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## EDITORIAL.

### THE RECREATIONS OF ARMY NURSES.

The question of the recreations in which Army nurses shall, or shall not, be permitted to indulge is one which goes much deeper than the mere prohibition that they shall not go to balls or dances, or to mixed bathing parties, as recently forbidden by the Director General of the Army Medical Department to the Sisters stationed at Hong Kong.

It was not suggested that there is anything unseemly about these parties, which are a recognized means, not only of enjoyment, but of keeping in health during the hot season; if there were, it would be an excellent reason for a General Order to officers and Sisters alike, prohibiting their participation in them; but it is impossible to believe that an order of this kind would be tolerated by men, and there has been no suggestion that one should be promulgated. The mistake, no doubt, is the issue of such an order from a Government Department in London, when those on the spot combine to say that swimming parties are a sport indulged in by people of all grades and ranks under perfectly suitable conditions, that bathing near land is impossible, and that it is difficult to keep in health during the hot season without this reviving pastime.

The fact is that everything depends upon the type of woman selected for the Military Nursing Service, not on the particular recreation in which its members indulge. A gentlewoman will at all times behave as one, and will take as a matter of course attentions which may be misinterpreted by one not accustomed to them. Where mistakes are made they usually occur from lack of social knowledge on the part of the offender.

For this reason, candidates for Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service are, by the regulations, required to satisfy the Nursing Board not only as to their professional qualifications, but also of their fitness in regard to education and social status.

It is most important that this regulation should be strictly enforced, and—while our remarks must not be taken as reflecting on the Sisters at Hong Kong, whose discretion, and *savoir faire* has not been questioned in any way—there is no doubt that there has been, of recent years, a lowering of the social requirements imposed upon candidates for admission to the Service. It may be that the Military Service is suffering from the general degradation of status which is affecting the nursing profession as a whole owing to the lack of organization. It may be that conditions in the Service itself prevent candidates of the most desirable class applying in sufficient numbers.

One thing is certain—that good nurses, holding certificates of three years training from first class hospitals and infirmaries will not be content to stay on indefinitely in the Service as Staff Nurses, in a position not very far removed from that of the orderlies; and, when they enquire into the probabilities of promotion they find that promotion is very slow, and there is a general opinion current that when vacancies occur in the senior posts it is useless to hope for promotion unless they have been trained in a certain school.

If the authorities wish to attract the best type of woman to the Service they must keep their standard high, and then trust its members—discipline was never yet maintained amongst gentlewomen by restrictive orders. Further, there must be ground for confidence that merit is the first qualification for promotion.

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