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NURSING AND THE WAR.

WELL-DESERVED HONOURS.

It is officially announced that Sister A. G. MacMahon, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve, has been awarded the Royal Red Cross for devotion to duty in France. She volunteered for service on the outbreak of war and was called for duty early in 1915. After serving for a year as Sister-in-Charge of the Surgical Division and Operating Theatre at Lichfield Military Hospital, she went to France, and had the distinction of being one of the first five British women to enter Arras after the battle at Easter, 1917. She was sent for duty to a advanced operating theatre attached to a field ambulance, which came under shell-fire, and she was then sent down the line again to a casualty clearing station. Sister MacMahon had the trying experience of being on duty in two casualty clearing stations that were bombed, and later was attached to one of the hospitals in the Etaples area, which suffered so much from air raids, many of the patients and staff being killed or wounded. She was highly complimented for her gallantry during these raids. Sister MacMahon was trained at the Union Infirmary, Belfast, and by her valour has brought credit not only on her profession but on her Training School.

Many brave women were honoured in the awards of the Medal of the British Empire recently announced. "Great courage and self-sacrifice as nurse; has frequently given skin for grafting on to patients," is Freda Bowring's record.

Eight members of the Belgian Section of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Corps have received the French Croix de Guerre with silver star for the gallant services they rendered in Calais during the severe air raids which the town has suffered. The French authorities have given them a splendid "Citation," in itself a great honour. The eight members are: Mrs. McDougall, Miss O'Neill-Power, Miss Margaret Hoole, Miss Gladys Marples, Miss M. Moseley-Williams, Miss M. Cadell, Miss D. Calder and Miss I. McDowall.

In addition to these members seven others have received the Ordre de la Reine Elisabeth, namely: Miss G. Anderson, Miss Baxter Ellis, Miss C. Dewar, Miss E. Faulder, Miss N. Cluff, Miss I. M. Lewis, and Miss C. Meade.

It gives us great pleasure to see real merit rewarded, and in this connection we are reminded of a story told to us this week. A Commandant who, during air raids, persistently hid in the cellar for hours, has been *the* person distinguished at the hospital of which she was in charge for decoration with the R.R.C. "for courage during air raids." The nurses—not one of whom has received recognition—who remained on duty with their patients, were, we presume, "being paid" for their services! We wonder who deludes the "Fount of All Honour" in such a flagrant case.

It is the habit, when speaking of "V.A.D.s," to assume that all are highly educated, financially independent women. A certain percentage of those workers may have enjoyed these social advantages before the war, but the large majority of V.A.D.s have been recruited from the class whose education leaves much to be desired, and who have to earn a living. If the parents of these workers are able to pay for their professional education, it is their duty to do so; if not, we presume they will gladly avail themselves of the charitable aid proposed by the Joint Women's V.A.D. Committee.

We regret to note that, as announced, so far there is no professional expert opinion available on the Committee of the V.A.D. Scholarship Scheme—an omission which has been fatal, in our opinion, to nursing standards in Red Cross and Auxiliary Military Hospitals during the war, and which it is to be sincerely hoped, for the sake of the poor, will be rectified before it is too late in organising Public Health work.

The following are the members of the Committee of the V.A.D. Scholarship Scheme:—Lady Amptill, the Duchess of Atholl, Lady Codrington, Mrs. Curnock, Lady Susan Gilmour, Miss Nanson (representing the Ministry of Labour), Lady Oliver, Mrs. St. Loe Strachey, and Miss D. Cochran (secretary).

Very aptly comes to mind that remark of Bolingbroke: "Socrates used to say that, although no man undertakes a trade he has not learnt, even the meanest, everyone thinks himself sufficiently qualified for the hardest of all trades, that of government."

The Belfast Board of Guardians have formulated a plan to allow V.A.D.'s 18 months off their training in their Infirmary. Surely, when we have a defined curriculum of training, for which trained nurses have been agitating, through a system of State Registration, for a quarter of a century, so disorganising a suggestion would not be possible.

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