

Sidney Herbert.*

A PIONEER OF NURSING REFORM.

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THE HOSPITALS OF THE CRIMEA.

"The chief military hospital of the Crimea was established at Scutari, on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, just opposite Constantinople, in an enormous barrack which had been made over for the purpose on the first arrival of the British forces in the East. The plan of breaking up hospitals into small blocks of buildings had not then been adopted, and no objection was made, or was then likely to be made, to the huge dimensions of the area occupied. Another hospital, called the 'General' Hospital, of smaller size, where were the headquarters of the Medical Staff, as well as two others, the Sultan's Palace Hospital and the Stable Hospital, containing together about 300 or 400 men, were established in the same locality. At a later period others, as they became needed, were set up at Kulali, Therapia, Smyrna, and elsewhere, and an additional hospital was provided at Scutari for wounded Russians. There were also two or three hospital ships."

From the foregoing paragraph we get a clear idea of the hospital provision in the Crimea. Until after the battle of Alma the establishment at Scutari was, Lord Stanmore tells us, fairly able to meet the wants of the patients. After the invasion of the Crimea large numbers of sick and wounded were sent down continually from the front. Moreover, the men when received into hospital had nothing but what they stood up in, for the reason that three of the four Generals (the exception being the Duke of Cambridge) on disembarking in the Crimea determined not to disembark the men's knapsacks with them. "They would march lighter, it was said, without them, and as it was confidently expected the allies would be in possession of Sebastopol in a few days' time it was proposed that the knapsacks should be restored to them there—a hope never realised." Stores which were at Varna and should have been sent at once to Scutari when the Army left for the Crimea remained unforwarded, "supplies, attendance, management, all became inadequate and inefficient."

THE "TIMES" FUND.

The *Times* called for subscriptions to a Fund for supplying those wants of the Army to which

it was asserted the Government had failed to attend, to be administered by its own agents. "It was reported to Sidney Herbert that, influenced by the outraged *amour propre* of the Army Medical Service, the Director-General, Dr. Smith, meditated the rejection of aid from this Fund, and intended to prohibit its agents from entering the hospitals. It was further said that the Duke of Newcastle was inclined to accept this recommendation." Mr. Herbert, however, successfully advocated the adoption of a wiser and more generous course.

MISS NIGHTINGALE.

Meanwhile a private association of a few benevolent men and women were preparing to send a small body of female nurses to Constantinople who were, on arrival, to offer their services in the hospitals there, and Miss Florence Nightingale was selected as the head of this expedition.

Miss Nightingale, whose friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Herbert was of long standing, wrote to the latter to acquaint her with her plans and asking whether Mr. Herbert would recommend the party to the officials at Scutari.

By a strange coincidence, this letter crossed one from Mr. Herbert asking Miss Nightingale to assume the control of the party of nurses to be sent out by Government. His choice proved his wisdom in the selection of the person for the task, and gave Miss Nightingale the position of an official sent out by the Government, with "plenary authority over all the nurses" instead of merely that of a private individual. Mr. Herbert wrote to her: "I think I could secure you the fullest assistance and co-operation from the medical staff, and you would also have an unlimited power of drawing on the Government for what you think requisite for the success of your mission." It was a splendid commission with which to proceed to the East.

Within a week of accepting Mr. Herbert's invitation, Miss Nightingale was on her way to Constantinople "as a recognised official under whose authority all female nurses in the military hospitals were placed, and on whose recommendation alone they were to be in future admitted."

The nurses who formed the first party, which in all numbered forty persons, were selected by Miss Nightingale, Miss Mary Stanley, and Mrs. Bracebridge, the headquarters of the expedition being Mr. Herbert's house in Belgrave Square.

"Here we sit all day," wrote Miss Stanley, "I wish people who may hereafter complain of the women selected could have seen the set we had to choose from. All London was scoured for them. We sent emissaries in every direction to

* Sidney Herbert, Lord Herbert of Lea: A Memoir by Lord Stanmore. (John Murray, Albemarle Street, W. 24s.)

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