

Nursing in Japan.

With the sanction of the Japanese Government, Miss Ethel McCaul, R.R.C., accompanied by Miss Elaine St. Aubyn, has left for Japan to see and report on the working of the Japanese Red Cross. She hopes to be back about the end of July.

THE JAPANESE RED CROSS SOCIETY.

The *Sei-I-Kwai Medical Journal* publishes an address in which H.I.H. Prince Kan-In, President of the Red Cross Society of Japan, on the outbreak of the war reminded the nurses employed by the Society of the grave responsibilities laid upon them by their position. The document is of especial interest as showing the spirit of enlightened humanity that now animates the foremost men of a nation which until a comparatively recent time was Asiatic in practice as in sentiment. After reminding those whom he addressed that the Society is an association established under the special auspices of the Emperor and Empress, he pointed out that in the discharge of its functions in time of war it must depend on its nurses. He recalled the fact that the Society assisted in the work of the Ambulance Corps in the war of 1894-5, and received on that occasion "gracious edicts" from the Emperor and Empress. During the disturbances in North China in 1900 the Society rescued and tended the sick and wounded on both sides. The Imperial Ordinance of 1901, which promulgated the regulations of the Society and gave its nurses the right to be treated as military officers, had increased its responsibility as much as it had enhanced its glory. Owing to the application of the Red Cross Convention to naval warfare, the scope of the Society's work had been greatly extended. Proceeding to lay down a scheme of duty for the guidance of the nurses, the Prince called upon them, "following the principles of the Society, inspired by the humanitarian views of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress," to do their work with diligence. He summed up the principles that should actuate them as follows. In assisting the military and naval ambulance service, the regulations and discipline applicable thereto should be observed, and such virtues as obedience and respect never be lost sight of; in attending patients, no matter to which side they belonged, kindness should be a guiding principle; the successful discharge of such duties should be aimed at by adhering to upright conduct, maintaining discipline, and enduring privations and want; the attainment of the Society's ultimate aim should be striven for, each adhering to his or her assigned duties and acting in harmony and co-operation with the other. His Imperial Highness concluded with the expression of a hope that all the nurses would always keep in mind the rules and principles set forth above, and endeavour to increase the prestige of the Red Cross Society of Japan by devoting themselves to the cause which they served with genuine earnestness. Mr. E. F. Knight, in an interesting letter to the *Morning Post* dated Tokio, February 18th, says: "Our first Japanese port of call was Kobé. Here, too, the preparations for war were manifest. Lying alongside us at the quay was a liner of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha, which was being converted into a hospital ship. To judge from all that

I have seen, the Japanese medical arrangements for the war are very complete, and the Red Cross Society of Japan is excellently organised and strongly supported by the patriotic people."—*British Medical Journal*.

Practical Points.

The Physics of the Damp Bed.

The question is very commonly asked, says the *Lancet*, as to why it is dangerous to sleep in a damp bed. Some persons even deny that there is any risk, confidently recounting perhaps in support of their view an experience in which no harm had ensued to them, even although the mattress had been accidentally kept wet through the night by the leaking of a hot-water bottle. A consideration of the physical condition of the damp bed easily accounts for its danger to health, and it does not follow that while there is risk when the coverlet is damp the risk is quite the same when the mattress is superficially wet. To begin with, damp air is not only a conductor of heat, so that the warmth of the body when surrounded by it easily escapes, but it also communicates a dampness to the coverlet which destroys its non-conductivity. The danger of sleeping in a damp bed, however, lies not so much in the dampness of the air as in the dampness of the clothes. The vital principle of the bed coverlet, as it is with all clothing, is that it should be as far as possible non-conducting—i.e., having the property of preventing the escape of the natural heat of the body. When clothing is damp it loses to a large extent this property, and so the body loses its natural warmth, experiences a chill, and a serious illness may ensue. It is therefore conceivable that no harm would result if merely the mattress of a bed were wet so long as the upper coverings, the sheet, the blanket, and the coverlet, were perfectly dry, effectually preventing, that is, the escape of the body heat. A chill does not arise from the cold of dampness (cold and damp are not interchangeable terms) but from the facility with which damp air and clothes allow the natural warmth to escape. Damp clothes, in short, are good conductors of heat, while dry clothes are insulators, and the degree at which the heat of the body is maintained in bed is a measure of the insulating value of its coverings. The risk of sleeping in damp clothes would be the same as if copper or tin foil were used for the purpose. It follows that the only practical and trustworthy test for a damp bed would be to place, say, a hot-water bottle in it and to note how rapidly the temperature of the water falls. According to the principles just laid down the difference would be very perceptible in the case of a damp and in that of a dry or well-aired bed. The so-called damp detectors, which depend upon the stretching of a fibre or hair in dry air and its shrinking in moist air, give, in reality, no useful indication, neither does a watch-glass showing the deposition of moisture.

The Movable Drop-light.

The electric drop-light has done away entirely with the use of candles or lanterns in working over the patients at night. It overcomes the danger of setting fire to the bedding, can be so closely shaded that patients in adjoining beds are not disturbed by it, and has been arranged

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