

when there was such an advance as has been taking place within the last few years. We are in line with you who are the pioneers of the effort to raise the standard of humanity and to advance in knowledge and in science, and the recognition of the rights of women, and the whole of that movement which constitutes the meaning and marks the time of the world's progress is as strong and as keen here to-day as it is in any other country.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it has been a great pleasure to me to be able to be present this afternoon, and to tell you how deeply cognisant we are at the War Office of the work which women are doing as nurses for the State."

The Secretary of State for War had a practical demonstration of the discipline and efficiency which characterise the work of trained nurses, in the way the stewards performed the distasteful duty of conducting those ladies from the Hall who interrupted his speech with questions on the suffrage. Method, order, deftness, and an entire absence of the rough handling so often unjustifiably employed in the ejection of women by male stewards reduced the interruptions to a minimum, and caused Mr. Haldane to remark how much more quietly the process of removal took place when it was performed by women. He wished the precedent could be followed at other meetings which it was his fortune to address; he had never seen it done more smoothly.

A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind, and naturally the majority of the intelligent nurses who form the International Council of Nurses realise the necessity for enfranchisement, if they are to attain to the dignity of responsible human beings.

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MILITARY NURSING SERVICE IN FRANCE.

Miss C. ELSTON next presented a paper, on Military Nursing in France, which she said had recently aroused interest in that country. For some years the greater number of the military hospitals had been staffed entirely by men, but surgical nursing was now a science exacting an attention to detail which the soldier-nurse, by calling, perhaps, a blacksmith, bookbinder, or bank clerk, failed to appreciate. A soldier who served his two years in hospital was looked upon as a lucky fellow, having nothing to do, and getting off fatigues as a matter of course, the poor patients being a negligible quantity.

At last the War Office could no longer remain indifferent to the many complaints, and in 1907 the Minister of War, M. Etienne, aided by the Under-Secretary of State, M. Chéron, made personal investigations, and the Army medical paper advocated the employment of skilled nurses for sick soldiers. At the end of that year notice was given that a competitive examination for the admission of nurses to the Army Nursing Staff would be held

early in 1908 at the Val de Grâce, Paris, candidates for which were to be of French nationality, and hold a nursing certificate from a training school recognised by Government. The examination proved very popular, and the War Office received 421 applications, of which 324 were rejected, leaving 97 to compete. Twenty-nine of these candidates passed, the proportion being 100 per cent. for Bordeaux, and not quite 25 per cent. for other parts of France. After that the nurses had to wait for many months, and were informed that their admission to the Service depended on the Budget, but at the end of 1908 the Senate and Chamber of Deputies voted the necessary sum for 60 military nurses, and on January 1st, 1909, France again opened the doors of her military hospitals to women. Army nursing reform was, said Miss Elston, one of the many changes which had taken place since the Franco-Prussian War. The political parties at that time were the Republican striving for progress, the Royalist clinging to tradition. The laicisation of the Parisian hospitals was one of the first blows dealt by the new Government to the old régime. The Army now admitted that the care of the sick was not the monopoly of the nuns, one of the traditions in France which would die slowly. The next point was the method of selection of Army Nurses. The fact that there was a competitive examination showed a wish to secure the best, but nurses would see that the conditions of admission were not drawn up by anyone conversant with nurses. First, there was the age. What Matron would from choice put a girl of 21 in charge of a men's ward, much less of a military ward where some of the patients were of the same social rank as the nurse, for military service was compulsory in France. Then, as to moral character, the only proof required was the "extrait du casier judiciaire," a register in which only criminal offences were inscribed. In regard to the certificate of training in France, practical experience was not essential to obtaining a certificate, and often came later. Thus the certificate of the Red Cross Societies represented the least possible practical experience. Their members did real good, without trespassing on professional ground. The Bordeaux certificates, issued to candidates selected with the greatest strictness and care, and only after systematic practical training, most nearly resembled the English certificates. It must be regretfully admitted that the most important factors in success, moral value and practical nursing experience, were omitted from the recent French War Office experiment.

The actual position of the Army Nurse in military hospitals was at present not well defined. They had the special charge of serious cases, and were under the authority of the doctor-in-charge. Their rank was not mentioned in the provisional rules, but they were treated as non-commissioned officers. There was no Matron or Sister-in-Charge. As a patriot the French nurse was well on her way to being worthy of her high calling. No one could cast a doubt upon her love of country, but her nursing qualities must be stimulated so that love of humanity might be honoured with the same laurels as crown devotion to the fatherland.

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