

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not in ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

THE ARMY NURSING SERVICE RESERVE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—My attention has been drawn to a paragraph in the Editorial note commenting on a letter from the Chairman of the London Hospital in this week's BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

This paragraph, which may be misunderstood by those of the public not intimately acquainted with the matters under discussion, reads as follows :

"So far as the supply of trained nurses recruited by the War Office is concerned, it has fallen far short of the requirements, and the Volunteer Territorial Force Nursing Service has been called upon to supply a large number of nurses for our Expeditionary Hospitals abroad, and many other nurses have been hastily engaged by the Matron-in-Chief."

May I, as one who is able to speak with full knowledge of the subject referred to, be permitted to make this matter clear.

It is entirely accurate that many members of the Territorial Force Nursing Service have been transferred for service abroad but happily this is in no way due to a shortage of nurses available for the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve. Under the existing Regulations of the T.F.N.S., twelve members from the staff of each of the twenty-three Base Hospitals may volunteer for foreign service.

On mobilisation each Principal Matron was instructed to submit forthwith to the Matron-in-Chief T.F.N.S. names of members of her staff desirous of volunteering for service abroad, and it is to the courtesy and kindness of Miss Becher, R.R.C., Matron-in-Chief Q.A.I.M.N.S., that such members as have been selected were privileged to serve with the Expeditionary Force, in the early days of the War, and not as is stated in this paragraph owing to a shortage of nurses available on the War Office Reserve. I may add that it is a great source of pride, joy and even comfort to those of us whose duty it is to remain at home to feel that these members have been working from the first in our name at the Front and winning for our Service no small measure of respect and appreciation.

I read with considerable surprise that any misconception should exist as to there being a sufficient supply of fully trained nurses available for enrolment in the Army Nursing Service Reserve. As such a misconception is likely to cause considerable anxiety in the mind of the public it would be well, by a clear statement of figures, to correct it. Under instructions from the War Office a Reserve of 652 members was maintained in times of peace to be immediately

ready for service when required. This Reserve was on the Declaration of War at full strength.

January, 1915, its numbers had been increased to 1,750. At the present time about 190 more members have been called up for duty and yet there are still over 200 fully qualified ladies already recruited and available immediately their services are required. Furthermore this number is being added to week by week. In the early days of the War telegrams were received by the Matron-in-Chief, Q.A.I.M.N.S. many times a day requisitioning additional nurses both for foreign and home service. I am able to say with authority on no single occasion has there been even delay in supplying the full number of nurses asked for. As one of the Civil Matrons on the Army Nursing Board, and a member of the Selecting Sub-committee may I say that the word "hastily" cannot justly be applied to the selection of those ladies who offer themselves for enrolment in the Reserve. The Selecting Committee meets weekly, when the records and qualification of each candidate are most carefully considered.

I must apologise for the length of this letter, but it seemed necessary that these facts should be made known.

I am, yours faithfully,

R. A. COX DAVIES,

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Principal Matron No. 1 London General
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Nursing Board.*

[In criticising a paragraph, the context should not be omitted, otherwise argument based upon it, is in our opinion apt to mislead rather than enlighten the public; our esteemed correspondent will therefore excuse our referring once more to the crux of the argument between Lord Knutsford and ourselves, in recent issues of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING. It is quite simple and characteristic. The Chairman of the London Hospital disapproves of a Volunteer Territorial Force Nursing Service, and we strongly approve the principle of nurses exercising individual freedom of action concerning their own affairs in this connection.

In an editorial note to correspondence we wrote the sentence to which Miss Cox Davies takes exception—but from which the following context from the paragraph was omitted—"we repeat that if our Volunteer Nursing Service had not been available chaos would have been the result in military nursing organization on the declaration of War"—a statement which, we repeat, is incontestable, as proved by the statistics placed before us by Miss Cox Davies.

She informs us that in August last, when War was declared, 652 nurses—the full strength of the Army Nursing Reserve maintained by the War Office was available, but surely it is not seriously advanced that 652 Reserve nurses were sufficient to meet the crisis, had the 2,116 certificated nurses of the Territorial Force Nursing Service, who were at once mobilised, not been at the disposal of the War Office! That during the

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