

amount of prejudice on the part of the R.A.M.C. to women nurses, more especially to civilian nurses; but I think the effect of this war will be to decrease that feeling. There are indications—at any rate, on the part of the junior men—that they have appreciated the services rendered by the many well trained nurses who have worked well through the war.”

This expression of opinion on the part of so competent an observer, will be welcomed by the nursing profession, who claim that, wherever sickness and suffering exist, their power to render skilled assistance gives them the right to be present. That the most careful selection of picked women to act as Sisters in the Field Hospitals would have to be made, by a professional authority, is obvious, but the history of the war emphasizes this fact in relation to the selection of all nurses. M. B.

A Woman's Wit.

THE story is told that, at the height of the transport difficulties, in the teeth of the officials, Lady Roberts carried eight large trunks from Cape Town to Bloemfontein. Everyone wondered, everyone murmured. No one else could have got the things through. The transport of stores had stopped for the time, the sick lacked every comfort, and those who were not sick were half-starved and half-clad. When the trunks were unpacked, the contents of seven were distributed amongst the Tommies. Lady Roberts had snapped her fingers at Red Tape, and smuggled comforts through to the men. One small trunk contained her kit.

Sketches.

THE VICTORIA CROSS WARD.

“OH, doctor, do please help me to get out to the Transvaal!” gushed a wealthy young lady to an eminent physician. “I’m just dying to nurse the poor, dear soldiers, and it will be quite easy, with your influence behind me, to gain permission from the authorities.”

“I will do my best for you,” said the medical man, not wishing to blight her enthusiasm, “but it will be rather more difficult than you imagine. In the first place, you will have to go to London for three weeks’ hard and special training, probably in a crowded fever hospital.”

The girl’s pretty face fell.

“In a fever hospital?” she repeated. “Oh, but I shan’t want to nurse fever cases, doctor. Can’t you get me into the Victoria Cross Ward?”

The Royal Army Medical Corps.

Mr. Edgar Wallace, writing in the *Daily News* on the subject of “What’s Wrong with the Royal Army Medical Corps,” says:—“Generally speaking, a Victoria Cross is the landmark of a blunder. Generally speaking, in the history of Britain’s wars, individual acts of heroism and endurance have atoned for the follies of collective administration, and so those who have watched the working of the hospitals in South Africa—and have watched with knowledge, appreciating the difficulties that beset them—are confident that when the truth about the hospitals is revealed it will show little more than the triumph of the Good Man over the Bad System. I do not propose to do anything more in this article than briefly to sketch what I saw of the hospitals on the lines of communication and with Lord Methuen in the earlier days of the war. In the first place, in no department was England’s unpreparedness for war more terribly apparent than in the Medical Department at Cape Town. When war appeared inevitable, and the small garrison of the Colony was sent to guard the important junctions and border towns, it was with the utmost difficulty that the P.M.O., Colonel Supple, was able to get together two complete field hospitals, which were split up between the forces holding Kimberley, De Aar, Naauwpoort, Orange River, and Stormberg Junction.”

It was after the battle of Magersfontein that the pressure first began to be felt, and the narrator continues:—“I remember the night, dusty, squally, stormy, when the long train of cattle trucks drew slowly into the dimly-lit station. We thought it was a train of ‘empties,’ but it was not. White faces appeared at the barred apertures staring strangely; grimy hands, caked and dappled with dried blood, held forth empty water-bottles for filling. Drawn faces made desperate efforts to smile. The trucks were in darkness, and the doctors who went in to sort out the dead from the dying carried lanterns. They were very silent, the poor battered heroes, who lay on the hay-covered floors. The place of the wild, mad moment of battle was seventy miles away, and it was yesterday—or was it the day before? They were very tired; they had been twelve hours coming seventy miles. They had been shunted into sidings by youthful staff officers to allow troop-trains to pass them. Sometimes the troop-trains were an hour late, sometimes it was the mistake of the staff officer, but all day long in the heat of the African sun the improvised hospital train waited, and some

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)