

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

THE ADVENTURES OF A SOUTH AFRICAN NURSING SISTER.*

The title of this book, by Sister F. M. Ayliff, together with the portrait on its wrapper in Army cap and cape, predispose us to think it is a story of war time adventure. The war, however, scarcely touches its pages, in which are related, with much skill and interest, the ordinary happenings of a nurse's life (which is always full of interesting episodes) from the time when she entered a hospital for training to the time when, as a fully-fledged Sister, she makes her bow to her readers. It is a story of steady work, of increasing knowledge, of varied experience, told in sober and restrained fashion, and should, as its author hopes, help in the enlightenment of a public "which singles out such epithets for the Nursing Profession as 'Frivolous,' 'Flighty,' 'Callous,' not knowing that reaction after nervous strain often takes the place of frivolity, nor that a forced laugh may be a weapon against haunting memory."

"Perhaps," she writes, "there are not many of that criticising public who know that a nurse's working week averages seventy hours. And that, during the time she is on duty, toll is taken not only of her limbs, but her brain also, and that to its utmost value."

We are introduced to the South African Training School by the clanging of the bell telling the nurses that it is six o'clock, and time to get up.

"Early rising," writes Miss Ayliff, "had never been a trouble to me. I had always thought it worth while to be up an hour or so before most people, for one was so amply repaid for the effort by the pure freshness of the early air. But to be told systematically by a bell that it was time to get up was another matter!"

"It was not without opposition that I had taken up my training as a nurse. . . . In addition to my parents' reluctant consent, the question of my physical fitness was also raised, my friends protesting at what they thought was audacity on my part, and predicting a speedy defeat; they gave six months as the furthest limit of my sojourn in Hospital. It was the remembrance of this prediction which many a time goaded me on to fresh efforts, when my energy lagged by reason of overwork—brain and limbs alike being often too weary to cope with the burden that was laid upon them. But, as a strong incentive will often carry us to our goal, over apparently impossible obstacles, so my determination carried me through my training. Looking back over the intervening years, I know that I would go through it all again sooner than own defeat and hear the words, however sweetly they might be whispered, 'I told you so.'"

Very charming are the vignette studies of the patients—white and coloured—who came under

Sister's care, revealing incidentally the sympathy and kindness, as well as the careful nursing, extended to one and all. Amongst them "Chettie," the only daughter of a wealthy Mohammedan merchant and of a St. Helena mother; alas! her parents deferred bringing her to the hospital until too late, and "after a week's rally the spark of strength which had followed careful nursing gave way, and Chettie lay looking like one of those bronze statues one sees surmounting a tomb in Westminster Abbey—her dusky beauty now beyond the help of human aid."

Those unacquainted with hospitals often have an instinctive dread of them. "How different," we read, "is the reality of Hospital life to the imagined thing of most minds; how homely and bright compared with the prison of severity and gloom pictured by many. 'Oh, nurse,' said a mother to me one day, having brought her sick child to Hospital, and being introduced for the first time to a bright, cheery ward, 'I had no idea Hospital was like this! I shall never again hesitate to bring any of my children in.' Happiness diffuses happiness, and perhaps the busy nurses have something to do with the bright atmosphere of a sick ward. A little time ago a visitor to my ward said to me: 'Sister, the nurses all look so happy.' 'Yes,' I replied, smiling, 'they are a happy lot.'"

Many nurses will agree that night duty—of which an excellent description is given—has its compensations. "There was the sense of freedom one had in coming off duty in the morning; . . . then, too, we saw the sun rise, and that over the sea . . . what a wonder that sunrise was! A sight missed by those who have never seen the sun rise over the sea, when, like a gorgeous ball of gold, he takes possession of the sky, mounting by stately steps to his throne of blue, while leaving in his wake a path of iridescent light, which grows and spreads till sea and sky are merged into one sparkling wonder, making one feel an atom of infinitesimal smallness beside the wondrous beauty of the scene which has been painted in living colours without man's aid."

We do not agree with the writer's opinion that women nurses should have nothing to do with venereal wards, as we consider that at least they should be under the supervision of a Sister or Nurse-in-Charge, though male attendants may be necessary for some of the cases, and senior or certificated nurses should be detailed for this duty.

If anyone thinks that the life of a night nurse consists mainly in watching sleeping patients let him study the Report on page 88 left by the Sister, on one occasion, for the information of the night nurse. This besides the regular routine ward work, which is no small item.

It is interesting to get an insight into the State Examination of nurses in South Africa.

"At the end of the third year, or sometimes a few months after the expiration of a nurse's third year, she usually stood as a candidate for the Medical Council examination, which was a general examination for any nurse in the Pro-

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