

Looking Back.

A book published in 1856, and now out of print, which gives many interesting details of the nurses and nursing during the Crimean War is "Eastern Hospitals and English Nurses, the Narrative of Twelve Months' Experience in the Hospitals of Koulali and Scutari, by a Lady Volunteer." The book is by one of the ladies who went out with the second party in charge of Miss Stanley, which, it will be remembered by those who read our review of Lord Stanmore's Memoir of Sidney Herbert, was sent on arrival not to nurse in the Hospital at Scutari, but to an empty house at Therapia.

It is amusing to read of the insular prejudices of the "paid nurses." The French custom of serving vegetables as a separate course did not commend itself to them on their journey across France. "I don't see the use of just eating one thing by itself," said one, "now I likes two or three of them together." Told that this was not the custom in France, another said, "Well, I means to manage it somehow. I am a-going to keep this 'ere fowl on my plate till I get some of that cauliflower," and so she did, in spite of the astonished looks of the *garçons*.

The majority of the party ultimately found their destination at Koulali, where they went through many vicissitudes. The "hired nurses" seem to have been a source of considerable anxiety. Of one we read that when sent to attend two ladies who were alarmingly ill, she was found in a state of dead intoxication by the doctor, and again:

"The light conduct of another of the hired nurses, even at this time of distress, obliged her dismissal. The one who had been intoxicated was to accompany a lady to Scutari, from thence to take her passage to England. She went down quite quietly to the water's edge, put one foot into the caique in which the lady was sitting, and then jumped into the water, running the narrowest chance of upsetting the boat, in which case the lady must have been lost, as the strength of the current was fearful. The unfortunate woman was dragged out, and immediately went into what was apparently an epileptic fit. She was carried to her bed, on which she would not lie, but broke the windows, tore the matting from the floor, and her hair from her head. . . . After some days she recovered, was sent home, and, I believe, is now a nurse in a London hospital. Such and many similar tales could be told of those who

came from and returned to nurse the poor of England."

The anxieties of those responsible for the efficient nursing of the sick soldiers in the Crimea must have been great indeed when they had to depend upon nurses of this description. Even ladies with little or no training in nursing must have been of more assistance. No wonder, however, especially when sick and well appear to have lived, slept, and eaten in the same room, that sickness was rife amongst these devoted but unseasoned women. One of the best workers, Miss Smythe, died of fever, and the writer says, "When the news of her death was brought me such was our strange life at the time I could not leave my employment, but was obliged to count out mutton chops and half fowls, and then went upstairs to the room of death. She had suffered from a malignant form of typhus fever, and the surgeons said interment the next day was absolutely necessary." Imagine at the present day unnecessary visits to the death chamber of a patient dead from malignant typhus by a nurse in attendance on other patients!

The "hired nurses" continued to be a source of trouble. We read, "None but those who knew it can imagine the wearing anxiety, and the bitter humiliation the charge of the hired nurses brought upon us, for it should be remembered that we stood as a small body of Englishwomen in a foreign country, and that we were so far a community that the act of one disgraced all." The conduct of some was such that they had to be sent home, and the writer says: "To our profound astonishment we found that our sending home so many gave great umbrage to the authorities at home. They thought fit to send a reproof, demanding more particulars of the cases, and evidently displeased at the number sent back. They were respectfully reminded that our Superintendent's duties did not include the reformation of women of loose character and immoral habits, nor did we imagine the authorities would require details, which were often too terrible to dwell upon."

We cannot wonder that the conclusion of the writer when the war was over was "It is not for military hospitals alone that we want better nurses."

We may be thankful on looking back to see how much has been accomplished since those days. The writer says of those ladies who were admitted into London hospitals in order to prepare for work in the East, "what we saw there—of disobedience to medical orders

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