

During 1907 the Minister of War, Monsieur Etienne, aided by Monsieur Chéron, the Under-Secretary of State, so well known for his surprise visits to barracks and hospitals, made personal investigations.

The *Caducee*, the Army medical paper, voiced many of the complaints, and suggested as a remedy that skilled nursing should be provided for the soldiers.

At the end of the year a notice was published that a competitive examination for the admission of nurses to the Army nursing staff would be held on February 15th, 1908, at the Val de Grâce, Paris; candidates to send in their applications on or before January 15th, 1908. All candidates were to be of French nationality, between 21 and 25 years of age, holders of a nursing certificate from a training school recognised by Government, a birth certificate, and a copy of the "casier judiciaire" were to be produced in every case. The written and *vivâ voce* examinations were to include surgical and medical nursing, dispensing, bandaging, application of splints, and a knowledge of drugs and instruments.

The successful candidates were to be admitted on probation for one year, with a salary of £32 with board and £14 in lieu of lodging. At the end of the first year they would be either dismissed or appointed to the regular staff as third class nurses with a salary of £41 13s. 7d.; the third year as second class nurses at £45 16s.; and the next, or fourth year, as first class nurses at £50, with, whatever the rank, £14 in lieu of lodging.

A fortnight was too short a notice for numbers of candidates to obtain the necessary papers, so the War Office decided to keep the list open until March 15th, postponing the examination until April 1st. At the same time the clause making women of over 25 years of age ineligible was struck out.

The examination proved to be very popular.

The War Office received 421 applications, of which 324 were rejected owing to their papers not being in order, leaving 97 to compete.

The following certificates were produced by candidates:—

- 68 from the Assistance Publique de Paris.
- 15 from the Red Cross Societies.
- 5 from the Bordeaux Schools.
- 1 from Nîmes.
- 3 from Clermont-Ferrand.
- 1 from Havre.
- 1 from Lyon.
- 1 from Angers.

When the list was closed on March 15th, notice was given that an examination would be held in the provinces for candidates not

living in Paris. Unfortunately the good news came too late. Many possible candidates had been deterred, not only because of the time a journey to Paris necessitated, but chiefly because the traditions of the country, although greatly changed within the last few years, do not generally allow a young girl to stay alone in Paris without a chaperone—an extra expense which the family might naturally refuse to incur. It must be understood that, as a rule, girls do not travel alone in France as they often do in England.

The 1st of April arrived, and the number of candidates who passed was 29 out of 97 who went up for the examination.

The proportion of candidates who passed was 100 per cent. for Bordeaux and not quite 25 per cent. for other parts of France.

The War Office wrote to the successful candidates asking them if they would be ready to take up their duties on June 10th. Most of the nurses were ready, only waiting for instructions fixing the hour and even minute of their arrival.

Their ideal of military promptness was, alas, destined to take a modified form. Days and weeks went by. June 10th came; no news from the War Office. Letters addressed to headquarters remained unanswered. Weeks and months slipped by, until November 1908, when awaiting candidates were informed that their admission depended on the Budget!

The nurses were in the same dilemma. Some had already given up all hope of getting on the Army Nursing Staff and had taken up other work. The rest wondered whether they should do likewise. Fortunately, the Senate and Chamber of Deputies voted the necessary sum for sixty military nurses.

In December, 1908, the candidates were asked to choose out of Paris and 14 provincial towns where they would like to work.

On January 1st, 1909, France opened again the doors of her military hospitals to women. God speed and good luck to them.

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Having given bare facts, I will now analyse the evolution of the Army Nurse.

Army nursing reform is one of the results of the many changes which have taken place since the Franco-Prussian War.

The political parties of that time were: on the one side the Republican striving for progress and on the other the Royalist clinging to tradition.

The laicisation of the Paris hospitals was one of the first blows dealt by the new Government to the old *régime*.

The Republic has separated itself from the

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