

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 2090. Vol. 90.

SEPTEMBER, 1942.

Price Sevenpence.

EDITORIAL.

ANNIVERSARY.

Three years of humanity's most terrible sufferings have now passed into history; three years of courage unsurpassed; three years of fleeting victories and humiliating failures; three years in which we have witnessed man's ferocious cruelties to man; and now we stand outraged—yet confident—on the threshold of the fourth year, of the ultimate victory of righteousness.

Through all this chaos, misery, suffering and death there gleams now brightly, now dimly, a golden thread of hope and victory, which—if we follow faithfully and with all our concentrated efforts and singleness of purpose—will surely lead us to the blessed goal of Peace.

And how have the fortunes of the Nursing Profession, in particular, fared through these three fateful years? Has it held firmly to its highest principles and traditions or has its grip slackened and tired, due to its many problems and difficulties, and the wiles of its enemies?

Sorrowfully we see that the horizon is clouded, and that the storm clouds threaten to black out the clear blue sky. We see the rights and privileges of Registered Nurses, which have been paid for out of their limited finances, being filched from them (and are to be shared equally by any unskilled woman who chooses to nurse the sick for gain). In the end, we know who it is who will suffer most! As a result of the degradation of the Status of Registered Nurses, the profession will cease to attract the right type of women to its banner, and inferior and less educated and probably unteachable women will have to be conscripted, and the sick poor and the national health will be grievously neglected.

And now a new blow is being prepared for us. We learn that V.A.D.s have cast jealous and longing eyes at the rewards of our labours, and that they wish to acquire for themselves the status and privileges of Registered Nurses without our strenuous preparation and tests of efficiency.

During the last war, V.A.D.s were accepted from their societies to assist in military hospitals as nursing orderlies. In this war they were accepted under the same conditions, that is, as nursing orderlies; but others were accepted for duty in the civil hospitals as nursing auxiliaries.

In the early days of the war women were not being conscripted into the services or armament factories, but as the need for more men arose, women were conscripted to replace men, and those who were called up under the new military law, had to obey, and go without question to any part of the country where their services were most urgently required.

V.A.D.s, by virtue of the importance of their work, were exempt from the new law, but, unfortunately for the country and for the hospitals, there was no power and no machinery in force to direct the efforts of the V.A.D.s where they were most needed.

Thus, their position in a fully conscripted country gives them an unfair advantage over other unskilled workers, and leaves them free to pick and choose their field of labour, and demonstrates them as a privileged group having preferential consideration.

There is, no doubt, a serious shortage of nursing aid in many provincial and country hospitals, and in order to meet this need the War Office, quite rightly, decided to place these V.A.D.s under military discipline in the A.T.S., so that they could be directed into those hospitals where the shortage was most acute. We think this decision of the War Office is most just and wise and sincerely hope that it will be carried into effect.

Are the V.A.D.s willing to lay aside their unearned privileges and serve their country to the utmost of their abilities, and on the same basis as other unskilled women in the land? Apparently not—because they have already protested to the War Office that they are not as other women, and do not wish to come under military discipline.

They wish to retain their preferential treatment; and they go even further than that, they actually have demanded that they be admitted into the Q.A.I.M.N.S. (for Trained Registered Nurses *only*) as "other ranks" with Commissions!

Could any demand be more unjust than that of degrading a body of highly-trained and skilled women to the level of untrained and unskilled workers? Is training then to count for nothing, and must our fine military Sisters be officially classed with nursing orderlies? We think not, and if the War Office gives in to this unjust clamour of socially influential people, the results will not be good either for the wounded Service men or for the country. Trained Army Sisters of whom the community is so proud, will cease to exist.

We hear that Sir James Grigg, Secretary of State for War, has set up a committee with an "Independent Chairman" to consider the question. We sincerely hope that the Army Nursing Service will be given representation on this Committee. We have a very fine and able Matron-in-Chief at the War Office as head of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service. Is it too much to expect that her sound advice will be sought and acted upon? She can be trusted to act fairly and for the good of our sick and wounded officers and men.

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