

**Army Nursing Notes.**

THE Hospitals Commission has concluded the taking of evidence in South Africa. The members of the Commission leave on the 10th inst. on their return to England, where further evidence will be taken.

Last week the Commission received evidence of the good management of the Rondebosch Hospital at Sterkstroom. It was stated, however, that at the Maitland Hospital the patients suffered considerable neglect and three deaths resulted. In many instances, witnesses stated, the food was unsuitable. One of the hospital ships was described as filthy, and the milk and food supplied were, according to the evidence, bad. The civil surgeon of the Tuli Hospital complained that the authorities would do nothing. Horses, he said, were allowed to die and rot near the tents, and it was impossible to procure the necessary medicine. Three patients died in consequence, including one Boer prisoner. The food supplied was unsuitable.

A returned Army Reserve Sister writes:—"In August I called at the War Office. The authorities are cute. A Sister I know called the day before I did, and said there was no fault to find with the arrangements for the nursing of the sick at Bloemfontein, and she had to state this before the Commissioners; but I, who called the following day, and who said there was *much* to complain of, was *not* asked for evidence before the Commissioners! They evidently mean to try and suppress the truth—it is a shame." Our advice to this Sister is to offer to give evidence before the Commission as soon as it returns.

Another Sister said, unblushingly, to us:—"I am going to Ireland to scuttle out of the way of the Commission—or woe to my Red Cross, for which I have been *influentially recommended!*"

Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett, in writing to Countess Howe, says:—"My son has been at Deelfontein since the middle of June desperately ill with enteric fever. He has been treated with the greatest care and attention by the doctors and the nursing sisters, and undoubtedly owes his life to the admirable and thorough management and equipment of this hospital, which Lady Chesham herself supervises. He has written me most warmly of the kindness he has received from all."

We know that Lady Chesham has been doing kind and womanly work with the Yeomanry Hospital, but to assume, because she happens to

be the wealthy daughter of a Duke, that she is capable of "supervising" a great military hospital without any knowledge of medicine or nursing, is carrying British snobbery too far. The assumption of professional control of trained nurses by energetic society women, during this war, has been one of the most grotesque aspects in its very faulty management, and will be a cogent argument, upon the part of trained nurses, in their demand for a Nursing Department with a trained Executive Officer, at the War Office.

If wealthy *flancurs* are to rush in and nobble every post of honour and responsibility, and the subsequent rewards, in the Army Nursing Service, whenever there is war, it is placing a premium upon ignorance and inefficiency, and Hospital War Scandals will become the inevitable result.

We think the best way to put an end to a repetition of this farce is to prohibit the landing of lady's maids in the enemy's country. "Me leddy" is quite prepared to assume the responsibility of a trained Superintendent of Nursing, but she doesn't appreciate buttoning her own boots.

We are glad to see the *Trained Nurse* has something to say, this month, on the question. Speaking editorially, it says:—"The reports and rumours which come to us from England regarding the nursing in South Africa, indicate a large degree of dissatisfaction on account of the number of untrained women and society girls sent there as members of the "Army Nursing Reserve." More than once comparison has been made with our own Army Nurse Corps, but, of course, always with credit to the latter. Prior to the outbreak of the Transvaal War there were only sixty-nine Sisters in the army service, and the reserve list numbered less than one hundred. The two most serious defects in the British system proved to be, first, that there was no woman at the head of the nursing service. The position of the lady superintendent at Netley was practically that of one of our chief nurses, and appointments, transfers, etc., were all ordered by the director-general (corresponding to our surgeon-general) without any feminine assistance or advice. The British nurses are, therefore, strongly urging the reorganization of the service with a professional woman at its head. The second great error is having the Army Nursing Reserve independent of the Army Medical Department and under civilian control. -It was this fact which led to the appointment of so many untrained women when it became necessary to greatly increase the reserves beyond the provision which had been made in times of peace."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)