

THE PLACE OF THE IMPERIAL MOTHER IN PEACE AND WAR.

In the afternoon the chair was taken by Mrs. Baillie Reynolds, when Mrs. Bedford Fenwick opened a discussion on the Place of the Imperial Mother in Peace and War, in special reference to Social Service in Relation to the Soldier, and outlined her scheme for a Sanitary Nursing Service for the Army.

A SCHEME FOR SOCIAL SERVICE IN RELATION TO THE SOLDIER.

Mrs. Fenwick spoke as follows:—

To quote from Mill's "History of the Crusades":—

"The Christians weary, thirsty, and oppressed with labour and heat, would have sunk into despair if the women of the camp had not revived their courage and brought them water from the stream. The combat was renewed with tenfold vigour."

Since the fateful opening days of the present European War, in August last, the one force which cannot fail to have impressed itself upon the world is the energy with which the women of the Empire have brought water from the streams.

If one attempts to visualize the innumerable channels through which the energy of women has brought relief to our warriors, "weary, thirsty, and oppressed with labour and heat," one realizes that though all this energy has been generated by the heart of the Imperial Mother, and has been of inestimable value, a vast amount of her brain power has been dissipated through lack of organization.

A fallacy is widely extant that women cease to have the right, inalienable from their maternity, of interest in the conditions of the lives of their soldier sons; and that in this connection their responsibility as human beings is non-existent.

But, from the first day of the present war, the vital patriotism of women has proved as irrepressible as their fitness for imperial responsibility has been demonstrated, and I think we may affirm that the Imperial Mother has come to stay.

Women have claimed that not only every man to whom the responsibility of Empire has been entrusted should be taught how to discharge his national duty, and encouraged to perform it, but that every woman has also her rightful place in the protection and safety of the Empire. That to her belong the place and duties of the Imperial Mother, a rôle which concerns not only her physical but her spiritual nature, and that if the great jewel of the British

Empire is still to blaze in the central place of the Crown of Nations, the spiritual forces of the whole nation must inspire those who grasp the flaming sword which guards its place of honour.

Her country is the child of the Imperial Mother, on which it is not only her pleasure, but her duty, to lavish her deepest love and devotion.

The Nursing Profession comes more intimately into touch with the *personnel* of war than any other class of women, and it is therefore our National Council of Trained Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland which has ventured to convene this Conference, and to appeal to women whose highly specialized work in many directions is intimately associated with national efficiency to confer and co-operate together, so that the expert knowledge of the women of the nation may be utilized without wastage for the benefit of the whole Empire.

We may state broadly that the progress and stability of any nation is founded on a high standard to health. Primarily, therefore, it must have an abundance of the essential elements—Earth, Air, Fire, and Water.

We have, thanks to the prowess and statesmanship of past generations, provided ourselves with these vital necessities all over the world, and it is the duty not only of men, but of women, to keep what we hold, and to use them to the utmost for the benefit of the State. Scientific knowledge alone of the forces and values of these elements entitles us to retain their manipulation. If a people more laborious, more scientific, with greater technical skill, more efficiently organized, arises to contest with us these priceless possessions, then let us not ignore the brain power or the will power, while we condemn the cruel and cowardly methods of the enemy, but let us realize where in the past we have failed in acumen, in self-denial, in patriotism, that we are to-day fighting to the death to retain our glorious earthly heritage, fighting not only for the material, but for the spiritual power and solace of the world. Now and for all future time woman must play her part in world politics—the mother part—with every faculty of body and soul. It is the Imperial Mother only who can raise and nurture a truly imperial race—dominant and humane—and we may fulfil the highest human duty in accepting a very humble part.

First, it is the British woman's duty to scan the Map of the World, and to appreciate the vital qualities which have given to the British race the pick of the world's places; then let her realize how intimately these qualities depend upon the standard of the people's

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