

### Hear both Sides.

LAST week we published a letter from a nurse correspondent, in which she politely differed from the views of Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee, on Army Nursing Organisation. This week we reprint from the *Trained Nurse* Dr. McGee's opinion on this subject. It is scarcely needful to say that, as a trained nurse, we strongly endorse the views of our nurse correspondent. Any profession, worthy of the name, should be controlled by its own members, and it is just as reasonable to hold that solicitors should be controlled by the Bar, or the Army by the Navy, as that the profession of nursing should be controlled by that of medicine.

#### STANDARD FOR ARMY NURSES.

ANITA NEWCOMB MCGEE, M.D.

THE war is over, and the army is gradually being adapted to the new conditions which we face. Gradually, too, the nursing service of the army is being perfected, improved and organized on a permanent basis such as will make it attractive to the best class of nurses. One of the first and most important questions to be considered in the connection is, What shall constitute eligibility for army nursing? and it is this matter which I wish through the medium of the *Trained Nurse*, to bring to the attention of the nurses of the country. To make the significance of this problem clear, it is necessary to begin with a brief retrospect.

As early as February, last year, officers of the Government began to receive applications from women who wished to serve as nurses during the approaching war, and all these papers found their way to the files of the Surgeons-General of the Army and Navy. The first step towards the employment of women in this capacity was taken by General George M. Sternberg, Surgeon-General of the Army, who applied to the United States Congress for the necessary authority and appropriation. This was granted in April, and I cannot refrain from adding here that this fact, though generally ignored or unknown, is one which the nurses of this country ought never to forget. Without this far-seeing action by this officer, there would have been no women army nurses.

It was in April also that I learned of the hundreds of applications that were pouring in, and that there was then neither officer nor clerk who could be spared to give them even a cursory examination.

The necessity for the establishment of a standard which should give only to graduate nurses the official recognition of the Government appealed strongly to me. I was then a Vice-President of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and I at once proposed

to that organization that it should offer its services to the Surgeons-General of both the Army and Navy as an examining board for women nurses. My plan was adopted, the offer made and immediately accepted, and the "D. A. R. Hospital Corps" was organized. There were three officers, besides myself as Director, and from our 25,000 Daughters, committees to aid us were formed in all parts of the country. From the end of April to September 7th, every application from a woman who wanted to be a Government nurse was examined by us and tested by our standards. Our large organization was admirably adapted to this work, as our committees were able to see the applicants, and to testify to their character and reputation. In fact, however, the popular supposition that the Daughters were "chosen" for this work has no basis in fact. No other person or organization offered to examine and test all applicants. Had the Daughters not done this, there would have been no such thing as an "Army standard."

The trained nurses who volunteered through their own professional organizations, were far too limited in number for the needs which developed; and for many other reasons which there is no space to detail here, it would not have been possible to limit the appointments to such applicants. Every one of the societies that offered to supply nurses, excepting, of course, the professional organizations and the Daughters, accepted as eligible both trained and untrained women. The assistance of all these societies was cordially welcomed, but it was always plainly stated that no applicant should receive an appointment who did not conform to our standards.

To be placed on the eligible list during the past summer, a nurse must have been graduated from a training school, and have the endorsement of the present superintendent of that school; or the one under whom she was trained. Endorsements from physicians were received in most cases, and besides these, the endorsement of some lady of known standing was requested. As the easiest way of obtaining this certificate of good reputation, the nurses were usually endorsed by some member of the D. A. R. Distinction was always made between this simple "request" and the "must" applied to the endorsement from the superintendent. The original age limit was 30 to 50 years, and even after the demand became very large, few nurses of less than 23 or 24 years of age were accepted. A requirement which was not demanded at the outset of the work, but the necessity for which soon became apparent, was a physician's certificate that the applicant was well and strong enough for army duty.

By order of the Surgeon-General, the nurses sent to Santiago in July and August were all immune to yellow fever. Very few of these

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