A Night With the Watchers in the Presidio Hospital.

The Long Hours of Darkness Bring Pathetic Incidents in the Wards of the Brave Boys Who Returned Sick and Dying.

A Sunday Call Reporter Visits the United States General Hospital of San Francisco.

IT was eleven at night. A little moonlit mist slid in from the Point and stole, shimmering, over the Presidio hill. Beneath it the still tents were sketched sharply in black and white.

Eleven o'clock and all's well—all that might be seen. Soldiers slept in their little slant-roofed houses. Other soldiers came rollicking campward in a late car. Eleven o'clock and all's well.

Past the gloom of the trees and across the bare slope beyond I walked to the hospital. It rose still and big and dim, and seemed to say in dignity, "Here, too, all is well." In the rear of it, opening from the square court, I found ten wards. Within them stood long rows of beds where men lay delirious and dying. They are the part of our army who cannot lie quiet and dreamless under canvas, nor make merry until merriment fades into sleepy hours. Instead, they toss through long nights of feverish dreams and wake to dreary thoughts of the other boys who are up and off to faraway homes.

The whole night through I watched with the watchers. The corps of night nurses had gone on duty at 7:30, and I followed the course of their twelve-hour labor until 7:30 of the next day brought them to bedtime. Twenty-four hours of hard labor is divided between two sets of workers. What is that we used to hear—

Eight hours to work,
Eight hours to play,
Eight hours to sleep—

The powers that be at the United States General Hospital of San Francisco have probably forgotten the rhyme. It's only an old jingle, anyway.

I began with the surgical ward. I read the posted instructions carefully before entering: "No admittance without a pass," and "Don't slam the door." I drew out my potent slip that bears the signature of Colonel Girard, and then entered—a hush.

The glimmer from one screened light and the cuddliy-warm stove made ghosts of the white iron beds and paled adown the length of the room until the ghosts faded away into measureless dark. A nurse crept, still of foot and grave of face, to meet me and drew me into the warmth. "These boys are mostly convalescent," she said, "they are sleeping."

The door was closed. There was only one sound to be heard for the length of the ward. It was the sound of many men sleeping the sleep of pain.

The breath came wearily heavy from one, short and struggling from another. Rustling and turning were heard. Moans broke in now and then—moans that the waking man would choke back scornfully, that sleep warily wrings from him, off his guard.

The nurse gave me a seat by the crooning fire, where her own chair and table stood. A book or two and a magazine lay on the table.

"You have a comfortable place to rest and read," I whispered

She smiled soberly. "We don't have time to reach much," she said.

A cough of waking sounded from the other end of the ward. She rose, with a firm hand stilling the chair, and pattered away.

Alone in the drowsy warmth, I stared at the beds, and little by little my eyes taught themselves to see dim shapes.

When the nurse returned it was to strike a match and select medicine from a case in the center of the room. "We hardly ever wake a man to dose him, but this one has waked himself," she explained.

The medicine was given and she came to me again. She was just seated when groans sounded from the front of the ward.

"That is No. 5. He suffers a great deal." She was away once more. When sleep settled again she left the room for a few minutes in charge of the assistant, and conducted me through the surgery in the rear. It is a series of shiny white painted rooms, clean and druggy to smell. There is a spick and span little room where the water is sterilized, and besides this are places wher medicines and bandages range, shelf upon shelf, and there are lavatories, and beyond them all is the operating room. Its walls are high and white, and the operating table waits, fixed and ghastly in the center. Unrelenting steel things glitter on tables made of sterilized glass; savage little instruments, with the savagery born at civilization. It is the cleanest, cruelest place I ever saw.

"The surgical ward is especially hard on account of the constant dressing of wounds," the nurse said.

And as I progressed I found every one especially hard. The nurses are a quiet set of women, too busy to find time for complaint. But whoever thinks army nursing an easy life let him try, or even watch a night of it.

It was at 12 o'clock that all the night nurses left their wards in the charge of the assistants and betook themselves to the kitchen of the nurses' building for lunch. It is an informal little meal, where the ten drop in and drop out as quickly as they can do so. A tall woman, good of heart and clever of cookery, served steak and potatoes and mushrooms from the brick range, and every luncher had brought her own cup for coffee. The lunch was good, but it was swallowed in dinner-pail time, in order to be back with the boys.

"Are any of yours dying?" one of them said.

"Yes," replied her neighbor, "two of them won't last through the night, the doctor thinks.

"How is your thin man?"

"Just the same. He is one who can't live."

"Did you know that Miller was very stubborn in objecting to a change of wards?"

