

The Advance of the Nursing Service of the Army.

The official announcement that the pay, and, consequently, the pensions, of the members of Queen Alexandra's Military Nursing Service have been increased, an abstract of which we publish elsewhere, is one which will afford extreme satisfaction to the nursing world. The increase in members, and the enhanced responsibilities, a problem the solution of which was undertaken by Mr. Brodrick's Reorganisation Committee, and completed by the Nursing Board, represents not only an advance in the evolution of the Nursing Service of the Army, but guarantees a distinct increase in the efficiency of Military Hospitals in peace and in war. It is right that a Service which makes such large demands upon the capacity of the nursing profession, and in which so high a standard has been set up and maintained, should be prepared to offer rates of remuneration equivalent to the requirements. It is undeniable that the attractions of the Military Nursing Service are great, and that the sentiments which it inspires in women have no parallel elsewhere in the nursing world. It is at once a Service devoted to the interests of the sick, of the soldier, and of the country. It incidentally affords opportunities for travel and for that cosmopolitan experience which the Army alone gives; it provides for the nurse in particular that clinical experience in tropical diseases which now occupies so much attention in this country, and which in proportion to the extension of our Colonies will assume a more definite importance in the near future. If it is essentially a department of the State upon which is imposed a large share in the mitigation of the evils of war, the wide horizon which the experience of its members in peace affords gives the surest guarantee of its efficiency in war. It has been too often assumed that the field of experience in the Army is limited. We cannot express our concurrence with this view. The experience of the work in large Military Hospitals, in which alone the members of Q.A.I.M.N.S. work, is to the contrary, and if further proofs were required they are sufficiently afforded by a perusal of the annual statistics of the Royal Army Medical Corps. The expansion of our Empire and the maintenance of our military forces abroad imposes a sad tax upon our troops, far exceeding in magnitude anything which we, who stay at home, imagine. But it

is to be feared that in the past the incidental attractions which the Army affords have served partly to supply the place of emoluments commensurate with its responsibilities. This can no longer be said. It now offers rates of pay and pensions which are attractive as compared to the ordinary rates in existence in civil life, and affords to any lady highly trained and educated one of the most honourable of all the careers open to women.

Hostile criticism in abundance has of late been launched against the War Office. It would be ungenerous in us not to recognise the determined effort which has been made, even to the extent of providing funds to the amount of some £60,000 per annum, to promote nursing efficiency. It has not been considered sufficient to enlarge the scope of the duties of Army Nurses and to impose upon the members of the Nursing Service increased responsibilities. The State has accepted its due share of the burden involved in profiting by the lessons which the recent war has taught.

The rôle which the Army Nurse fills is not, we believe, fully appreciated by her civil sister. The adaptation of nursing knowledge and nursing administration to the problems of war is her mission. Her varied experience of military life in the different countries where she serves, her acquaintance with problems which so constantly arise in connection with preparation for war, mark her as an expert bearing a definite relation to public affairs of which we have no counterpart in civil life.

If her department has been hitherto small, and its influence upon military medical efficiency consequently slight, its experience has been sufficient to form the basis for the constructive policy which the past two years has seen in operation. The development of the department, the widening of its activities, and the extension of its importance to the Military Service, offers a career to any woman of capacity who is prepared to toil in establishing the great principles involved. For the duties imposed upon the modern military nurse are extensive. In war the duties in ambulance trains, in hospital ships, in stationary hospitals, and in general hospitals, always different and ever varying, present a strong contrast to the immutable conditions of peace.

The requisite possession of qualities adequate to the performance of duties in war, the ready adaptability to conditions oftentimes necessarily adverse, mark the characteristic qualities

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