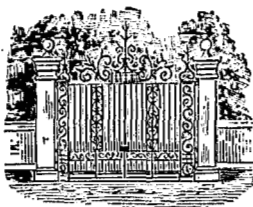


Outside the Gates.

A WOMAN'S MEMORY OF THE WAR.



"A Woman's Memory of the War" is distinctly interesting reading. In it Miss Violet Brooke-Hunt gives an account of her experiences as a civilian in South Africa. As she herself tells, the war fever laid its hand upon her, and she started in the *Tantallon Castle*, the only condition imposed by her family being that she should return by the next mail if the Principal Chaplain to the Forces at Cape Town, to whom she took special letters, decided there was no way in which she could be of use. Eventually she arrived at Pretoria, being sent up there from Bloemfontein by General Kelly-Kenny on a telegram from Lord Roberts.

Her experiences began in the Woodstock Hospital, "the hospital round which so much controversy has raged. . . . It appeared that Mr. Treves' "plague species" did not patronize Woodstock, preferring Wynburg and Rondebosch, with their beautiful scenery and more interesting surroundings, and yet anyone who wanted to be useful, and who would have devoted a certain amount of time regularly every day, could have found plenty of scope here, for the Superintending Sister was cordiality itself, and welcomed help. The mere task of unpacking and sorting the baskets of fruit, flowers, and other garden produce which flowed in so liberally, was well within the power of any intelligent and methodical woman. But this would have meant a daily routine to have been of any use, and the women in beautiful clothes, who talked of the "darling Tommies," and who went to "see the wounded," had no idea of undertaking work of this kind.

Maitland Camp was the next place where there was work for willing hands in supplying meals to newly disembarked troops.

There was plenty of work to be done also amongst the thousands of refugees—women and children, sent on panic trains from Johannesburg. Miss Brooke-Hunt records "The women of Cape Town nobly rose to the occasion. At a mass meeting of women only held early in the war, they resolved to 'prepare for any emergency, and be ready to take their share of citizens' duties.' They formed a Committee, raised £5,000, opened receiving houses for the refugees, and met every train, and so well did they organize that the Committee for the distribution of the Mansion House Fund handed over large sums to this Committee, confident that they would be wisely used.

Naauwport was the next scene of Miss Brooke-Hunt's work. Her strong point was evidently the organization of soldiers' club rooms and tea rooms, thus providing that touch of home which is so conspicuous by its absence in barrack life, but no work seemed to come amiss.

A story of a patient in hospital at Naauwport must be quoted. Underneath his pillow he kept a little Union Jack handkerchief, which he had had since he was ten years old. He was too shy to say much for himself, but his chum did the talking for him, "Bill, he was knocked over, miss, and his face and head was all streaming

with blood; but his heart wasn't broke, not he! and he started waving his handkerchief and calling on our chaps to stick to it, quite excited like, as if he was at a football match. Then we got a lot of Boers round us, and one of them made as if he was going to grab Bill's handkerchief out of his hand. But Bill, he just claps it on his head, and ties it round; then he says, 'Now I'll dare you to pull the bandage off a wounded man's head.' And when our ambulance men got up, there was Bill, with his head all tied up in the Union Jack, and I expect it brought him good luck, for he has got on something marvellous."

Work for the convalescents at Naauwport was next undertaken. The men in the convalescent camp had nothing beyond their rations, but when the hospitals were crowded, and they had to leave at an early stage of convalescence to make room for more acute cases, a different diet was needed. Finally a soup kitchen was organized, and here soup for 150, and 200 pints of cocoa, was made each day. Then there were the troops passing through the station to be considered, so that there was no lack of work.

From Naauwpoort to Bloemfontein, where a Soldiers' Institute was organized, and from Bloemfontein to Pretoria, where Lord Roberts himself performed the opening function at an institute worthy of the occasion, afforded plenty of scope for energy.

Indeed, the moral of the book throughout is that there was plenty of work for women who were ready to put their shoulders to the wheel, and no lack of appreciation of their services on the part of the authorities. But war is a stern matter. Frivolous were in the way.

Here is Miss Brooke-Hunt's account of the opening of the Institute at Pretoria: "We had hoped for a good attendance on the Monday, but we had little calculated on the crowd of men who assembled. When every corner of the building had been packed, there were still hundreds waiting outside, determined to have their share of the cheering if they could do nothing else, and as Lord Roberts' carriage drew up, he was greeted with rounds of welcome so spontaneous that he could not hide the fact that he was deeply touched. When he got inside the large room they all sprang to their feet to cheer again and again; anything more striking I have never heard. A few rows of seats had been kept for specially invited personages, but the Chief ordered every seat to be filled by the men directly the appointed hour for the commencement was past, and we heard amusing stories afterwards of generals who could not even get up the stairs, so great was the crush. The speeches were few and short, but Lord Roberts touched exactly the right note when he said he wanted to see the Institute run "without rules," each man feeling that he personally was responsible for the good tone of the place. When he announced that in order to enable the troops to use the Institute freely he had arranged for special Institute passes to be issued each day, which gave men leave to be out of camp for two extra hours, it was but natural that the cheers and general enthusiasm should start afresh."

The Institute was largely used by both officers and men, and one story of its usefulness must be quoted:

"An infantry regiment had arrived in Pretoria that afternoon to strengthen a brigade about to start out early in the morning," and flocked into the Institute.

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