

### Army Nursing Notes.

The press, and, in consequence, the entire nation, have, during the past week, written and talked of little else than the treatment of the wounded at the front, which at last has been thrown open for criticism by Mr. Burdett-Coutts' letter to the *Times*, describing what he saw at the front.

Since our last issue, the matter has been discussed in the Commons, and the vials of indignation and rage poured out, and the corruption of our latter-day party politics duly illustrated by the quibbling excuses made by Mr. Arthur Balfour in his undignified and partisan speech "that they (the opposition) wanted to extract from this episode, material for a party fight"; and further, his attempt to assume that, if the accusations were true, it was an attempt to blame Lord Roberts and the Generals in the field.

And now we come to think of it, Mr. Arthur Balfour may be more to blame for the crude condition of the Army Nursing Service than at first appears. Was it not Mr. Arthur Balfour who, as leader of the House of Commons, refused the desire of 70 Members of Parliament for "a searching enquiry into the whole Nursing Question"? Anyway, such a request, so supported, was presented in 1898, and Mr. Balfour knows by whose influence the late Sir William Priestley, Vice-President of the Royal British Nurses' Association, urged the refusal of the inquiry. No doubt, had the Army Nursing Service been overhauled in 1898, its present obsolete organization would have long since been swept away, and reforms instituted in time to save the present scandal.

Be that as it may, the one important question for the mothers of our soldiers, and the whole nation, is to determine that a full and sufficient enquiry into the medical, which includes the nursing, department, at the War Office shall be held, that those responsible for its present inefficiency shall be held responsible, and that not one more valuable life shall be sacrificed to the jealous and intolerant ignorance of Trained Nursing, which at present stands between our brave and devoted soldiers, both at home and abroad, and the best care the nation can provide. The Secretary of State for War, and his Executive, the Army Medical Department, and its futile Nursing Reserve Committee, governed as it is by social and untrained influence, must be made to recognise the value, in the treatment of disease,

of the thoroughly trained professional nurse, and grant her the *professional status and official position which is hers by right of knowledge, and of skill*, in the care of the nation's defenders in every military hospital throughout the Empire.

No solution to this burning question of the personal and professional subjugation of the trained nurse to the medical man, in her official relations to the Governmental Departments which deal with the sick, can be satisfactorily settled which denies to her a full and sufficient official recognition through a Trained Executive Head. This revolution in the Naval, Army, and Poor Law Nursing Services, goes to the root of the whole question. It is one of Order and Organization, and no botching and tinkering at the present system, responsible as it is for hundreds of deaths, both in the Soudan and South African campaigns, and also at home, can be of any use. It is now a question of the Time and the Woman.

Resounding through charge and counter-charge on the Army Nursing Question—because the *furor* aroused by Mr. Burdett-Coutts' letter in the *Times*, is narrowed down after all to, "Are our wounded soldiers efficiently nursed, or not?"—the valour and devotion of the Nursing Sisters in South Africa have received nothing but praise, and well we know that the highest praise and gratitude of the nation is due to them,—but—

But are our soldiers efficiently nursed in military hospitals at home or abroad? We know, and our wisest Nursing Sisters know, that they are not, and that it is the obsolete *system* of Army Medical arrangements which prevails at the War Office which prevents this desirable result. In plain English—nursing, as we moderns understand it, is simply *non est* in Government Departments. Prejudice, ignorance, and social influence, have done all they can to stifle its existence, but it is a factor in the question of Life and Death, and is, therefore, demanded of the people.

We feel sure that the nursing world is with us when we claim that justice demands that an experienced trained Superintendent of Nursing should be added to the Committee of Inquiry which is to be appointed and despatched to South Africa. The Army Nursing Service has suffered, in the opinion of the public, by the exposure of the failure of our present Army Medical system. But we repudiate any blame for a Service which is denied all authority and representation in the department which controls it, and without a Nurse Representative on the Committee of Inquiry, no right conclusion is available concerning the question of Army Nursing. Let women arouse

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