

able me to convince the writer that we are earnest in our efforts, and that we could, if efficient, accomplish good work.

Supposing we can carry our plan into execution, I think it would be quite impossible for any of our members, even if desirous of deceiving the public into the belief that they were trained and qualified Nurses, to succeed in doing so, because its mere title of Women's Volunteer Medical Staff Corps would indicate that all its members were trained in accordance with the Regulations for the Army Medical Service, Part II., which is the Manual for the Medical Staff Corps. The training here prescribed is a very definite one, including only sufficient instruction to enable them to carry out their special duties.

These duties in war consist of furnishing bearer companies, to carry the wounded from the field, &c., to the dressing stations, and thence, after first dressing, to the field hospitals. They receive elementary instruction in rendering first aid, &c., but act under the direction of the Staff Surgeons. If the men's illness is of such a nature as to necessitate their removal to the Base Hospital, the Medical Staff Corps provides means of transport, tending them in every way on the journey until their arrival at the seat of war, where they first receive the advantage of the presence of the Army Nursing Sisters. The duties of these Sisters include the training of the men of the regular Medical Staff Corps in military hospitals to act as orderlies in carrying out their instructions in Nursing. The Volunteers also receive, from time to time, the advantage of some experience and instruction in the hospitals, and we hope, if worthy, to be allowed to share the same privilege. Any civil Nurses who volunteer in case of war would take rank with these Sisters, and would, therefore, superintend the services of any of the proposed corps with whom they might come into contact.

These Nursing Sisters never go nearer the scene of action than the Base Hospital, and are naturally fitted by training only for Nursing duties. It is thus conceivable that the War Office might have thousands more volunteer Nurses than they could employ in case of war, and yet that great suffering might be entailed on the sick and wounded for want of sufficient numbers of the Medical Staff Corps men. Our idea is, therefore, that as women's physical education has been greatly improved of late years, they are rendered capable of performing more arduous duties for the community than they have hitherto been able to fulfil. We believe there is a field for good work in the subordinate medical service of the country, and if our reasoning is just, and our efforts meet with public approval, we hope to become as useful a body as the men's Volunteer Medical Staff Corps; for we shall go through the same training, and shall pretend as little as they do to be trained and qualified Nurses.

I have supposed a case of war in a foreign country; but, of course, the services required of the Medical Staff Corps would be similar in case of a defensive war at home, in which Volunteers, as such, would be more certainly engaged. They would also be useful in supplementing other bodies on public ceremonial occasions.

In conclusion, I should like to point out that as our training is different from that of a Nurse, so are the duties required of us; and that if we are to succeed in carrying out the above scheme, we shall have to be the reverse of superficial. The usefulness of the Corps depends very greatly on its self-dependence; it has its own arrangements for cooking, camping, transport, &c.; and we shall not be satisfied unless we can provide for the performance of all necessary operations by some members of the Corps. The mending of carriages, harness, and tents, shoeing of horses, &c., must be provided for. And we are determined that, if we are to fail, superficiality, at any rate, shall not be the cause of our failure.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

THE HON. SECRETARY W. V. M. S. C.

March 17th.

WE give publicity to this letter because we consider that the scheme proposed in it is so preposterous that nothing further is necessary for its condemnation by all reasonable persons than that its proposals shall be made plain. It is foredoomed, not only to ridicule, but to failure. Strongly as we shall always uphold the equality of man and woman before the civil law, we bow to the great and indisputable laws of nature, and recognise the *physical* inferiority of the female sex.

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In relation to this subject a correspondent writes:—

"The age of chivalry is not dead, but it has broken out in a new and strange development. No reproaches now await the carpet knight. His liege lady is only too anxious to take his devoirs on herself. In time of battle, murder, and sudden death, it has hitherto been the chief concern of men to keep women out of danger; but '*Nous avons changé tout cela.*' In future, a corps of women, properly equipped, duly instructed in musketry and drill—Heaven save the mark!—are to appear on the battlefield. The grandeur and self-abnegation of the idea is appalling; but, as we slowly recover from the shock, comes the question: What good purpose can this innovation serve? Reply is difficult; but had the reverse point been raised, as to the evils that would result, the answers are numerous. We might then urge that the presence of women in action would call off attention that should be concentrated on the enemy. Anxiety for their safety would not improve the steadiness or *morale* of the troops. Or it might happen that feminine nerve would give way, and the first shower of bullets send these heroic ladies flying; and this would, perhaps, be the most fitting end to their martial ambitions. But if they stand firm, suppose that for one ('Tell it not in Gath') that feminine prowess failed, the corps might be decimated, and the wounded soldiers be deprived of tender womanly ministrations at the supreme moment. Another point that strikes us is the utter uselessness of the whole proceeding, since it is well known that soldiers—surely better fitted for this duty—are always detached for the purpose of bringing in the wounded. Women are invaluable in their own sphere, but unsexed if they step from it. Useful, indeed priceless, in the Hospital, they would be useless in the field. If they will not heed this word of counsel, we can only hope that a split may arise in the feminine corps on the much debated question of the most becoming uniform."

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THE following from last week's *Times* will not be agreeable reading for the anti-vaccinationists:—"A striking illustration of the value of vaccination is afforded by the recent experience of the Nurses at the Birmingham Workhouse and the Workhouse Infirmary. The two Institutions are contiguous to the City Smallpox Hospital, and the Guardians, therefore, deemed it prudent, on the recent outbreak of the smallpox epidemic, to have the Nurses vaccinated. Two of the Nurses, one in the Workhouse and one in the Workhouse Infirmary, refused to submit to the operation. The one in the Workhouse caught the disease and died about two months ago. The one in the Workhouse Infirmary was also seized, and her case ended fatally on Saturday morning. None of the Nurses who were vaccinated have been affected."

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