

Army Nursing Notes.

THE QUEEN has given instructions that while at Balmoral she is to be kept informed not merely of the condition of the South African sick and wounded at the hospitals, but of the manner in which those hospitals are fulfilling their work. Weekly reports will be sent to her Majesty from at least three centres. The arrangements made with a view to securing information as to the condition of the patients have been the result of her Majesty's own suggestion.

The Hospitals Commission has reached Bloemfontein. On its way up country it unexpectedly met an ambulance train and paid it a surprise visit of inspection.

At the first sitting of the Commission at Bloemfontein, Major Bedford admitted a shortage of ten field hospitals, and said it was most difficult to meet requirements as the operations extended. In Natal the Bearer Companies and Field Hospitals got very mixed. During Lord Roberts' advance, the usual medical unit was not kept up, and the number of ambulances was reduced. He could not say whether the provision for the sick and wounded had been sufficient.

The correspondent of the *Daily Mail* gives the following information as to the evidence given by medical men of No. 8 General Hospital. Dr. Kirkham declared that every necessary was wanting. There were only two commodes, one feeding cup and no bedpans. Dying patients were obliged to leave their beds in consequence. Dr. Whittington's evidence was to the same effect. Dr. Fitchett declared there were a number of cases of drunkenness among the orderlies, sometimes when they were on duty. There was no fresh milk at times of pressure, though it was always available for afternoon tea. A cook employed at a large salary was monopolised by the officers' mess. Dr. Stott gave confirmatory evidence.

Dr. Leon, in charge of the enteric division of the hospital, said that in six weeks the Principal Medical Officer never visited the marquees. Requisitions for more nurses, orderlies, and utensils, were not complied with for a fortnight. There was shortage of utensils, and the beds got dirty through not being changed. Typhoid patients were obliged to do everything for themselves except clean the wards. The condition of the bell tents was awful. There were no organised preparations to meet convoys, and new arrivals were frequently compelled to sleep in their great coats on the ground.

Dr. Johnstone, for ten years a practitioner in Bloemfontein, said he thought the Principal Medical Officer was too sparing in the matter of bedding. Material was obtainable at the stores, and ladies were willing to assist in making it up. The Principal Medical Officer, however, regarded the expense as unduly great.

The following Nursing Sisters have been invalided home, and left Cape Town for England on August 22nd on the *S.S. Assaye*:—Sisters J. E. Mount, A. E. Jocelyne, E. Richardson, E. M. Herriott, M. E. Owen.

Sisters E. Duxbury, J. A. Davison, E. Vansettart, M. Bruce, E. Miller, and C. E. Goode also left in the same ship for duty on the voyage.

The following letter from Mrs. Richard Chamberlain, which has been published in several leading daily papers, contains such grave charges against the Army nursing arrangements in South Africa, that we reprint it in full. If these statements, or half of them, can be substantiated, most people will be convinced that Mr. Burdett-Coutts not only was amply justified in writing his famous letters to the *Times*, but that he deserves the gratitude of the nation for his courage in espousing a cause which should be far above party politics, but which, unfortunately, has not been so considered by the party at present in power.

Condition of Base Hospitals.

"Every word that Mr. Burdett-Coutts has said with regard to the dreadful mismanagement of the hospitals is true, and much more than he has said is true. Base hospitals at a place like Cape Town, where everything necessary for their equipment can be had on the shortest notice, ought to be in as good condition as a London hospital. In reality, they were worse than the field hospitals. I can speak more particularly with respect to the No. 1 Base Hospital, at Cape Town, where I worked seven months. It had as beautiful a situation as anyone could have desired, right on the face of a hill. No attempt had been made to clean the buildings before the men were taken in, and the result was that in a very short time the patients had to be covered with insect powder to keep off the vermin. The scandalous state of affairs was repeatedly brought under the notice of the military authorities, but they paid no attention. The nursing staff was wholly inadequate. At an average when I went there there was one sister to every 175 men night and day. What made the neglect more unjustifiable was the fact that about that time there were any amount of sisters in Cape Town. They had come from Johannesburg, and they would have been glad to have accepted situations. But the authorities preferred to let the men die for want of adequate nursing rather than employ these women. And I have no hesitation in saying that this was the cause of many a man's death. Then there was an absolute want of discipline. There were plenty

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