

Professional Review.

THE STORY OF THE SIEGE HOSPITAL IN PEKING.

Those who followed the story of little party besieged in Peking last year, concerning which rumour was so rife, and the truth so scanty, will welcome a little book penned by one of the besieged in the hope that if she never reached home again the lines then written would find their way to those friends who were left to mourn her loss. To nurses it is especially interesting, as it was written from the International Hospital. The writer is Miss Jessie Ransome, a Deaconess of the Church of England Mission, Peking, who, in February last, received the Royal Red Cross for her services in the Hospital, and the book is published (price 1s. 6d.) by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Northumberland Avenue, W.C.

Speaking of the Hospital Miss Ransome says: "Our great difficulty was the suddenness with which we found ourselves confronted with the necessity for a hospital at all. Up to the very day on which our first patient was brought in it seemed probable that Admiral Seymour's party would arrive to relieve the situation, and that the 'Boxer' siege would come to nought, and when that hope was destroyed by the murder of Baron von Ketteler, a hospital ward had to be opened at once for the reception of our first patient, the Chinese Secretary of the German Legation, who was wounded at the same time as his Minister. On the following day hostilities began in earnest, and the Legation doctor had to face the fact that a hospital, fully equipped with all the requisites for dealing with wounds and probable sickness, and furnished with the necessary staff of nurses, assistants, cooks, coolies, etc., must somehow or other be forthcoming at once, and that there was no other material available, either animate or inanimate, than such as happened to be within the narrow lines of our defences. Fortunately, Dr. Poole, of the British Legation, had a most able and experienced colleague in Dr. Velde, of the German Legation. They immediately faced the task before them, and, in spite of what sometimes seemed insuperable difficulties, always managed throughout the long nine weeks which followed, to produce either the very thing that was needed, or some cleverly devised substitute which did as well. We used sometimes to say that Dr. Velde either kept a private magician, or else had a sixth sense which enabled him to find out where such necessaries as condensed milk, or thermometers, or dressings were to be found, when to all appearance not a trace of any of these things was left in the Legation."

The Nursing Staff comprised Miss Lambert, of the Church of England Mission, who was the only fully trained and certificated nurse, and was immediately put in charge as Matron. Some lady doctors of other Missions, who generously laid aside professional etiquette, worked under her as nurses. Others, missionaries with some training, were put on the staff, and several ladies volunteered to make themselves generally useful. A British and an Italian Sick Berth Steward were also of great use. This little staff settled into a regular routine, one set taking night duty, a second the hours from 8 a.m. till noon, and from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., and a third those from noon to

4 p.m. and from 7 to 10 p.m. The hospital was arranged in the Government offices, and gradually increased until six wards were in use. People gave up the best that they had to the hospital, bolsters were made of the straw covers in which bottles are packed, bales of calico were made into sheets, shirts, and pillow-cases by Mrs. Conger, the American Minister's wife, and the ladies in her house. From the stores whose contents had been commandeered came basins, cups, plates, knives and forks, kitchen utensils, soap, sponges and bottles of sweets, the last of which delighted the Tommies of all nationalities. The kitchen department was in the hands of ladies belonging to the various missions. "It was truly astonishing what excellent breakfasts, dinners, and suppers were produced daily from very little else than horseflesh and rice. Soups of various kinds, roasts, stews, rissoles, pies, patties, curries, used to appear on the bill of fare, always served beautifully hot and looking most appetising. Then there were wonderful blanc-manges, fritters, pancakes, rice puddings, all made without eggs or milk, and yet, strange to say, quite palatable, and, indeed, making some of us feel we should have liked a patient's meal now and then. . . . Of course all this could not have been accomplished by the foreign ladies alone. An excellent old Chinese cook, himself a Christian refugee, did most of the actual kitchen work, and stuck to it all day and every day, never grudging any amount of trouble by which he could make the food a little more palatable for the patients. I have seen him run backwards and forwards across the little yard between his kitchen and the hospital, with shot and shell flying all round him, and never hesitating an instant. We owe much to that old man, and his name deserves all honour." The difficulties of the kitchen department were increased by the various nationalities to be provided for—Russians, Italians, French, Germans, and so forth. The Japanese were the easiest to deal with. Always hungry and always pleased with their food, provided there was plenty of it.

To find drugs and dressings was a problem which increased in difficulty as the siege lengthened. Happily there was a sterilizer, and in this ladies' underlinen, linen sheets, and muslin curtains were prepared for dressings. Bags of powdered peat and fine sawdust, after being sterilized, made excellent dressings for suppurating wounds, and Chinese cotton-wool, though non-absorbent was used as outside packing.

Of the 120 cases received into the hospital only fourteen died. Of these deaths two were from tetanus, three from dysentery, and the remainder had mortal wounds, and died within a few hours of admission.

The characteristics of the various nationalities in hospital were an interesting study, yet generalizations were always met by exceptions. Russians were as a rule most stolid and silent. French and Italians were inclined to make the most of their wounds, with a view to a little longer rest in hospital, while British and Americans were usually in too great a hurry to get back to duty, but to both cases there were large exceptions. One Frenchman, for instance, bore terrible pain without a murmur. The only nationality whose conduct could be forecast with almost absolute certainty was the Japanese. They were invariably cheery, and made as light as possible of their pains;

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