"All the boys are like that. They always like their first nurse best."

This was another phase. "It takes tact to get along with them, doesn't it?" I asked.

"Tact? I should think so. A sick man is usually not very different from a child. Sometimes a nurse will try the work and not be able to get along at all."

"Number 28 talks all the time about his money."

"What is the matter?"

"Typhoid."

"You get so used to the work that it is no longer distressing, I suppose," I put in.

"We get used to it, but it never becomes a joke," said the pretty one. She wore a crisp little military jacket over her blue and white uniform, and from the flutter of a cap that she wore even unto the hem of her apron she was as briskly dainty as a feather-duster soubrette.

"Come to my ward after lunch," she said, and I went.

There I saw the thin man. His thinness is his fame. It is the one distinction that his fighting has won for him. Wispy, with the claws of a bird.

I turned back to the warm corner behind the screen. It was easier so.

The assistant, bearing the red cross of the hospital corps, lounged in a rocking chair. There was nothing that he could be doing. Two men in the ward lay waiting to die, but when they have been served in every detail that physician and nurse can direct, then there is no use disturbing one's self. Death is a very commonplace affair to the hospital corps.

Soon after midnight the doctor visited Ward I. He was on his last round. The sick men were nearing the deep sleep of the morning hours when a physician was not likely to be needed. He listened to the report of critical cases, prescribed, chatted and was off. The only other visitors were the officer of the day and the coalman, who attends to the two stoves of each room. He is as black as the coal he carries, and he looms up cheerfully in every ward from A to J.

The door opened softly soon after the doctor had left, and another nurse stole in. "I'm afraid that boy of yours is dying," she wispered nervously. My nurse and I followed her.

She was a bit frightened, for she had been given charge of two isloated cases that were new to her. We found them in a small room behind one of the wards. The light was turned on brightly, although shaded from the two patients' eyes. The light was necessary, for the work over their beds was constant, and day and night had merged in their unknowingness.

"They are both typhoids," whispered the nurse.

She who had directed their care before approached the one who had alarmed his new guardian. She laid a steady hand on his fumbling one. "He is no worse," she reassured.

"Last night they were both delirious," she continued. "I had to hold one or the other in bed all the time. You see they are not so violent now."

She returned to her ward and I was left. A small oilstove burned in the room, but only one sheet was spread over the fevered bodies of the two men. The one lay with eyes closed and moaned, moaned without ceasing. The other plucked with long, eager hands at the sheets, and followed me with eyes of glittering glass.

The nurse attempted to feed the first one, but he could not swallow. He was half conscious of what she was doing. "Oh, I can't. O Lord! Nurse, don't—oh, nurse, nurse!"

His voice died away in inarticulate groans.

She worked on patiently. Across the room the glittering eyes were fixed upon me and I could not escape them.

The face that belonged to the eyes was white with the dull whiteness of death. The nostrils were wide and suggested a skeleton. A straggling growth of black beard made the face ghastliier.

The eyes and I stared at each other. They fascinated and terrified. Could they see? Could they know? I moved back to the door and still they turned and were after me. They made me feel hunted—guilty.

The plucking and clutching grew feverish, then violent. With a summoning of the paltry little strength left him, the man started to rise from the bed. The eyes were still upon me.

The nurse drew up the knot in a sheet which was tied upon the bed to gently hold one prisoner. She crossed the room.

"Lie down again, Mason," she soothed. "Is there something you want? Let me get it for you."

His little energy slackened and let go. He fell back.

"Bring me my clothes," he whined. "There's money in 'em. I want it; I want to take care of it."

"Yes, you shall have it in the morning. Wait until morning, Mason. I'll take good care of it."

"But—you—I—it might be—stolen"——

The words mumbled away into mere sounds that had no power to give themselves shape. But the eyes, fearing and fearful, did not cease their troubled vigilance. He was not satisfied.

"I think the sight of a strange face worries him," I said.

Shuddering, I went out to the quiet ward and walked the length of it. The eyes haunted me even to the door. Then I stepped out upon the great veranda and felt the cold, clear night air in my face as I walked, and the only eyes that met me were the clean little twinkling stars. Out of doors all was calm and healthy and sane. I forgot the fever and the madness within.

Four o'clock came when I was in the crowded typhoid ward at the end of the veranda. Here I found forty men in all stages of the disease, except violent delirium, with two nurses to attend them. It is the only ward that has more than one, although nearly 400 patients are within the walls.

Three lights were burning, for attendance was constant. The disease allows but little sleep. What sleep there is breaks repeatedly into sorry waking. Throughout the room muttering and calling and whimpering could be heard.

