

absence, taking the position of second in command when the Principal Matron is in the building.

Why, when there are only two Principal Matrons for the whole of the regular Military Nursing Service—one as Assistant to the Matron-in-Chief at the War Office, and one as Executive Officer in South Africa—there should be twenty-three in the Territorial Force Nursing Service it is not easy to see. But it is certain that the system is conducive neither to good discipline nor efficient management. Under present arrangements we consider that no Matron should accept the position of Principal Matron unless she obtains from the committee of the civil hospital with which she is connected permission for leave of absence in time of War.

WHY NOT WARDMAIDS?

Nothing could have been finer than the response of trained Nurses to the invitation to enrol themselves as members of the Territorial Force Nursing Service, when it was formed in 1909, or the way in which they immediately reported themselves at the various hospitals, as ready for duty when called upon, and have since worked for the welfare of the sick and wounded in their charge. So much, indeed, has their work impressed outside observers that, as we reported last week, the Leicester Trades' Council sent, by resolution, its best thanks to the nurses in that town for their unremitting care of the wounded. At the same time it was stated that the nurses were beginning to break down through the great strain. The work of the nurses in Territorial hospitals is so hard because, in addition to their arduous nursing duties, they have more ward work than they were called upon to perform even in their probationer days, when they brought the exuberant energy of youth to the task.

The fundamental mistake is one of organization, the Territorial Hospitals being organized on exactly the same lines as military hospitals, whereas they are "General Hospitals," and a modification is necessary for their efficient working. Military hospitals, in time of peace, are training schools to some extent for Nursing Sisters and Matrons, and for nursing orderlies, and in time of war trained orderlies are available; but, for the Territorial Hospitals there is no such trained staff on which to draw, and a staff of untrained, if willing orderlies of all kinds, including medical students who have probably never cleaned a floor or done any ward in their lives, is an encumbrance rather than an assistance. Nor are all orderlies even willing. We heard of one, for instance, who being urged by the Sister to finish quickly the task on which he was engaged, remarked, in reply, "What is the good of hurrying, I shall only get something else given me to do when I have finished this job?"

One of the most important duties which the Advisory Committee of the Territorial Force Nursing Service should have undertaken in time of peace was to advise the War Office on the organization of the domestic department of the hospitals when mobilized, in order to conserve

as far as possible the skilled services of the nursing staff. We hear that the employment of scrubbers in Territorial Hospitals has now been sanctioned, but this is not enough; an efficient and adequate staff of ward maids should be installed without delay, if the nursing staff are to perform their nursing duties efficiently and without undue physical strain.

LETTER FROM THE FRONT.

FROM WARSAW.

DEAR EDITOR,—Thank you very much indeed for sending me the letter of introduction for International Council of Nurses—it will be very useful indeed.

As you will see I am now in Warsaw. We were only a week in Petrograd, but it was a very full week; we had to get all sorts of warm clothes (the English Colony were so very good as to give us a sheepskin each), and we had all kinds of invitations, both from English and Russian people, and were presented to the Empress, and I don't know what else besides. The Empress was simply charming to us; we went to the Palace and were with her about half an hour. She was so interested in hearing all about Belgium, and then thanked us for coming to Russia to help, and said she hoped God would bless us in our work, and that she hoped to see us again some day.

Now that I have come right to Warsaw, I feel that the war is very near again. Miss Grey and I have come to the Military Hospital here—it was a boys' day school which has been converted into a temporary hospital, holding nearly 1,000 patients. There are only 20 sisters, so when it is full you may imagine there is enough to do. There is terrible overcrowding, but of course that can't be helped in war time. We are very lucky in having surgeons who are very clever and up-to-date. No dressings are done in the wards—indeed, the beds are so close to one another that it would be impossible—all, even fractured femurs, &c., are brought to the dressing rooms (of which there is one on each floor) every day. The orderlies do all the probationers' work. They are such nice men—soldiers, of course. There are no servants here at all, the soldiers do all the cooking and cleaning and waiting on us.

I heard to-day that we shall probably not be kept here long, but will be sent out nearer the Front, and then I will try and write again—but you will understand I know that there is not much opportunity for writing—and every spare moment I am learning Russian. I will not forget your request for some information as regards the organisation of nurses in Russia, and I will try to send you some notes on it as soon as I can.

Again, ever so many thanks for the trouble you have taken for me.

Yours very sincerely,

VIOLETTA THURSTAN.

Chez M. le Directeur de la Croix Rouge,
Warsaw, Russia.

previous page

next page