

## Professional Review.

### CRIMEAN HEROINES.

WE have received from Messrs. Burns & Oates, Limited, of Orchard Street, a copy of a book entitled, "Memories of the Crimea," by Sister Mary Aloysius, which will, we are sure, meet with the welcome which it certainly merits, from many of our readers. It is of exceptional interest as coming to us from the pen of the only Sister still living of the little band of Irish nuns who volunteered for work amongst our soldiers in the Crimea, and further, one who in her quiet convent, in her 77th year, has received from her sovereign the recognition of her devoted work, by the bestowal upon her of the Royal Red Cross.

The appeals from the East were heart-breaking, and the sufferings of our soldiers appalling. Our allies fared better, for "they summoned their Sisters on the first appearance of sickness." "The questions were constantly asked: Are there no such women in England? Can the women do nothing for us in this fearful emergency?" But, as usual, "the women only waited to be asked," and were speedily forthcoming when once the need for their services was made known.

It is noticeable that even three and forty years ago, when there was little organization of nursing matters, that the promptitude which stamps a good organizer at the present time, characterized the departure of the Sisters. Sister Mary Aloysius writes:—"The telegram came, and we were to start in the morning by the first train. Dr. Dunne, the President of Carlow College, said an early mass, that we might have the happiness of receiving Holy Communion; and we began our journey." The Sisters met in London some of the nurses who were going out to work under Miss Nightingale. It would seem that their costume was a singularly unattractive one, to have left such a vivid impression upon the mind of Sister Mary Aloysius after the lapse of so many years. She writes:—"The ladies and paid nurses wore the same costume, and a very ugly one it was. It seemed to be contract work, and all the same size, so that the ladies who were tall had short dresses, and the ladies who were small had long dresses. They consisted of grey tweed wrappers, worsted jackets, white caps, and short woollen cloaks, and to conclude, a frightful scarf of brown holland, embroidered in red with the words, 'Scutari Hospital.' That ladies could be found to walk into such a costume was certainly a triumph of grace over nature." We have advanced since those days, for certainly the costume in which the nurses who recently went to nurse the Greeks, in the late war, left London, was as charming and well fitting as could possibly be devised.

After some delay in Constantinople, during which time the Sisters were hospitably housed by the Sisters of Charity at Galata, the Sisters were ordered to proceed to the General Hospital at Scutari; but even when they arrived there they were not at once sent to the wards, but were "sent to a store to sort clothes that had been eaten by rats." The first day in the hospital was one to be remembered. "Vessels were arriving, and the orderlies carrying in the poor fellows, who, with their wounds and frost-bites, had been tossing about on the Black Sea for two or three days,

and sometimes more. Where were they to go? No an available bed. They were laid on the floor one after another, till the beds were emptied of those dying of cholera, and every other disease. Many died immediately after being brought in—their moans would pierce the heart—the taking of them in and out of the vessels must have increased their pain." Added to other diseases, cholera raged of the very worst type—the attacked men usually lasting only four or five hours. The cramps were terrible. "You might as well try to bend a piece of iron as to move the joints." The usual remedies were prescribed, and, in addition, the doctors were very anxious to try chloroform; but "they would not trust anyone with it except the Sisters." It is interesting to read the method of applying fomentations adopted by the Rev. Mother of the little band of Sisters, who seems to have been exceptionally well qualified in every way for the difficult work to which she had set her hand. The following are the directions given: "You have a large tub of boiling water, blankets torn in squares, and a piece of canvas with a running at each end to hold a stick. The blankets were put into the boiling water, lifted out with a tongs and put into the canvas, when an orderly at each end wrung the flannel out so dry that not a drop of water remained, before a preparation of chloroform was sprinkled on it, and it was applied to the stomach."

Many of the patients also suffered severely from frost-bite. "The men who came from the front had only thin linen suits—no other clothing—to keep out the Crimean frost of 1854-1855. In most cases the flesh and clothes were frozen together; and as for the feet, the boots had to be cut off bit by bit—the flesh coming off with them—many pieces of the flesh I have seen remain in the boot. Poultices were applied with some oil brushed over them. In the morning, when these were removed—can I ever forget it?—the sinews and bones were seen to be laid bare. Far, far worse and more painful were these than the gun or sword wounds; and what must it have been where they had both?"

The intense cold was followed by intense heat, and the Sisters had to undergo trials of the same sort as the nurses in the recent Græco-Turkish war. "Insects of all kinds abounded—fleas, flies, bugs, ants, mosquitoes." When Miss Stanley, the sister of the Dean of Westminster, who had pioneered the Sisters on the journey out, and had been their right hand in many ways, returned to England, "the Queen (anxious of course to hear all about her soldiers, sent for her; and when the interview was nearly over Her Majesty asked her what she thought the poor soldiers would like—she was anxious to send them a present. Miss Stanley said: "Oh, I do know what they would like—plenty of flannel shirts, mufflers, butter, and treacle. Her Majesty said they must have all these things, and they did come out in abundance: Koulali got its share of the gifts. But the very name of butter or treacle was enough for the doctors. They said they would not allow it into the wards, because it would be going about in bits of paper and daubing everything. So Rev. Mother at once interposed, and said if the doctors allowed it, she would have it distributed in a way that could give no trouble. They apologized, and said they should have known that, and at once left everything to her." So even in those days the medical and nursing staffs had their little differences, and it is worthy of note that the nurses remained in possession of the field.

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