

## THE JOINT WOMEN'S V.A.D. DEPARTMENT.

### SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME.

The problem of what is to become after the war of the unit, who, by a misapplication of the English language, is called a "V.A.D." (Voluntary Aid Detachment), is one which is engaging the attention of a sub-committee of the Joint Women's V.A.D. Department at Devonshire House, and it is announced that the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society, and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem "have decided to give a sum of money for scholarships and for training, as a tribute to the magnificent work so generously given by V.A.D. members during the war." Only those members who served prior to January, 1917, will be included in the scheme.

The widespread lack of preparation of girls for the duties of life, whether in the home or the world, is one of the facts emphasised by the war, and we are glad that the lesson that serious training is a necessary preparation for a definite career has been taken to heart.

In August, 1914, there was a large reservoir of willing service to draw upon, but a great proportion of it was neither skilled nor competent. We have, therefore, only commendation for the effort to impress upon young women the need of honourably qualifying for any work undertaken, more especially when that work is concerned with so delicately balanced an organism as the human body.

It is, however, a debatable question whether the Joint Committee should spend money subscribed in the name of "the sick and wounded" to relieve parents of the obligation of maintaining superfluous daughters, by paying for their professional training. If the Department decides to help to place the V.A.D.'s in suitable positions for training, and assist them, if they or their parents are unable to find the necessary fees, wherever possible such payments should, in our view, be regarded as loans, and the money subscribed to the societies associated under the Joint War Committee—at the cost of much self-denial, in many instances, on the part of the general public—conserved for future use. We wonder how parents, impoverished by the war and handicapped by the fees they are paying for the education of their daughters and for placing them out in the world, will appreciate paying for the education of the daughters of other people, in many instances better off than themselves!

The Committee has drawn up a list of professions and occupations towards which scholarships covering the cost of training or grants-in-aid will be given, under the headings "Type of Work," "General Conditions," "Qualifications," and "Approximate Length of Training," and a comparison of these is very instructive. First, the salaries to be earned when trained, are in some instances below the margin which will permit the worker to be self supporting; and we hope the committee, if it spends public money on training, will also endeavour to obtain a rise

in the standard of pay for the trained worker, so that a living wage may be secured.

A point to be noted is the anomaly of remuneration in relation to the length of training. We give a few instances.

*School Nursing.*—Qualifications: Hospital training, special experience in children's diseases an advantage. Remuneration when trained, £60 to £120. Non-resident.

*Welfare Supervisors.*—Training: Six months to a year; special courses for welfare workers, social study, diploma of recognized university and university degree an advantage; experience in social work very helpful. Salary £120-£400. non-resident.

*Hospital Almoners.*—Training: Eighteen months, university degree an advantage. Salary £120-£400.

*X-Ray Assistants.*—Training: Six months. Salary in hospitals, about £60, resident; £80 to £150, non-resident. Private work (non-resident) may rise to £4 per week.

We wonder how many V.A.D.s, weighing the relative advantages of the different occupations and professions, will select nursing for which the length of training is four years, though "the course may be slightly reduced for members with long service." The pay is not given, but nurses know well that the salaries they can command (for most responsible work) make nursing the Cinderella amongst the professions. Who can wonder, therefore, if the V.A.D. rejects nursing as a career as too arduous and too unproductive, if she must serve an apprenticeship of at least three or four years to obtain a post as a school nurse at a salary of from £60 to £120 a year, when, after only six months' training, she can secure from £120 to £400 as a welfare supervisor?

(There are also inequalities of rank which may here be noted, thus, while the Commandant-in-Chief of the Women's Royal Air Force holds the dazzling position of a brigadier-general, the Matron-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force Nursing Service is accorded the relatively humble rank of major.)

Such anomalies must be rectified, lest, with the way made easy for women to enter professions and occupations at once more attractive and remunerative than nursing, the stream of desirable candidates is diverted from this essential occupation.

Lastly, we note that the occupations and professions tabulated by the Committee are mainly those for workers who have a capacity as drudges. But the talents of a certain proportion at least of the V.A.D.s must lie in the direction of the arts and sciences which make the joy of life. If the greater proportion are content to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water," we should like to see opportunity offered to talent whatever direction it may take.

### TRUE TALES WITH A MORAL.

*Private War Widow:* "If I don't get my pension soon, I shall have to go on the streets and take to immortality."

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