

of discipline and management, a defect which had nothing to do with the undermanning of the corps, but which was connected with the general incompetence running through it.

He had stated that patients in field hospitals at Bloemfontein lay almost in the mud. The Commission said: "We come to the conclusion that though after rain there was some damp in some of the tents, the tents inside could not fairly be called wet, and the men inside could not properly be described as lying in the mud. We do not think that the dampness to which we have referred caused any suffering or annoyance to patients." This was the attitude which the commissioners assumed throughout the report; and he said that before they had a right to come to a decision of that kind they ought to be ill with enteric and lie on the damp ground. Then they would be justified in deciding whether lying on such ground did not cause any annoyance to the patients. The Woodstock Hospital at Cape Town was described as "an old building infested with bugs, but they had never been in such numbers as materially to affect the comfort of the patients." How many bugs must browse on the patient's body before he could be officially described as uncomfortable? Indeed, he found that this spirit coloured the whole of the report; and in taking note of that spirit the rank and file of the Army would consider the whole of this inquiry a humbug and a sham.

What effect did the House suppose would be produced by the refusal of the Commission to receive the evidence of soldiers who had suffered from these things? A great mass of valuable evidence from soldiers who had been in these hospitals had been collected by him with the greatest care, but when the Commission left this country for South Africa, stating that the English evidence would be taken when the Commissioners returned, his offer to submit this evidence on their return was peremptorily refused.

The leniency to and partiality for a Government Department had coloured the Commission's recommendations of reform to such an extent that they were extremely imperfect. He was afraid that the subject of reform was far too difficult for him to go into then, but in conclusion he wished to say that it was not within the range of human possibility for a man who saw the things which he saw to remain silent under the circumstances. Having seen those things he should have been, in his opinion, a coward if he had not brought them forward. He had no other means of making them known except those which he adopted, and he was glad he had been instrumental in directing attention to the need of reform.

### Another Nurse Fraud.

Mary Watkins, of various aliases, was, last week, charged at Westminster Police Court with forging a cheque bearing the name of Mr. Fielding Ould, an art student living on an allowance from his mother. Her career has been a varied one. She is the daughter of a Gloucestershire collier, and four years ago took a situation in London as a general servant. At the time of her conviction she was living in a flat in Victoria Street, and posing as the Hon. Mrs. Clifford. Several barristers watched the case on behalf of gentlemen whose names it was thought might be mentioned.

On the advice of her solicitor, Mr. Philip Conway, the prisoner pleaded guilty, and Mr. Williamson then told the police story of "Mrs. Clifford's" career. In 1899, he said, the police received many complaints about her. She was then calling herself Nurse Macdonald, of Charing Cross Hospital, and was endeavouring to obtain goods by false pretences. In June last she was living at Montagu Mansions as Sister Macdonald, a niece of Major-General Hector Macdonald. She showed people a large photograph of the general, with the words, "Dolly, with love, from H. M." on it, and pretended that the general had sent it to her. That was untrue, and the inscription was in her own writing.

Soon afterwards she posed as Nurse Watkins, of the R.A.M.C., Netley Hospital. She never was a nurse, and never was at Netley. But she managed to swindle tradesmen with worthless cheques, which, however, various gentlemen had since taken up. Last December she stayed at the Queen's Hotel, Manchester, as the Hon. Mrs. Clifford, widow of an army officer. She kept some memorial cards about her with the inscription, "In loving memory of Major A. Clifford, Yorkshire Regiment, who died from wounds received at Spion Kop, February, 1900." There was no such officer.

Then she gave out that she was in Ladysmith during the siege. She left the hotel owing £13, and her luggage was detained. She afterwards stayed at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras, where she swindled jewellers, and afterwards took a flat at Maida Vale, where she swindled a jobmaster over the hire of broughams.

Mr. Conway pleaded that the prisoner's youth and delicate health should be taken into account. She was about to be married, and forged the cheque at a time of great distress and financial embarrassment.

Mr. Horace Smith sent her to gaol for two months with hard labour, a remarkably light sentence for so accomplished a swindler. She is still under 21.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)