unforgettable scenes pass before my eyes.

"I see the white, distressed faces of the nuns from N—, who, flying before the Boches, came to our barracks for a night's lodging. I see Sister C— bustling about, getting beds ready and giving them food. I see the broken, bleeding men lying in long rows, with red-dyed bandages and whitening faces, waiting to be taken into the operating room. Magnificent heroes, every man of them, both English and French. I saw them being rushed into battle. I saw them brought back on stretchers. I saw some of them 'die for their country,' always with the same high courage.

"The Allies will win, nothing can kill the spirit of our men.

"All day long the troops were passing; some marching, some in camions.

"It was marvellous how the reserves were brought up—a splendid piece of organisation; even in the night the regiments were marching always at a quick pace. Every day the cannons became louder as the enemy came nearer, and the thunder of them seemed to become part of ourselves; it entered our brains, and because our heads did not open, it stayed there; and even yet there are days when I hear those awful crashes, an appalling sound.

"We did not go to bed; we just lay down for half-an hour, when we felt too exhausted to do any more.

"I have never seen such splendid weather. Sometimes we looked at the resplendent sun and cloudless skies, and sometimes at the brilliant moon which made the night seem as day. We

hurriedly took snatches of cold food, and ate it mechanically to keep going.

"Going through the grounds one day, I met two old women. They were both crying. It was early morning and bitterly cold. They were thinly clad and they wore carpet slippers. They stopped me to ask something, but before I could make out what they wanted, they both began talking together. 'I am 76 years,' said one. 'I am 74 years of age,' said the other. 'The Germans are bombarding our homes; we were so frightened we ran from them; we did not put on our boots, we had no time; we thought they were just behind.' Their limbs trembled, their faces were thin and pinched, and their voices were broken with sobs. We gave them hot coffee, a woollen jersey each, a blanket, and a little money for food. It was all we could do.

"At the end of the week orders came that we must evacuate at once, the Germans were only five kilometres away.

"The wounded were all to leave that night, and we were to pack up and be ready to leave at a minute's notice either by train, camion, or it was possible we might have to walk. Under these circumstances luggage became a serious question, and we had to decide how much we could carry if we had to run up the road with the enemy after us. As the shells were falling rather near, we had to wear our casques when we crossed between the barracks.

"We were operating until midnight that night, and afterwards I went to the station, which was just near our barracks, to see our wounded being evacuated.

"It was bitterly cold with a clear moon, and the wounded must have shivered on their stretchers.

"I saw a long procession of orderlies, each with their stretcher, moving forward as directed by the sergeants, filling up the carriages of the train.

"It was very orderly and quickly done.

"Many doctors were there also directing. "I had a box of cigarettes, and I said 'Good-bye' to as many as I could, and gave them these little comforts.

"'Sister, don't you know me?' a weak voice called to me from a stretcher.

"'No,' I said, peering in the dark, 'Who are you?'

"'You nursed me at N— in the officers' service when I was wounded before.'

"There was a halt for a minute.

"I bent down to listen to him. 'I am badly wounded this time,' he continued.

"I remembered him now as a young officer of about twenty years of age.

"The sergeants shouted at the stretcher-bearers to advance.

"I ran by the side of the stretcher to hear what he was saying.

"'I will tell you who else is wounded.' They were lifting him into the train, his voice was far off. I could not hear any more. The door was shut.

"It was weird, this midnight scene.

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