

Secretary, Dr. Bezly Thorne, in which he says:—

"On Friday last the Princess summoned me to attend a conference with herself and Brigade Surgeon Evatt on the subject of the Army Sisters and nurses, and I now have the pleasure to enclose you a brief memorandum of the conference, which H.R.H. asked me to convey to you. . . . It was proposed on Friday that the Brigade Surgeon should deliver a lecture on the subject of the scheme, *after this has been elaborated*, to the Corporation and others, and under our auspices, at which H.R.H. should be present. Both at once fell in with this idea, and I now submit it to you for consideration."

I "considered" the memorandum, and requested Dr. Thorne to call upon me to discuss it, and in a letter dated April 2nd, 1894, he arranged to "be with you between 2.30 and 4 to-morrow, or soon after 4 on Wednesday," and adds, "I am awaiting a scheme, 'up to date,' which Col. Evatt has promised to send me"!!

In the memoranda enclosed it is suggested—
"The War Office not to be approached until the scheme has been elaborated and initiated."

The history of this movement from this time forth is that of every scheme primarily suggested by the nurse members of the Association and, as he expresses it, "seized upon with avidity" by Dr. Bezly Thorne. Col. Evatt attended our Committee and generously placed his expert experience at the disposal of the Association. A few weeks later, the Regulations were drawn up, and excellent some of them were. "The Reserve of Nurses" was definitely organized and reported by me in this journal in May and July, 1894, and the thanks of the Corporation were officially offered to those who had helped to inaugurate the scheme at the General Council Meeting in July, 1894. Nurses were placed upon the Roll, and a Special Committee was appointed to carry out the details.

The disgust of the pioneers of this movement when they became aware, in 1896, that Dr. Bezly Thorne, without consulting the members of the Special Committee, had, in conjunction with Sir John Furley and others, formed a new Committee *outside the Nurses' Association*, for the purpose of organizing an Army Nursing Reserve, can be well imagined. The methods adopted by Dr. Bezly Thorne for wrenching all the power and authority in nursing affairs from the nurses themselves, had ceased to cause any surprise. His system of absorbing the ideas of others, and impudently claiming them as his own, had long ere this gained for him the soubriquet of the "Cuckoo."

His present efforts, therefore, will only excite ridicule amongst those who know the facts. What is much more serious is the failure of the Army Nursing Reserve—and for that failure Dr. Bezly Thorne must be held largely responsible—to fulfil the great work which it might have done for the nation in the present crisis of its history. A searching investigation is impending into the whole Army Nursing question, and then there will be exposed both the method in which the Nursing Reserve was manipulated, and, in consequence of ignorance and incapacity, the manner in which it has failed to perform the full measure of its possible usefulness.

E. G. F.

The Time and the Woman.

Having been invited by the *Morning Leader* (one of the few papers which did not exclude the truth from the public in relation to the R.B.N.A. scandals) for a signed expression of opinion as a nursing expert on the charges of Mr. Burdett-Coutts, we had pleasure in forwarding the following letter, which goes to the root of the question:—

AN ARMY NURSING RESERVE.

To the Editor of *The Morning Leader*.

SIR,—The terrible condition in which Mr. W. Burdett-Coutts found hundreds of our sick soldiers at Bloemfontein, and which he has described in the *Times*, appears to have caused the public a rude shock. Why? Is it possible that the public knows so little of the organisation of the medical and nursing arrangements in connection with the War Office that it was unprepared for a complete breakdown in South Africa should any excessive strain be laid upon those arrangements? The revelations made by Mr. Burdett-Coutts have caused no surprise in the nursing world.

It is now 11 years ago since I first drew the attention of the War Office to the urgent need of an Army Nursing Reserve. Later (in 1894) I brought the matter before the Royal British Nurses' Association. In due course the suggestion was adopted, but it is deeply to be regretted that in the organisation of the scheme of an Army Nursing Reserve those trained nurses, whose experience would have been invaluable, were excluded from any part in the management, with the result that

NO EFFICIENT SYSTEM

has been suggested and perfected in time of peace for use in time of war. The Army Nursing Service Reserve Committee, having failed to suggest any system of efficient education for nurse volunteers, or to demand even a certificate of training from its members, proved its total incapacity to deal with this most important national work. The fact that the accredited number of female nurses deputed for active service in a general hospital of 500 beds in South Africa was only nine is conclusive proof that neither the War Office nor the Reserve Committee grasped the first principles of modern nursing requirements.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)