

## NURSING AND THE WAR.

The secret of the visit of the King and Queen to France was well kept, and until their Majesties return, on Saturday last, after a ten days' visit, few knew that they were out of the country. During their absence the King inspected the troops, and the Queen visited a large number of hospitals and institutions in the Lines of Communication Area, not only British Hospitals including those of the mother country and the Dominions, but also French and Belgian Hospitals, a casualty clearing hospital, and a base veterinary hospital.

Her Majesty was accompanied by the Acting Principal Matron in France, Miss Beadsmore Smith, R.R.C., and gave great pleasure by making it her practice to speak to each patient in the hospitals she visited. During their tour their Majesties met the King and Queen of the Belgians, and also entertained the President of the French Republic at luncheon.

The Special Order issued by the King on his return included the following sentence:

"It was a great pleasure to the Queen to accompany me, and to become personally acquainted with the excellent arrangements for the care of the sick and wounded whose welfare is ever close to her heart."

This is the first occasion on which a Queen of these Dominions has left the country to visit the sick and wounded in war.

Speaking at Exeter on Saturday last, Colonel the Honourable Sir Arthur Lawley, Commissioner British Red Cross and Order of St. John, Mesopotamia, speaking of work on the battle fronts, paid a handsome compliment to the R.A.M.C. and the nursing sisters:—"I have always spoken, and always shall speak," he said, "with unstinting praise of the splendid response made by the R.A.M.C. to the stupendous demands made upon them in this great campaign. The spirit shown by the doctors and nurses has been simply splendid. There is no other word for it. They have ministered to the sick and wounded unstintingly and untiringly, and with a courage equal to that shown by the soldiers in the trenches. When the history of this great war comes to be written no more glorious record will adorn its pages than that which will tell the story of the self-sacrifice, the devotion, and daring of our doctors and nursing sisters in Flanders and France—and the British Red Cross Society is proud and flattered to be welcomed by them as auxiliaries and comrades. We are the handmaid of the Army." He mentioned how he was present at Messines Ridge shortly after the successful enterprise there, and saw many outward and visible signs of the work of the Red Cross Society in the casualty clearing stations. The universal exclamation he heard there was "What should we do were it not for the Red Cross?"

Writing in a Nurses' League Journal, the President of the League states: "I had to join No. — Ambulance Train for Leeds with 160 patients. My partner and I began doing dressings, and did not cease until we reached Leeds. We had 54 patients to dress, and nearly every one had many dressings, and had not been dressed since the Sunday or Saturday previous. The smell and the condition of the wounds were appalling. I simply had to take down compound fractures, which it is one of the rules to leave alone on the train. The pus poured out. This is the result of the removal of Nursing Sisters from the boats. Orderlies are not trained nurses, and I believe they are too afraid and the medical officers cannot get the work done."

There is a sort of sniff of Mesopotamia about this letter which we commend to the attention of the Army Medical Department. It is a condition of affairs which needs immediate reform.

When Sisters object to service on the boats it will be time enough to risk increased suffering, if not neglect of our wounded men. But, we know well, thousands are prepared to risk their lives in saving our soldiers if needs be.

*The Red Cross* usually has a sly dig at the "professional" opinions expressed in this JOURNAL on V.A.D. vagaries. We recently objected to "the untrained Commandant wearing nurses' uniform and assuming the duties of hospital matron, with authority, recognised and supported by the War Office, over the skilled and trained nurse."

*The Red Cross* says, after quoting this paragraph:—"We were not aware that Commandants on duty do wear the uniform of trained nurses, which is expressly provided for in the regulations, and is blue, while that of the Commandant is red." Then the editor favours us with a little lesson on inaccuracy.

The nursing profession is not restricted to colour in its uniform—blue, pink, grey, green, black, stripes, spots and checks are all in use as frocks, but a nurse's uniform consists in a simple washing dress, white cap, apron, cuffs and collar, and these articles of dress are assumed by untrained Commandants and V.A.D.s engaged in domestic duties.

*The Red Cross* says nothing of Commandants assuming the duties of matron as hundreds of them are doing, thereby posing as professional persons, and often wrecking the discipline and standards of nursing in institutions they control. One has only to visit a military hospital to realise the value of the "pucka Red Capes," and the confidence and admiration in which their wearers are held by sick and wounded soldiers of all ranks. Our claim is that "pucka Red Capes" or their equivalent in nursing experience, should control the nursing department of every hospital and home for our soldiers and sailors at home and abroad. If the American Red Cross can organise its military nursing on these sound professional lines, so can we—and sooner or later it will be done—when social influence ceases to govern the skilled woman worker.

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