

Proposal to form a corps of volunteer female nurses for service in the Army Hospitals in the field, with suggestions as to the incorporation of the nursing profession, by Surgeon-Major G.J.H. Evatt of the Army Medical Staff

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PROPOSAL TO FORM

A Corps of Volunteer Female Nurses

For Service in the Army Hospitals in the Field,

WITH

SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE INCORPORATION OF THE

NURSING PROFESSION,

BY

SURGEON-MAJOR G. J. H. EVATT, M.D.,

ARMY MEDICAL STAFF.

IT is proposed to enrol a Corps of Volunteer Female Nurses for service with the English Forces in any foreign war, or with the Volunteer Forces in case of any invasion, to supplement the existing Nursing Sisters now employed in the Army Hospitals.

Such a Corps would be formed on the lines of the ordinary Volunteer Regulations.

The Nurses would be chosen from fully trained and disciplined female nurses already serving in great Civil Hospitals, and who have undergone a distinct training course in a recognised training Institution or Hospital.

They would in peace remain so employed, but would be enrolled in a Corps, graded in seniority, assembled periodically for lectures on their army work, and probably paid the same Capitation Grant as is given to ordinary Volunteers, for the purpose of defraying the cost of clothing, and the up-keep of the Corps, although this is not important.

- I. *Age.*—A definite age would require to be fixed, so as to ensure active women only being employed.
- II. *Physical Fitness.*—A certificate of physical fitness from an Army Surgeon would be desirable stating that the candidate is strong and healthy, and fit for the hardships of war-work.
- III. *Clothing.*—A uniform, similar to the Army Nursing Sisters, would be required, with some slight distinction to mark the Volunteer Sisters.
- IV. *Pay.*—The same pay to be issued during war as is issued to the regular Nursing Sisters.
- V. *Outfit Allowance.*—A definite outfit allowance to be given to each nurse chosen for war service.
- VI. *War Service.*—On the out-break of any foreign war, the War Office Authorities would apply to the proposed Superintendent General of Volunteer Female Nurses, who from the list of volunteers kept in her office, would call on such as were willing to serve to come forward, and she would then submit their names to the Military Authorities for service. In case of home invasion power would exist to send the Volunteer Nurses to any part of the three kingdoms where their services would be needed.

VII. *Gratuity*.—A gratuity to be given to each nurse at the termination of the campaign, of say one year's pay.

VIII. *Medals and Decorations*.—The medals and decorations as granted to the Army Nursing Sisters to be made available for the Volunteer Sisters as well.

IX. *Certificate of Character*.—The most rigid enquiry into character to be made before any nurse is enrolled, and certificates of character from last employment to be demanded.

X. *Grading*.—A certain number of grades of rank to be established, such as—

Assistant Nurse.
Nurse.
Chief Nurse.
Sister.
Superintending Sister.
Assistant Lady Superintendent.
Lady Superintendent.
Chief Superintendent.
Superintendent General.

Ladies occupying or who had occupied the position of Matron or Lady Superintendent of certain classes of great Hospitals, to be eligible for the position of Lady Superintendent. The Corps to be controlled and governed by a Superintendent General of Volunteer Nurses, chosen for her special ability, aided by a Committee and a Code of Regulations. She would keep the records of the Corps, assisted by a Volunteer Secretary, and would be the official channel for communicating with the Military Medical Authorities.

XI. *Head Quarters*.—The Head Quarters to be in London (query), at the Volunteer Medical Association Rooms, 26, King William Street, Strand, *pro tem*.

XII. *Discipline*.—The Discipline of the Army Sisters to be the ruling principle; the power of lowering of rank, suspension from pay, dismissal, expulsion, forfeiture of medals and decorations to exist.

XIII. *Annual Meetings*.—Four or more Annual Meetings to be held in London for Lectures on Military Work, and to facilitate social knowledge of the Nurses by each other,—an important element in all associations.

XIV. *Diplomas or Grades—Certificate of Proficiency in Nursing*.—A regular certificate of Efficiency or Diploma in Nursing, to be drawn up by the Corps, and this Diploma or Certificate to be issued only after a due course of instruction, study examination and previous certification in Civil Hospital.

XV. *Pensions*.—Any Volunteer Nurse falling ill from sickness or injury received on active service, to have the same Government Pension as the corresponding rank in the Military Service.

