

Lord Alwyne Compton, M.P., writing from the seat of war to a Bedfordshire friend, says:— "One word about the Hospital and Army Medical troubles which I see are creating a good deal of stir in England. I shall have something to say about this hereafter; all I will now remark is that there has been much to be desired, and I quite approve of the truth coming out. I am not going to apportion the blame to any particular individual; indeed, it is difficult always to pin down any one gentleman, and to say he must suffer for it. What is wrong is the system, a system invented by the War Office, and hemmed in by red tape. Of course, exigencies of warfare require terrible sacrifices from all, and a single line of railway keeping a gigantic Army fed, must make transport a fearful problem when that Army gets farther and farther from the base. Still, I have no doubt there has been grave cause for criticism, and I believe the Bloemfontein Hospitals were very far from what they should have been, considering the willingness of all to help, and the vast amount of money spent. Anyhow, we must take the lesson to heart without blinking the truth, and I think it will be found that it is the system which is bad, and which must be improved or, indeed, changed altogether in the future."

Speaking at the meeting of the British Medical Association at Ipswich on the question of the employment of nurses in the Field Hospitals, Mr. Treves said the present campaign showed that nurses—keenly as their services were appreciated—could not work in the field hospitals. In the base hospitals their number could be greatly increased with advantage. He somewhat illogically went on to say, what they would have done without the nurses they had at Colenso he did not know, and their work on the two days and nights after the battle called for the very highest possible praise. He believed that the field hospital to which he was attached was the only one carrying nurses, and they were allowed up by special permission of General Buller. They did splendid work, and that work was rendered possible because the War Office very liberally gave him the most magnificent transport. He never left it till he left the colony. That lavish preparation for one individual one could hardly expect to find repeated, but it enabled him to take two nurses up to the front. Every wounded man appreciated the services they rendered.

We think that Mr. Treves has somewhat missed the point of the transport arrangements made by the War Office. The "lavish preparation" was not for the individual, but for his conveyance

to the front in order that his services might be available for the wounded. If, as he points out, the services of nurses are so valuable in the field hospitals, surely the transport which would enable them to be there should be arranged.

Surgeon-Colonel Francis H. Welch has contributed an article to the current number of the *Fortnightly Review*, dealing with the Hospital question in South Africa. He points out the immense importance of health preservation in maintaining the efficiency of an army in the field, and says that, despite object lesson after object lesson, we have failed to grasp the import of the facts or failed to profit fully by them; in point of fact, in sanitary precautions we have receded from the position taken up after the Crimean War, arising out of the disasters then fresh in the memory of the nation. He says further:—"One point is absolutely certain, and that is that nothing short of a revolution in the attitude and action of the War Office (especially its military section) will avail if future good is to come out of present evil, and the Royal Army Medical Corps is to be so organized, systematised, and worked as to render the experience of the years since 1858 but a memory of the past."

A contemporary thinks that the War Office scheme of increasing the number of women nurses in the Army cannot but meet with unqualified approval even from those to whom the War Office and its ways are *anathema maranatha*. This step is undoubtedly one in the right direction, but "unqualified approval" cannot be given to Army nursing arrangements until they are organised on a professional basis and a Nursing Superintendent is appointed in charge of a nursing department at the War Office. This reform would go to the root of the whole matter, and no other, though good as far as it goes, can really touch the point which underlies the whole trouble with regard to Army nursing organisation.

The following inscription, intended for a ration biscuit, was written by Trooper J. Lanham, 7th Dragoon Guards, a patient in the Imperial Yeomanry Base Hospital, who apparently appreciated his quarters, and felt sympathetic for those less happily situated:—

"When you've finished eating dinner,
When you've started on a smoke,
When you've aired your pet opinion on the war,
Let this wheaten slab remind you
There's a certain absent bloke
Who is eating these 'ere biscuits by the score."

With apologies to Rudyard Kipling, and the A. M. B.

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