

The Dufferin Fund.

WORK OF THE YEAR 1903.

In the Nineteenth Annual Report of the Central Committee for the year 1903, just issued, it is stated that steady and encouraging progress has been made during the year under review.

Notwithstanding the prevalence of plague, the number of patients treated in the numerous hospitals and dispensaries was very large and satisfactory. The number of women who continue to enter the various colleges and medical schools are considerable, and the financial status of the Association as a whole is satisfactory.

During the year, the objects for which the Victoria Memorial Scholarships Fund was inaugurated have been successfully established.

The Committee are pleased to note that the French Government have started a similar scheme to that of the Dufferin Fund in Algeria during the past year, and "in each village where the Mussulman population is sufficiently large the Government propose to establish a lady practitioner, providing her with the necessary medicines and instruments, and giving her a salary proportionate to her work."

The Central Committee much regrets the impossibility to express its acknowledgment separately to all the local organisations and individuals who have worked so strenuously and unselfishly in the interests of the Association. But the fact that there are now over 300 medical women of the higher grades alone in more or less important centres, engaged in furthering the objects of the Association, is perhaps sufficient proof of the inability of the Committee to individually thank all those engaged in its work as it would wish to.

The usual brief statement of the United Kingdom Branch has been sent by the Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava.

The subscriptions amounted to £176. Since the formation of the United Kingdom Committee in 1889 £7,903 have been collected, and it now has an investment of £2,235 and a deposit of £500 at the bank.

There are now forty-one lady doctors of the first grade holding appointments, seventy-eight assistant surgeons or practitioners of the second grade, who have been trained in India, and 256 hospital assistants or practitioners of the third grade, but these do not include a large number of midwives practising in various districts.

The Committee say that notwithstanding the steady increase, year by year, in the number of ladies who possess the higher degrees in medicine, the Association cannot always provide employment, carrying a suitable remuneration, immediately it is required, or, indeed, within any given period.

In all cases where the Central Committee is asked to recommend a lady for a particular hospital, the claims of each and every registered candidate

for employment receive full and impartial consideration.

A specially-appointed Sub-Committee has recently submitted a report to the Bengal Provincial Branch on several points which will be found of interest to lady doctors. One of the Sub-Committee's recommendations is that Government should be asked to assist in raising the standard of female medical education in the medical schools, and another that all candidates for employment as lady doctors under the auspices of the Fund should be required to produce evidence of having undergone practical training in a special women's hospital for a period of at least one year after passing their qualifying examinations.

A third proposal is that the Central Committee should be asked to appoint a highly-qualified lady doctor as inspecting medical officer for all genuine *purdah* hospitals working in India under the name of Dufferin Hospitals.

The Central Committee states that it regrets its inability to fall in with this latter suggestion of the Bengal Branch. The appointment of such a lady with travelling expenses would cost far more than it could afford from the slender funds at its disposal. If, however, the Provincial Branches are willing to subscribe from their own funds towards the pay of such an appointment, the Central Committee will be prepared to reconsider its decision, and possibly also to contribute towards it.

At present there are 114 European and native ladies training as assistant surgeons, 95 as hospital assistants, and 281 as nurses, dais, and compounders. This latter total does not include 194 dais who are being trained under the Victoria Memorial Scholarships Fund.

The Central Committee is of opinion that its main duty now lies not so much in the direction of erecting new hospitals, to the initial cost of which must be added the necessary charges of superintendence and upkeep, as in promoting the wider education of hospital assistants, nurses, and midwives who may be enabled to carry relief into the outlying districts and villages. Quite a considerable number of the principal towns and centres in India now possess hospitals in which relief is systematically offered to women and children.

About thirty-five and a-half lakhs in all, it is computed, is the value of buildings which have either been constructed for, or presented to, the Association, or have been specially set aside for furthering the objects of the Fund.

From a sum of money given to Her Excellency by Mr. Phipps for charitable purposes, Lady Curzon purchased new operating tables for the female hospitals at Lucknow, Rangoon, Lahore, Agra, Benares, and Allahabad, besides medical instruments for Madras and Nagpur. At the Lady Aitchison Hospital, Lahore, a new operating room was built with a sum of Rs.5,000 given by the Central Committee.

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