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Editorial.

DANCING AND DISCIPLINE.

A question of interest to the Nursing Profession was raised last week in the House of Commons by Mr. A. Rendall, Liberal Member for Thornbury, Gloucestershire, who asked the Secretary of State for War whether he would explain why nurses at Netley Hospital, and in the Army Service generally, were not permitted when off duty, except when on furlough, to take part in public or private dances, seeing that the prohibition did not apply to medical men in the same hospitals; and whether he would at once free the nurses from this interference with their liberty.

The answer to the question, which was postponed for a week, and is consequently given too late to report in this issue, will be received with interest. Mr. Haldane, who asked for its postponement, said that he was looking personally into the amusements of the nurses.

The fact is that Army Nurses are not prohibited by the regulations from attending private dances, but that a regulation came into force some years ago prohibiting them from attending public balls.

The rights of personal liberty should be sacredly guarded, but in connection with any community working under a Government Department, it is essential that some regulations should be framed, to which they are required to conform, for the general good.

The members of the Military Nursing Service are appointed to perform certain duties, and to conform to certain hours of work. It is of imperative importance that they should be physically fit to perform those duties, and therefore their hours of leave must be so organised as to admit of recreation of a healthy and restful nature, but not of that which is exhausting, and will thus unfit them for their responsible duties.

It cannot be denied that if a woman is working most of the day she should retire to rest at a reasonable hour at night. If she is dancing till the small hours of the morning, it is very improbable that she will be fit to take up her work next day at the usual hour.

Another point which touches very nearly upon discipline is that it is certainly not desirable that Army Nurses should be dancing through the night with the medical officers under whose direction they perform their work, as would probably be the case if they went to local balls. Between Army medical officers and nurses cordial relations should exist, but these are best maintained by the due observance of the usual etiquette between their respective professions. This is not easy of maintenance at one time if relaxed at another.

One more point is that it is undesirable for nurses to go to dances in uniform, and that suitable dresses cost not only a considerable sum, but take much time and thought to design.

The regulation as it stands is, as far as we can gather, considered no hardship by the large majority of the members of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service. Now that the Service is being organised on thoroughly professional lines, we feel sure the ladies who compose it desire that it should be held in the very highest public estimation.

Anything which would be likely to be detrimental to discipline or to create in the public mind a feeling that there is a frivolous tone in the Military Nursing Service is to be deprecated. We believe that most of the members regard the regulation under discussion not as intended to restrict personal liberty, but to safeguard that which they hold dear, the honour of the Service as a whole, and they are therefore content loyally to abide by it.

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