

### Army Nursing Notes.

MISS McCAUL SPEAKS.

THE NURSING RECORD is the only journal of those purporting to be devoted to nursing matters, and therefore, presumably, to the interests of the sick—which has not hesitated to point out the vital defects in our Army Nursing organization, and the consequent needless suffering of our sick and wounded soldiers. In the face of all the accumulated evidence now placed before the press in this country, as well as before the Army Medical Department, there is no longer any opportunity for maintaining that our nursing organization in this war has been "perfection," nevertheless, it will be generally conceded that the lives of its many defenders are regarded by the nation as a sacred charge, and that they are entitled to the best possible attention when sick and wounded.

But what has occurred in the present war? We are the last to minimize the value of the splendid work done by individual medical men and nurses, it stands out as a bright spot in the surrounding gloom, but behind this individual effort is Chaos.

It is, therefore, with extreme pleasure that we have read the two temperate and lucid articles which have appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* on "Nursing at the Front," by Miss Ethel McCaul, who accompanied Mr. Treves, F.R.C.S., to South Africa, and who worked under his direction during the time he was on active service as Consultant Surgeon to the Army, and to whose work and character Mr. Treves has over and over again testified in the very highest terms.

#### MR. TREVES ATTACKS THE VERACITY OF MISS McCAUL.

Bearing in mind the eulogies showered down by Mr. Treves on Miss McCaul, the following letter, which he has thought fit to send to the *Chronicle*, will be estimated by the public at its true value:—

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY CHRONICLE.

Sir,—An article appears in your columns this morning in which an account is given by Miss McCaul of the nursing arrangements in Natal.

As my name appears prominently in this narrative, I am anxious that it should be known that it is published without my knowledge. I should like, at the same time, to say that I entirely disagree with the account given, which appears to me to be as unjust as it is exaggerated.—Yours faithfully,

FREDERICK TREVES.

6, Wimpole-street, Cavendish-square, W., Jan. 18th.

Comparing this letter with the statements made by Miss McCaul, a trained nurse and an eye-witness, we are driven to one of two conclusions—either Mr. Treves has a very elementary idea of the value of trained nursing, or he has adopted the policy of wilfully whitewashing the War Office. We prefer the former conclusion as the

more charitable. Moreover, we sat through the evidence given by Mr. Treves before the Select Committee of the House of Lords in 1890, when he defended the system then in vogue at the London Hospital of sending out semi-trained probationers to nurse the public at the fees commanded by "thoroughly trained" nurses, and expressed his satisfaction with the work of these women in the care of his own private patients.

So we must conclude that Mr. Treves is satisfied with a standard of nursing which is not up to date. Anyway, he will have difficulty in convincing trained nurses that Miss McCaul is suffering from an optical delusion or has turned a moral somersault since her return from the Cape.

#### A PLAIN, UNVARNISHED TALE.

As we have previously reported, Miss McCaul and Miss Tarr were selected for active service by Mr. Treves, and landed at Cape Town on November 29th, 1899, and in her letters Miss McCaul reports in the simplest manner her experiences whilst in South Africa. She writes:—

I am writing these papers entirely on my own initiative. I have not consulted Mr. Treves, under whom I worked, or anyone else on the subject, and therefore they are from a woman's point of view. (All the more valuable.—Ed.) They represent my own ideas of Army nursing with the Natal Column, and I think should apply equally well to the campaign in the Free State and the Transvaal, and the reforms to any future war. I do not propose giving harrowing details merely to prove that deficiencies exist. That there must always be a tragic side to nursing in war, which excited and sensational people can work up into horrors, I admit; but on the Natal side of the campaign these necessary horrors were in every possible way remedied by the earnest endeavours of both surgeons and sisters. The primary fault, I may urge, lies in the doubtful system on which Army nursing is based, and until method and organisation are introduced into the election of the lady-superintendent, Army sisters, Army Reserve sisters, and the *training* of orderlies, we can never hope to see a permanent improvement.

#### THE BASE HOSPITAL AT WYNBURG.

The impression left on my mind after visiting the Base Hospital in December was that of inefficiency and want of readiness, and I felt sad that such want of good nursing and organization could be possible in these days of advanced nursing. We look to the Army to have method, but it is lacking where nursing is concerned. I saw two operations at Wynburg which would not have been creditable to a cottage hospital. They were made as difficult as possible through want of method. Packets of wool were dragged forth, gauze tumbled out by the yard, and it was with something like horror that I saw the orderly putting his dirty hands into the lotions and handling the instruments. His costume was of a slovenly character; he was in his working clothes, coat off, braces hanging down; the state of his hands I hesitate to describe! It was difficult, indeed, to suppose that he was a

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