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## Editorial.

### **\*One Hundred Years of Army Nursing. The Story of the British Army Nursing Services from the time of Florence Nightingale to the present day.**

By Ian Hay

(MAJOR-GENERAL JOHN HAY BEITH, C.B.E., M.C.)

IN THE STORY of the nurses who have administered to the Army sick and wounded in time of war, from the days of Florence Nightingale in the Crimea to the highly skilled organisation of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, the late Ian Hay has made a timely and signal contribution to the annals of the Nursing Profession.

To peruse "One Hundred Years of Army Nursing" is to experience breathless interest, admiration, and profound gratitude, as the writer traces the hazards suffered by those heroic nurses who have played so gallant a part in the nursing of the sick and wounded in every theatre of war of our far-flung Empire and beyond.

The first three chapters are devoted to a brief history which tells of Miss Nightingale's genius, the reforms she forced through and, ultimately, her creation of Modern Nursing.

In a Foreword Sir Alexander Hood, from Government House Bermuda, says: "Much of the progress of medicine is also implicit in these pages, for the story starts before anaesthetics were in general use, before Lister paved the way for modern surgery, when hospitals were hotbeds of infection, when pain and death held sway. And so to the days of blood transfusion, modern anaesthesia, penicillin. . . ."

Coming now to the time of the South African War the writer says: "The South African War—the Great Boer War, as it afterwards became to be called—is but a dim memory now to those who lived through it. To those generations whose conception of warfare is based on the earth-shaking struggles of 1914–18 and 1939–45, it must appear as the merest affair of outposts." Nevertheless, the South African War saw a further increased development and efficiency of the Army Nursing Services. The conditions of the base hospitals . . . a vast improvement upon those of the Crimean War then forty years ago. "Firstly, anaesthetics were now available and in general use; secondly, scrupulous cleanliness everywhere was an accepted canon of hospital management

and not merely regarded as a private obsession of Miss Nightingale's! and thirdly, the Nursing Sisters themselves were all women highly qualified both by training and character."

On March 27th, 1902, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service was established (by Royal Warrant) and in 1908 the old Princess Christian's Army Nursing Reserve was replaced by Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve. Then in the same year a Territorial Army Nursing Serv-



General Plumer presenting Military Medals to Army Sisters for bravery when their hospital was bombed, Blendecques, June 1, 1918.

(Imperial War Museum.)

ice came into being and after the passing of the Nurses Registration Act, 1919, Nurses were required to pass an examination set by the General Nursing Council.

It is the two World Wars which absorb the remainder and greater part of this highly documented history of which a poignant feature is the recording from the Sisters' own Diaries of their experiences when serving in hospitals, field stations and hospital trains in each area in which the Q.A.s served.

In the 1914–18 War, Dame Ethel Becher served as Matron-in-Chief throughout the War—and Dame Maud

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