

**DIARY OF A NURSE IN SOUTH
AFRICA: BEING A NARRATIVE OF
EXPERIENCES IN THE BOER AND
ENGLISH HOSPITAL SERVICE. PP.
1-207**

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Diary of a Nurse in South Africa: Being a Narrative of Experiences in the Boer and English Hospital Service. pp. 1-207 by Alice Bron

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DIARY OF A NURSE
IN
SOUTH AFRICA

BEING A NARRATIVE OF EXPERIENCES IN
THE BOER AND ENGLISH HOSPITAL SERVICE

BY
ALICE BRON

WITH PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

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G. A. RAPER

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PREFACE

THIS book is a record of personal impressions written on the spur of the moment. I think it best to give them practically word for word, with all their absence of restraint, and their perhaps too familiar tone, so as to preserve that spontaneity and vigour which an effort of memory, assisted by too brief notes, can never supply. A section of the public may perhaps regret that this book contains no melodrama or exciting stories of adventure, with the author as heroine. I am very sorry, both for the public and myself, but, being a submissive slave to the strict truth, I can only relate facts; and, furthermore, my nature is so defective that the grotesque side of men and things often appeals to me more strongly than the complicated psychology of motives. I do regret, however,

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that I did not begin my note-book until the 11th February—my dates are often only approximate—though I must have entered upon my duties at Jacobsdal about the 20th January. This is explained by my having sent several letters and articles to a Brussels paper at the urgent request of the editor. I kept no copy of them, and, because they did not agree with preconceived opinions, they were published only in the form of mutilated extracts or imaginative summaries. These prejudiced motives I am ready to condone, inasmuch as they have become so general in the Press; but I wish to clear myself beforehand from the charges of "weathercockism" which will not fail to rear their heads against me.

Owing to this suppression, my disillusion in regard to the Boers will appear less gradual in these pages than it actually was, and thus it is as well for me to say at once that, even when I had gone no further than Lorenzo Marquez, I felt that my enthusiasm was collapsing. My travelling companions experienced the same feeling. To avoid involving certain

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young gentlemen belonging to the Boer *beau monde*, I will not dwell on this point. Later on I did my best to collect the scattered fragments of my enthusiasm, and to struggle against so rude a shattering of my beliefs, but the reality has never failed to rise up implacably and exclaim, "O blind, will you not see? O deaf, will you not hear?" Alas!

I wish to anticipate another objection. I may be asked to explain my article in the *Petit Bleu*, extolling the Boers' civilization and amiability, the beauty and elegance of their women, and so on. As a matter of fact, this article was penned when I had been only three days in Pretoria; and, in my laughable ignorance, I took the Dutch colony for Boers! I really beg the public's pardon for such a blunder. It deserves to be called colossal, and I confess it in all humility.

ALICE BRON.