"What is it you want, Pierce?" the nurse asked, her hand pushing back the tumbled hair of a big, pale boy, who looked without understanding.

"Peanuts—oh, bring me some peanuts!" he fretted.

She laughed cozily. "When you are better you shall have them. Rest now," she said, stroking the white forehead.

"There is bathing and plunging to be done all the early part of the night in this fever ward," the assistant told me. "The water is made warm at first, then the temperature is gradually lowered, and finally ice is put in."

The nurse came to me. "There's a convalescent awake at the other end of the ward," she said; "No. 36. He wants to know if our visitor won't come and see him. He can't sleep."

A chair was placed for me at the bedside of a plucky Minnesota youngster, who saw his fellow-fighters mustered out and away to their northern homes while he thrashed a fever out in the hospital prison house.

"I'm in cell No. 36," he told me with a gleam of white teeth, which showed where a smile could be found in his dark end of the room.

"Plucky," I said. There are men who faced all that was most terrible in war, and faced it without flinching; but some of those very men lie sick and fret as feebly as babies, while others storm curses of impatience that a six-handed nurse couldn't quench. Still others are meekly grateful. But the Minnesota youngster was none of these. He was just jolly, good-natured, no more nor less; while discreet care tantalized his returning appetite with a milk diet that many a veteran would never take humorously.

"They won't let me even sit up yet," he said, "after all these weeks. I was sent up in the first place for two days, and here I am. But I'm going to leave for home in three weeks. The nurses are all right, but a fellow wouldn't mind seeing his mother when he's laid up like this."

And I'll wager that his mother wouldn't mind seeing a fellow when he's the kind that that one is. It's a ringing good cheer that he'll carry back to Minnesota, and here's luck to the trip!

"I can't sleep in the morning," he explained. "You hear how this noise keeps up all over the ward. That one calls and swears and the next jabbers all kinds of nonsense, and that one sings a lot of the time."

A queer, unearthly chant suddenly rose from one of the heapy beds. It was a weird noise in the night.

The boy talked on with the hurry that belongs to an invalid. He rambled over Manila and he branched off to campaigns. He talked of waiting and of action and told of a night when twenty men and their lieutenant slept on a wet hillside with blankets for beds and a fog for roof. He laughed a feeble but sunshiny little laugh when he recalled how they had lain together like spoons in a case for warmth and how they had been obliged to turn simultaneously and "spoon the other way" when one man had to relieve his cramped position.

By the time that 5 o'clock came the lights were turned out and a crafty glimmer of gray morning stole in. I passed on to another ward, where I watched the day come.

In the ghostly light a dark figure was sitting wrapped in an overcoat. "Why is that man not in bed?" I asked.

"Heart disease," replied the nurse. "He has not lain down all night. It hurts him. He always sits."

He leaned forward gloomily, half asleep, half suffering.

Another nurse dropped in. "My boy's mother has not come yet," she said, "and he surely can't last through the day. She was to arrive from Dakota," she explained to me, "but it will be no use for her to come now. He will never speak to her again."

There was a ripple and rustling of waking through the ward. Men began to sit up and call for the nurse. They wanted egg nogs and milk punches, and they had them. The diets are of three classes: regular, special and light. A pantry on wheels brought a 7 o'clock breakfast of steak, potatoes, eggs, mush and coffee from the messroom. This was for the regulars. The "lights" had the least hearty of it, and the specials were provided for by the nurse in the ward kitchen.

There was a universal stir at last. Breakfast, dressing and the morning papers started the day. From the back of the ward came the singing and twittering of canaries.

"Those belong to my bird man," the nurse said. "He brought them from the Philippines and the bamboo cage comes from Japan. They sleep under his bed at night. You see they are on his table now to keep him company."

An assistant came down the room with a full tray. "The bird man won't eat. He doesn't like any of the breakfast," the assistant reported.

"Tell him to eat his birds," somebody said. Never mind who, for the who didn't mean it. "Tell him we'll see what can be done for him," was the order given.

A fretful voice at the front called for help. The invalid wanted to sit up, and two men worked to make a prop of a slanted chair and many pillows.

"It doesn't feel right. The chair is too high. There, you've got it too low now," he fumed. "My head aches. I always have a headache in the morning. I want my face washed."

"Wait a few minutes."

"I can't wait. I tell you I want my face washed. Say, you, don't you want to wash my face?" appealing to a convalescent who was sitting near, having made a shaky toilet by himself.

"I guess I might try it," was the doubtful reply.

