

the rescued nurses spent all their time in the water on rafts, or clinging to bits of wreckage. At no time did I see any signs of panic, or any signs of fear on the part of any one, and I cannot find words adequately to express my appreciation of the magnificent way in which the nurses behaved, not only in the vessel, but afterwards in the water. Their behaviour had to be seen to be believed possible." The nurses state that the incident was "much exaggerated"!

Sister Metherell had been at Queen Mary's Hostel for some days before Mrs. Kerr Lawson knew that she was one of the *Marquette* nurses. She was in the water for seven hours, and relates that her predominant feeling was one of loneliness. When another survivor got hold of the wreckage to which she was clinging, this feeling passed.

We have all read with bitter grief, shame and indignation the terrible indictment of the Government by Lord Wemyss in the House of Lords of the neglect and sufferings of our brave troops in Mesopotamia. How our wounded had been left for 24 hours exposed to pitiless rain, and how, when taken down the river in barges, they had been exposed to all the elements. For their shattered limbs their puggarees and sometimes their puttees were used as bandages; how accommodation for 500 wounded had to suffice for 4,500; of men covered with vermin in hospital, and no provision for their dire necessities; few doctors and attendants and no nurses. Little wonder those of us who foresaw on the outbreak of war the sure necessity for military nursing reorganisation, and offered help and service offensively refused or ignored, resent this result of lack of initiative, and hidebound persistence in narrow and inadequate grooves.

The Englishwoman has this month an excellent summary of this scandal and compares it with conditions upwards of sixty years ago, when the great *Times* correspondent wrote from Constantinople:—

The greatest commiseration prevails for the unhappy inmates of Scutari. . . . Can it be said that the Battle of the Alma has been an event to take the world by surprise? Has not the expedition of the Crimea been the talk of the last four months? And yet, after the troops have been six months in the country, there is no preparation for the commonest surgical operation. . . . The manner in which the sick and wounded are treated is worthy only of the savages of Dahomey.

On July 21st, 1916, Mr. Bryce, referring in the House of Commons to communications he had received from Mesopotamia, said:—

The accounts of the misfortunes which occurred were so appalling that if the facts were known there would be a cry of indignation throughout the country.

Some will, no doubt, reflect that Florence Nightingale might well turn in her grave in despair that no woman should have arisen to carry on her work. The women are not lacking, the public ought to know it; but there is no

Sidney Herbert in the Cabinet to give them a chance.

It seems that early in the year in view of the news from Mesopotamia, the Scottish Women's Hospital Committee in Edinburgh, made an offer to the War Office of a Women's Hospital fully equipped and staffed, with all expenses paid, for service with our troops in Mesopotamia. Dr. Elsie Inglis was informed by War Office officials that it was not its business to offer anything to the Indian Government, but merely to supply them with what they asked for. Telegrams sent to the Viceroy of India elicited a favourable reply, but after delay the Scottish Women learned that the Chief of the Imperial Staff in England replied to the Viceroy's acceptance of the proffered Hospital Unit as follows:—

Can send you all the hospitals you may require. You should not accept others as long as we can supply.

Thus did the War Office in April, 1916, in time of stress, refuse the valuable service which the Scottish Women's Hospitals might have rendered the country. In like manner did the military authorities in 1855 declare that all possible stores and equipment had been sent to Scutari!

Now we have a very urgent call to the trained nurses and women of the Empire to volunteer for service in military hospitals and we urge every woman worth her salt to respond to it, but we cannot help reflecting that now, two years after the declaration of war, no really effective scheme of military nursing, co-ordinating all the help available throughout the Empire, has been considered, or new methods adopted. It is now nearly two years since we, as President of the National Council of Trained Nurses, petitioned the Army Medical Department of the War Office to set up an expert committee to consider the efficient nursing of the sick soldier in war; and a year since we made public our suggestion for a Sanitary Nursing Service for the Army. We cannot learn that any steps have been taken to extend or co-ordinate the trained nursing care of our Army in the field from a professional standpoint. Here we are, close on two years after the event, depending upon voluntary and charitable effort in providing the trained nursing skill which every man in the Navy and the Army can claim as a right from the State whose servant he is. No wonder we women outside the official ring see Florence Nightingale turning in her grave. As for Parliamentary Commissions, they will not return us one dear man from the dead.

In an appreciation of Sir Victor Horsley in the *British Medical Journal*, Major R. McCarrison, I.M.S., writes:—

"How he came to volunteer for Mesopotamia is characteristic of him. He had come through a period of intense family anxiety, when he met at dinner one evening in February a man who related stories of the horrors of the Tigris campaign and of the sufferings of our sick and wounded

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)