

## WOMEN IN THE TRANSVAAL WAR.

When Surgeon Treves bluntly declared at a recent dinner, given in his honor by the Reform Club of London, that "so far as the sick are concerned there are two plagues in South Africa—the plague of flies and the plague of women," he little realized what an extraordinary outburst of resentment his remarks would cause in England. Indignant women wrote to the papers and reminded the world of Florence Nightingale and the noble work done by the women nurses all over the world, as well as in South Africa. Against these women Mr. Treves, of course, had nothing to say; for them he had nothing but praise. In a scathing reply to the attacks made on his speech, he says:

"Cape Town was, at the time of which I spoke, packed with women idlers, the majority of them 'society' or 'smart' people, who, yearning for new excitements, had come out to South Africa to make a holiday. I say, and I say it very earnestly, that the condition of affairs, as brought about by the presence of these ladies, was an absolute disgrace to our country. The hotels of Cape Town (I will say nothing of Durban) were crammed with these people in the enjoyment of what to them was a picnic on a large scale. The Mount Nelson Hotel was packed with them, and if a sick or wounded officer came down from the front in search of accommodation, he had not the slightest chance of getting into a decent hotel. These ladies had not the faintest pretext for being in South Africa beyond their own desire to make the campaign a means of obtaining new pleasures and excitements."

That, however, was not the worst side of their presence:

"When dinner-parties and other junketing grew wearisome, they would make up parties to visit the hospitals. 'What shall we do today?' 'Oh, let's go and see the wounded,' would be the preparation to an invasion of the base hospitals and an incalculable amount of interference with the work of the medical staff. Officers in charge of wounded would, in the course of their duties, be interrupted by ladies bearing permits signed by personages whose request the officers dared not or did not care to refuse. You know, perhaps, what influence means in the matter of promotion, and so the women would be taken round the wards and the wounded shown to the utter disorganization of discipline and duty. There were cases in which the wounded men, aroused half a dozen times in succession by these meddlesome intruders, turned from them at last saying: 'Good heavens, shall I ever get any peace?' In another instance, a certain medical officer complained that it was already late in the day, and he had not seen one of his patients professionally owing to the horde of busy-body women who had

made his hospital the show-place for the day. These are the women to whom Sir Alfred Milner referred, and of whom I have spoken as a plague—women who are making the scene of war and suffering a place in which to satisfy morbid curiosity and find new enjoyments. For the woman who is giving everything in the cause of tenderness and compassion I have a profound admiration; for the other sort I have only disgust."

But Surgeon Treves has been very generally supported by the English press, who applaud him for his courage. Here are some extracts from a letter written by a bona-fide army nurse at the front, which reëcho his charges:

"The 'lady amateur' crops up everywhere when military excitement is going on. Lord Kitchener himself took most stringent measures to keep her out of the Sudan, but she has succeeded beyond all precedent in this South African campaign. The 'society ladies' who shipped as nurses—many of them thus escaped paying their own passages—all wear silk gowns and the flimsiest caps and aprons, and look like the 'nurses' of fancy fairs. If amateurs came as 'additional' nurses, they could play around brow-smoothing, and not do much harm; but in many instances the war office authorizes only a certain number of nurses in hospitals and on transports. When society women, with no technical training, take these posts they fill posts which ought to be filled by certificated nurses. Real nurses, as a consequence, are too few in number and terribly overworked by doing their own and the amateurs' duties."

No end of trouble has been caused by these masquerade nurses to doctors, nurses, and poor, sick, wounded Tommies:

"They get in everybody's way and have no intention of working. Their idea is to take posts of authority and 'boss' the trained nurses, who have borne the heat and burden of many years in hospital. We don't grudge them going round the wards in fancy dress, distributing flowers, and petting Tommy Atkins. They can do this picturesquely enough. But interference with the nursing of the sick soldier is too serious a matter. Many of these amateurs were actually sent to the front. 'Somebody' in authority had the courage to send several of them back to the headquarters responsible for their appointment. Social influence has no right to count when it comes to war nursing. It would astonish English people did they know how many of these 'nurses', without one day's hospital training in their lives, are trying their 'prentice hands on Tommy sick. And if ever patients called for good nursing it is these poor fellows from the front—with terribly shattered wounds, enteric, and dysentery. Meanwhile hundreds of South African highly trained nurses are

out of employment owing to the war. Nurses from Kimberley and Johannesburg and Cape Town sit with idle hands, many almost destitute, while the amateur nurses take salaried positions. Some of them give their services; others have government posts and receive government pay. Very often they spend it in cologne and cushions for the patients; but that does not make it easier for the trained certificated nurse, who has 'got no work to do.' There are many ways in which the leisured society woman may help the sick soldier, but the sooner she realizes that her province does not lie in the wards of a military hospital the better."

Contrast this picture of the elaborately dressed English women masquerading in summer toilets and arranging picnics about Cape Town with another drawn by Douglas Story, in which he shows us the splendid manner in which the Boer women have toiled for their cause. Here is his description of a Pretoria market:

"Two long rows of wagons stood axle-deep in the mud, with their curtains rolled up and their interiors showing. In each was a Boer woman, sometimes a couple, and always a youngster or two. But there was no man, and people refrained from reference to the absentees. Gowned in black, with her fallow, wrinkled face set far back in her black kappie, the Boer woman sits on a bundle of clothing in the hinder part of the wagon eyeing the crowd. Before her on a wisp of straw are the eggs, pumpkins, or potatoes she has brought to market. But there were other keen-eyed women on the market square that morning—women who stood guard over heaped wagons of forage and heavy loads of potatoes in bags. Their immediate object was business, and I stood curiously by while the auctioneer disposed of their bringings. Anxiety sat on every line of these women's rugged faces. They scanned the crowd and rearranged the potatoes in the mouth of the bags until the auctioneer's quick hammer had cleared the lot. Then they clambered silently into the wagon again and resumed their interrupted toilet. Crowded market square or solitary veldt brought no blush to their cheek, and they braided their hair in the full presence of the towns-people without a sign of embarrassment. Blushes are the luxuries of the rich and the grace of the effete dwellers in towns. The veldt woman has no use for such fopperies, and despises them."

Meanwhile the potatoes and mealies were passing under the hammer, and Mr. Story noted the prices they fetched in war times:

"I and other ignorant persons had predicted a failure in the food supply consequent upon the absence of the men upon commando. We had reckoned without the Boer vrouw and a remark-