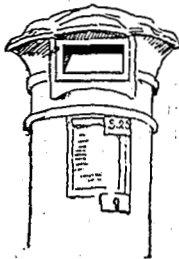


## Letters to the Editor.

NOTES, QUERIES, &amp;c.



*Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not in any way hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.*

## THE HOSPITAL COMMISSION.

*To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."*

DEAR MADAM,—Having read the various reports of my evidence before the Hospital Commission last Monday, I think it only fair that I should be allowed to make a personal explanation.

I had carefully prepared a "statement of evidence" for the Commission, not only in order to save the time of the Commissioners, but to be exact as to my facts. I believe this is a very usual course in such inquiries. In drawing up this statement, the wording and matter of which I carefully considered, so as to admit nothing superfluous or doubtful, I refreshed my memory from notes, letters, complaints I had frequently made to authorities on the spot, and other material; and I arranged what I had to say under special heads so as to avoid confusion.

To my surprise, Sir Robert Romer asked me no question as to the form in which I should like to give my evidence, and with this document before me he gave me no opportunity of reading it.

It must be remembered that my evidence covered a period of six months, dealt with a complicated series of incidents, and was of such length that no witness could "memorise" it all, and certainly no woman could state it off-hand succinctly and clearly.

The questions put to me by Sir Robert Romer amounted to little more than a hostile cross-examination, and their sole concern seemed to be to throw doubt upon any evidence that was unfavourable to the Army Medical Department, and to find excuse for even its most glaring deficiencies.

I will only trouble you with one instance of the way in which clear points were confused and my meaning shifted. I brought forward three cases of Army doctors who had been removed from hospitals for drunkenness being sent home in charge of sick and wounded on transports. I offered to substantiate these by a letter from Lord Lansdowne, which would have saved me the pain of mentioning names. They refused to hear it. This was not all. I was asked the question, "Do you not think that out of the large number of doctors in South Africa three is a very small number to be guilty of this?" Now that had nothing to do with the matter. My point was that it was a disgraceful thing for the Army Medical Department, even in a single instance, to send a doctor of known drunken habits home in charge of 500 or 1,000 sick and wounded, including many serious cases, to say nothing of his being placed over female nurses.

I will not prolong this letter save to point out that I was at least a witness who must know something. I had been in a large military hospital for six months,

observing everything, working from eight to ten hours a day in the wards or in my store, from which I supplied great quantities of comforts and necessities in which the hospital (close to Cape Town) was lamentably deficient. Moreover, I was a woman before these Commissioners, without counsel or assistance of any kind, subjected to a hostile cross-examination which would have required an able lawyer to deal with. In my opinion it was not the treatment I or any other woman who was trying to do what she felt to be her duty deserved.

I am not concerned about the treatment meted out to me personally, except so far as it prevented my getting out the whole of my evidence. I do, however, feel strongly for those women who, while able to give important evidence, were either deterred from doing so, or were less able than I to protect themselves before this Commission, which was appointed by the Government to inquire into and not to suppress charges against the administration of the South African Hospitals.

I am, Madam, yours obediently,  
RAHMEH THEODORA CHAMBERLAIN.

24, Wilton Street, Grosvenor Place, S.W.,  
November 9.

## THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR NURSES.

*To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."*

Toronto, Canada.

DEAR MADAM,—I was much interested in reading your American correspondent's account of the first meeting of "the Spanish American War Nurses," which was held in New York in September. It certainly was, as she says, a most delightful reunion, and I cannot express to you how deeply I regret that she could not have been present at our meetings, so that she could have given a more accurate account of them.

Not being a Nurse (for I cannot believe that any Nurse *could* or *would* judge her sister Nurses so harshly) she probably did not know that out of the 65 or 70 women who were present at the meetings, not *one* was still in the service; and very few, *if any*, expect to return to it (unless a special demand should be made, when we would all be ready), and that this Order was formed by nurses who were in the service *previous to December, 1898*, so that it has *absolutely nothing* to do with the present Army Corps; it concerns the *past*, not the present or the future.

I feel certain that your correspondent never dreamed of how *very uncomplimentary* her remarks were going to sound to us, as Graduate Nurses, when among other things she so openly questions our judgement in the selection of our President. We had several reasons for *particularly* wishing Dr. Anita McGee to hold this office. First of all, it was our one great opportunity of expressing to Dr. McGee and the public, just how keenly we as nurses appreciated all that she had been to us in the past, and still is to our sister nurses. Then we all know her. As ex-chief nurses some of us were known to the few nurses who were in our own camp, but every woman in every camp and post knows Dr. McGee at least by reputation, and every one who cast a vote knows her personally. Your correspondent probably did not know, or if she did, has forgotten to mention that it was moved that Dr. McGee should be elected by acclamation, but the doctor *insisted* as chairwoman that a ballot *must* be cast, so that every nurse present could vote just as she wished,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)