

FOR THESE MERCIES

By ESTELLE M. KERR



THIS is the eighth of October. Let us give thanks. For what?

Why should a day be set apart for national

thanksgiving when we are at war, when our sons are fighting, perhaps dying; when our incomes are diminishing and the cost of living is increasing; when we must face cold and hunger, why should we give thanks?

Because we are brave and strong and able to face these difficulties. Because we do not compare our national prosperity with that of former years; we contrast it with the hardships suffered by France, Belgium, Serbia, Roumania. Let us give thanks!

Perhaps it is easier to do so nationally rather than individually. That is your affair—and mine. You may have suffered unutterably and no one can judge the extent of your sorrow, but when I see so many men who have lost an arm or a leg, or both, I feel that everyone who has his full share of limbs should be very, very thankful.

They only should be exempt. They only should be allowed to go about with long sorrowing faces and voices full of gloom. But do they want to be exempt? Not they! Go to the hospitals, where amputation cases are treated, where poor maimed stumps of limbs have to be operated upon once more and artificial limbs fitted to them. Look at their faces, are they down-hearted? No!

"We're jolly well out of it," says one. Many of the others don't feel that way, they would like to be back again, but they are facing the long years of a maimed existence as bravely as they faced the bullets and in the meantime there is much good comradeship in the hospitals, and it is interesting to see what you can do with that old stump, or with the artificial substitute for the lost limb!

FOR the brain-worker it is comparatively simple.

His livelihood did not depend on his physical activity or manual dexterity, and he brings to the manipulation of the artificial member a scientific knowledge that helps him to overcome difficulties.

Stories are told of an American gentleman who lost both his arms eleven years ago and has since devoted most of his time to perfecting his artificial substitutes with most surprising results. His artificial arms are equipped with elaborate mechanism, which he is able to alter with his teeth and which enable him to shave, put on his collar and tie his cravat. But the average returned soldier will not and cannot spend eleven years in learning to manipulate this elaborate mechanism. He usually prefers a more simple arrangement equipped with a hook and a place for installing a knife or fork, with a gloved artificial hand "for best," and sometimes, when only the hand is missing, he becomes so expert in the use of his stump that he prefers to dispense with his artificial hand while at work. The best artificial arm on the market to-day is said to be of French origin, and costs \$200, but its manipulation is too complicated for the average soldier to master, and an Italian in one of our own factories, under the supervision of the Military Hospitals Commission, has invented an arm of simpler design, which is much more practicable for his needs.

Not only must the soldier be taught to use his artificial limbs, there are many returned men who have to learn how to use their own. In some cases their limbs are partially paralyzed through shell-shock, or they have become feeble through having remained long in a plaster cast and circulation must be restored through proper exercise and massage. In other cases shell-shock has resulted in loss of memory, and strong men have become as little children and must be taught by the simplest of kindergarten methods.

Rooms devoted to the Re-education of Disabled Soldiers have been set apart in Hart House, a beautiful new building that has just been erected facing the campus of the University of Toronto. It will take two years before the interior is completed,

with its mammoth swimming-pool, its gymnasium equipment and the exquisite details of its stone-work, but in the meantime some of the finished rooms are devoted to this useful work.

There is the Chamber of Torture, fitted with machines for manipulating the legs, for registering the gripping power of the hands, for testing the accuracy of the finger movements. The exercises seem simple to us, very simple, there is nothing in those gentle movements that would tire us. But if you meet a soldier coming away from the building on crutches and give him a lift in your car, perhaps he may tell you confidentially that it really is a chamber of torture, that those movements are for him—a tall, broad-shouldered man of twenty-three—almost unbearable, but he endures the pain because they tell him that some day he will walk again without crutches—won't that be wonderful! And so he is thankful, very, very thankful.

Another room contains what looks like a kindergarten equipment, where men formerly strong and brave must learn the difference between a round object and a square one. They have lost their sense of touch, some of them cannot tell whether they are holding anything or not; whether what they touch is smooth or rough, soft or hard.

"This work requires infinite patience," said an instructor.

"I should think it would be eminently suited to women," I remarked.

"On the contrary, we find that men give greater satisfaction. The girls don't need to work, they are impatient, and if someone asks them to play tennis they don't put in an appearance."

"But are they trained workers?"

"Oh, no."

"And do the men give their services voluntarily?"

"No, they are paid."

Now, is that fair? To compare the work of trained paid men with that of unskilled voluntary women? Such an important branch should never be entrusted to an unskilled worker, but surely trained kindergarten teachers will come forward with offers of assistance, and surely there are many women who would willingly take a course that would fit them for this useful work!

Women have proved their worth as masseuses. In the winter of 1914 some girls who had taken a course in massage in England returned to Canada and offered their voluntary services to the Canadian military hospitals. They were refused, but as the need increased they were asked to take paid positions, to form classes to teach other women to do similar work, and now under the auspices of the Military Hospitals Com-

mission many young women are paid to take this course. At Hart House there is a class of 80, and the training consists of a severe physical drill and practical work on the disabled soldiers. When the course is completed these young women have agreed to go wherever they may be sent in Canada, and they will receive \$45 a month and an allowance for board and lodging. During the period of six months' instruction they are paid \$25 per month.



ALREADY there are many trained masseuses in all the convalescent homes, and there is a constant demand for more. You may see them at work in a ward set apart for their use—strong, muscular young women radiating good health bend over the weak, recumbent forms of men, not as we like to imagine the white-coiffed nurse as an angel of mercy, smoothing the pillow and administering cooling drinks, but slapping and punching with skilful but none too gentle fingers the wounded flesh, manipulating the misplaced bones and restoring their usefulness. Though they appear to be very strong, they admit that it is most tiring work and that they are glad to go to bed early and sleep.

A good masseuse, like a good physician and a good soldier, must not have too much pity. That is a virtue that must be suppressed in facing the enemy, and temporary pain must be inflicted to affect a permanent good, and so the best masseuses give to their patients their force and their intelligence and withhold their pity. But the soldiers do not ask it. They bless the hands that hurt while they heal. They are glad to have done their duty, to have given something for their country; they realize that their country is trying to do what it can for them, and they say on the 8th of October,

"This is Thanksgiving Day. Make us truly thankful."

PEOPLE who have most to be thankful for are often discontented. When we are forced to keep quiet, we begin to realize our blessings and to lift up our hearts in thanksgiving. The convalescent soldiers feel grateful for the autumn sunshine and realize that life holds many things that make it worth living, like one of George Borrow's gypsies, who says:

"There's night and there's day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother, who would wish to die? A Romany Chal would wish to live forever."

"In sickness, Jasper?"

"There's the sun and the stars, brother."

"In blindness, Jasper?"

"There's the wind on the heath, brother; if I could only feel that, I would gladly live forever!"

A soldier writing from the trenches says:

"It is wonderful how one forgets the discomforts, the mud and the noise and the stench, the sight of poor fellows with their faces turned down to a merciful earth, and the lice! One thinks more of bird-songs and the great, good-comradeship of men. In fact, except for about one per cent. of the time, life is one glorious picnic!"

Perhaps it is not the sun, moon and stars that make the maimed soldier thankful to be alive, but there is something. Someone is coming to see him, someone has sent him cigarettes or a new magazine, there is to be a concert to-night in the entertainment room. Besides, it is thanksgiving day, so there's sure to be an extra good dinner—and pumpkin pie!



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