

NURSING AND THE WAR.

The Director General of the Army Medical Service asks all civil hospitals with training schools to help the country by making every effort to train for three or six months as many probationers as possible, so that they may be available for work later, under supervision, in military hospitals. Those of us who remember the disorganisation which resulted from the rush of women into war nursing during the South African War, cannot but realise what the result of flooding the nursing world with semi-trained nurses will be at the termination of the present terrible struggle. The Government has turned a deaf ear to our petitions for a decade—the present shortage of trained nurses is the result. Everyone must make the best of a bad job now, but we cannot too soon begin to organise strenuously for just conditions after the War is over.

IN FORMA PAUPERIS.

The question which has greatly perturbed a number of hardworking professional women during the past week has been the charitable appeal made on their behalf by the officials of the National Pension Fund for Nurses (which is an insurance and not a pension fund) "on behalf of the nurses who have suffered, or may suffer, from attendance upon the sick and wounded during the War," other than members of the Government Army Nursing Services.

We have received many letters strongly deprecating such an appeal, and owing to the courtesy of the Editor of the *Times* have been able to give publicity to the feeling of those nurses who resent the indignity very keenly.

Miss E. S. Haldane, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council, Territorial Force Nursing Service, in a letter to the *Times* on Saturday last, wrote that she read of the proposed War Nurses' Relief Fund with mixed feelings.

"On the one hand," she continued, "it is a fund which is greatly needed; on the other, it brings us face to face with the question, Are our nurses to be paid a pittance, and, after risking their lives in their country's service, made the recipients of what is after all a charity?"

"An organised profession would not consent to see its members being exploited. But nurses are not organised. They are a highly patriotic body of women who are ready to give their services almost gratuitously even for work abroad which involves serious risks to health and life. There is the other question, however—Ought the public to permit of their sacrificing themselves on the altar of patriotism even if they recognise their debt by founding a fund to assist them later on? We seem just lately to have wakened up to the value of the splendid work done by our trained nurses because their numbers are limited and the demands made upon them at this time of stress are unlimited. Let us see

that our gratitude, which is very real, is expressed in a proper way."

On Monday last Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, President National Council of Trained Nurses, in a letter to the *Times*, welcomed Miss Haldane's letter in the name of those nurses "to whom it is extremely distasteful to be held up in the public Press in *forma pauperis*, especially as they are the only class of workers connected with the War for whom an appeal of this nature is being made." The letter continued:—

"The aim of the organisers of the various relief funds, from the Queen's Fund downwards, has been to preserve the self-respect of those assisted by providing them with work, for which payment is made on the ordinary scale, and to avoid giving relief in the form of charity. In the case of nurses the bad precedent has been established of expecting them to work for half the ordinary fees of a private nurse; that is, when they cannot be induced to give their services free. Nurses are a singularly uncalculating class, and only too willing to throw themselves into the breach at this crisis without considering their own future. It is therefore the more incumbent upon the committee which employs them, at a reduced rate, to make provision for them when incapacitated, because they have sacrificed themselves, in Miss Haldane's words, on the altar of patriotism. As the soldier has a right to a pension when incapacitated, so provision should be made, under similar circumstances, for the nurse who serves him, as a right, not as a charity, until she is again fit for active work. This should be a charge, and a most legitimate one, on the funds of the Joint War Committee—to which the public have contributed most munificently—which knows her work and her circumstances, and should not be left to an outside committee.

"Miss Haldane speaks of the gratitude of the public for the work of trained nurses, and hopes that this may be expressed in the proper way. May I indicate more precisely that way, which is, first, the organisation of nurses in a legally constituted profession recognised by the State, for which they have been asking for the last quarter of a century; and, secondly, by ensuring to those nurses, whose skilled work is lavished on our sick and wounded, the ordinary rate of remuneration for that work. The services of nurses can never be recompensed by a cash payment, but every true nurse has a most precious reward in the remembrance of the gratitude of patients, living and dead, and in her knowledge that her skilled work, in conjunction with that of the doctor, has minimised suffering, alleviated the last hours of the dying, and in numerous instances restored to health and friends those who would otherwise have succumbed to injury and disease. Whether or not her work is paid for on a scale which reduces her to the poverty line, that is a joy which no one can take from her. Nevertheless, the national value of her skilled services is so great that the remuneration

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