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**EDITORIAL.**

**A NATIONAL DEBT OF HONOUR.**

It is becoming increasingly evident that the strain of the work in Territorial Hospitals is having a serious and permanent effect upon the health of a certain percentage of the nursing staffs, and the question of some provision for those invalidated out of the Service demands attention. Such nurses are likely to become a permanent charge upon Insurance Societies from a cause which was certainly not contemplated when the Insurance Act was passed, and one which the funds of Approved Societies are not large enough to bear without injustice to other members. At the same time it is obvious that Disablement Benefit of 5s. a week, is utterly inadequate for the maintenance of a nurse in anything like decent circumstances, and the problem of her support therefore remains unsolved.

The claim on the nation of the disabled soldiers, in certain instances, is recognized by Parliament by the provision of a pension amounting to 25s. weekly, instead of Disablement Benefit, under the Insurance Act, and when a nurse suffers a complete breakdown in health, due to services rendered to her country, she is equally entitled to similar provision. The vote of credit for the expenses of the war granted and asked for amounts already to the huge sum of £1,420,000,000, and one of the first charges upon it should be adequate provision for the men and women broken in the war. It is a debt of honour which the nation will most willingly pay.

From cases which have come under our special notice we are of opinion that the question is an urgent one, and should be considered by the Advisory Council of the Territorial Force Nursing Service, whose duty it is to advise the Army Council on

matters affecting the Service, without delay. Military Nurses in the Regular Service if disabled are entitled to pensions, retired pay, or gratuities, and a charitable fund has been founded to help war nurses who are not members of that Service in sickness and necessity; but it was expressly stated, when this fund was founded, that Territorial Nurses would be outside its scope as they were otherwise provided for. We have, however, been unable to ascertain that any provision is made for them when invalidated out of the Service. So long as nurses remain members they no doubt receive every care in sickness, but the urgent question is what is to become of those, without means, who are incapacitated for further work, out of the Service, and it is one which should be settled forthwith by the provision of an adequate disablement allowance.

No observant person who attended the memorial service to Miss Edith Cavell in St. Paul's Cathedral, when a congregation of nurses filled the space under the great Dome could fail to note the exceeding weariness on the faces of many of the Military and Territorial nurses. They bore the visible impress of the strenuous year of work through which they had passed—exacting in its demands on both their physical and emotional nature—and which they had discharged with an efficiency and devotion of a high order. It is impossible to conceive what would have been the additional suffering, incapacity, and loss of life amongst the sick and wounded of our army in the field without the devoted work of trained nurses.

We hope, therefore, that the War Office will deal justly with these nurses, and see to it that the reward of their patriotism and devotion is not a life of poverty for the remainder of their days, but that if incapacitated in the national service due provision is made for them.

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