

## THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AND SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE FOR WOMEN IN AUXILIARY SERVICES.

The following correspondence has taken place between the President of the British College of Nurses and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury on his proposed provision of spiritual care of young women enrolled for auxiliary service in the Navy, Army and Air Force:—

THE BRITISH COLLEGE OF NURSES,  
19, Queen's Gate,  
London, S.W.7.  
January 25th, 1940.

TO HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

MY LORD,

I note it is reported in the Press that "speaking in the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury in the Church House, Westminster, on January 17th, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Lang, announced that a committee of Bishops had been formed to deal with problems created by war conditions. Among the most insistent of these was that of moral temptation to which the troops were inevitably exposed. . . ."

"Referring to the difficulties of making provision for the spiritual care of young women enrolled for auxiliary service in the Navy, Army and Air Force, Dr. Lang said: 'In co-operation with the principal chaplains and with representatives of various women's organisations, I am promoting a scheme under which carefully selected women will visit the camps and depots to give talks, public and personal on the Christian religion.'"

For the information of the Council of this College of Registered Nurses, may I invite further information from your Lordship on this matter?

Do the young women in the "Navy, Army and Royal Air Force auxiliary services" referred to by you include the Auxiliary Nurses of the Civil Nursing Reserve, who have had a very short course of training, some of whom have been allocated to service with the troops at home and with the British Expeditionary Force in France?

Your Lordship will readily realise that a scheme which may infer that the moral standard and conduct of Auxiliary Nurses is open to criticism will certainly reflect upon the morale of the Nursing Services referred to, and if Nursing Auxiliaries of the Civil Nursing Reserve are exempted from "spiritual guidance" so far as your Lordship's scheme is concerned, a public statement to this effect would be advisable in justice to the highly qualified and responsible members of the Naval, Military and Air Force Nursing Services, with whom the Auxiliary Nurses of the Civil Nursing Reserve may be associated in attendance on the troops at home and abroad.

The public cannot be expected to discriminate on these professional distinctions without guidance.

Awaiting a reply from your Lordship,

I remain,

Yours faithfully,

ETHEL G. FENWICK,  
*President.*

LAMBETH PALACE, S.E.  
January 26th, 1940.

DEAR MADAM,

The Archbishop of Canterbury received your letter of January 25th. He asks me to make it clear that nothing that he has done or intends to do casts any reflection whatsoever upon the morale of the Nursing Services. The scheme to which he referred in his remarks at the meeting of Convocation is still in its preliminary stages.

The purpose which the Archbishop has in mind is to see, in close consultation with the Chaplain-General and his Department, whether any steps can be taken to give carefully selected and well-equipped women an opportunity of talking on the subject of the Christian religion to members of the A.T.S. and possibly also of the W.R.N.S. and the W.A.F.S. If Auxiliary Nurses of the Civil Nursing Reserve in this country should desire to be present to listen to such addresses, lectures, etc., as may be given, His Grace hopes that opportunity may be granted them to do so.

What, however, the Archbishop is mainly concerned to emphasise is that garbled accounts of what he said in Convocation have been interpreted as a criticism of the morale of the Women's Auxiliary Forces. This was the last thing in the world which he intended, and the interpretation put upon his words has caused him great annoyance, as it may tend to militate against the success of an attempt to minister to the fundamental spiritual needs of women and girls serving in H.M. Auxiliary Forces.

Yours faithfully,

ALAN C. DON,  
*Chaplain.*

(Dictated, but not signed personally, owing to absence.—  
I. H. W. T.)

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, F.B.C.N.

We sympathise with the Archbishop in his objection to some Press comments which may be injurious to his good intentions. For instance, to quote an important evening paper, "Representatives of various social and women's organisations have accepted invitations to serve on the Archbishop's committee, but the organisation of the campaign is still in the preliminary stage."

"Commanding officers of units are expected to make any regulations that may be necessary in the interests of the moral welfare of girls in the services, but the guiding principle is to impose as few restrictions as possible."

### No Ban on Drinks.

"In the A.T.S., for instance, there is no rule to prevent girls drinking in bars, but a commanding officer may place an hotel or a public-house that is considered 'undesirable' out of bounds."

"Make-up is permitted, and there is no rule against smoking, except in the streets."

"Girls can go out with men in the ranks or with officers. How late they are allowed to stay out depends on local conditions, but an early curfew is not imposed unless the girls have to start work very early in the morning."

It will be realised that "moral temptations" and "spiritual guidance" are matters which require very delicate handling, and we have ventured to invite the Archbishop to make it quite clear, which he has done, that Auxiliary Nurses are not necessarily included in his campaign.

It is rumoured that already some of these ill-educated and inexperienced girls associated with nursing the troops have failed to realise the necessity for the utmost discretion in their conduct. But, in our opinion, it is the duty of their professional superior officers to maintain discipline and to insist that the services of young women who discredit the nursing profession shall be dispensed with without delay.

### Worth Remembering.

Do not pray for an easy life, pray for greater strength. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers: pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle, but you will be a miracle. Every day you will wonder at yourself, at the richness of life that has come to you by the grace of God.

*Phillips Brooks.*

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