

Army Nursing Notes.

WE are much indebted to Mr. Clinton Dent, of St. George's Hospital, who is acting as the special war correspondent of the *British Medical Journal*, for his keen appreciation of the true value of good nursing, which appears constantly in his very interesting letters. In writing of "Nursing in Abdominal Cases," he says:—"It is in injuries of this nature that the weakness of the nursing makes itself felt. Every patient requires a special nurse. The Nursing Sisters do not attend to such cases—more's the pity!—and thus the patients are looked after by orderlies. However hard these men work (and in many instances they work with the utmost industry and intelligence), they seem incapable of bestowing the same patient, unremitting, watchful care on a distressing and ungrateful case that a nurse (if worthy of the name) always has in her power to give. Very slight influences will tip the balance one way or another, and really good nursing may, in cases of the kind, absolutely determine the issue. There is not much romance about a patient with a urinary or a fœcal fistula, or a case of fractured spine with paralysis of the sphincters. Most women can effectively sit by the bedside of a patient, fan away the flies, and put eau-de-cologne on a forehead, persisting in these simple duties with a great patience that appeals very directly to the sympathies of those who do not understand what nursing really is, or can be. But the hard-working, practical, conscientious woman, who keeps one of these distressing cases always dry, who can ward off bed-sores, and who, in short, does a world of invaluable work that does not show, and does not appeal to anyone save the medical officer, gets little credit for what is real nursing."

Sister Warriner, R.N.S., writes that she reached Bloemfontein on the 11th April, and was, of course, glad to be sent to the front, and, her friends will be pleased to know, she is well and happy. The 8th and 9th General Hospitals are stationed there, and the 10th is also to be stationed at Bloemfontein. "It was most interesting," she writes, "to see the tents all along the line from Strekstroom. We were blocked for one day on the border of the Orange Free State, owing to the railway bridges crossing the Orange River having been destroyed by the Boers. The engine took us as far as the new traffic bridge, and we were then pushed across by 20 Kaffirs—each truck separately—when we were then attached to another engine, and proceeded on our journey." Letters seem

constantly to go astray, and we hear from Sisters how they long for news from home, which never reaches them.

One can hardly realise at home, with dozens of dailies to supply us with telegraphic information of what is going on in South Africa, how completely in the dark are those on the spot. In a letter from Bloemfontein a Sister writes:—"You ask me to tell you the news, but I have none to tell, *no one here knows* what is going to happen next. Lord Roberts forms all plans and submits them to the staff officers (they wear scarlet stripes on their wrist-bands—quite a relief to the eye—one gets *so* tired of khaki), and they are sworn to secrecy, and the officers carry the orders sealed to their destination, and know about as much as I do. Everything is kept so quiet because there are so many spies. And don't the Dutch hate us? Yesterday, when I was buying some raisins, I asked the man if he had a pot of jam by any chance, and he replied, 'No, Miss, you must wait till you get to Pretoria for that.' To which I replied, 'I don't fancy I shall be there, but our troops soon will be.' You should have seen the sarcastic expression of his face! The following little story will show you we are somewhat short of luxuries, and, indeed, of many necessaries. A young lieutenant who is recovering from dysentery was frightfully hungry, so he begged to be permitted to send his servant out to forage for any little dainty *at any price* he could find. The man was away five hours, and returned triumphant with a large basket containing a dozen of soda water, 12 sheets of writing paper, a box of tooth powder, and with the information 'that, please sir, eggs is 5s. a dozen, and there is no eggs!' Indeed, it is very difficult to feed enterics, as there is so little milk, and both condensed milk and lime juice are running short. I dread to see the poor parched lips in the morning. Bloemfontein is a lovely place, pretty red stone houses, but sanitation bad. We drink rain water, but as Modder River water—and one is often short of that—and such luxuries as soap have been very short, our poor patients have not been kept very clean. To give you an idea of what our food costs, we have to pay 3s. 6d. a lb. for butter (when it is to be got), 1s. for 4 oz. of Bicarb. sodæ, 1s. a lb. for flour, common soap 1s. a bar. We had to find our own servant, and have at last got a black woman. We pay her 7s. a week between four Sisters, and she finds herself. She is to do our washing, so we save something on this allowance towards our food. I have not seen a paper since I came up—am looking forward to letters from home."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)