

Realising this fact, in February last the Hospital Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland unanimously passed the following resolution, and forwarded it to the Secretary of State for War :

"That in the opinion of this council the system of nursing the sick in military hospitals is unsatisfactory and in need of reorganization. The Matrons' Council therefore petition the Secretary of State for War to receive members of that body as a deputation, so that they may be enabled to lay before him their views on the necessary reforms in the nursing department of this service."

So far Lord Lansdowne has begged to be excused from receiving a deputation, and thus the practical and expert knowledge of hospital matrons has not been available for the benefit of our sick soldiers.

Briefly I submit :

1. That the present Army Nursing Service in connection with the War Office is obsolete, and needs complete reorganisation to raise it to the modern standard of nursing efficiency.

2. That it is essential that a nursing department should be formed at the War Office, superintended by an experienced nurse as an executive officer ; and

3. That both the regular Army Nursing Service and the Army Nursing Reserve should be under the control of this department, both in times of peace and of war. The care of our sick soldiers

IS A SACRED DUTY,

which should not be deputed to unprofessional persons. Had such a department as that above suggested been in working order I have no doubt that 5,000 nursing sisters instead of 500 would have been dispatched to the seat of war to meet the inevitable requirements of an army of 200,000 men. No doubt we should have found these skilled sisters working, as they should do, in the field and station hospitals, as well as at the base. Wherever the sick soldier is to be found there should be the trained nurse.

I am also of opinion that nursing sisters should not only be deputed to perform the duties of superintendents, but that they should be engaged in military hospitals, in the practical service of the sick, on exactly the same lines as those which have proved so successful in our civil hospitals.

From the criticisms of Mr. Burdett-Coutts the absolute disorganisation of army nursing in South Africa becomes amply apparent. Is this surprising? Some 500 nurses have been turned loose at the seat of war, but there is no Central Nursing Department supervised by an executive nursing officer in the whole of South Africa directly responsible to the home authorities for the discipline of the nurses, and the efficiency of the nursing. I contend that it would be just as reasonable to expect the best results from our army—though individual members might perform prodigies of valor—in the absence of a Commander-in-Chief, as it is to expect efficiency in the nursing arrangements under the present system.

ARMY NURSING REFORM

is urgently necessary, and it is to be hoped that, now the nation realises the horrible suffering and loss of life entailed upon our brave soldiers by the present disastrous condition of affairs it will demand a searching inquiry into the organisation of the army medical and nursing arrangements at present in vogue at the War Office, and see to it that the necessary reforms are made.—Yours, &c.,

ETHEL GORDON FENWICK.

In the following leaderette we rejoice to see that the *Morning Leader* has grasped the most essential point in our argument—that an Army Nursing Department shall be under the control of an Executive Nursing Head, *about whose direct responsibility to the country (through the War Office) there shall be no doubt.*

"Few people who read the admirable letter from Mrs. Bedford Fenwick which we print in another column, will fail to agree with her that army nursing reform is now imperative. It is intensely exasperating to learn from Mrs. Fenwick that the collapse of the old system was considered not merely possible but certain by those whose professional experience entitled them to form a judgment. This experience was placed at the disposal and even pressed upon the attention of the War Office. It was disregarded with all the contempt which that institution shows for those who really understand their own business. Lord Lansdowne begged to be excused from taking advice. The attempt to meet the requirements of modern war with the antiquated resources of the department was again made, with what deplorable results we all know. The whole of the hospitals in the field were understaffed. The work of trained nurses was left to raw orderlies. Patients who would have otherwise recovered are dead. Now we may hope that something will be done. The new system, whatever it be, must at least follow Mrs. Fenwick's proposals to this extent, that it shall be under the control of a departmental head, about whose direct responsibility to the country there shall be no doubt. If we can once secure this it will be half the battle. The knowledge that there will be no escape from the nation's anger will avail, if the instincts of humanity will not, to prevent the wanton sacrifice of precious lives."

Gone to her Rest.

MOTHER MARY MAGDALEN TAYLOR, the foundress of the Providence Free Hospital, St. Helens (S.W. Lancashire), who died several days ago in her 69th year, was one of the noble band of nurses associated with Miss Florence Nightingale in her Crimean campaign of 1854—5. Her death has almost passed unnoticed—another instance of the world's worthiest workers living unobtrusively and dying almost in obscurity. The reverend mother was very young when she volunteered to nurse the sick and tend the wounded during the dark and horrible days of that terrible war period; but she turned her bitter experience to good account, and when she came back founded a sisterhood in London to nurse sick and wounded at home. In 1882 she went to St. Helens and opened a small hospital there. A year later Hardshaw Hall, an old private residence, was opened as a hospital by the late Cardinal Manning, who was wont to speak in high terms of the love and devotion in the cause of suffering humanity of its foundress.

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