

## Reflections

FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.



In view of the fact that one of our ports is infected with plague, and another is in some danger from the same cause, it is satisfactory to learn that the London County Council is taking time by the forelock, and has arranged for the accommodation of suspected cases of plague in buildings under its supervision. Should such cases prove to be true cases of plague they will be removed to one of the hospitals of the Metropolitan Asylums Board.

There is a current rumour that cases of plague have occurred amongst the troops in South Africa. It is sincerely to be hoped that this report may prove groundless, as such a calamity would be terrible indeed.

The trustees of the New Hospital for Women have received a donation of £500 in memoriam George Kelly.

The announcement of the death at Para, Brazil, of Dr. Myers, who was connected with the expedition sent to Brazil last June by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine to investigate the cause of yellow fever, has been received with deep regret. He and his co-worker fell victims to the terrible disease, and Dr. Myers succumbed. He was a native of Birmingham, and had only recently left Cambridge University, where he had taken high honours. His is the first death which has occurred in connection with the expeditions.

A Berlin telegram announces that the whole of Professor Virchow's valuable collection in the Pathological Institute at Berlin has been destroyed by fire.

Mr. Burdett-Coutts has sent a letter to the press apropos of the Hospitals Commission in which he says: "It is impossible, for obvious reasons, at this moment to discuss in your columns the report of the Hospitals Commission; but I hope you will permit me at an early date to place before your readers the grounds for considering both the report and the inquiry on which it has been based open to the gravest objection. I would also point out that without the publication of the evidence, which is constantly referred to in the report, a suspension of public judgment is all the more necessary."

Our further remarks on Mr. Burdett Coutt's book appear this week, and we hope to discuss at some length the Report of the Commission in forthcoming issues. We are not of opinion that it has "white-washed" any department. If its compilers have not quite grasped some important points in reference to the care of the sick and wounded this was quite inevitable, by a Committee composed entirely of men, the majority laymen. A medical woman and an experienced trained Matron should have been added to the Committee if its report was to have been a well-balanced expression of opinion. We repeat this opinion because we wish to drive it home.

## Professional Review.

## THE SICK AND WOUNDED IN S. AFRICA.

(Continued from page 75.)

THE preface with which Mr. Burdett Coutts introduces the subject matter of his book to the public should be read with attention. In it he deals with the scope of the Commission, and also the fact that new matter, obtained from many quarters and essential to a full inquiry, of which he gave intimation to the Commission on its return, was excluded by the summary and unexpected closing of the Evidence, and says, "the only tribunal to which new facts can now be carried, or further appeal made, is the tribunal of public opinion. The writ of that Court runs far; and its strength never found a more apt illustration than was supplied by the magic transformation scene, which took place throughout the hospitals in South Africa, the moment the search-light of publication and debate was thrown on their condition. The cable does its work quickly; and within less than a week there was hardly a soldier amongst the many thousands still in hospital who did not feel the effects of the significant change."

In the first chapter Mr. Burdett Coutts defines his mission to South Africa, as an effort, "to tell the truth, without animus or prejudice against the Royal Army Medical Corps," a task which he believed could be performed in a more unbiassed manner by a civilian than by an officer. On his arrival at Cape Town he gathered that the special character of his mission as correspondent dealing solely with the treatment of the sick and wounded did not commend itself to Head Quarters. He adds, "I desire, however, to guard this conclusion by stating that my subsequent experiences with the Press Censor, who became my only medium of communicating with Head Quarters, were of such a peculiar and unprecedented nature, that I have always remained in doubt as to whether and how far they were the outcome of a personal or a delegated authority."

Speaking of the effect of adequate treatment and nursing on the mortality in enteric fever, the writer says that at the end of the Turkish war, when suffering from a severe attack of this disease, the ceaseless devotion of doctor and nurse in a small Seamen's Hospital in Galata taught him what these can do. He adds, "The fortunate inmates of the Volk's Hospital at Bloemfontein will be found to have had a similar experience, for in that plain but admirably tended institution the percentage of deaths in enteric cases was under 7.75 per cent. as against 21 which represented the total percentage of the same mortality at Bloemfontein." It has been asserted that Mr. Burdett-Coutts started with a prejudice against the Royal Army Medical Corps, and he maintains that his first articles in the *Times* prove the exact opposite, and that "it is to be doubted if that much abused body ever received a fairer or more flattering tribute at the hands of an independent critic. Whatever flaws were brought to light were referred to the system rather than to its executive officers." He adds that the system "is as bad as it can be." Do we not all know it well? He also tells us that "as long as things go well, Ministers take little or no notice of the most careful comment. They receive with no less satisfaction than oblivion the praises of the hospitals at Cape Town. But when

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