

## FRENCH FLAG NURSING CORPS.

### MEETING AT THE INDIAN EMPIRE CLUB.

A very successful meeting in support of the French Flag Nursing Corps was held at the Indian Empire Club, Knightsbridge Hotel, S.W., on Wednesday, May 10th, preceded by a delightful tea given by invitation.

Mr. Sholto Douglas, who presided, was supported on the platform by the Vicomtesse de la Panouse, President of the Corps, who was accompanied by a party of members of the French Croix Rouge, Mrs. R. D. Murray, Chairman, to whom the Committee are indebted for arranging the meeting; Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Hon. Treasurer; Miss I. Hutchinson, Hon. Secretary, and Dr. Dundas Grant and Dr. Murray Leslie, Hon. Medical Advisers.

At the commencement of the proceedings both the President and Miss Ellison were presented with lovely bouquets of roses, and then the incomparable notes of the Marseillaise rang out.

Amongst those who sent letters of regret at their inability to be present were Lord Curzon, President of the Club, Lord Inchcape, Sir Mortimer Durand, and Lady Robertson Nicoll.

The Chairman said that it was with pleasure and pride that he introduced Miss Grace Ellison, who had come over from France and would tell them about the French Flag Nursing Corps. He also referred the audience for information to the first Annual Report, a much more interesting document than Anglo-Indian officials were accustomed to associate with annual reports. At the present time when the glorious French Army was defending the interests of Europe before Verdun they could show their appreciation of this heroic resistance by doing their little bit to support the Corps and so help to keep it efficient to do its good work.

Miss Ellison, who began by saying how much she appreciated the kindness of the Club in allowing her to come and speak to it, said that geography had been good to England. She referred to the tenacity of the French, as demonstrated at Verdun. When war was declared she knew that the French must suffer terribly, and felt she must try to help. She arrived in Paris just after the battle of the Marne when many of the hospitals were in the hands of the Germans, and there was a shortage of such necessaries as chloroform and other supplies. It was perfectly pitiful. One thing which stood out was the courage of the French soldiers. They did not care about themselves so long as France was victorious.

Miss Ellison referred to the position of nursing in France, owing to the expulsion of the nuns from the hospitals, and to the substitution of uneducated women. This had prevented gentlewomen from adopting nursing as their work in life. The nursing of the sick and wounded in France was therefore mainly done by Red Cross ladies. She did not in any way wish to undervalue that work, but these ladies were not trained nurses.

What was the use of the *Entente Cordiale* if each nation did not supplement what the other lacked.

Her ideal was to send British nurses to work in the French hospitals, not to send complete hospital units from this country. The English language and the English food were both a trial to the sick soldier. The best plan, therefore, seemed to be to try to fill the gaps in the French hospitals, and British nurses stepped into these gaps.

Miss Ellison said that the President of the Corps—the Vicomtesse de la Panouse—was known and loved throughout France, as well as in England. The little corps of splendid nurses, recruited not only in the United Kingdom, but in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, had taken care of over 27,000 wounded. Her own special work was to look after the welfare of the nurses, to go up and down the Front and smooth out difficulties—not an easy matter. If alive after the War, she hoped to say something on the language question. For instance, a Frenchman might call his wife a cat or a little cabbage, as a term of endearment; an Englishwoman by no means regarded these terms as compliments. One nurse said that the orderlies laughed at her. It was understandable when it was elicited that the nurse who wanted a surgical cradle had asked for a *berceau*.

Again, the nurses incensed the orderlies if they used the words *je veux* instead of *je voudrais*. The orderlies were drawn from all ranks of those who were unfit for combatant service. The priest orderlies were perfectly splendid; whether washing the floors or saying Mass, nothing came amiss to them.

Some of the Frenchmen thought the English nurses washed their patients too much. Miss Ellison explained the different national outlook to one doctor, by saying that in England a bath was a daily necessity; in France, an anniversary.

They had, she thought, quite conquered the nuns and priests. One Mother Superior told her she could never have imagined Heaven with Protestants in it, but she hoped that God would make room for her and for the Canadian Colonel.

Miss Ellison then took her audience along the French front. Sometimes grave, sometimes gay, always interesting, she told of the work of the nurses—not only amongst the wounded, but in the hospitals for contagious diseases. She described the Marne—on one side beautiful, carpeted with wild flowers and lilies-of-the-valley; on the other, desolate.

Of the pillows used by the French soldiers, she said that she felt sure that if Jacob had been offered one of them in exchange for his stone at Bethel, he would have asked to keep his nice, soft stone.

She spoke of the splendid brotherhood between the soldiers, a marquis, a butcher and an apache, all using the intimate "tu" to one another. She told also of the anxiety and distress of the men as to the fate of their families. She found one patient sobbing in a corner with the clothes over his face, and learnt he had had no news of

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