

Annotations.

MEDICAL WOMEN AND THE PLAGUE.

THE bubonic plague still rages in Bombay, and already the European powers are beginning to regard with anxiety the annual Mohammedan pilgrimage to Mecca as likely to be the means of spreading the infection westward. It is feared that it is impossible to prohibit the exodus to Mecca, and therefore the only possibility of diminishing the risk is by making the sanitary precautions taken as complete as possible. The *British Medical Journal* is of opinion that all pilgrims should be medically inspected before they are allowed to embark, and that "the work of inspection will be arduous, and quite beyond the power of the health officer and his ordinary staff." It therefore suggests that "his staff should be largely re-inforced without delay, and it appears desirable that lady doctors should be engaged for the purpose of making the medical inspection of female pilgrims."

Anyone who has travelled by a ship conveying Mecca pilgrims will understand how necessary it is that strict precautions should be taken, and how impossible it would be to prevent the plague, once it broke out on board, from becoming epidemic. Mecca pilgrims almost invariably travel as "deck passengers," that is to say, they take their bedding and cooking pots on board with them, and live, sleep, eat, and drink on deck, where they are often almost as closely packed as cattle in a pen on a market day at home. They undergo many hardships, and are generally below par, so that their condition is one which at all times predisposes to disease. The need for stringent sanitary precautions before embarkation therefore is obvious. It appears to us that the proposal to engage lady doctors to inspect the female pilgrims is excellent, more especially as it is contrary to all Eastern usages for a woman to be attended by a medical man.

The hardships which these poor pilgrims willingly undergo would appear to be incredible, but it must be remembered that the advantages gained by a devout pilgrim to Mecca are, according to his belief, solid and substantial. He receives in the first place the pardon of his sins, and beyond this the right to dye his beard red, and thus proclaim his holiness to his fellows. These permanent benefits weigh heavily in the scale when compared with the temporary discomfort of the way, and so the pilgrim remains undaunted, even by the bouquet of the portion of the deck apportioned to him, and one hopes that the odours of "Araby the Blest," when he arrives, will be all the sweeter by way of contrast to those which he has endured on board ship.

JEWISH NURSES.

ANOTHER instance of the progressiveness of our American cousins is that they have succeeded in drawing Jewish women into the Nursing world, a feat which has not yet been achieved on this side of the duck-pond in an appreciable degree. It seems strange that amongst all the numerous applications which are received by Matrons of Hospitals for the vacant posts for Probationers so few are made by Jewesses. In the Hospitals where a special feature is made of wards for Jewish patients it would seem eminently suitable that the Nurses in these wards should be of the Jewish persuasion, and they would necessarily understand their patients better than those of a different race and creed can hope to do. The leaders of any movement always have to contend with many difficulties and prejudices, and this must especially be the case with an Oriental race whose conservatism is a hereditary instinct, but we have no doubt that when once the tradition has been established that Nursing is a suitable vocation for Hebrew women, the tenacity of purpose and indomitable perseverance with which the Jewish nation are endowed will make its women a valuable acquisition to the Nursing world.

HOSPITAL SHIPS.

A LETTER addressed to the *Irish Times* by Professor Anthony Roche shows the necessity for some immediate arrangement by which cases of small-pox which occur in Dublin may be isolated. This gentleman states that if cases of small-pox are received into the Cork Street Hospital the disease will inevitably spread to the other patients and become epidemic. We should have thought that this self-evident fact would have been patent even to the average Guardian; but it would appear that this is not the case, and the Guardians at their last meeting appeared "indignant that a case of small-pox had not been taken into the Hospital." Professor Roche suggests that a ready-made iron hut, which could be erected in a few days, should serve as an isolation Hospital. It appears to us that a more satisfactory arrangement still would be to fit up a discarded ship as a floating Hospital, after the pattern of the Hospital Ships at Dartford, where this plan has been found to work most satisfactorily. In this connection it is interesting to note that several ships for ambulance purposes are to be added to the Navy of the United States.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)