

The Nurse as Patriot.*

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MILITARY NURSING SERVICE IN FRANCE.

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The next point is how the War Office chose its nurses.

The fact that there was a competitive examination shows a wish to secure the best.

Nurses will see that the conditions of admission were not dictated by anyone knowing nurses' possibilities for good and evil. Were such a competition to take place in England, where nursing is far in advance of France, the most rabid anti-registrationist would be convinced of the necessity for a minimum uniform standard of nursing, when it came to putting the successful candidates to work.

The age is the first thing which strikes one. Putting aside the fact that French women are older for their age than English women, what Matron would from choice put a girl of 21 in charge of a men's ward, much less a military ward, where some of the patients would belong to the same social rank as the nurse? for military service is compulsory for all classes in France.

As far as moral character is concerned, the only testimonial required with nurses is the "extrait du casier judiciaire." The "casier judiciaire" is a register in which only criminal offences are inscribed. Minor failings, which we should describe under the head of unsteadiness or untrustworthiness, are not noted.

I have left it to the last to mention the certificate of a training school recognised by Government. The Government encourages every one to train nurses, but it is very chary about giving preference to anyone in particular, so that as far as the selection of candidates was concerned, the State approval was no sort of guarantee whatever.

The English public knows that a person holding a nursing certificate of any kind has more or less practical experience, but in France practice is a thing which very often comes later, and is not considered to be at all essential to the obtaining of a certificate.

It is quite possible to hold a diploma without having nursed a patient, and it is also possible to be nursed in a Parisian hospital by an infirmier or infirmière who holds no certificate at all, and who has no intention of qualifying for one. So that certificate and

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experience have nothing in common with one another.

The certificate of the Red Cross Societies represents the slightest possible practical experience, which is as much as can be expected of amateurs.

The Red Cross Societies are composed of three branches, whose object is to send to the sick and wounded gifts provided by public generosity; in time of war to provide accommodation for patients at the rear, and as the Comte d'Haussonville says, "to provide the superfluous."

The Red Cross Societies have 30,000 beds—that is to say, that hotels and similar establishments promise to one or other of the Societies a certain number of beds in time of war—creating what is called an auxiliary hospital.

The Red Cross Societies arrange nursing lectures, which are largely attended by society women. Those amongst them who wish to obtain certificates practice dressings in a dispensary for three to six months. A higher grade certificate is awarded to those who work for three months in a hospital approved of by the Society, but even this course may only mean a few hours' work in the morning.

The professional value of the Red Cross nurses in France is in no way the equivalent of those of Germany or America. They have lectures rather more advanced than the St. John's Ambulance First Aid Classes; have at the most the ward experience of our three months' paying probationers.

The Red Cross Societies are for the most part an agglomeration of women belonging almost entirely, by reason of family ties and interest, to the clerical party, just in the same way as the Primrose League dames are wives and daughters of Conservatives in England. They do real good without trespassing on professional ground, as lady visitors and ladies bountiful.

The Bordeaux certificates, which are issued to candidates who are chosen with the greatest strictness and care, are the most like our English ones. They are awarded after two years' consecutive ward work, including night duty, in a hospital for patients of both sexes, where nursing is systematically taught by trained nurses.

It must be regretfully admitted that the most important factors towards success—namely, moral value and practical nursing experience, were omitted from the recent French War Office requirements.

The actual position of the Army Nurses in the military hospitals is not well defined. They have the special care of serious cases, help the

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