

Professional Review.

A DOCTOR IN KHAKI.

Every member of the nursing profession should read "Impressions of a Doctor in Khaki," by Mr. Francis E. Fremantle, M.A., M.B., B.Ch. (Oxon.), M.R.C.P., late Civil Surgeon to H.M. Forces in South Africa, published by Mr. John Murray, 50, Albemarle Street. It is written in a genial, and at times humorous vein, but withal is a strong indictment of the system (or want of system) of Army Nursing which has obtained up to the present, and of the red-tapeism which has seemed to be inseparable from Army methods of administration, and which permeates the R.A.M.C., with the result that the best work of which it is capable is stifled.

THE PAY OF CIVIL SURGEONS.

It is amusing to note how Mr. Fremantle exults in the £1 a day, with board and a free passage provided for the young civil surgeon by the grateful tax-payer. "This is sheer wealth. No practitioner would pay as well for an assistant, and no partnership or practice of this value could be bought for less than a year's purchase, some £400 down. And if, as a well-earned holiday, after his years of hard work and rough living, the young doctor were to undertake a sea trip or Continental tour in charge of an incipient drunkard or madman, it would do little more than pay his expenses."

IT WAS ALWAYS SO.

The author's comments on the situation from time to time, if not always respectful, are delightfully frank. "We were getting up at six, when some authorities sent round word that all except the regiment were to be off the boat in ten minutes—the silly jackanapes!" All the luggage seems to have been hopelessly mixed up. "The Colonel at the docks here in charge of disembarkation is quite unsympathetic. The luggage may come on in another transport, and he says our only chance is to send down a man to watch every box unloaded from every transport; otherwise it will go off with some regiment to the uttermost parts of the earth. And the most piteous part is that the military look on all this discord as the most natural thing in the world. "It was always so, they say."

DIET SHEETS.

Settled down to hospital work the minutiae of clerical work required was strange to a medical man fresh from a London Medical School. "I struggled with the diet-sheets, which strike terror into the heart of the new-comer. The Medical Officer has to order exactly what a man is to have on the following day. So many ounces of meat and bread, tea and milk, with one-twentieth of an ounce of mustard, and one-fiftieth of an ounce of pepper. That being so one-fiftieth of an ounce of pepper that patient must have, and not 'ooi oz. more or less. I wonder what happens to the pepper when a man doesn't want it! Perhaps I ought to call for a return of pepper unused and send it up to various authorities in turn, to be filed and never looked at. . . . And yet with all this minute daily record of diets for each patient, there is no record of the medicines given to any particular patient, except in the daily prescription book common to the whole ward, through the whole of which you have to hunt to find what drugs Private

Smith or Corporal McAlister has been taking. Of course this red tape as to diets is designed in order to prevent dishonesty on the part of the contractors and orderlies: but the whole system seems overdone. It should be easy to revise and just lay down a few simple diets—milk, farinaceous, fish or eggs, chicken and full diet, the order for which would hold good until countermanded. The responsibility for the choice between chop, steak, and joint could surely be laid on some other shoulders than those of the doctor. In civil hospitals it is the sister of the ward who is responsible, and who by a judicious varying of the diet within the prescribed order is often able to pacify discontented patients. Happy thought—she could also save the pepper!"

ORDERLY MEDICAL OFFICER.

Each medical officer takes it in turn to be on duty as orderly medical officer for 24 hours. Part of his duties in this connection Mr. Fremantle thus describes. "I walk at racing speed in the track of the Assistant Day Ward-Master, a corporal of the corps, round some forty wards at each of the three meals, and down the hill, and up and down again—fine exercise for us both. 'Stand, Orderly Officer,' shouts the Ward-master through one of the windows. I come panting up some some yards behind. 'Any complaints, men?' 'None, Sir,' the men answer in chorus, as if they were letting off a volley; rather like the Head's order at Eton that at the end of the Queen's visit. 'The boys will cheer.' It was amusing to vary the formula once or twice. 'Is the tea all right, men?' I asked, and the result was a most dishevelled volley, or rather independent firing."

NURSING.

Passing over much of interest we pass on to the conclusions as to the nursing system. "As to the nursing I can only say that the whole system here at Wynburg appears to be entirely inadequate, and that for no reason, since there are a thousand civilian nurses in England and at the Cape willing and thirsting for the work; and surely there are few things for which the tax payer would so willingly pay. Hitherto there have been seven Sisters on day duty, and two on at night for the whole of our six hundred beds spread out over a space at least a quarter of a mile in diameter each way, and on the side of a hill. Practically the whole nursing is meant to be done by orderlies—the unfortunate orderlies have to be on night duty every other night as well as their twelve hours every day. Night duty with them means two hours on and two off alternately through the night. Naturally this kind of life leads to festivity as an antidote, whenever the orderlies get a free evening, resulting of course in confinement to barracks or cells for a few days, and in no little discontent. Thus I went into one on my huts on Sunday and found that my head nurse, so to speak was confined to cells for being drunk the previous night; and the one remaining orderly said that was nothing, as he had had eleven days, not long ago, and lost his corporal's stripes after fourteen years' service. "It ain't no game this job, it ain't," he continued, "I'm goin' to chuck it, sir, when I gets 'ome; try some other trade. Eightpence a day! Lorblimy!" And the orderlies curse the patients for not helping them, and the patients curse the orderlies for making them do all the work. What can one expect under

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