

The International Council of Nurses.

NURSING IN EGYPT.*

By Miss J. G. WATKINS.

The only authorized training school in Egypt for nurses is the Government Hospital, "Kasr el Aini," at Cairo. Here the patients, mostly Egyptians, are nursed by Egyptian nurses of their own sex, under the supervision of an English staff consisting of a Matron and seven nurses.

The Hospital, which contains four hundred and twenty-five beds, is divided into two wings, one for male patients and the other for the Harem or female patients.

On the male side the nurses are men of the lower class, sufficiently educated to be able to read and write, who work in the wards for a long or short period according to their capabilities. They receive no special training, and of course no certificate.

The nurses for the female side are provided by "L'Ecole Medicale des Filles." These pupils are under the superintendence of the Matron of the Hospital. They are chosen from the Sanieh School, a Government secular institution under the care of an English head mistress, and are obliged to bring with them a certificate of proficiency in reading and writing.

The term of training is for three years. During the whole of this period the pupils work in the wards, having medical, surgical, ophthalmic, midwifery, and gynæcological training, under the supervision of English Sisters, who train them in practical nursing. For theoretical work, during the first year lectures are given by the Physiologist to the Medical School (a native), on elementary physiology and anatomy, and by the Matron on nursing. At the end of this term an examination is held on these subjects.

During the second year the principal subjects taught are Pharmacology by the Professor of Chemistry (a German), and theoretical nursing by the Matron. The pupils are examined in these subjects at the end of twelve months.

In the third year the lectures are upon midwifery, normal and abnormal labour, which are given by a native doctor; on anatomy of the pelvis and gynæcology by another native doctor, and on Legal Medicine by the Director of the Medical School.

The practical ward training in midwifery is given by the surgeons attending the cases. There is no English midwife in the hospital, and the pupils receive no special training in obstetrical

nursing. The pupils have lessons in English and are instructed in physical exercises.

At the end of her three years, if a pupil passes her final examinations and her conduct has been satisfactory, she receives a diploma from the Sanitary Department, and is registered by the State as a Hakeema. A Hakeema has the following choice of work. She may practise as a midwife on her own account, or she may remain in the Government employment in either of the following capacities. She may stay on in the hospital as a sort of Staff Nurse, there are two of these posts at Kasr el Aini; she may be attached to one of the police divisions of Cairo or Alexandria, or she may go to a "Moodarish" (province), working with the Doctor attached to the police station of province. Under these conditions a Hakeema may legally certify cause of death, write a simple prescription, attend cases of normal labour, treat gynæcological patients, and in case of an outbreak of an epidemic, inspect females. A few Mahomedan families who object to a male doctor employ a certificated Hakeema for sick female relations. In addition to and quite distinct from the Hakeemas are the "diah's." These are completely uneducated women, who receive theoretical instruction by a course of lectures on simple midwifery, given by a doctor or midwife at Kasr el Aini, or other Government Hospitals. The course of lectures usually occupies about fifteen days. At the end of this time they are examined by a doctor, and if passed by him are licensed by the State to attend cases of the simplest kind. The law is very strict with regards to the limitations of the "diah's" work. She must use no instruments of any kind, not even for rupturing the membranes.

The number of cases of normal labour at Kasr el Aini hospital is very small indeed, and chiefly comprises women, undergoing a term of imprisonment at one of the State prisons. The abnormal cases are usually very difficult ones, as the patient has probably been attended in her home by a "diah" who has not recognized the difficulty of the case until the patient is in a dangerous condition.

There is very little demand for Egyptian women as nurses among Egyptians. The Hakeema as a midwife has a recognized position, and so has the "diah." The great majority of women in Egypt are still veiled, and they have no authority in any household but their own. They are, therefore, useless, simply as nurses. The German Hospitals, of which there are two in Egypt, one in Cairo and one in Alexandria, are nursed by German Deaconesses, trained at Kaiserswerth.

The French hospitals, three in number, are nursed by the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul.

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