

Army Nursing Notes.

WHAT a cheering bit of news was the relief of Kimberley; it won't be long before we have accounts of the siege, which will be vastly interesting; and we long to know how all our nurse friends have come through its trials—with the utmost courage and devotion to duty, we have no doubt.

It is also good news that the hospital accommodation for the wounded in Cape Colony and Natal is getting into good working order, and that the medical authorities have realised the necessity of appointing a much larger staff of Sisters to duty in each hospital than was originally arranged. We feel sure that if a larger floating staff of Sisters had all along been available, for special duty for night and day for the serious cases, instead of clinging to the obsolete system of placing these cases in the charge of male orderlies on short shifts, the complaints which have filtered home of overwork and understaffing would have been avoided.

To quote a "South African Campaigner" from the *British Medical Journal*, on nursing in the Military Hospitals, he says:—

"The one point which does seem open to question is whether trained nurses have really been employed to a sufficient extent, at any rate at the base hospitals at Capetown. The opinion of the medical correspondent from whom I have already quoted is, at any rate, to the effect that 'more qualified nurses are required.' Thus he says: 'At the best of times one day nurse has at least 40 beds, and at night time one nurse has 9 huts to take charge of—that is, over 180 beds, for each hut has 20, or in some cases more beds.' This appears on the face of it rather unsatisfactory; but it must be borne in mind that male orderlies or nurses are employed, not only in hospitals at the front but also in military hospitals at home. Thus my correspondent says that each hut has a male orderly, and I would point out that even at Netley a very large amount of what is usually regarded as nursing work is done by these same orderlies. I confess, from personal experience, that I am by no means enamoured of the male orderly as a nurse. I have had charge of a hospital where none but male orderlies were used, and I have no hesitation in saying that nursing duties are not as a rule so well performed even by trained men of this sort as by trained women nurses. But, these views notwithstanding, it is only fair to remember that we are asked to condemn an old system and not merely a temporary arrangement for a campaign."

It must be borne in mind, however, that for years the NURSING RECORD has urged the War Office to supplement some of these male orderlies by trained women nurses, and we hope that before long the authorities will realize that such a reform is absolutely necessary.

Captain Norton, M.P., asked the Under Secretary of State for War, in the House, whether it had been brought to his notice that, owing to the insufficient number of non-commissioned officers and men engaged in hospital duties at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, these non-commissioned officers and men were frequently on duty thirty-six hours at a time, and also that no regular night duty men, kept for night duty only, were employed there, and whether he would take steps to remedy this state of affairs. Mr. Powell Williams, replying for the Under Secretary, said:—"The establishment of the Royal Army Medical Corps at Netley has been so depleted by the demands from South Africa, that the men have not of late had the usual number of nights in bed, but additional men have been ordered from Aldershot, and a reinforcement is shortly expected from the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps, which will allow the men to have proper rest. It is not customary to have a separate staff for night duty. The staff of female nurses is ample, and further assistance of that nature has been declined at present by the Lady Superintendent."

When it is realised that the Netley Hospital is capable of holding 1,000 sick and wounded men, any further remarks concerning this staff of nurses is superfluous. It is simply impossible that the soldiers can receive proper and efficient nursing, unless a sufficient and experienced staff is provided.

We last week expressed our sympathy with the colonial nurses in South Africa, many of whom are well-qualified nurses, and, of course, used to the climate, in being refused by the War Office for military service. The special medical correspondent of the *British Medical Journal* in Cape Colony has something to say on the question, and incidentally remarks that "It is a great mistake to suppose that the ordinary civil nurse is fit for military work." We agree with him, and yet, with hardly an exception, "the ordinary civil nurse" has been accepted by the Army Nursing Service Reserve Committee, who in the two years at their disposal have taken no steps whatever to provide instruction for the members in military nursing, for with very few exceptions the hundred nurses selected by the Committee for active service in South Africa have not had a day's experience in a military hospital, so that, to disqualify the colonial nurses for this reason, is unjust.

But this gentleman also remarks:—

"There has been a good deal of grumbling about the supposed mistake of the authorities in not largely employing Colonial female nurses at the base hospitals,

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