

## Professional Review.

### SHADOWS OF THE WAR.

We have received from the publisher, Mr. Edward Arnold, of 37, Bedford Street, Strand, W.C., a copy of "Shadows of the War," by Mrs. Bagot, to whose initiative is due the organization of the Portland Hospital, which, as all the world knows, did valuable work for our sick and wounded soldiers in South Africa. Having raised the sum of £12,000, £2,000 more than the estimated cost of maintaining the hospital for six months, Mrs. Bagot and Lady Henry Bentinck, also a prime mover in collecting the fund, sailed for South Africa in the *Tantallon Castle* in December last, and remained with the Portland Hospital at Rondebosch until April.

Mrs. Bagot's reason for accompanying the hospital is given most modestly in the following words. "We went in no official capacity, merely because we loved the cause, and enjoyed watching the results of what we had helped to bring about and because we were glad to assist the soldiers in whatever humble ways we could." No one can say that they had not the right to go with the hospital with this intent. Indeed, there are many ways in which educated ladies can render invaluable service at such a time, witness Mrs. Bagot's Tea Hut at Bloemfontein, "a certain little wooden shed of a rough-and-ready order which stood near the station. Here it was that tea was prepared from the hours of 6.30 to 8.30 in the morning, and from 3.30 to 7 o'clock in the evening, and wayfaring soldiers foregathered in shoals to eat and drink and get warm. This undertaking was an unusual satisfaction which only increased as time went on. Not only were soldiers constantly waiting about at the station, but very often a whole regiment might have to wait a night at Bloemfontein on their way to the front. Winter was now setting in with severity, the nights were bitterly cold, and men came creeping up in the early dawn blue and shivering, hardly able to hold the cups for the numbness of their fingers. One thousand seven hundred was the largest number that were fed in one day, but a rough calculation showed that 4,800 was the usual average of men who came during the week. This included arrivals of patients from the front to whom bovril or milk were given according to their several ailments." The successful organization of this Tea Hut is an achievement to be proud of and would alone justify the journey to South Africa. We are anticipating events however and must go back to the Portland Hospital. Within a week of the landing of its stores and equipment at Cape Town, the hospital was established at Rondebosch, and everything ready for the reception of patients. It was attached to No. 3 General Hospital, the staff of which had the distribution of the patients for both hospitals. We can imagine the flutter of excitement as the first convoy of wounded were received, and cannot suppress an amused smile at the description of the event. "To the truly professional mind a stretcher case is at first sight most to be welcomed; as the probability is that such a case is severe, and therefore more likely to be interesting in its treatment. It so happened that every single patient was able to walk into the hospital, and the Sisters were found almost in tears afterwards, as they murmured in despondent accents, 'Not a single stretcher case has been sent to us!'" How well we

can picture the scene! Mr. Rudyard Kipling's visits to the hospital were a keen delight to the men, as one of them remarked: "No, I 'av'nt laughed so much, Sister, not since I come out to South Afriker. I believe I should have been ill again if e'd stopped 'arf a minute longer." "It was," says Mrs. Bagot "an incomparable sight, Kipling sitting like a little god in the midst of the patients, the quaintest figure, dressed in the ugliest of reach-me-down suits, spring side boots, and a brown slouch hat pulled right over his eyes, with a crumpled looking face below, beaming with fun and good humour."

Later in the campaign Mrs. Bagot went up to Bloemfontein in a hospital train, which was on its way to bring down wounded to the base, it was an exciting moment when the train crossed a temporary bridge over the Orange River. This bridge "of raft-like construction, from lying so close to the river, necessitated the quickening of the train down the slope in order the better to gain the impetus to take it up on the opposite side. . . . I would not," says the writer, "exchange the thrilling recollection of that hurried dash over the Orange River in the dead of night—no, not for a purse of gold!" Arrived at Bloemfontein it was found that there was great anxiety with regard to supplies, only seven days' rations were in the town, and it was greatly feared that the enemy would cut the line of rail which connected it with the base. The order was therefore issued that all civilians should leave at once. Mrs. Bagot, who was, of course, included in the order, went to Nauwpoort, where she worked in the hospital as assistant to Sister B—, of Guy's Hospital. Of this experience she writes, "I soon found out my good fortune. Sister B— was looked up to as a particularly skilful nurse, but it did not in any way diminish her patience and kindness in making the way clear to me and my duties easier. I tried to atone for my many deficiencies by being implicitly obedient, and I can never be grateful enough for what Sister B— has taught me."

Of the Sister Superintendent (an Army Nursing Sister) she writes: "Her duties could hardly have been easy or light, but she carried them out in a way which called forth the devotion of the Sisters, and commanded the respect of all the staff. To a humble observer it seemed that firmness, uniting with gentleness, and dignity with tact, was mainly responsible for a result which added, as it were, a girder of iron to an already strong establishment."

Later on Mrs. Bagot worked in a Field Hospital where "there were of course no nursing Sisters." We do not doubt that the services of anyone so capable as she evidently was were most valuable. But this very fact, emphasises the wrong done to our soldiers by the War Office in keeping fully-trained nurses, whose trained services should have been available for these wounded men, out of the Field Hospitals. We hope that Mrs. Bagot, from her personal experience, will draw the attention of the authorities to this point.

Again, what right had the War Office to appoint Mrs. Bagot a Nursing Sister in charge of the sick on the *Dilwara* on the way home? We are not blaming her, under the conditions which existed, for offering her services. We do blame the War Office for placing our wounded soldiers in the care of amateur nurses, just as bitterly as we should blame it if it augmented its staff of surgeons by appointing this lady's husband on to the Royal Army Medical Corps.

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