

### Army Nursing Notes.

Mr. A. G. Hales makes some practical remarks with regard to Army Nurses in a recent issue of the *Daily News*. Mr. Hales, who has observed the work of women nurses not only in South Africa, but also in the bush of Australia, is a firm believer in the value of their services; but he pleads that, beyond the routine work of a hospital, they should have "the best practical training that the nation's wealth will procure." He says:—

"The hospitals will do to provide the groundwork of their education, but it should not stop there; they should be sent away in batches to all parts of the world wherever an epidemic breaks out, and learn by stern hard work under strange and trying circumstances the very marrow of their business. Three months in a big, back-block fever camp would make a smart woman a better nurse than three years' attendance at lectures, where everything is cut and dried for them."

Amongst the points included in the education of a nurse, he pleads for instruction in riding, to fit her for service in the field, and writes:—

"As they are trained at the present time these fine women are not of much real use to an army, except when the army is in touch with a railway; but this is a difficulty that can easily be overcome. Every nurse should be taught to ride, until she is an expert horse-woman. It is all nonsense to say that a woman cannot stand the strain of saddle work. Half of our bush girls get through enough work in the saddle, not mere pleasure, but real hard work, to knock the backbone out of an ordinary city man, and there are no girls in the world more healthy than they. As a matter of fact, the change from the confinement of the sick tent to the invigorating life on horseback, would put new life into the nurses, and they would be better able to stand the tremendous strain of the constant watching by sick beds in a fever laden atmosphere than they are at present. It seems to me that most of the modern fighting will be done by men who move rapidly in the saddle, and I cannot see why nurses should not accompany them. Each division should possess its own corps of nurses, who could take the field as rapidly as medical men do now. As for breaking the women down, why if I were a person given to the sinful practice of betting, I should be prepared to lay decent odds on the women when it came to a matter of staying."

This is a really practical suggestion, which we strongly commend to War Office authorities.

In successfully combating the diseases which always follow in the wake of an army in the field, Mr. Hales estimates skilled nursing at its full value. He writes:—

"Apart from actual wounds received upon battle-fields, there are three other great scourges which always decimate an army—viz., pneumonia, dysentery, and fever, and in all of those cases the battle lies principally between the nurse and the disease. The doctor does not play a very important part. Go to any great

mining camp in its earlier stages if you want to see this statement proved. Go to New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, or Western Australia; visit any of the towns that were once alluvial camps, and you will see graves by the hundred, and nine out of every ten of the grave-stones will tell you that the dead man went over the border through the agency of one or other of the diseases I have mentioned. Yet, in a majority of cases, doctors were plentiful, but nurses scarce. The doctors were as good as any in the world—smart, active, enterprising, energetic men—but they could do little. We have learnt our lesson in the Southland; we paid a heavy price for the teaching; and now, when a big mining rush breaks out, we send up a large staff of trained women to fight the diseases, and no one fights them as they do. Doctors advise, and the nurses do the work, and that is why, knowing what I do of such matters, I say emphatically—get more nurses and get them good. . . . I think nature built women for the business of nursing. They possess a certain staying quality which is not found in men, or, if it is, I have not met with it."

As to the desirability of employing women nurses in active warfare, Mr. Hales is emphatic. Of the present South African campaign he says:—

"Give our medical men first-class female nurses, and give them plenty of them, and the death rate in a campaign will be lowered by 50 per cent. No one who went through the first nine or ten months of the present campaign with his eyes and ears open can deny that our men were ill-attended to; not, I venture to think, on account of the poor class of the medical men, certainly not on account of the male-attendants or the nurses, but because the medical men were worked to death, clean run off their legs, because there was only one nurse where there should have been five, because the authorities did not send out the proper supplies at the proper time to the proper places. That, I think, and that alone, was the reason for the muddle in the medical department."

In spite of the obsolete system of nursing as yet in force in connection with the War Office, the poor wounded soldier in the South African War, has been better "done by," surgically, than his predecessor in the Crimea. Sir C. Bell, writing of wounded soldiers after the battle of Waterloo, says:—

"This is the second Sunday after the battle, and many are not yet dressed. It is impossible to convey to you the picture of human misery before my eyes. At six a.m. I took the knife in my hand, and continued at work incessantly till seven in the evening, and so the second day, and again on the third. All the deficiencies of performing surgical operations were soon neglected. While I amputated one man's thigh there lay at one time thirteen, all beseeching me to be taken next—one full of entreaty, one calling on me to remember my promise to take him, another execrating. It was a strange thing to feel my clothes stiff with blood and my arms powerless with the exertion of using the knife."

A grim picture; indeed.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)