

mains their opponents, thus breaking the law of neutrality as completely as though they supplied arms, or cash, or munitions of war, or even volunteers, in a cause which is not the cause of our land and people."

But Lord Esher does not realise that women concerned in the relief and cure of sick and wounded humanity, maimed and shattered by the barbarous art of war, are strictly neutral, and give their service with equal willingness to both sides. Witness the excellent work done by English nurses in connection with the British Red Crescent Society for the Turkish sick and wounded, while friend and foe on both sides are nursed with the same devotion by the nurses in the hospitals on either side.

Nurses are not concerned with political expediency; their duty is to a higher law, the law of humanity. It is this which bids them put their skilled work at the service of the sick and suffering, and it is the knowledge that they can alleviate in some degree the horrors of war which impels them, if they cannot go out under the protection of the Red Cross Society, then to go at their own risk, paying their own charges, to offer their services wherever they may be most needed, as various nurses did in the recent war. But it is comparatively few, however strong their desire, who can afford to do this, nor should it be necessary, if our Red Cross Society adequately fulfilled its mission of providing aid for the sick and wounded in war.

Mrs. Stobart, in her modest poem, says that "the book has been written solely with a view to showing that women can be of independent service in National Defence," and she is convinced that "if women are to become *efficient* members of a National Service . . . they must no longer be played with, as at present, by the British Red Cross Society's scheme of Voluntary Aid Detachments."

She has resigned her membership of the County Committee, and also of the Executive Council of the County of London branch of the British Red Cross Society, because she feels that "the telescopes of this society are, as concerns the work of women, directed to the *Past* rather than to the *Future*, and there is no hope that, under the aegis of this organisation anything practical will result." She has done more than this, for, because the "Women's Convoy Corps" (of which she was the Founder and Organising Commandant) "has always been intimately associated with the Red Cross Society, she writes: "Rather than ask the Corps to sacrifice this official respectability and come out into the wilderness with me, I have resigned and become a free lance." To sever her connection with the Corps which she conceived and developed with so much care, at the moment when it has demonstrated its usefulness and success, is a fine proof of her singleness of aim and devotion to ideals. "For the first time in history a company composed exclusively of women has had the experience of going to the front in a campaign and of improvising and administering,

in a foreign country, a hospital for sick and wounded soldiers." It is an achievement of which Mrs. Stobart may well be proud, for no one can, in the future, deny the possibility of a method of organisation, the usefulness of which has been proved by this practical demonstration. The success of the scheme is, no doubt, due to the rigorous training the members of the Corps received, for in their annual camp they "live in tents which they pitch and strike themselves, dig their own camp fire trenches, construct their own camp kitchen, and cook their own food in the open, whatever the weather may be. They perform all their own quartermastering, and steward's work, sleep on straw mattresses, in unboarded tents, and, without the aid of male hewers of wood and drawers of water, undergo a general training in improvisation, discipline and self-reliance, and learn, generally speaking, to approximate as nearly as possible, to conditions likely to obtain in time of war."

Mrs. Stobart has no desire that untrained women should undertake the work of the trained nurse. She writes: "The distinction between trained nurse and volunteer first-aider should be complete, both as to work and uniform. It was, to my mind, grotesque that women, after attending half-a-dozen lectures on first-aid and home nursing should be allowed, as under the régime of the British Red Cross Society and the War Office, to wear a *nurse's* uniform and regard themselves as fully competent members of a Voluntary Aid Detachment, qualified to take their places in a scheme of National Defence." She believes however, that women, trained and disciplined should be able to take "a responsible share in warfare without the need of Gibeonites of the male sex, who ought, if able-bodied, to be in the fighting line." When war broke out in the Balkans and the British Red Cross Society announced that units to nurse the sick and wounded were to be despatched, Mrs. Stobart at once applied for specially selected members of the Convoy Corps to be included in the first volunteers sent to the front. Every one of its members is also a member of a Voluntary Aid Detachment, and only those were offered for service who possessed special qualifications, either as trained nurses, or for length of service in the Corps. As is well known, however, the fiat went forth that the British Red Cross Society intended to send units of *men only* to nurse the sick and wounded! Men, of whom some—as was eventually revealed—knew more about the rules of football than of hospital work. There was, it was said, "no work fitted for women in the Balkans." Feeling that many fully trained women nurses outside the Corps were also being refused *because they were women*, and that the whole cause of women's work in war was in danger of being retrograded by this decision, Mrs. Stobart determined to go out to the Balkans to see for herself whether there was indeed, no work "fitted for women," or whether, as she suspected, the truth was that the British Red

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