

interest to you. We feel that while it is not a very large concession it will be somewhat helpful.

Trusting that you may finally be victorious in the continuous fight that you have been keeping up,

Very truly yours,

M. HELENA MCMILLAN,
Principal.

The Presbyterian Hospital
of the City of Chicago,
Chicago, Ill.

COPY OF LETTER WRITTEN TO MR. A. M. DAY,
PRESIDENT, PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL,
CHICAGO, BY MISS M. H. MCMILLAN, AND
LATER USED FREELY.

The question of Congress granting a commission to the graduate nurse while on Government duty, has, as you know, been under discussion, but does not seem to be entirely understood and for that reason I would like to present a few of the facts to you and ask your assistance in securing proper consideration of the matter.

The graduate nurse has learned by experience that military ranking is necessary to secure recognition, and therefore to obtain results in the military world. Without a defined place, she is dependent on the judgment and good will of heavily burdened officers, each commander deciding as to the opportunity given individual groups of nurses to put their professional knowledge into use; as to conditions allotted them in travelling and in camp; as to the courtesies of treatment, and in fact every detail that makes up daily life in a military hospital.

It was this same lack of official status that hampered Florence Nightingale's work in the Crimean war, and which took all her indomitable courage and strong personality to contend against.

The British graduate nurses, in this present war, while continuing to nurse in the hospitals of France and England, openly resent the undignified and unfair position in which the Government has placed them, the lack of appreciation of their services, of consideration for their welfare, and most of all, the lost opportunity of skilled nursing for the British soldiers. Instances are numerous in which untrained and unskilled but titled or influential women are placed in charge of the seriously wounded, while the graduate nurse, who is competent but uninfluential and unprotected by military status, is delegated to duties which might be performed by any strong person. British Nursing Journals state that young women of a few months' training are sent to France and given higher authority than the graduate nurse without family or political backing. The unfortunate part of this is, of course, the confusion and lack of professional management, for which the sick soldier has to suffer.

It is to save the American troops from the same lack of expert nursing that a commission is asked for the American graduate nurse while on Government duty, with the belief that her position being thus strengthened, she will be more able to maintain her authority against well-meaning but

harmful amateurs. A commission would also obtain for the nurse a little more comfort in travel and camp life; it would secure some consideration if taken as a prisoner; it might prevent some of the petty humiliations the British nurses are putting up with. In the practical working of a military hospital there will be many helpers, orderlies, maids, and assistant women—not nurses. It is vital to the proper administration of the hospital that the nurses who are responsible for the care of the patients and their welfare, shall have such authority as will compel respect and obedience from those necessary helpers. Many of them will be enlisted men and will not be apt to recognize authority unless it is fortified with a title. To get efficiency and the best results in such hospitals, nurses should have authority second only to the medical and surgical men, and such title as will make this authority evident.

As the nurse at best will experience many discomforts and some hardships, as she will have periods of long and strenuous work, as there is the possibility of loss of health, and even life, and as her services in caring for the sick both at home and abroad are much needed, it does not seem unreasonable to ask a consideration which would help conserve health and strength. Medical and nursing authorities of the world recognize the high standing of the American Nurses' School, and consequently of the American graduate nurse. Nurses selected by the Red Cross to serve the government, represent the very best of the American graduates. The government does not have to spend time or money training them. They are experts, ready for executive or bed-side duties; they are disciplined, professional women. Many of them have given up good positions; others have left remunerative private practice. The salary paid to the nurse by the Government is a very moderate one. She is not granted a pension or an insurance, and in case of becoming incapacitated for work has no assurance of permanent care.

Granting rank of 2nd Lieutenant to the nurse will not interfere with the authority of the medical profession, as the lowest ranking given to a medical army man is that of 1st Lieutenant. It has been sanctioned by a number of the leading medical men of the country.

To quiet the nurse and to please her, it has been suggested that a "civil title" be given. This would not satisfy her as she is not craving title, but the results which military, not civil status, will bring—the possibility for effective work and a position which she may hold without loss of self-respect.

The nurses going to the Front are too absorbed with work to take any action in this matter, and it is being presented by those who stay at home and will not profit by commissions. It is felt that they will have the support of the public who understand graduate nurses, and of those who are interested in securing their services for the troops.

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