

18, 19, and 20 years of age have been in training and are being merged in the Army.

Every physically fit Frenchman from the age of 18 to 45 is now a soldier; he may be a professor of science, a farmer, a marquis, an operatic singer, an *apache* (hooligan), or a priest. It is most difficult to distinguish which at first, especially when he is brought in on a stretcher, covered with mud, in his obsolete Napoleonic uniform. The safest thing under the circumstances is to address him as "Monsieur," a title which even the chimney-sweep in republican France claims for himself.

Corporals, sergeants, sergeant-majors are all *sous-officiers*, ranks they may have acquired during their three years' training, as our cadets do at Sandhurst or Woolwich, before they get their commissions.

**THE OFFICERS.**—There are two kinds or categories of officers in the French Army, viz.: *Les officiers de carrière* and *les officiers de métier*. The first become officers on leaving St. Cyr and the *Polytechnique*, where they qualify for artillery regiments or for the engineers (*le Génie*), which means very extensive and costly studies. (St. Mexaint is also for officers, but is an endowed or free education college and does not rank the same.) There are also several *chic* regiments, mainly cavalry, where the officers enter the Army as a career by choice. Otherwise, what are known as *officiers de métier*, are usually men who have risen from the ranks and are drawn from the same social stratum as our non-commissioned officers. The latter usually do not rise higher than the rank of full lieutenants and are employed for the training of the young army.

Thus it frequently happens that the *simple soldat* is far more interesting and comes from a nicer home than the officer. But woe betide any one who does not make the official difference. Officers must have a separate bedroom, so many courses and so much wine! I have known them as particular of their rights as the most exacting workhouse patients! In hospital you may ask a *simple soldat* to sweep or do menial work, but anyone from a *caporal* up is exempt. The slightest orders have to be given in the most courteous way.

There are very many combatant priests, but very many of the older ones and those physically unfitted to fight have been made use of as *infirmiers* in the hospitals. Their previous work in their villages as *curés*, or in town parishes amongst the sick, would have made them quite suitable for the work—far more so than untrained men who were sent to nurse the sick because they were on the auxiliary list, either through having attained the age-limit or through physical unfitness to fight. But the awkwardness of the situation must be intolerable sometimes, as, from a military point of view, they rank as soldiers and as such rank as *infirmiers de deuxième classe*, and have to work under sergeants who frequently take great pleasure in bossing them, though they know nothing about their allotted work. The position of the English nurses under these circumstances, coupled with

the amateur nursing of the French ladies, has required the utmost fortitude and patience. Tact, of course, goes a good way, but when tact comes to a dead hard wall, the only thing to do is to put one's back against it and hold the fort with the same British tenacity the Tommies have shown in the trenches.

French habits and customs, the absence of organised military hospitals and nursing staffs, the shortage of nursing requisites, of dressings, of medicines—in fact, the pitiable lack of cleanliness, of hygiene, and of sanitary arrangements have been hard facts to face. The position, too, of the English nurse is not easily understood. She is nursing for pay, for her livelihood; who can she be in her home and her country that she should have placed herself in these circumstances? The English V.A.D.'s who have arrived with their cars and dispense favours to the wounded are quite a different matter; but even these kind ladies are not looked upon with much favour by the French ladies of the Croix Rouge. "Why have they come to nurse our wounded?" they say. "We are quite capable of doing so ourselves."

Still, many of the English nurses have been appreciated by the doctors, and certainly by the patients themselves, especially so when they can speak French and know something of Continental ways.

I think, if we put ourselves in the place of the French, we should feel as they do.

EDLA R. WORTABET.

## FRENCH FLAG NURSING CORPS.

The seven following nurses will leave London on Friday for Bordeaux, to complete the staff of the Talence Hospital: Miss Ethel Grindon, cert. St. Leonard's Infirmary, Shoreditch; Miss Jessie Cumming, cert. Firvale Hospital, Sheffield; Miss Martha E. Morris, cert. The Birmingham Infirmary; Miss Gladys K. D. Johnston, cert. Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford; Miss Katherine M. O'Leary, cert. County and City Infirmary, Waterford; Miss Elizabeth M. Scott, cert. Royal Infirmary, Perth; and Miss Margaret Scott, cert. The Birmingham Infirmary.

The nurses' quarters at Talence are now open, and the staff find the cubicles much more comfortable than the open wards in which they previously slept. But everywhere under cover is far more comfortable than the terrible trenches in which the men who are fighting our battles are interned for days at a time, so no true nurse expects any sort of luxury in these hard times.

Dr. Dundas Grant has again most kindly gone to France, as far as Bordeaux this time, to see if he can in any way help the good cause of the F.F.N.C., and he will learn if a proposal to organise units of trained and certificated Fever Nurses for service in Infectious Diseases Hospitals will meet with the approval of the *Médecins de Santé* in the various regions.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)