"All right. He'll bring a basin and you wash my face. Here, hurry, bring a basin. I don't like to wait."

Away from the fumes of carbolic and the peevish voices that whimpered, the little white tents had turned gray in the gray hour. The first car halted and a raft of soldiers left it. I entered. There were two soldiers toppled in a heap against one another, who did not leave the car. They were sleeping the deep sleep of Sunday morning.

"Wait till I wakes up me lodgers," said the conductor.

He shook them. One started and blinked.

"Why, we're here," he shouted. "Don't you know we're here, Dick?" he cried reproachfully, mauling his comrade. "What's the matter of you? Who ever heard of reachin' the place to get off and not knowin' it!"

In the loving embrace of drowsy fellowship they departed together. Then the sunniness of the day swept in and it was sleep time for night watchers.

KATHRYN MARCH.

GEN. CHARLES KING'S THRILLING STORY

"Found in the Philippines"

WILL COMMENCE IN NEXT SUNDAY'S CALL.

Facts and Figures of Dewey Day.

Five million souls united in a welcome to one. Three million persons saw the center of all human interest. Seven miles of boats escorted the hero up the Hudson River on Friday, September 29. Seven miles of humanity cheered him through the city on Saturday, the 30th. Caesar himself had never a more triumphal reception in a more imposing setting.

Meanwhile New York was aglow with patriotic color. It was rainbowed. It was a forest of flag-poles. A sea of flags, medallions and festoons of bunting. Five million Deweyites helped make it so. The 5,000,000 would have made a line 2000 miles long. Put one behind the other in lockstep, they would have reached from New York to Salt Lake City. Marshaled in 5000 regiments and marching company front, forty-two men abreast, they would have required twenty-one days to pass in review before Dewey, marching day and night. This mighty army would have been 850 miles long and would have reached from New York to Fort Wayne, Ind. If all the flags used by this army on Dewey day could have been sewed together, the result would have been a mastodonic affair of stars and stripes that could have been laid, like a blanket, over the whole of Central Park.

What did it mean to have 2,500,000 visitors in addition to a population of equal number? It meant that it took half an hour to walk from the Fifth Avenue Hotel, past the great white arch, to the Hoffman House, just one block. Broadway was a river of people with a sluggish current flowing one mile in many hours. Fifth avenue was like the congested corridor of a theater after the play. Battery Park was a lake of men and women, without islands. Every tall building was an observatory. Even the nickel-in-slot machines filled so rapidly that agents had to harvest the cash three times each night and ten times each day. Sixty thousand people, 4500 tons of humanity, taxed the strength of the Brooklyn bridge at one time. Manhattan Island was a mighty hive. The city became like an enormous sponge—it absorbed millions of people on Friday, and on Saturday was able to absorb millions more. Seven thousand policemen kept order. Half of these had no sleep for three days. Each policeman did the work of ten. Great crowds attract thieves, and for them the city became a Mecca. A round-up of these was ordered. Six hundred detectives were on duty. All suspicious characters were gathered in and locked up over the two great days. The same with the fire department. Even every auxiliary member was on duty, and very few closed their eyes in sleep between Thursday and Sunday.

And what the cost in money of Dewey day? New York city itself appropriated and spent $200,000. More than half of this went for the arch and for reviewing stands—$26,500 for the arch and $75,000 for 55,000 seats. The next largest amount was $31,000 spent for fireworks. Then came $20,000 for boats in the naval parade; $13,000 for decorations, $12,500 for feeding visiting troops, $8500 for refreshments for guests, $5400 for badges for the committee of twelve hundred, $5000 for he loving cup, $3500 for sundries. By visitors and citizens the largest single expenditure was for seats. The price for seats ranged from $1 for a few of the least desirable on stands to $500 for a window. A fair estimate of the average cost of seats is $3.50. The cash expenditure for the 500,000 seats, therefore, amounted to $1,750,000. The next largest amount was $1,000,000 for decorations, bunting, flags, fireworks, etc. Nearly 1,000,000 yards of bunting were used and nearly 500,000 flags. Besides this the soldier boys spent $500,00 in New York for trappings, for refurbishing, New York being the center of the military equipment business. Every visiting militiaman bought some new or needed item for his uniform or kit; the Twenty-second New York ordered 500 brand new coats and hats; bands fitted out anew from head to foot; $8000 was spent just for white cotton gloves. Bankers estimate that at least $25,000,000 was put in circulation in New York by visitors during the week. This is based upon the conservative estimate that the average amount spent by each of the 2,500,000 visitors was $10.—Gilson Willets, in Leslie's Weekly.