

"They had to a certain extent. There were two of them. The civilian doctor was all right, but he was 'bossed' by the army surgeon, who was a brute, with a mania for malingering. You had to be half dead before you got into hospital—one man was made a prisoner for malingering, and his temperature was 105 deg. the next day when they took him to hospital—and if you complained they threatened to kick you out. What was the good of complaining? The doctors always believed the orderlies, and as soon as the doctors had gone you were treated ten times worse than ever. They were simply brutal. I suppose they had had some training, or they wouldn't have been there. But they frequently gave you the wrong medicine, and found it out afterwards. One of the men who had been a dispenser up country at a hospital wouldn't take it. I daresay they reported him—its quite likely.

Kindness of Officers.

"We couldn't tell who was responsible for all this slackness, the majority of the officers were kindness itself to the sick. They were handicapped almost as much as we were, but Colonel White, Major Jarvis, and Captain Glynn did all they could to cheer the fellows up, giving their own tobacco, cigarettes, books, and writing paper away to the sick and wounded. When medical comforts came the orderlies took the lion's share of them; they used to drink each other's health in brandy, and they had lots of food and plenty of sleep."

The following extract from a letter, recently received from an officer laid up in hospital in South Africa, is published by the *Westminster Gazette* :—

"We were greatly excited about the hospital scandal going on at home. Burdett-Coutts's letter to the *Times* is not the faintest bit exaggerated; I think it most moderate and temperate, and any amount of realistic and perfectly true detail which he could have put in it he has most carefully avoided. You cannot possibly picture to yourself what the places have been like. Now there is a change and so much less disease here. One of the hospitals had only room at the tightest pinch for 500 men, but at one time they had 1,700; men lay on the ground packed like sardines in a most loathsome state, uncared for and suffering terribly, almost naked; the death-rate ran up to 103 a day from fever. This Commission is exciting a great deal of stir among the medicos; it is two-sided (a decent civil surgeon and a good man tells me the men chosen are a useless lot for the work of the kind). The Army Medical Corps, who are inclined to think that the whole thing is done to cast mud on them, intend to lie wholesale before the Commission. As a whole they are a horrid lot of men, but most of them have worked hard all the same; they resent inquiry and publicity, and have stupid notions about things. But in this way the Commission is doing good, as public attention has been drawn to the A.M.C.'s methods of work. The result is they are setting their houses in order with a vengeance—sweeping, cleaning, and attending to details they never troubled about before. The doctor who looks after me tells me now that one of the P.M.O. here now, is buying things wholesale, evidently under instructions from the Government. The Government have just sent out two fresh general hospitals to be in

working order before the Commission starts enquiring. Burdett-Coutts said about a certain number of stores asked to be sent up not being sent. Why? *There were no things to send.* Most men out here don't notice or care to notice things they are not obliged to; anybody with eyes—well, I don't know how they managed to keep them quiet. The reporters have not *dared* to say what they wished; I have met several of them, and to hear them talk is quite a different thing from what one reads from their pens. What a grumbler you will think me! But when one's men don't get fed, clothed, and treated properly in hospital, with all the millions being spent and all the money to be had for them, and all arising from bad management, then it is time to shout, especially when one reads such glowing articles at home. A great deal depends on the regiment and their commissioned officers in the field as to how the men get treated. But at the same time I think it very wrong to favour in such a marked way certain regiments—for instance, all the Guards have had the best of everything."

General Buller on the Natal Hospitals.

General Buller has written to the *Times* from Paardekop, in reply to a letter which appeared in that paper from Mr. Lees Knowles, quoting extracts from the letter of a correspondent who desired his name to be kept private. General Buller writes as follows :—

"At the moment when the attention of England is directed to the hospitals at the Cape, Mr. Lees Knowles publishes, and endorses as the utterance of a person in high position, the following words: 'I am given to understand that the senior officers Royal Army Medical Corps, with few exceptions, are so taken up with their own importance as combatant officers, and their rank as colonels and majors, that they leave much to be desired.'

"Was ever a more shameful accusation more shamelessly published? There were then but three colonels Royal Army Medical Corps in Natal outside Ladysmith. Col. Gallwey, principal medical officer, has procured for the Natal Field Force the most complete hospital system ever provided for an army in the field.

"He is, I believe, the first P.M.O. who has ever provided nurses in the hospitals receiving wounded on the battlefield. His organising power and untiring energy, with assistance from home, added 4,700 improvised beds to our hospital accommodation, and provided nurses, doctors, and attendants, some of them (let Mr. Knowles note) from Johannesburg. Col. Clery was in charge of No. 4 General Hospital of 520 beds, which was expanded into Mooi River Hospital of 920 beds; it was justly referred to by the writer of the articles in the 'Times of Natal' as a model of what a hospital should be. Col. Allin was senior medical officer of the field army, and superintended the collection and subsequent removal of the wounded and sick from the front. I believe this duty has been accomplished by him more rapidly, and with less discomfort to the sufferers, than in any previous campaign.

"I could say as much for the next senior officers R.A.M.C. (adds Gen. Buller); but colonels are mentioned, and I challenge Mr. Lees Knowles and his correspondent of high position to say which colonels they refer to, and either prove their accusations or withdraw their slander."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)