

Annotations.

THE EFFECT OF THE WAR IN RELATION TO NURSING.

Now that the war is over and we can review its effect in relation to nursing as a whole, the experiences gained in its course stand out in bold relief. It has driven home, as no amount of pleading in time of peace could have done, the paramount necessity for a complete re-organisation of the Army Nursing System, so that we may hope, not only in the case of another war—which we hope may not occur in our life-time—but also in time of peace—our sick soldiers may receive as efficient nursing as sick civilians.

For years this journal had been pointing out that our system of military nursing was obsolete and ineffective, thoughtful and experienced nurses, notably the members of the Matrons' Council, had been urging the same thing; still, the Army Medical Department, which had complete control of the Army Nursing Department, went on as is the wont of Government Departments in the same old ruts, regardless of advice founded on the experience of those who were qualified to give it.

But the first few weeks of the war proved the inherent rottenness of the Army Nursing system, and not only the débacle made public by Mr. Burdett Coutts, but the observations of every thoughtful person confirmed this view. The result is that years before we could otherwise have gained it, the complete re-organization of our Military Nursing Service is now in process. The authorities have at length realized the co-operation of experienced nurses in the control of this Service as essential, and with the warm personal interest of Her Majesty the Queen, and with so strong and able a woman as Miss Sidney Browne as Matron-in-Chief, the outlook for the future is most hopeful. Years of endeavour in time of peace could not have driven home the need for re-organization as the bitter lesson of the war has done. It seems almost inevitable that Government Departments should fail to avail themselves of the practical knowledge of those who have graduated in the school of experience, and that it is only when this is confirmed by untoward experiences, involving often a needless loss of life, that their advice is acted upon.

Out of all the mistakes of the war in regard to nursing matters, no less has come than the complete reorganization of Army Nursing. In regard to a scheme which in its broad outlines

is so excellent we wish to strike no discordant note on matters of detail. We desire however to point out that in at least two particulars, one in relation to the position of the Principal Matrons, and the other to that of the nurses themselves, there are two suggestions in the present scheme which, if adopted, will undermine the discipline, and consequently the well-being, of the new Service. The trained Matrons on the Nursing Board will, no doubt, realise these defects at once, and substitute more practical recommendations.

THE DECREASE OF SMALLPOX.

Mr. Augustus C. Sewell, Chairman of the Hospitals Committee, at Saturday's meeting of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, made an interesting statement relative to the smallpox epidemic. The rate of proper smallpox mortality came out at 16.1 per cent., the actual mortality, including infants, being 16.7 per cent. Thus out of those admitted one in six, or thereabouts, had died. The disease was steadily decreasing, and he thought during the next three months they might look for a still further decrease. Since August last year there had been, in the Metropolitan area, 7,500 cases, and taking the population of London, that gave an incidence of one patient in every 615 persons. He wished to lay stress on that fact for one particular reason. He knew, from his own personal knowledge, there were some people who would not come to the Metropolis for fear of smallpox, and he wished to say there really were no grounds to justify such a fear. If smallpox came again it was quite certain they would be able to accommodate between 3,000 and 4,000 persons. Even at the present moment they could accommodate 1,800 patients, and the maximum number under treatment at any one time had been 1,604. There are now about 1,300 cases remaining under treatment in London. We regret to learn that during the whole epidemic the supply of thoroughly trained nurses has been less than the demand. This we consider a decided reflection on the nursing profession as a whole.

THE X RAYS AND CANCER CURE.

It is stated that experiments made with X rays on eggs indicate that the rays destroy the germ cells, thus preventing incubation. It has been deduced, therefore, that the cure of cancer and consumption by means of the rays will be permanent, not merely temporary.

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