

NURSING AND THE WAR.

President Poincaré and Mme. Poincaré, the Ambassadors of the Allied Powers, and civil and military authorities of Paris with delegations of British and French hospital organisations, were present at the Trocadero on Sunday afternoon at a great gathering convened by the League of the Rights of Man in honour of Miss Edith Cavell, when M. Painlevé, Minister of Public Instruction, took the chair and made a most eloquent oration, in the course of which, as reported by the Special Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, he said:—

"Germany has neither accused nor excused herself. Her lawyers are still miserably quibbling over the murdered nurse's so-called trial. It passes their comprehension that the legality of the murder increases its horror.

"What is intolerable precisely is that her trial and execution conformed with German justice. So long as Germany does not profoundly feel the shame and remorse of this crime, no peace will be possible between Germany and humanity.

"She whom we celebrate to-day must not appear to us merely as a touching elegiac figure, but as an inspirer of heroic deeds. Afterwards, when justice triumphs and barbarism is worsted, she will live again a gentle figure in the memory of men. . . . The Germans shot the frail nurse in vain. Little English nurse you have not been vanquished, you are victorious for all time. At this great commemoration, which anticipates history, before crowds of French people come to celebrate you, we greet you as the herald of better humanity and triumphant justice."

A Military Sister writes: "The article on 'Our Orderlies' in last week's BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING realistically describes the experience of many sisters but the fact is that the strong and able men we used to get as orderlies are now used up on active service; and in my opinion this hospital is working its wards most satisfactorily with Sisters, Charge and Staff Nurses, and two or three probationers, and I find the experience a grand improvement on the ordinary working of a military hospital with Sisters and male orderlies. It is the civil hospital system, and undoubtedly nursing is better done by women than men. If kept in the capacity of probationers the V.A.D.'s are thoroughly good, and we work exactly on civil lines, without lectures and exams. But if we do not get State Registration soon what will happen at the end of the War? Naturally those who have been working for two or three years under skilled nurses will consider themselves trained, and the competition will be fast and furious."

We have received a large number of letters from both Sisters and Matrons working in military hospitals, sympathising with the nursing staff who resigned from the Endsleigh Palace Hospital

for Officers—and wondering how it would be possible, without breaches of discipline, to obtain redress. One Sister writes that she answered the call to mobilise in August, 1914. She spent weeks in scrubbing and cleaning in a certain hospital, to which work she had no objection; but resents, after all the rough work was over, being suddenly sent off to a Poor Law Infirmary, and having to work under those compulsorily added to the Service, and being placed under the authority of Sisters who had neither her knowledge of general or military nursing, nor general education.

Another complains that, having held the position of Superintendent, she has for a whole year being doing staff nurse's work under young Sisters who were brought in from outside—many of whom are not of the type who should be a Sister in a military hospital at all.

Another complains of the lack of discipline amongst the nursing staff, owing to the divided authority of the Principal Matron and Matron. These two officials do not agree, and in consequence there is no ultimate appeal in professional matters; and as the Matron is much the more able woman of the two, she considers it is a pity she has not the authority to control the nursing department. A house, evidently, divided against itself.

A Matron, who has resigned after a year's untold misery of a V.A.D. hospital, writes: "If I had known, as I do now, that many others besides myself were suffering the same kind of injustice, I would not have left quietly, and all the Sisters would have joined me; but we did not wish to upset the patients more than necessary. The Sisters would sign with me any form of protest or petition to Lord Kitchener or other authority likely to effect the proper administration of the V.A.D. hospitals. I personally know of three similar cases to my own, in which the Matron's work has been so interfered with by untrained heads, that they have been forced to give up, and, in consequence, none but an inferior trained nurse would take up the work after their predecessors had been treated so unfairly."

This Matron sends us her "case." It is astounding—and all the result of the present "system" upheld by the War Office. We shall refer to it on another occasion.

In this connection we have been privileged to read a letter from an untrained Commandant who reigns supreme, with a young sister in her teens as second in command, over "my own war hospital," a mansion in the country. It ran: "My uniform is extremely becoming, I designed it myself. I am, of course, absolutely supreme; I organize and order everything; I go first to the kitchen and arrange all meals; with my secretary I then attend to letters, then to the wards where I inspect, superintend, and do what nursing I choose—(the men simply adore me). From 12 to 1, I return to office and reprimand the nurses!" This final touch is sublime. We wonder how long this beatific régime will last!

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