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EDITORIAL.

THE THANKS OF PARLIAMENT.

"That the thanks of this House be accorded to the women of the medical and other auxiliary services for their devotion in tending the sick and wounded as for other duties faithfully and bravely discharged."

In the above words the Prime Minister included in the Votes of Thanks to the Forces, which he moved in the House of Commons on Wednesday last, the recognition of trained nurses amongst those whose services he invited the House of Commons to honour by recording its thanks to them for the faithful and brave discharge of their duty during the recent war.

It will always be a matter of pride to the nursing profession that its members were permitted to utilise their skill for the benefit of the sick and wounded in the great war to an extent never before known in war time.

It has always been the official policy in former wars to restrict the services of women nurses to the base hospitals, and to hold that the conditions prevailing nearer the front were unsuited for their employment.

Nurses held different views. They considered that wherever there were sick and wounded whom they could assist, right of place was theirs, and they were willing to take all risks if they might perform what they held to be their duty, and bring to the men who had served their country so nobly the skilled services which they were qualified to render by years of arduous apprenticeship in hospital wards.

Sir Anthony Bowlby, late Consulting Surgeon to the British Army in France, in an address delivered to the Abernethian Society of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, told how the Sisters came to be employed at the front.

"It was," he said, "the considered policy of the Army before the war that no wounded should be retained near the front longer than was absolutely necessary, and at the first battle of Ypres there were only three Casualty Clearing Stations close to the battle in which 13,000 men were wounded. Each had a staff of six medical officers, a commanding officer, a quartermaster and eighty orderlies. They had no beds, and only 200 stretchers.

BEDS USELESS WITHOUT SISTERS.

"Towards the middle of November," Sir Anthony writes, "it was suggested that some beds might be got for the worst cases in the C.C.S.s, and we got twenty beds to start with. That was a beginning, but when we got the beds we said: 'It is no good having beds for sick patients unless you have nursing sisters!' The latter were not supposed to go to the C.C.S.s, but when we got the beds we asked for them, and said: 'Until you have sisters you will not get a sufficiently high ideal of work.' We wanted to do things as well as they did them at any great civil hospital; so we got twenty beds to begin with, and we got five nurses to each C.C.S."

How the Sisters justified their employment in the front line hospitals all the world knows, and they have, moreover, established a precedent, whether serving in Casualty Clearing Stations, on hospital ships, and in other dangerous positions, on which there can be no going back in future wars. "What I have I hold." To the thanks of Parliament will assuredly be added those of the men whose lives the Sisters have helped to save, and the gratitude of relatives of those who made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of freedom, and whose passing was the easier because, as they passed over, they had the support and care of skilled and sympathetic women nurses.

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