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THE PURPLE HIGHWAY.

A Member remarked to us recently, "Now you may give us a rest from nursing matters and put something about the country into the Supplement just to help to keep us in the mood of the holidays." We thought, just then, of an artist and his work, of how he will often give to the background of his picture greater consideration than to that part into which enters the play of colour and form and detail. "The background makes the picture," we have heard it said, and so does the mind and its moods influence, to an enormous extent, the work we do, making it beautiful and effective or the reverse. We take a holiday just as much with the object of securing mental recuperation as with the idea of laying in a store of physical strength; the holidays are too often arranged just on the whim of a mood or some passing suggestion, and so this background, against which a year's work is to be enacted, is not always properly laid in; thus it does not carry the mental stimulus it might provide and, incidentally, the pleasures of anticipation and planning are more or less lost. There are many, of course, who have not the possibility of choosing where or how they will spend their holidays; when they can, inclination is no doubt a healthy factor to depend on when making such choice. It may lead some to seek mainly opportunity for meeting fresh company and gaiety, others choose to get into an entirely new atmosphere by going off to some foreign country to enjoy fresh scenery and to sense the folk spirit of races other than their own.

Many look upon the seaside as the best means of securing recuperation of mind and body. Yet few among the nurses, so far, have set out upon the type of holiday now becoming so popular which we hear spoken of as "hiking in the hills." It can be freed from many domestic entanglements when one has learnt the possibilities of a tablet spirit-lamp and pan. At almost any croft you can obtain milk, butter and a homemade scone or two. We know of one confirmed "hiker" who depends upon any mountain stream he may chance upon for his mid-day meal; he skilfully captures from under some stone, in its pebbly bed, a lusty trout, which, transferred to his small cooking pan, is soon transformed into a dish fit for a king. The matter of finding sleeping accommodation appears to present insuperable difficulties to some people. Yet there are "hiking hostels" springing up everywhere, and in any case the problem gets settled somehow in districts accustomed for centuries to meet the needs of wanderers among the hills. Nurses might, with advantage, in another year, form "a hiking group" and set out upon adventures. There are sound psychological reasons why so many people who, for the greater part of the year, are compelled to undertake work involving a heavy mental strain, now choose, when summer comes, to set off, each with a knapsack by way of luggage on such expeditions. Go to the top of a hill one evening and you may understand the

reason why and sense something of the effects of such a holiday. Everything in the valley below assumes a correct proportion to other points in the landscape and even the events of the day seem to have fallen into greater harmony. As one's surroundings and the mood of nature readily invade the mind, so will you find that, in the hills, the affairs of the times seem to adjust themselves in your mental outlook, fall as it were into a better perspective with life in general. Thus one is enabled to take a healthy standpoint towards whatever work one must undertake.

But there is more in a mountain holiday than the impulse which it can give towards establishing a certain balance and harmony in a person's outlook on life. The clear air and exercise go far towards securing physical health for a long time to come. But there is also the fact that nowhere, as among the mountains, does one meet with such variety in nature; never do we see the hills for long in just the same aspects of colour, atmosphere and light. For this year at least Scotland has, for the most part, earned the title of "The Land of Regrets" for, like all parts of these islands, she has been in gloomy mood. Yet there are many who profess to find the highlands more impressive and attractive when the skies are grey. There is a fascination they will tell you in finding yourself surrounded by the great bens and, on all sides, by miles of wind and mist and storm. Even then there is continual variety; the scene is always changing. We can remember one of the most famous painters of the present day sitting under a large umbrella by a highland loch sketching in effects as fast as he could dash his brush across his paper. He changed neither his position nor his subject for the space of two hours; at his elbow stood a manservant, whose sole duty it was to remove one board from his easel and replace it with another every few minutes, just as someone might turn the pages for a musician. A score or so of sketches, each one different from the last, were the witnesses of the infinite variety which can be found in sky and hill and loch even on the dullest day.

When leaden skies cast themselves between the sun and the heather the mists about the mountains become fantastic and strange; sometimes they assume forms like great dragons ready for battle, rolling and rushing on their way, sometimes plunging deep into the ravines and then climbing the hillsides again, to vanish one knows not whither, or to spread an impenetrable curtain between you and some hill or loch not a park's breadth away. They may lift themselves in a few moments and you have the whole panorama of the hills again but for some drifting shreds of grey that look like the ghosts of old-time warriors stretching out vaporous hands as they disappear in some mountain gorge or hasten on the wind towards some ancient ruin perched high on a rocky promontory like the eyrie of an eagle. There are many like it; they are the children of the mountains these. Yet the mountains are more hoary than they for all their crumbling decay. You may like

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