

subject of foods and cookery, important essentials indeed, but which do not include all that is meant when we say that a pupil should have a knowledge of housekeeping before entering the hospital wards for her training as a nurse. Unfortunately, this practical handling of the things and affairs of the home is taught in no schools and in but few homes at the present day, and, as Spencer has said, "That which our school course leaves almost entirely out we thus find to be that which most nearly concerns the business of life."

(To be continued.)

Medicine and Nursing in the South African War.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

(Continued from Vol. XXXI., page 527.)

EVIDENCE OF SIR A. DOWNING FRIPP, C.B.,
C.V.O., M.S., M.B., F.R.C.S.

Sir A. D. Fripp said he went out to South Africa in 1900 with the Imperial Yeomanry Base Hospital of 520 beds, a number eventually enlarged to 1,000. He also visited nearly all the hospitals in Cape Colony, Orange River Colony and Natal.

The Yeomanry Hospital had the great advantage, compared with the regular hospitals, of being able to get anything money would buy on making a reasonable representation to the Committee at home; therefore it would be unfair to compare the military hospitals with the voluntary ones. He thought the base hospitals were as good, under the circumstances, as could be expected, or would have been if there had only been a stronger brain-piece at the head of the Medical Department. When you have a brain-piece that hesitates to check small abuses, such as difficulties with ladies, and who does not see how such interferences tend to mix up all sorts of petticoat questions and ruffle the backs of the nurses, who should be left to do their proper work unmolested, difficulties must arise.

The witness continued: "One of the things that I should like to be allowed to speak openly about here is the fact that all the senior officers, from the principal medical officer, who was the most charming, delightful gentleman (Sir William Wilson), but from him downwards, through all the senior officers, they are impressed with a sort of feeling, first of all, that their service is looked at askance, that their branch is secondary; and, next, that they must not approach any General Commanding Officer, and certainly not if he has got a title, without their knees chattering together with alarm and fright; they must not think of advising him that it really would be for the good of the Army if a camp was not pitched on a certain proposed site because it is covered by stinking horses in various degrees of decomposition. My impression is that Lord Roberts would have

been only too delighted if somebody had warned him by saying to him: 'I am sure such and such a site is already fouled by the enemy's camps; don't you think, my Lord, it would be better to put your camp a little further out' But there is a general shirking of taking any responsibility of that kind, taking any initiative, and daring to do anything that is not already laid down in the Regulations. And I dare say that that general fear has a good deal of foundation in what has happened to individuals who have dared to exceed regulations in the past."

In regard to the position of the Director-General the witness drew attention to the improvement now made in his position giving him direct access to the Secretary of State. Similarly his position on the Headquarters Staff had been recognised. "It is not, of course, for the flattering of the individual that that is important, but it is because every member of the corps, even down to the latest-joined orderly, is proud to be able to nudge his girl in the street, and say: 'There goes our Chief in the King's Procession'—that does make a difference."

In regard to the officers of the R.A.M.C., the witness, in reply to a question, said they were not more lacking than was to be expected, considering the time they had been away, but they were undoubtedly lacking.

The R.A.M.C. officer has had no opportunities except such as he made for himself. The average man has had no opportunities whatever, and, added the witness, "I have no hesitation in saying that if he has shown keenness by making opportunities for himself he has got himself disliked thereby. You see that in many a confidential report." Questioned as to whose dislike was incurred, he said, "That of the officer's seniors. As soon as a man becomes Colonel in command of a base hospital, he ceases to be a doctor at all; he becomes a purely administrative officer." The most eminent surgeon in the R.A.M.C. holding this rank, unless he happened to be appointed Professor of Military Surgery at the Medical Staff College, would not be able to take any post except an administrative one. He could not possibly have time to practise his profession.

The alternative, and one with which the witness said he would be quite content, would be to have an Army Service Corps officer to do the administrative work.

The reason which he assigned for the dislike of keenness in junior medical officers on the part of their superiors was that "there has drifted up into the senior ranks of the Royal Army Medical Corps a body of men who should not be taken as representative of the better class of our profession. . . . These comparatively weak men have drifted up to being in command, and really they now are suffering from 'swelled head,' and have gone about

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)