

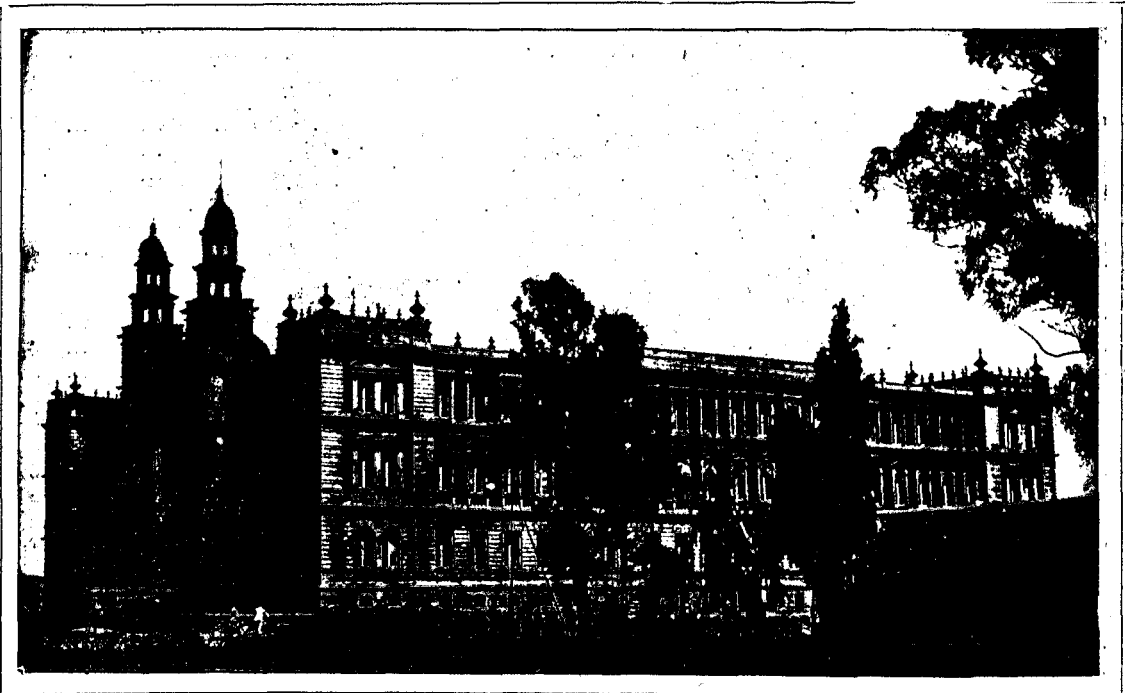
## Professional Review.

### THE TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF WAR HOSPITALS.

This book in the form of letters by "Sister X," which has just been published by Mr. John Murray, Albemarle Street, W. (price 6s. net), should be read not only because the letters are exceedingly graphic and clever, but because they present a true picture of the condition of Army nursing organisation in the South African war, that is, before the re-organisation of the Military Nursing Department under a Nursing Board, on which trained nurses have seats. Since this re-organisation, and the consequent increase in the number of Sisters, and the addition of Staff Nurses to the personnel of the Service, some dissatis-

quately nurse the patients, as nursing is understood by refined and skilled women, without the most careful training. Moreover, except in most exceptional cases the class of men from which the orderlies were drawn affords only those who should be in subordinate positions to highly-trained nurses. It was the system that was wrong and obsolete, and, as "Sister X" explains, "to be chained to a dead system is, in its way, just as unpleasant and unsanitary as to live chained to a dead body, and this was practically their position." The letters as a whole are a condemnation of the system of Army Nursing before reorganisation, and bear out exactly what we have always said in this journal on the subject.

An attempt has been made quite recently to decrease the authority of the woman nurse in the Army, but we feel sure that so long as a Minister so liberal-minded in his views towards women as the present



THE PALACE OF JUSTICE AT PRETORIA (THE IRISH HOSPITAL)

faction has been evinced by certain Army medical authorities, who claim that military nursing should be largely done by orderlies. One point, therefore, makes "Sister X's" book of national value, namely, that it affords proof positive that it is impossible to expect the first-class fighting man to be also the first-class nursing man, especially when left to the ways of nature.

To read these letters makes one feel that it is positively inhuman to exclude women from work which by nature they were designed to perform, and no one can fail to realise that the old Army nursing system was rotten to the core, the core being the crude, untrained, and ignorant Tommie. We do not wish to blame the men, they were soldiers and fighters, unversed in the peaceful art of nursing, and it was impossible that they could ade-

Secretary of State for War remains at the helm nothing will be done to revert to the old bad system. Some people may think perhaps that the spirit shown by "Sister X" was a little too insubordinate, and would not do in times of peace, but, in the circumstances in which she was placed we consider that her pluck, power of organisation and spirit were just what was wanted. Would that more of the Sister Superintendents had had the same spirit. Moreover, had a woman of her bright intelligence and instincts been placed on the Royal Commission which inquired into the nursing arrangements during the war it is probable that a very different Report from that presented would have been drawn up.

"Sister X" relates her experiences on her introduction to her work at the College Hospital, Maritzburg, where the Sister, who took her round her ward-

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