XVI. *Temporary Training in Military Hospitals*.—Power to be obtained for any Nurse already trained in a Civil Hospital to spend a month in a Military Hospital, to learn the routine. Pay to be allowed for such temporary service.

Indirect Results of the Formation of Proposed Nurses Corps.

It seems at first sight that the formation of such a Corps as I propose above, is purely for a Military Reserve for War; in point of fact it is far more than this. It is, I think, the first definite attempt to Incorporate the Nursing Profession. That profession is clearly evolving itself out of the old disorder and chaos of untrained attendance on the sick.

But up to the present date the Nursing Profession has never been taught to incorporate itself, to undertake its own self-government, to endeavour to work its own future, to expel unworthy members from its ranks, to define its curriculum of training, to found a Diploma or Certificate of Efficiency, or to form a Pension Fund. But all these steps follow logically from the lines I have laid down. Let us examine them in order.

- (A.) *Diploma*.—No defined Diploma in Nursing, everywhere acknowledged, now exists. It is quite possible for the Corps now proposed to be founded, to draw up through its Council, such a Diploma. It would require a curriculum of service at a Hospital and a written and *viva voce* examination. Various classes of Certificates could be founded.
- (B.) *Register of Nurses*.—At present no definite Register of Nurses exists, showing place of training, &c. Such a Register is needed, and this Corps now proposed could begin such a Register.
- (C.) *Sick Fund*.—It would become possible to gradually develop a Sick Fund for the support of Nurses falling into ill health.
- (D.) *Pension Fund*.—A Pension Fund for Superannuated Nurses is much needed. This Association could gradually form such a fund.
- (E.) *Power of Expulsion of Unfit Persons*.—No definite power of expelling unfit persons from the body of Nurses in general now exists. This Corps, through its Council, could gradually take up such work, which is certainly wanted.
- (F.) *Self-Government*.—This proposed movement would if carried out, give to the Nursing Profession as distinct an autonomy and self-government as is enjoyed in most organized professions. It would associate in one body the various disunited and scattered elements of Nursing in the Metropolis. It would develop social intercourse between the Nurses. The development of professional efficiency would follow out a combination as is here suggested. There is to-day very considerable ignorance as to "How to become a Nurse," and there is distinct room for a Society to protect the Nursing Community. All this could follow from the suggested Corps.

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ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY,
WOOLWICH,
DECEMBER, 1885.

Army Medical Staff.

* * Any suggestions or excendations of the above scheme would be heartily welcomed.—G. J. H. E.

Indirect Results of the Formation of Proposed Nurses Corps

It seems at first sight that the formation of a Nurses Corps as I propose above is purely for a Military Reserve for War; in point of fact it is far more than this. It is, I think, the first definite step towards the re-organization of the Nursing Profession. That profession is clearly evolving itself out of the old order and changed conditions attendant on the war.

But up to the present date the Nursing Profession has never been taught to incorporate itself to undertake its own self-government to endeavor to work its own future, to capul unaverly members from its ranks to take its curriculum of training to found a Hospital or Certificate of Efficiency, or to form a Pension Fund. But all these steps follow naturally from the fact I have just given. I can compare them in order.

(A) *Autonomy*.—No doubt Hospital Efficiency is being everywhere acknowledged, now exists. It is quite possible for the Corps now proposed to be founded to draw up a Hospital or Certificate of Efficiency. It would require a certificate in service at a Hospital and a written report on the examination. Various classes of Certificates could be founded.

(B) *Right of Honor*.—At present no honor is attached to the Nursing profession. It is a plain fact that the Nursing profession is not a profession, and that it is not a profession.

(C) *Self-help*.—It would become possible to gradually develop a Self-help fund for the support of Nurses during the war.

(D) *Public Law*.—A Hospital Fund for the re-organization of Nurses is much needed. The foundation of the Nursing profession is much needed.

(E) *Form of Education*.—The Nursing profession is a profession, and it is a profession. It is a profession, and it is a profession. It is a profession, and it is a profession.

(F) *Self-government*.—This proposal would mean that I could cut me to the Nursing profession as a whole, or as a part, and self-government as is required in that organized profession. It would mean that in one day the various national and provincial elements of the Nursing profession would be organized and united in one body. The development of professional education would be a condition of this suggestion. There is today very considerable work to be done in the Nursing profession, and there is a distinct need for a body to govern the Nursing profession. It is a body to govern the Nursing profession.

G. J. H. WYATT, M.D., Surgeon-General

London, 1914