

## THE SHADOW OF EFFICIENCY.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—Your reference to *The Englishwoman's* refusal to insert an article by the Hon. Albinia Brodrick has just been brought to our notice.

If the article had been as your wording suggests on "Nursing in Military Auxiliary Hospitals," we should have been glad to publish it, though Miss Brodrick takes a different view from *The Englishwoman* as to the reality of the present shortage of nurses and the necessity of utilising workers who are not fully trained. But the article in question which was entitled, if my recollection serves me, "Cheap and ——" began with strictures on amateur nursing in the Boer War and made serious charges unsupported by references to persons, places and witnesses, against titled directresses of Hospitals and untrained ladies masquerading as nurses at the present time. Miss Brodrick replied to our claim that we were entitled to ask for facts in support of her opinions (which are not ours) that the facts were too private for publication.

*The Englishwoman*, as its readers know, has consistently supported the efforts of the nursing profession to maintain and to raise its status. It cannot undertake to be a medium for unsupported grave charges which if they are to be brought at all must be most fully substantiated, nor can it continue to grasp at the shadow of efficiency represented by the claim that none but three-year trained nurses shall attend our wounded when official figures make it clear that any such limitations would result in dangerous understaffing and disastrous overstrain for the available professional nurses.

Yours faithfully,

E. M. GOODMAN,

Editor "*Englishwoman*."

[We have carefully read *The Englishwoman* since the commencement of the war, and fail to find any article whatever dealing with the inevitable need for economic organisation of the nursing profession during war. In September an article appeared on the "Untrained Nurse in National Emergency," written by the foreign untrained editor of a commercial paper for nurses, which is, of course, a plea for the untrained nurse in war. And other paragraphs which have since appeared maintain the same policy. We would ask the editor of *The Englishwoman* to what "official figures" she alludes which make it clear that if none but three years' trained nurses attend our wounded, "such limitations would result in dangerous understaffing and disastrous overstrain for the available professional nurses."

The fact is that no attempt whatever has been made by those responsible for the nursing in military hospitals to consult the nursing profession, no statistics of any sort have been sought or tabulated. One fact alone has been made public, and that is that those who have grasped a monopoly

of the nursing of wounded soldiers have determined to pay only half the market value of trained nursing, so that the hundreds, if not thousands, of working women, who cannot afford to work at half-price, are thus eliminated from a State Service, and the supply artificially restricted.

This is a serious economic fact, and in our opinion the duty of a journal such as *The Englishwoman*, which professes to support the political and economic equality of the sexes, would be better employed in supporting just conditions for members of the nursing profession than in encouraging the disorganisation of our nursing schools with short term pupils, thus undermining the whole economic structure of trained nursing.

No one has claimed that "only three years' trained nurses" shall work in military hospitals, but we trained nurses do claim that if probationers are admitted it shall be on the usual terms on which they are admitted to general hospitals, and that they shall be under strict professional tuition and discipline.

As to dangerous understaffing and disastrous overstrain for the available professional nurses, the proposal to decrease the skilled nursing staff by one-third in military hospitals, and substitute untrained members of V.A.D.'s, will, we have no doubt, produce disastrous overstrain of professional nurses. The only excuse for unskilled workers in military hospitals is that they should be supplementary, but that is not the suggestion of the Army Nursing authorities, they have decreed that they shall be substitutes.

As to "titled directresses of hospitals, and untrained ladies, masquerading as nurses," the assumption of the direction of a highly skilled profession and of scientific institutions by women totally untrained, and therefore incompetent, is nothing short of a scandal, which *The Englishwoman* would do well to discourage if it desires to maintain its claim to "bring before the cultured public the case for the enfranchisement of women" — a claim which can only be founded and maintained on sound economic conditions.—ED.]

## FRENCH FLAG NURSING CORPS.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick will interview candidates for the French Flag Nursing Corps at 431, Oxford Street, on Friday, April 23rd, and Monday, April 26th, from 2.30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

May 1st.—Describe fully what help in diagnosis can be obtained from (a) the colour of a patient's face, (b) expression, (c) the eyes, (d) position assumed.

May 8th.—At what season of the year is infant mortality the highest? How may it be lessened or prevented?

May 15th.—Give a classification of wounds. Describe three of the classes named.

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