

THE  
**BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING**  
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 873.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1904.

Vol. XXXIII.

**Editorial.**

**CONSUMPTIVES ON BOARD SHIP.**

Now that the infectious character of consumption has been fully established, it seems likely, in the present state of the public mind, that considerable and unnecessary hardship may be inflicted by the steamship companies on patients of this class when ordered abroad for the sake of their health. No one, surely, would grudge to a sufferer from lung disease the hope afforded by a winter in Egypt, or the comfort enjoyed from a sojourn in its sunny climate in place of the choking fogs, and damp, cutting winds of winter in this country; and yet, if consumptive patients are to be tabooed as passengers by the steamship companies, as seems quite likely, how are they to get to the climate where the diseased organ will be placed in surroundings where it will have the best chance of healing? Again, may a man with a phthisical tendency never go to the other side of the world on business? The situation would be absurd were there not a danger of real hardship being inflicted.

Inquiries made by a contemporary at the headquarters of the Orient Line Company prove that the regulations of the company which carries many passengers to Australia are very strict in regard to consumptive passengers. Although it is impossible when a berth is booked to know whether the passenger is ill from consumption, once on board the ship, two inspections have to be passed. It is the duty of the ship's doctor to see that no really ailing person is allowed to make the voyage, and, as the doctor does not wish to have a sick person on his hands for a long trip, no one who is likely to be troublesome to other passengers is permitted to remain on board, and even if the ship has started before such an unfortunate is discovered, it is the doctor's duty to report to the commander, who will put the passenger ashore at the first place of call!

Imagine if the same regulations prevailed on the other side of the world. Think of the man or woman, broken down in a tropical climate and ordered home, those in charge of him anxiously awaiting the arrival of the first homeward-bound ship, so that the sick man may have his one chance of life. Does the captain exist who is so inhuman as to refuse to give that chance, and take the patient on board, even though he may have to be carried on in a hammock and lifted straightway to his bunk? If so, then may Nemesis await him.

But the moral of both East and West is this: A sick patient on board ship is in an evil plight indeed if he has to depend on the good offices of the ship's stewards to attend to his need. Even though they may be willing, their other duties prevent their giving the attention which he needs to a sick passenger. Further, it is not right to healthy passengers that the cabin in which they sleep at night should be occupied all day by an invalid. If the patient be phthisical the position is even worse, as other passengers who occupy the same cabin undoubtedly run a risk of contracting the disease.

We come, then, to the conclusions which have been repeatedly urged upon shipping companies so far, we regret to say, without result:—(1) That passenger ships making voyages of any length should carry trained nurses, as much as a matter of course as they now carry doctors; and (2) that for the adequate accommodation of sick passengers and for the well-being of the healthy, hospital accommodation should be provided where such passengers could receive skilled medical and nursing care. It is inconceivable that such an arrangement has never entered into the calculations of shipping companies up to the present time; we can only hope that representations will be made to the Board of Trade if the steamship companies fail to realise their obligations in this respect, and that the provision of hospital accommodation for passenger ships will be made one of the Board of Trade requirements.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)