

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRAINED NURSES.

THE STATUS OF THE TRAINED NURSE IN THE BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY.

The last subject discussed at the Afternoon Session on November 27th was "The Status of the Trained Nurse in the British Red Cross Society."

The President, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, said that it was a disastrous thing that the organization of the British Red Cross Society did not include the provision of trained nursing as an integral part of its work.

In the United States of America Red Cross Nursing was very highly organized, under Miss Jane A. Delano, who had resigned the important position of Superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps to take up Red Cross Work.

The Committee of the British Red Cross Society, while it was composed of Medical Baronets and persons of social influence, only included one lady with any experience as a trained nurse. That, no doubt, was the reason why nursing was ignored.

Mrs. Fenwick then introduced to the audience Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, Founder of the Women's Convoy Corps, who organized a hospital entirely officered, and managed, by women at Kirk Kilisse, during the Balkan War.

Mrs. Stobart gave a most interesting address, first explaining the *raison d'être* of the Convoy Corps. She was neither a nurse nor a doctor, but after a period of absence in South Africa she had come home to find everyone talking of Home Defence and the necessity for the establishment of the Territorial Force. Believing that all should try to help their country in some way, she endeavoured to find out if there was any gap in the Territorial organization in which she could be of use. That gap appeared to her to exist between the field and the base hospital. The wounded were left for anybody to convey to the base, which might be some days' journey away, and here was scope for the work of a Women's Convoy Corps, trained to render first aid, and to do everything practical, as all able-bodied men should be with the fighting force. When the war broke out in the Balkans, and it was notified in the Press that the British Red Cross Society were sending out units, Mrs. Stobart related that she went to the Society, with which the Convoy Corps has from the first been intimately connected, and offered the services of specially selected members. To her astonishment she was told that the units were to con-

sist only of men, and that there was no work fitted for women. She thought, therefore, that she would go out herself and see if something could not be done.

By the greatest good fortune she was received by the Queen of Bulgaria, and secured the goodwill of a doctor highly placed in the Medical Service. Assured that the services of the Corps would be welcome, she cabled for the sixteen women (including six trained nurses) who were holding themselves in readiness to leave for the East at once, if sent for. They arrived with all speed, and Mrs. Stobart testified to her enormous appreciation of the work done by the nurses.

The whole party had a drive of seven days in springless ox waggons before they arrived at their destination at Kirk Kilisse; they lived principally on coarse brown bread, often limited in quantity, and rejoiced at their privations as affording proof of the capacity of women to endure them. For their hospital they secured two empty Turkish houses, in which 729 serious cases were nursed, only one being lost. The staff consisted of herself as directrice, six trained nurses, members for general duty, as cooks, first aiders, and dressers, seventeen in all. The medical members of the staff were women, and were a great success.

The whole moral of the experiment was that women can be of the greatest service in war if trained and disciplined for their work.

Mrs. Stobart emphasised the necessity of placing fully qualified trained nurses in charge of wards. Others were useful in the surgery. She considered it a shocking scandal that trained nurses were not effectively represented upon the Red Cross Council. It was mainly run by peeresses and men, who were not qualified to deal with the nursing of the sick.

There was a British Red Cross unit at a hospital at Kirk Kilisse; at first the members kept aloof from the Convoy Corps, but afterwards they came to call, and friendly relations were established. Mrs. Stobart told the medical officers that they were possessed of considerable hardihood to attempt to run a hospital without women nurses, and they owned that they would be invaluable.

She concluded a most interesting address by urging that something should be done to secure the assistance of trained women nurses for the sick and wounded in foreign wars in future.

In thanking Mrs. Stobart for her speech, the Chairman remarked that, in a notice of her book, "War and Women," which had just been published, the *Times* had said

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