

to come forward and receive instruction to fit them to work in the hospitals as nurses.

If I give a few figures, it will show the work which we know is being done. The Civil Nursing Reserve has trained many thousands of women, but there has been some difficulty with women who do not wish to leave their homes. Greater mobility is necessary, for the fever hospitals and some of the special hospitals are not getting sufficient recruits. Even before the war it is known that we had some anxiety concerning the number of people who were entering the nursing profession. I would like to say, however, that there has been a steady increase in the numbers coming in, but because the demand is becoming greater and greater we want even larger numbers. We are going to appeal for more, but in doing so I do not wish there to be any misunderstanding. As yet, the appeals that have been made to people to take up nursing in our hospitals have not been made in vain, and all over the country in most difficult times these nurses have been doing most gallant work, carrying on through appalling conditions.

The nursing profession is showing the spirit it has always shown.

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A NURSING DIVISION AT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

That spirit has been shown by the women working as nurses in our shelters. Then we have to supply nurses for the munitions factories, for the day and night nurseries for children, and for the residential nurseries for children who have been evacuated. Now we are appealing for more mobility. We want new recruits for the nursing profession, who will go anywhere and nurse anyone, and stay in one place until we find that their services are more urgently needed somewhere else. The hon. Lady asks whether arrangements had been made for a nursing division of the Ministry of Health. Those arrangements have been discussed for some time. My right hon. Friend, when he took over the Ministry of Health, looked into the matter, and arrangements have now been actually made.

We have done much in connection with the Civil Nursing Reserve. A further increase in pay is being made to members of the Civil Nursing Reserve. I hope that we shall be able to make the majority of nurses, if not all of them, realise that the increase is given in order that they may pay their share of superannuation.

In this time of reorganisation of women's work, when we are asking people to register, and to find the work that is most suitable for them, I hope that we shall keep in mind the work of the nursing services. We are determined now to make a further appeal, as I have said, to those who will go anywhere and nurse anybody.

A Wise Suggestion.

I suggest that those who are thinking of taking up this kind of work as their war work should consider whether it is not better to go in with the student or probationary nurses, so that at the time that a woman is doing her war work she will also be getting the chance to train for a profession which she may well like to keep on after the war. The State registered nursing service of Britain holds a very high place in the social services and in the life of this country and overseas. The nurse who obtains that certificate has the chance to go all over the world and hold posts of great responsibility. Many of those who are coming in to help as nurses in our hospitals would, I think, be well advised to take up that form of nursing under the student or probationary service in order that their time may be used to get their certificate later should they be in time to do so. We suggest that there should be an appeal to these people to come in and train.

The hospitals in the majority of cases prefer not to take women over 30. What is to be done, I am asked over and over again, for women over 30 who also come into our hospitals and who are not at present trained nurses? The Civil Nursing Reserve, I think, is the answer. As nursing auxiliaries, women can obtain a short instruction in hospitals, and arrangements are being made for nursing training from now on of a more comprehensive nature. We take them into hospitals for their training; they receive their food and lodging from the start.

A Central Register.

Under our new scheme we hope to form a Central Register for those who will come into the nursing profession merely:

the duration of the war, or who are looking forward to work in the nursing profession later. We are told that if such a Central Register is formed the local authorities will be only too glad to avail themselves of it. We shall fix a minimum rate of salary during the war which the hospitals to which the probationers are sent from the Central Register will be required to pay. The Government have accepted the principle laid down by the Athlone Committee of a national scheme of payment for the nursing profession. The scheme to be set up is similar to that which the Burnham Committee set up for education, but, unfortunately, we cannot do it at the moment. We suggest that there should be an increase in the salary of the Civil Nursing Reserve, both the trained and the casual, or, in other words, the nurses which the Government employ directly. We suggest also that for women coming in as probationers on the Central Register a definite standard of pay shall be laid down. We have not gone the whole way yet, but we are taking an important step in the right direction.

I am asked sometimes whether, with all the calls that come to women now to work in munition factories and to do all sorts and kinds of work which, I believe, they can and will do, the call of the nurses will not be answered. I do not believe that. But as long as people realise that there are sick and injured in our country and in our hospitals, where we are looking after air raid casualties, civilian and Service, the sick and the old people who are chronically ill, whatever else women do in this war, they will not neglect these things. I believe that we can do it, but it must be put right in the forefront of women's work. Some time ago Florence Nightingale gave very careful instructions to people training for nursing work. I will not quote them now, but listening to the Debate to-day I could not help thinking how far we had improved on those days of the "Lady with the Lamp." I thought also of the black-out and of modern warfare, which has put out so many lamps, but I am quite certain that the men and women of this country will never see their courage, endurance or patience dimmed in any way, whatever may be the horrors of destruction, the discomforts and the tedious boredom of their work. The light will never be dimmed until victory has been won and the overthrow of the aggressors has been completely achieved.

We hope Miss Ward's and Miss Horsbrugh's speeches will be read carefully, as they include pronouncements which may have important results in the future organisation of the Nursing Profession. They include:—

1. A Division of Nursing in the Ministry of Health, with qualified persons in charge of that department.
2. Arrangements are now being made for such a division.
3. A Register of Student Nurses.
4. A Central Register of persons merely for the duration of the war.
5. Increase of salary for the Civil Nursing Reserve.

The proposal that the Division of Nursing at the Ministry of Health should be under the direction of professional persons is the only fundamental recommendation of importance.

We are of opinion that the National Council of Nurses and other organisations of nurses should be consulted concerning their own professional affairs before the Division of Nursing is organised.

THE WAR ON RHEUMATISM.

The following letter from the Duke of Gloucester, president of the Empire Rheumatism Council, has been received by Lord Horder:—

I was glad to receive the encouraging report for 1940 of the Empire Rheumatism Council, of which I am president. That the war on rheumatism is being bravely and vigorously carried on in these times is proof, as you note, of the Empire's confidence that we shall emerge from the present ordeal victorious and with strength to give the lead in building a better world.

Please accept for yourself and convey to your colleagues and fellow-workers my congratulations on the good work of the past year, and my confident hopes of full success in the future.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)