

Royal British Nurses' Association.

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THE RAMBLERS AT VERULAMIUM.

The Ramblers celebrated Michaelmas Day by making a pilgrimage to St. Albans to inspect the Roman excavations at Verulamium. The trees were just taking on the ruddy tints of the autumn time and the woods and lanes were beautiful. Gardens were simply gorgeous, and the great masses of dahlias and other autumn flowers made brilliant splashes of colour which called forth many an exclamation of pleasure as we passed on our way.

Being Michaelmas Day we felt that we could not pass the open door of St. Michael's Church, and so we entered and spent a short time of quiet enjoyment of its old architecture, its windows and lovely Lady Chapel. We stood around the alcove in which is the statue of Lord Bacon—a figure of mystery this of the great Chancellor, who "took all knowledge for his province": he sits there as though in mediation most profound. We lingered in the sunny churchyard enjoying the peace there, and, almost reluctantly, passed through a wicket gate to the field path that leads to the excavations. The Roman city of Verulamium is believed to have covered over two hundred and fifty acres, but the excavations have been carried out only over a comparatively small surface. With great courtesy we were shown the remains of the ancient city and many features were explained to us. Evidence of the methods of heating some of the houses was very interesting; in the middle of a large central apartment we could trace the charred foundations of a furnace, the floors of the rooms were raised so that the hot air circulated beneath them and this was carried up also through shafts in the walls to higher apartments; in the museum we saw the hypocaust piles on which the ground floors rested and also the tubelike tiles that formed the hot air shaft. "We couldn't teach them much, could we?" said one of the nurses at our elbow. The Romans built their houses so that they faced the direction likely to give the greatest amount of sunlight, and splayed windows were pointed out whereby they captured the light-rays; most of these houses, be it noted, date from the first and second centuries. In the remains of one large house it was pointed out that the Romans had discovered the advantage of doing away with sharp corners and other dust traps—the junctions of wall and floors being rounded off in it. In two houses we admired fine mosaic floors.

The pottery section was the one which appeared to give the nurses the greatest pleasure, and it was most interesting to compare the Roman pottery and that of the Britons. The Romans of that time, as far as art was concerned, were purely copyists, we know, and in their conventional mouldings there was nothing of the flowing freedom of design which is seen in the Celtic vases of the Britons. Here, indeed, one got a curious feeling of the psychology of the two races—of that of the Romans with their propensities for making and living under statutes, and that of the Britons still untrammelled by the entry of the influences arising from

a strong system of laws, into their sub-consciousness. We admired the delicacy of a collection of surgical and toilet instruments, and it was not surprising to hear one of the nurses express the wish that they might be transferred to the History Section of the British College of Nurses.

THE MATRON OF THE ROSS INSTITUTE, PUTNEY, MISS MARY GRAY, S.R.N., F.B.C.N.

A member of our profession who evidently finds her work very fascinating and full of interest is Miss Mary Gray, S.R.N., F.B.C.N., Matron of the Ross Institute. When we visited her a short time ago she was enthusiastic in describing to us all the wonderful variety of research work which is carried on there. Miss Gray was trained at the Ingham Infirmary, South Shields, and held important positions subsequent to that; the work which especially qualified her for her present appointment, however, was that in a European hospital in Ceylon, when she gained experience of the various tropical diseases. Probably that experience also led her to realise how useful a good knowledge of the nursing of tropical diseases can be to nurses; in fact, Miss Gray appears to regard such experience as quite essential for nurses who go to tropical countries. Realising the fact that most of those who go to the Institute will be called upon to fill important and responsible posts abroad, Miss Gray makes it a point that all members of her regular staff are Registered Nurses; they go, many of them, to China and other countries, and in some cases nurses are sent to the Institute by other institutions to gain experience before leaving to take up appointments abroad. They are given facilities for attending lectures at the School of Tropical Diseases and they are allowed to make free use of the splendid tropical library of the Ross Institute; apart from this, every effort is made to give them as wide a knowledge as possible of such diseases as dysentery, sprue, malaria, black-water fever and kalasar.

The Ross Institute is in reality a tribute to the life work of a very great pioneer in the sphere of science, Sir Ronald Ross. To use the words of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales when he opened the Institute: "It is not too much to say that Sir Ronald Ross has made one-third of the world habitable." While making a tour of the Institute, Miss Gray explained to us that it must not be regarded from the point of view that it is a hospital; the Ross Institute is founded for research work and, therefore, the number of patients admitted for actual treatment is limited. Besides, the main work of studying tropical diseases, a certain amount of research in connection with cancer and some skin diseases is also undertaken. In the Bacteriological Department we were given some indication of a most important section of the Institution's activities; here we saw a multitude of test tubes with great variety of colour in their cotton wool stoppers; each colour indicates the media or sugars being used for the cultivation of bacteria in the different tubes. In a large laboratory,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)