

Society, which is part of the great International Society, would be in a false position. We note that Miss Wedgwood, Matron of the Royal Free Hospital, represents the interests of trained nurses on the Committee. We think the representation accorded to the nursing profession is very small; but it will, we hope, have the effect of making Miss Wedgwood doubly alive to her responsibilities in this matter. As she has had no actual experience of army nursing, presumably she has acquainted herself with the details concerning its organization, and with the unsatisfactory conditions which at present obtain with regard to our own Army Nursing Service. We hope that Miss Wedgwood will have the courage to bring these matters forward. A mere endorsement of medical opinions, as in the case of the Royal British Nurses' Association, will not satisfy the consciences of those nurses who have at heart the true interest of the sick and wounded.

Nursing Legislation.

FALSE AND PETTY ECONOMY.

CAPTAIN NORTON, M.P., is to be congratulated upon the way in which he has persistently directed the attention of the House of Commons to the lack of organization in connection with the nursing of the sick and wounded in the late Egyptian campaign. Recently, when the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply on the Army Estimates, Captain Norton once more returned to the charge, and drew attention to the fact that after the battle of Omdurman 1,080 men were laid up in hospital at Alexandria and Cairo, with only ten trained nurses to attend them. He asked, therefore, what steps had been taken to improve the arrangements for the nursing of the sick and wounded in the army.

Mr. Pirie said that in the general opinion of the country the War Office had been guilty of a false and petty economy. He drew attention to the letters which had appeared on the subject in the *Times*, from an officer of high standing, and thought that the matter was one which should not be passed over without an explanation.

Mr. Powell Williams attempted to give the required explanation. He said that in a great number of cases, more especially under the conditions prevailing in the Sudan, it would be almost impossible to employ female nurses. At home, no doubt, female nurses served the purpose better than male nurses, but under the conditions in Cairo he was informed this was not the case. The advantages of employing male nurses were there very manifest. The men employed were called orderlies, but in a very large number of

cases they were trained nurses. We note that Mr. Powell Williams made no attempt to define what he understands by a trained nurse, and until we have an official declaration as to what the Government understands by the term, the assertion that a large number of hospital orderlies are "trained nurses" will not be considered satisfactory by those who are aware of what constitutes the training of the majority of male orderlies. How many of these orderlies, for instance, have had three years' consecutive training in a general hospital? Yet, this was the "minimum period" of "thorough training" in the opinion of the House of Lords' Committee.

Sir Walter Foster, following Mr. Powell Williams, said that he regarded the explanation as very unsatisfactory. Such a condition as that to which attention had been called would not be tolerated in any hospital in this country, and it was one which did not reflect credit on the Army Medical Department, or the general administration of the Army. He considered that this state of things had been brought about by a foolish and petty economy, and he hoped they would not have a repetition of it in any future campaign.

Captain Norton, who pointed out that the hospitals at Cairo and Alexandria were so overcrowded that the authorities were obliged to pitch tents in their vicinity—the very worst place possible—moved a reduction of the vote of £1,211,900, by £100, as a protest against the mismanagement in this matter.

Thirty-nine members voted in support of this amendment.

While entirely agreeing with Sir Walter Foster and Mr. Pirie, that any want of provision for the due care of the sick and wounded, from monetary considerations, is false and petty economy, we cannot consider economy as the reason for the neglect in the present instance. We recorded at the time, and we again draw attention to the fact, that at the commencement of the Soudan Campaign a munificent offer was made to the Government of £50,000 for the organization of an efficient nursing service in connection with the war, and that this offer was refused. The condition of affairs at Cairo and Alexandria, therefore, was due, not to "false and petty economy," but, presumably, to the fact that those to whom the organization of the proposed nursing service would have been entrusted were not *personæ gratæ* with the Government and the War Office. It is well, when attention is being called to the mismanagement, and that it is being to some extent condoned on the plea of a desire for economy, that the country should remember this generous offer, and its refusal by the Government.

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