

HOSPITAL LIBRARIES.

ONE has to be ill oneself to realize the power of books to wile away weary hours of pain, and, one of the joys of convalescence to a book lover is that much time may without compunction be given to the delight of revelling in the literature which in a busy life must often be placed unopened on the bookshelves. When the sick man or woman is a hospital patient however it too often happens that the books provided for him do not appeal to him. In some instances we have known the choice of selection to lie between somewhat dull tracts, and the *Sporting Times*, and we ourselves in one institution in which we worked have seen the latter publication bestowed by the chaplain upon a dying woman as suitable literature. Committees of literary persons might therefore well be formed in connection with our hospitals for the purpose of providing the patients with new and interesting literature. A good novel, or a readable magazine would be the greatest of boons to many patients who are now perforce condemned to idleness, and it is not going too far to say that it might have a distinctly beneficial therapeutic effect. With regard to Nurses' Libraries we are aware that kindly ladies in some instances interest themselves in their establishment. For instance Mrs. Alfred Harmsworth has devoted much time and trouble to the maintenance of the Nurses' Library at the London Hospital. Whether such libraries should be maintained by the matron or nurses, by means of an annual subscription, or by charitable members of the public is a matter of taste. Personally we prefer the former course as that which is self-respecting and independent. But however it may be arranged nurses should certainly have access to a well-stocked library. The liberal education thus provided will do much to counteract the tendency to narrowness of thought and aim, which is distinctly a danger in their absorbing professional life.

NURSES À LA MODE.

WE are glad to see that *Truth* has made some sensible remarks upon "money being spent in sending to Africa fine ladies as nurses, who have no experience of nursing," and suggests that it would be well if the ladies who long to be fashionable could be induced to subscribe to charities in connection with the war by some sort of social function in which their names are recorded. By all means, if this form of advertisement appeals to the fashion-

able world let it be adopted. If, however, any public money is spent in sending any untrained person to nurse our soldiers the iniquity should be exposed. Many thoroughly trained nurses are ready and anxious to go to South Africa, and, if society ladies wish to play, let them play with harmless things, not with life and death.

SOME ONE HAD BLUNDER'D.

As the *Jelunga* steamed into the Empress Dock at Southampton on Saturday last, carrying some 500 women and children, the wives and families of soldiers in South Africa, there was a sound heard plainly above the shouting of orders and the clatter of chains, namely, the cry of the children. And small wonder, with faces pinched and blue, and for the most part sobbing, they came in sight, wearing the thin cotton and muslin frocks they had worn in South Africa; some had no hats, others no boots, and the bitter east wind seemed cruel to these mites as they sat on the frost covered deck. Nor is this all the tale of woe, on the journey six babies had died of cold and exposure, and the six tiny bodies had been sewn up in canvas and committed to the grave in the deep sea. Of course no one is to blame, all the official orders were carried out and each department is satisfied that the best possible care that was possible under the circumstances was taken, but if this is so, then bad is the best. Moreover when the sad party arrived at Southampton their troubles were by no means ended, for when some of them arrived at Waterloo they found it was too late to proceed to their destination, and sat down on the platform in desperation. A casual passer by provided them with a meal, and the porters piled up the fire in the waiting room, and did their best for the party, and Government officials slept no doubt the sleep of the just, satisfied that they had done all that could possibly be required of them.

DIPHTHERIA IN SCHOOLS.

PARENTS who are concerned lest their children should contract contagious diseases at school will be glad to learn that, in the case of diphtheria, according to statistics supplied by medical officers in a large number of towns and cities in England, America, and the Continent, attendance at school is an unimportant factor in spreading it. With relation to sex, in infancy the mortality amongst females is largely in excess of that of males. At two to three years of age it is equal, after which the female mortality again increases.

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