

that was the highest ground, but for the further reason that no army was efficient which did not have provision for the treatment of its sick and wounded, with a view to their restoration to the fighting ranks as quickly as possible. For that purpose the War Office was inviting the co-operation of women on a large scale. Every class in the community which could bring skill to bear, which could be helpful, was being invited to take part in this great national movement. In a sentence the object aimed at was to create a nation under arms—not for aggression, but for its own defence—on a purely voluntary basis, and a corps of scientifically trained women was an integral part of this organisation from the fighting line, or, at all events, from behind it. The wounded had to be brought from the field of battle, from just behind the fighting line, which work would be performed by men trained to go in the fighting ranks; they would then be conveyed down to the general hospital, where they would receive the treatment they needed. That meant a great organisation in which the nursing element was of the very first importance. Those present were aware how both in this country and abroad the idea of what was required for a trained nurse had changed. The great profession of medicine was now divided into two sections—that which contains those who bring the high knowledge of the physician and the learning of the trained surgeon to the help of the sick and wounded, and the nursing section, which more and more was becoming recognised of equal importance, because without the nurse the work of the physician and surgeon was often in vain, because the healing power of nature could not be applied without the help, not merely of the nurse, but of the highly trained and skilled nurse, and the profession of nursing had attained an importance which it had never had at any other period in the history of the world. That was because we knew more, and because science had cast a larger light than it ever had cast before. That was as true of war as of peace. The work of women in home defence became a very important one. No army was organised without that element, and it was one which those responsible were seeking to supply in the arrangements for home defence more than had been done in the history of any nation. The women were coming forward splendidly for this purpose—every class of them—and the organisation was proceeding apace. He hoped that in a short time a still larger scope for the opportunity of the skilled services of those citizens would disclose itself than had appeared up to the present time. He was looking forward to great results from

the very far-reaching invitation to women to take part in an organisation which was for a national purpose, and which aimed at the defence of the common interests of the whole nation. Women had never been called on for the purpose on so large a scale as they had been called on in connection with the Territorial Army. Right through its organisation their co-operation was becoming of greater importance every week, and he looked forward to the time when it should be recognised as a manifestation of the movement which would demonstrate the fallacy of the old-fashioned, ridiculous idea that women were not the equals of men in regard to citizenship, and in regard to their title to a just recognition of their rights to participate in the advance of humanity. These facts would be made plainer and plainer to the minds of all. The great world process would go on, though it might for a time be delayed through local tactics, which he regretted, as it seemed to him we had been advancing pretty fast. The one thing certain, however, was that though there might be much difference and speculation, the advance had to be made, and women brought more and more into the work of the nation, and the great work of nursing was one of the most notable paths of the advance. Nursing organisation was getting new significance and new importance right through the world. It was a great thing when the nations could send representatives to meet in Congress, as they were meeting that day. There was the stimulus of rivalry and innocent jealousy which was all to the advantage of the movement.

Directly addressing the foreign and colonial members of the Congress, Mr. Haldane said: "We like to see and hear through you who come from over seas what you are doing and how you are advancing; we like to learn from you, to pick up the lessons which you have to bring us. We like, on our part, to show you our own advance and what we are doing. Each learns from the other, and the lesson which we are most anxious to speak about and to try to say something about this afternoon is the lesson that the nurse is not merely a private individual, but that she can be a patriot, and can play her part in the defence of great national interests.

"You who have come here from abroad must not think that we are all so vocal as some of our sisters have shown themselves on this occasion. It is a current belief that the British nation is very much asleep, and that it has been going down hill. I think that impression is entirely wrong, and I totally disagree with it. I do not remember a time

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)