

NURSING AND THE WAR.

WOMEN ORDERLIES.

"During the South African War, the women who called themselves nurses without having any claim to the title were the cause of many difficulties," says the *British Medical Journal*. "When the present War broke out, it was the determination of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England that, so far as they were able to prevent it, there should be no recurrence of the trouble. From the very beginning, however, many women have been applying for work as nurses whose only qualification seemed to be a strenuous desire to 'do something' for the wounded soldiers. They are women often of an emotional type, and it is to be feared that already some such people have obtained passports, and have wandered abroad, masquerading as nurses, and in all probability wearing the Red Cross badge. It has been dangerously easy up to the present for any woman to go out as a free-lance in this way, but recently the Foreign Office has made some attempt—imperfect though it be—to check such action. In order to find useful work for suitable women the two societies have arranged for the establishment of a special class of women to help in hospitals in this country or abroad. They will not be able, by any possibility, to consider themselves as nurses, but it is hoped in this way to provide an outlet for their energies. The women will be selected from the Voluntary Aid Detachments of the two societies, and they will help in the work of the wards, in the kitchens, and in the store-rooms—their designation being that of 'women orderlies.' In this way, the use of the word 'probationer' will be avoided, and the untrained woman will have no ground for considering herself a nurse for wounded soldiers. A certain amount of training, however, will be necessary, and it will be required that each applicant should have served for a short time at least in a hospital. Those going abroad must have a working knowledge of French. The women orderlies will be drawn from the two societies in proportion to the number of women in the Voluntary Aid Detachments, and all applications for work will be submitted to the committee of matrons at St. John's Gate."

We much regret that the official organ of the British Medical Association has not condemned this proposal. We hope the Matrons at St. John's Gate will have the moral courage to deal with it from a professional standpoint, and sternly discourage what appears to us to be merely a subterfuge. It does not matter what title you give an untrained woman—so long as she is dressed up in nursing uniform and permitted to nurse our sick and wounded soldiers, she is employed on duties for which she is not qualified. In our opinion it is absolutely unjustifiable that brave men, whose lives and health stand between this Empire and annihilation, should have dangerously

inefficient and incompetent nursing, when broken in our defence. We bitterly resent it.

The fact is that thousands of girls have recently paid for First Aid and Home Nursing Certificates, and have loudly clamoured for an equivalent for their expenditure. But the comfort, care, safety, restoration to health—maybe, the very lives of our troops—are a very stiff price to pay to quiet their emotional demands. Since the beginning of the War, thousands of sick soldiers have been subjected to unskilled nursing all over the country and abroad, through the maladministration of the British Red Cross Society, whilst thousands of trained nurses have been willing to tend them with skill and knowledge. We call upon the medical profession to make a stand against this new misleading title of "woman orderly" being used to cover unskilled nursing in military hospitals by persons wearing complete nurses' uniform.

The fact that the wounded men themselves are beginning to object to unskilled nursing is a hopeful sign. Several have already done so, and one said to us recently: "If I had been handled by a trained nurse my poor leg wouldn't have been in this mess. It was all along of a Red Cross miss dragging off my trousers instead of slitting them up. I know that much. What do they take us for?" What indeed!

THE DUTY OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

Dr. N. A. Eddlestone, of Whitley Bay, put the matter in a nut shell in the *British Medical Journal*, when he wrote:—"At present with the war scare, women of any age, healthy or otherwise, are encouraged by press puffing to take a course of ambulance lectures, obtain by paltry examination an ambulance certificate, don a cap and apron (though they have never seen a patient), parade about the streets (nearly always in indoor uniform) and mystify the general public more than ever as to the true meaning of a trained nurse. In some instances they are even permitted to waste their own time and that of some hospital staff by doing a month's so called training. These sentimental women, so misguided, actually imagine, in most cases, that they are prepared and fully ready for the front. Now what must women who have given years of their lives to hospital work think when they see a uniform (theirs alone by right, and I have no doubt would be so if registration of nurses were only an accomplished fact), put to such a scandalous use? And we have the definite fact that many hundreds of trained women are waiting to work!"

The medical profession has a duty to the country in this connection, and in spite of social pressure we hope it will do its utmost to put an end to a cruel wrong.

Of the numerous letters which have appeared on the subject, Dr. Eddlestone's is the only one which appears to us to deal with it adequately. There is no question that so-called Red Cross Nurses, are running Red Cross Hospitals, with quite inadequate professional supervision, perhaps one trained nurse on day duty and none on night

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