

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,176.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1910.

XLV.

Editorial.

THE SPIRIT OF THE VOLUNTEER NURSE.

No one who was the guest of the Lady Mayoress and the Executive Committee of the Territorial Force Nursing Service of the City and County of London at the reception at the Mansion House on Monday last could fail to recognise the strong appeal made by the Territorial movement to the nursing profession or the popularity of the Territorial Nursing Service.

What is the reason for the hold which this movement has gained upon the affections of nurses? It is simple. Nurses, as a class, are a most patriotic section of the community, their loyalty to King and country is unbounded. A well-disciplined and invaluable body of workers, they go where they are bidden to go, work as they are bidden to work.

But the Territorial Service presents itself to them, for the first time, as a channel through which they can make a free-will offering of the gifts which they possess. Conscription has always been unpopular in this country, and in raising the necessary force for home defence the War Office has relied upon the individual patriotism of its sons and daughters, rather than on the method of compulsion.

Nurses are grateful that the principle which has been applied to the fighting force has been applied also to the Nursing Service, which is an integral and indispensable part of the Territorial organisation, and that the opportunity and joy of placing at their country's service, by their own voluntary act, a gift of value—nay more, of supreme importance—is thus offered to them. Is it any wonder, therefore, that the Territorial Force Nursing Service is probably the most popular Service in the country with nurses

at the present time, or that the full staffs required for the hospitals throughout Great Britain have been quickly enrolled? The country showed its confidence in the patriotism of its trained nurses by appealing for volunteers, and they eagerly pressed forward to prove that this confidence was well founded, and that they were no whit less anxious than their male relations to place the best they had to give at its disposal; so that there are now enrolled and in touch with the responsible authorities—for every Territorial nurse reports to the Principal Matron of the hospital to which she is attached at least once a year—a body of nurses sufficient to meet the estimated needs of the sick and wounded should an invading force ever land upon our shores—nurses, moreover, whose professional and personal credentials have been carefully investigated in time of peace, and whose efficiency and patriotism are undoubted.

Had the War Office relied on hospital authorities—as was strongly urged in some quarters—to select and supply the nurses when the need arose, as goods are supplied by firms which provision and furnish hospitals, it is possible the need might have been met, though it is more than probable that the supply would have given out; but the spirit which now animates the Service, and which is its most valuable possession, would have been wanting—the spirit which impels each member, not because she is bidden, but because she is desirous, to serve her country; because the appeal for service has been made to her as a sentient human being, rather than as an efficient machine.

The spirit animating the volunteer nurse is the desire to give the best that is in her, “good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over,” to the Mighty Mother who has bred her.

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