

THE MINISTRY OF PENSIONS HOSPITAL, ORPINGTON.

THE AFTERMATH.

Those who have visited the battlefields of France and elsewhere, and who are not totally insensible, must carry with them for the rest of their lives an abiding memory of the tragedy of war, a deep sense of pride in those of their blood who at the call of Empire, offered freely that most precious gift, life itself—a gift which was accepted—and whose graves are mute evidence that they paid the supreme sacrifice.

Deep in our hearts there lies the remembrance of those little white crosses marking the spot where a brave man rests. Gathered together in their thousands, in their hundreds, in little groups by the wayside they mark the resting place of a great army for ever glorious, and passers by, on business or pleasure bent, bare the head, or raise the hand to the salute.

But what of that other army, the maimed, the halt, the blind, whose offering was equally splendid, but whose fate was not a glorious death but the harder one of a shattered life, and whose pain

“Passeth not, nor will pass—and only this
Remains for them to look for—more of pain
And doubt if they can bear it to the end.”

Though three years have passed since Armistice Day there are, we know, 7,000 men in hospital in London alone who contracted their sickness, or received their wounds in the Great War, and many thousands more are gathered together in the hospitals under the control of the Ministry of Pensions, many of whom struck down in the prime of their manhood must, for ever helpless and in pain, be dependent on the services and ministrations of others. What greater vocation could any nurse desire than to serve these men who received so great a hurt in preserving the freedom of the world, and in defending British women from the fate that befell so many of their sisters in the invaded regions of France and Belgium?

The graveyards of the Allied Armies are sad, but the hospitals in which are gathered the broken men who are the aftermath of war are infinitely sadder. Only let us always remember that they are still with us, and that by tender, skilful and sympathetic service we may repay in some small part the debt which we owe them.

A visit to such a hospital as that established by the Ministry of Pensions at Orpington, where some 1,000 disabled men are gathered together, is at once a sad and a comforting experience. Sad, because before our eyes there lies bare the book of tragedy, its pages open for

all to read. The face, the attitude, of patient after patient is mute evidence that he has drained the cup of suffering to the full, and in some instances that it cannot be long before

“Death the Consoler,
Laying his hand upon many a heart, will
Heal it for ever and ever.”

And comforting because on every hand there is evidence that the nation is doing what is possible to discharge its obligations to these men, and that all that medical science, and skilled nursing can do to alleviate their sufferings, to restore their health, to minimize their disabilities will be done.

We refer elsewhere to the Ministry of Pensions Nursing Service, and the hospital at Orpington is staffed with its members. The Matron is Miss Kathleen Smith, R.R.C., who as a member of the Territorial Force Nursing Service did good work as Matron of the 5th Southern General Hospital, and afterwards in France. Still later she was one of those selected for service in Cologne with the British Army on the Rhine. The uniform of the staff is grey, with three blue stripes on the sleeve for the Assistant Matron and two for the Charge Sisters. The cap is a hemstitched square of clear muslin, becomingly worn with the monogram M.P.N.S. (Ministry of Pensions Nursing Service) embroidered in blue in the front. A blue belt is also worn.

Those who knew the hospital when it was the Ontario Military Hospital, staffed by the Canadian Army Nursing Service, will remember that it consists of long huts opposite to each other, at right angles to a connecting corridor, with windows on either side, and at the far end a French window, which, set open, frames a vista of green fields, undulating ground, and beautiful trees, familiar to those acquainted with the county of Kent, than which there is none fairer in this country. It is set on the side of a hill and the cases are classified, according as they are surgical, or medical—heart cases, phthisical cases, bronchitis and asthma, malaria and other tropical diseases such as dysentery and sprue, also enteric.

The sisters' quarters are also in huts, each one having a separate room. There is a common sitting-room and a rest and writing-room, harmoniously furnished, a mess room and servery, for the Sisters run their own mess, and have a separate kitchen and kitchen staff. The Matron's simple but charming quarters are adjacent.

The Medical Superintendent is Colonel Heaton, who has charming quarters at the Boundary House.

M. B.

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