

Our Foreign Letter.

HOSPITALS IN CONSTANTINOPLE.



All travellers are sorely tempted to describe the places they have seen, and I am only restrained from pages of raving over Constantinople by the knowledge that it would sound flat and dull to those who have not been there, and those who have will know what a unique and unequalled spot of the earth it is, with the most brilliant of spring weather shining down on it.

And how near home it seemed when I found myself being "toted" by Miss Hart, a Bellevue nurse, and Dr. Ottley, a Johns Hopkins medical man! To them I am indebted for seeing hospitals. They got the permits and untwisted the manifold yards of red tape, and personally conducted me about. No such thing in Constantinople as going to the door of a hospital and announcing one's self as a *Dottorresse* or *Krankenschwester* from America and expecting to be taken about! In the first place, the distances are enormous; one must go to the ends of the car-lines and then drive a couple of hours to the outskirts of everything, and then pass the sentinel boxes of soldiers and the lodges of porters, and then go from pavilion to pavilion in large grounds, and all in a language which might just as well be Chinese.

It took the greater part of a day to go to the Greek hospital (all the different nations have their own hospitals, like their own post-offices, in Constantinople), and another whole day to visit the Royal Hospital for Children, and to drive to the old military barracks at Scutari, where Florence Nightingale's world-famous work was wrought. A week could easily be spent in hospitals in Constantinople. The French and German hospitals are, of course, managed according to the national customs, and excellently. The Greek hospital is very large, on spacious grounds, and has some new pavilions with small rooms that are modern, cheerful, and attractive, but some of the old wards, deficient in light and air and with the painfully unkempt appearance of old hospitals without trained nurses, were very forlorn, especially those that were filled with phthisis patients. The managers and physicians of this hospital are very desirous of establishing a modern system of nursing, and it would not be surprising to see such a change effected before long. The Royal Hospital for Children, called the *Hamidié* (after the Sultan, Hamid), is the pride of Turkey, and well it may be. It was erected at the personal cost of the present Sultan, who also bears the whole expense of its support on a truly munificent scale. It is entirely free, and though a children's hospital has also provision for women, and when we were there several large pavilions were filled temporarily with wounded soldiers.

The Sultan is said to be the most humane ruler Turkey has had, and, indeed, his face (for we saw him drive to prayers), while old, tired, and sad, showed kindness, and one could easily imagine him taking an interest

in charitable institutions. The Children's Hospital is his special interest, and it is said that he personally inspects every instrument and appliance that goes into it. Under his rule there has been a marked revival of medicine and hospital work in Turkey, and the Germans seem to have been called in everywhere to direct the movement towards modern reforms. The Children's Hospital has been built from the plans of German experts; its medical management is planned out and systematised according to the most thorough-going German science, and the nursing is entrusted to German sisters drawn from the "*Diakome-Verein*," which is an association especially modern, free, and highly trained, and which seems to attract women of superior calibre.

The hospital is really so complete and perfect in all its details that there is no room for criticism anywhere. The grounds are extensive and well planted; the pavilions, of simple architectural lines, stand singly; every kind of service, including contagion, is provided for; scientific sterilisation, the laboratories of all kinds, the X-rays and photography, the plumbing and drainage, the ventilation, the details of soiled linen removal and disinfection, the fittings for surgical technique, all are as faultless as any hospital has yet succeeded in making them. The wards are exceedingly pretty, tiled and painted in light colours, and the most immaculate cleanliness reigns supreme. The white linen gowns and caps of the nurses were as spick and span as a German military parade, and only one Oriental feature was present in the whole picture, and this the prettiest possible one. This was the dress of the Turkish (or native of some kind) women, ward assistants to the nurses. They wore gowns of native cut, of light colours and charming materials, and were most gracefully draped in large sheer white veils, which they wound around their heads and shoulders in an inimitable manner. All the women, and little girl patients, too, wore similar veils, not so large, but all carried out the idea of the covered head.

Several women patients in single rooms had brought their own bedding and linen, and we could hardly sympathise with their ills for admiring the crimson satin-covered mattresses, fine embroidered linens, and home-dyed and home-woven bedspreads, which were fit to adorn a museum, to say nothing of their little Turkish shoes, elaborate Parisian toilet cases, and innumerable perfumes.

The diets in this hospital are arranged in seven schedules according to medical requirements, but it is a matter of pride that no difference is made between rich and poor patients. The food varies according to the disease, but not according to the pocket-book of the patient, the poorest receiving the same delicate diet as the richest.

It was all so fascinating we could hardly tear ourselves away. Generous provision is also made for entertaining foreign medical men who come there. A most beautifully appointed little dining-room is theirs, with table always set, and in the visitors' book we saw the names of many American physicians and others from all over the world.

Dr. Nicholas Senn, of Chicago, has written an account of this hospital in which he says: "This hospital, the just pride of the Sultan and the local profession, has few, if any, equals of its kind in the world. It was built and is maintained at the private expense of the Sultan as a memorial to one of his favourite little daughters, who died. The outside

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)