

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,410.

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1915.

Vol. LIV

EDITORIAL.

ARBITRARY ACTION.

There are evidences on all sides that, in the immediate future, there will be a great demand on the resources of the nursing profession to meet the needs of the sick and wounded brought back to the hospitals in this country from the battlefields abroad. It is a demand which appeals to all nurses, and we have no doubt whatever that the nursing profession will rise to the occasion, and will do their utmost to meet an exceptional situation with exceptional service.

The needs of Belgium, France, and Serbia for skilled nursing are even greater than our own, for trained nursing, as we understand it, has only recently begun to be understood in those countries, and, further, we must not forget that it is on their soil that our battles are at present being fought, and that there is corresponding distress in the devastated regions which to us, so far, is unknown.

It is sympathy not only with our own brave soldiers, but with all who are fighting for liberty and freedom, which has made some British nurses anxious to place their skilled services at the disposal of our allies, and grateful for the opportunities which have been afforded them for so doing. The right of professional and industrial workers to engage to serve where and whom they choose is, in our opinion, incontestable. Just as the feeling in the British Empire has always been against conscription for the army, so we believe it is against compulsory service for nurses, preferring that they should be free to offer their services where they choose, and, until legislation is enacted decreeing otherwise, we believe they have a perfect right to do so.

It will therefore be a surprise to many that, acting under instructions from the War Office, issued, we are informed on the

first of this month, members of the French Flag Nursing Corps, engaged in accordance with arrangements made by the French Minister of War to serve in Military Hospitals in France, were prevented by a British Red Cross official, and a Scotland Yard detective, from leaving Victoria with this object on April 2nd, though their passports, issued by the Foreign Office, were absolutely in order. The nurses thus summarily treated were requested to present themselves at the head quarters of the British Red Cross Society at 83, Pall Mall, S.W., and a car placed at their disposal for that purpose. The reason of their detention was there explained to them to be that the War Office needed the services of all trained nurses whose qualifications conformed to its requirements, and therefore objected to any such nurses leaving the country except under urgent conditions.

Every one will sympathise with the War Office desire to secure the services of well trained nurses, but so arbitrary an interference with the rights of the members of a skilled women's profession, to make contracts as they choose, cannot pass unchallenged.

Before taking such action the War Office authorities should, in any case, have given the widest publicity in the press to its intentions, and should have instructed its representatives to present to each nurse a copy of the order under which she was detained. It did neither.

What action are trained nurses going to take in this matter? In our opinion they should not submit to such arbitrary treatment without further explanation.

The discourteous action of the British Red Cross Society, in connection with the police, appears to us inexcusable in the present instance, as the nurses in question have been accorded the honourable position of officers in the French Army by the Minister for War of an Allied Power.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)