

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,589.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1918.

Vol. LXI

EDITORIAL.

**THE WAR COUNCIL SHOULD TAKE
ACTION.**

It will surprise none of those who, at the outbreak of the war in 1914, desired to see the nursing service of this country put upon a war footing as a whole, that there is at the present time a very serious shortage of nurses and probationers in our civil hospitals. If thousands of nurses are taken out of these institutions to care for the sick and wounded it is evident that there will be many vacancies on the nursing staffs of such hospitals. But because the best must be available for our sick and wounded sailors, soldiers, and airmen, there is no valid reason why a comprehensive survey should not have been taken, with the object of filling these vacancies, or that it should not be taken even now in this fifth year of the war—late as it is to begin work that should have been inaugurated as soon as war was declared, in an international conflict which was bound to affect the furthestmost ends of the world.

Had recruits been called for for our civil hospitals in the early days of the war, had the untrained enthusiasm of many ardent young women who desired to nurse our wounded soldiers been directed to hospital training as a means to attain this end, the probationary service in our civil hospital wards would not have been starved. As it was, short courses of a few weeks' instruction were inaugurated, and many young women were permitted at their conclusion to proceed on active service, whilst numbers of fully qualified nurses were turned down.

The National Council of Trained Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland presented a Memorandum on the Care of the Sick and Wounded to the Director-General of the

Army Medical Service in December, 1914, prepared by the President, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, which advocated the formation of an expert committee "representative of the various departments which are now engaged in organising the nursing of sick and wounded soldiers, and including independent experts on military nursing." Had such a committee been formed one of its first acts no doubt would have been to safeguard the sources of supply of military nurses, to see that the needs of the civil hospitals were met, as far as possible, while providing for the emergencies caused by the war. This statesmanlike course was not pursued, nor was it endorsed by the heads of the military services, and organisation proceeded in water-tight compartments. Unfortunately none of the heads of those departments had attended international conferences of nurses, or learnt what their colleagues of other nations were doing, and their outlook was very restricted.

One of the first acts of the nursing profession in the United States of America on the entry of that country into the war has been the formation of an expert committee composed of the heads of the naval and military nursing departments as well as other leaders of the nursing profession, with the result that attention is being directed to nursing as a field for national service, and 25,000 young women are asked for to join the United States Student Nurse Reserve, and thus to be ready, as trained nurses are drafted to the front, to fill up the ranks by entering the training schools as student nurses for the full term course.

This country might have led the way. It is now too late. But it is not too late to follow where the United States of America have led, and even now to organize a Student Nurse Reserve.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)