

The result of placing these hospitals under the direction of untrained Commandants has, in many instances reduced trained nursing to a minimum. Where one nurse on day, and sometimes one on night duty is all the provision made in hospitals containing as many as 30 or 40 beds, it is impossible that acute cases should be properly nursed. The excuse made by those responsible for these hospitals that they cannot afford to pay for trained nursing is untenable. The subsidy of three shillings a day per patient granted by the War Office, together with the liberal subscriptions received, should provide under competent management for skilled nursing service. Amateur hospital management and nursing are notoriously extravagant.

2. Further, we unhesitatingly condemn the arrangements made for the organization of Voluntary Aid in the Field, because it is provided that the Voluntary Aid Detachments, the knowledge of whose members is limited to a course in First Aid and Home Nursing, without any hospital training being required, shall be used (under whatever name they may be designated) not only in the auxiliary hospitals, but at the clearing hospitals, which nominally contain 200 beds, but practically may be considerably extended to meet the pressure after a battle.

The official statements as to the duty of Voluntary Aid Detachments in relation to the Clearing Hospitals are precise. The published scheme for the Organization of Voluntary Aid in England and Wales (and the same applies to Scotland) after describing the medical organization of the Territorial Force, states:—

“The units which it lacks are (a) Clearing Hospitals, (b) Stationary Hospitals, (c) Ambulance Trains, (d) Other formations. The medical service of the Territorial Force has no establishment for carrying out the duties in connection with the above-named organizations. This scheme has been devised with the object of giving to those members of the civil population, who from motives of patriotism and sympathy for the sick and wounded are desirous of offering their services for the performance of these various duties, an opportunity of allowing themselves and their efforts to be organized and co-ordinated efficiently, so that the sick and wounded may derive the fullest possible benefit.”

We could wish that the outlet for the patriotism of the civil population might be confined to the manipulation of inanimate matter!

Other duties officially assigned to members of Voluntary Aid Detachments are “taking temporary charge in the evacuation stations, or temporary hospitals, of severe cases unable to continue the journey—arranging small wards for patients in suitable buildings—and in such nursing as is necessary for the temporary care of patients until they can be transferred to the general hospitals. Detachments or a certain proportion of a detachment may be employed for duty in ambulance trains.”

It is almost incredible that according to this scheme it is actually proposed that acutely sick and wounded men, whose lives are in the balance, may be handled and cared for, in the supremely important hours between the time when their wounds are received, and the time when they reach the base hospital, by young women who are untrained, and whose age, according to the regulations, should not be less than seventeen. In our opinion, from the time the wounded arrive at the Clearing Hospitals, until they cease to be under medical care, they should be attended by thoroughly qualified nurses, and as expressed in the Resolution of the National Council of Trained Nurses, the standard of such nursing should be the best that a grateful nation can provide.

IV.—PRIVATE HOSPITALS AT HOME AND ABROAD.

Amongst the Auxiliary Home Red Cross Hospitals are officially included Private and Voluntary Aid Detachment Hospitals. Private Hospitals are amongst those mentioned in the scheme for the organization of Voluntary Aid as amongst the institutions for which the Medical Service has no establishment for carrying on the duties, and which are commended to the patriotism of the civil population. It is recommended that the expenses in connection with the upkeep of these should be met entirely by private funds.

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