

highest professional skill in the country. The lack of such a Register unfortunately prevented the Nursing Profession being in the organized condition necessary to enable it to give the very best service to our Army on mobilization.

Owing to the opposition to the organization of Nurses, Trained Nursing, and that branch of it now being called upon to render the invaluable national service known as Military Nursing, have had to be mobilized under adverse conditions.

In consequence, a makeshift service has had to be offered to our sick and wounded soldiers, instead of a thoroughly organized, tested, and efficient body of nurses having been registered for National Service under State authority.

The consequence is that an enormous amount of time has been occupied in sifting qualifications and references since the declaration of war, qualifications which, under a reasonable system of State Registration, would all have been guaranteed and registered. The required number of nurses could then, without any delay, or confusion, have been called up for service, and have filled every position where skilled nursing is necessary; for through such Registration we should have had available an index of every trained nurse whose qualifications had been tested by an expert independent authority, and who in its opinion was competent for National Service, and the selection of nurses for the posts for which they were most suited could have been proceeded with, with a minimum, instead of maximum, expenditure of effort and time—this woman for a Matronship at home or abroad, that one for a Sister's or Nurse's post, on home or foreign service.

As education and experience indicated, each could have been drafted into the section for which she was best qualified. It has been proved repeatedly during the last ten months that the non-existence of this National Register of Nurses has not only caused tremendous waste of time and effort, but the lack of organization has been extremely prejudicial to the nursing profession, and, therefore, disadvantageous to those whom it serves.

An index of nurses, through a State Register, is just as imperative as one of medical practitioners through a Medical Register, for the day has gone by when the argument can justifiably be advanced that medical treatment, either at home, or in the field, can be best, or indeed efficiently, applied without the assistance of the Trained Nurse, and the lack of a Register of Nurses issued under the authority of the State, has opened the door to the most flagrant exploitation; by unqualified women, of highly skilled work, work which is absolutely indispen-

sable, not only in maintaining the health of armies, but also in the restoration to health of stricken men.

Of recent years consideration has been given to the organization and improvement of the Military Nursing Service as an independent section, but not as a branch of the whole profession.

A Nursing Board has been appointed at the War Office, and an Executive Nursing Officer, with the title of Matron-in-Chief, has been given responsible charge of the Service. A Reserve has also been formed in connection with it, which on a peace basis was organized on lines as efficient as the unstandardized condition of the Nursing Profession permitted, though the adoption, as the qualification for membership, of "a certificate of not less than three years' training and service" instead of "three years' training" is much to be regretted. In the Territorial Force Nursing Service the latter qualification is happily required.

What I desire to emphasise, however, is that the candidates for all these Services pass into them without being required to give evidence to a Central Examining Authority of having attained a definite standard of efficiency; by which I do not mean that the work of the Nursing Sisters is not of a very high order, or their devotion beyond all praise. I have had the pleasure and privilege of recently seeing their work in Military Hospitals "somewhere in France."

Nevertheless, that does not affect the fact that there should be one portal to the nursing profession, and that before any woman is entrusted with the responsible care of our sick and wounded soldiers, she should have passed through it.

So far, the State has left the general public to fight its own battles on the qualifications of trained nurses; but our armies are composed of men whose lives may be forfeit to the Empire, and for whom the State is not only corporately but personally responsible through the Department of the War Office.

It is therefore the duty of the War Office to guarantee the quality of all the nursing which it provides for the Army, and this is impossible unless the curriculum of training, and the standard of examination, are defined by State authority.

The fundamental mistake in the organization of Military Nursing, in so far as the War Office is concerned, is the fact that it has deputed to a body of charitable and unprofessional persons the organization of nursing in military auxiliary hospitals, thus failing to control effectively the

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