

preparation, food distribution and food storage, not to mention the prevention of waste. Accounts frequently reach us, as was pointed out recently at the Headmistresses' Conference, of the waste going on in the camps, and side by side with it of the bad cooking which upsets the health of many of the soldiers, and the suggestion was made by one headmistress that a few trained, experienced women caterers might change the state of affairs. In any case the occasional inspection of kitchens by Sanitary Sisters would be a valuable check on such waste.

In regard to the protection of food, such kitchen inspections would ensure that food is protected from flies, and that it is covered by muslin or fine wire netting, both during storage and during conveyance from kitchen to mess rooms. Here, again, Major Lelean definitely states that although the fly-proofing of kitchens and mess rooms by coarse butter muslin is both cheap and effective, it is difficult to induce men to undertake this duty. They cannot be persuaded to use it. I suppose because they will not be troubled with those trivial details which are so all-important in regard to kitchens; women appreciate better than men the importance of scrupulous cleanliness, *e.g.*, in the camp mincing machines—and here the supervision of the Sanitary Sister would be of much value.

Insect Pests.—Apart from flies, there are the great pests associated with lice, fleas and other vermin. A single lice-infected individual can in a very short space of time infect a considerable body of men, as has been often proved both in camps and in trenches. It has been computed that one single female body louse may be responsible in six weeks for 8,000 progeny. The aggregation of men leads to the direct personal transference of lice, and the proper disinfection of clothing is all-important. It is not always possible to get the clothing disinfected in large disinfectors and a Sanitary Sister might be of great value, not only in treating the condition, but in disinfecting the clothes. The adequate management and treatment of those minor horrors of war is extremely important.

I am afraid I have already occupied too much time, but what I have said has perhaps been sufficient to indicate how Sanitary Sisters might be of assistance. Women are mistresses of detail, and in sanitary matters and personal hygiene attention to detail is everything.

There is, of course, the question of expediency, and whether the presence of Sanitary Sisters would hinder the various units of the Field Ambulance Service in carrying out their duties, as they might be inclined to trust too much to the Sisters, and shirk their own work. In other words, there might be divided authority. This objection to the employment of nurses in camps was raised only this morning by a Colonel Commandant of one of the large Field Ambulances, who seemed to think there might be some difficulties in the way of carrying out such an organization as has been proposed, and he seemed to be of

opinion that the rôle of trained nurses would principally lie within the walls of permanent or temporary hospitals. Such objections, however, have been brought forward in regard to every new proposal, and such an organization could only be tested by actual experience, and personally I hope that one result of the present conference will be that a trial of carefully selected Sanitary Sisters should be made in one or two individual camps, and it is more than possible that such an experiment might prove an unqualified success. If it is proved that personal hygiene can be more efficiently carried out with the assistance of such Sisters, then they should certainly be employed. A judicious selection should, of course, be made to start with, and they should be, as Mrs. Fenwick suggests, specially trained women of dignity, commanding respect.

It is also a matter of constant observation in hospitals and elsewhere that soldiers (Tommies) are extremely willing to carry out any directions given by a nurse in uniform; they will do any mortal thing a nurse tells them to do, and a man 6ft. 2in. high will cheerfully obey a little Sister in uniform; and this may be a point of some importance.

Whether Sanitary Sisters could be employed at the front on the lines of communication or in the collecting and distributing zones, is a question I do not feel competent to deal with. There are many obvious objections to the presence of ladies near the firing line, though I believe in the case of Continental armies, women are a good deal employed behind the trenches. Anyhow, they would be much more use than the dear, beautiful V.A.D. people, who do not know much of either hygiene or sanitation. The first step undoubtedly would be to prove their value at home before sending them out to the Front.

I would close with the remark that anything and everything that will contribute to a higher standard of hygiene is a matter of paramount importance to our armies in the field.

PREVENTIVE NURSING.

Miss H. L. Pearse, Superintendent of London County Council School Nurses, said preventive nursing implies the avoidance of disease by maintaining a high standard of health, and the prevention of serious trouble by attending at once to slight ailments, so that they are not permitted to develop.

So far the assistance of the nursing profession in relation to the soldier has been restricted to hospitals to which he has been admitted after a break-down in health either from wounds or disease, but were the assistance of a Corps of Sanitary Sisters, such as Mrs. Fenwick has outlined, at the disposal of the Royal Army Medical Corps they could do much to prevent the break-down by which the soldier is incapacitated, and the fighting strength of the Army thereby weakened.

I am of opinion that such assistance is required wherever large numbers of troops are gathered

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