

### Annotations.

#### THE ARMY NURSING FIASCO.

At the recent annual meeting of the R.B.N.A. Mr. Farden and Dr. Thorne made several untrue statements in eulogising the President, in relation to the Army Nursing Service Reserve. In fact this "successful organization" was as perfect as perfect as could be, and as both Mr. Farden and Dr. Thorne were in part organisers—not to say creators of the "idea"—naturally it did not appear possible to them that their organization could possess a flaw.

But all this jubilation took place a few days before Mr. Burdett Coutts made known through the medium of the *Times*, the lack of initiation, discipline, and order in the nursing arrangements at home which had resulted in the terrible neglect of our sick soldiers at the front, and their unspeakable suffering and needless deaths. Now that the truth is out, we are treated to one of those *volte faces* for which the official ring of the R.B.N.A. is so famous. The "successful organization" having been questioned, of course the Committee of the Reserve is in no way to blame, and we of course find them attempting to shuffle off their responsibility on the War Office, through the good offices of their valiant supporter, Sir Henry Burdett

In an interview with Mr. Burdett Coutts, published in Sir Henry Burdett's paper last week, we observe that the following conversation took place:—

MR. BURDETT COUTTS: "The truth is that the objections of the Army Medical Department to female nursing have permeated the very organization which was started to encourage it."

"You mean the Army Nursing Service Reserve?"

MR. BURDETT COUTTS: "Yes, unfortunately; the Department has introduced even there red tape and restrictive regulations which militate so greatly against female nursing. It is a striking commentary on the policy pursued that, owing to the Department not having sent out sufficient female nurses from home, they have had to take on a large number out there."

This information Mr. Burdett Coutts has presumably received from the Committee of the impugned "Reserve," and before accepting such assurances we must ask that Committee to be good enough to make public the Draft

Scheme for the reorganization of the Army Nursing Service, which we presume they duly laid before the Secretary of State for War, and which we gather has not received his consideration.

If on the contrary the Army Nursing Reserve Committee did *not* present any scheme for reform to the War Office, it is certainly in the highest degree reprehensible to endeavour to make the War Office responsible for its own ignorance and inefficiency.

The exact position of Army Nursing affairs is this—Lord Lansdowne, as Secretary of State for War, is responsible for the efficiency of the Army Nursing Service. And how does he maintain its efficiency? (1.) By ignoring the importance of nursing as a factor in the treatment of disease. There is no Nursing Department at the War Office with an Executive Nursing Head.

(2.) By placing the Volunteer Corps of Nurses under the control of a daughter of the Queen, who is not a trained nurse, is not therefore qualified for, and certainly should not be placed in, a position involving grave responsibility to the nation and possible public criticism. Ours is a constitutional monarchy, the Queen governs through her ministers who are held responsible to the nation. The present fiasco at the War Office presents the most undesirable spectacle of a Minister of State, supported by Parliament, handing over a section of his business to be controlled by a Royal Princess; who is in consequence involved in the national indignation at its failure, and the resulting suffering at the seat of war. But apparently now the Reserve Committee, presided over by Princess Christian, blames the War Office—that is to say, the Queen's Secretary of State—for the general mismanagement. Surely this is an entirely unconstitutional condition of affairs, and one which for the prestige both of Parliament and Royalty must be made impossible in the future.

We feel strongly upon this matter, because we have on previous occasions objected in these columns to the contemptuous carelessness, exhibited by the half-dozen medical men who are at present exploiting the nurses, for the constitutional arrangement which all loyal subjects of our revered Queen desire to strictly and jealously safeguard and preserve—the absolute abstention of the members of the Royal Family from public scandals.

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