

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,084.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 1909.

Vol. XLII.

Editorial.

AN OVERWHELMING CATASTROPHE.

The subject which is filling the minds of all civilised peoples at the present time is the appalling disaster in Southern Italy and Sicily, the magnitude of which those not on the scene of the tragedy can only faintly grasp, or surely not one of us would rest until we had done everything in our power to alleviate the suffering caused not only by the original disaster, but by the complete disorganisation which has inevitably followed in its train.

The news which is forthcoming, chiefly through telegrams and the correspondents of papers on the scene of action, reveals by its very terseness the grim reality behind the few brief words. The story is from all sides "monotonous in its horror." It shows also human nature at its best and at its worst—at its best when, led by King Victor Emanuel and Queen Elena, all classes are working nobly for the relief of the sufferers, and at its worst when a ghoulis section of the population are taking advantage of the disorganised conditions to reap an unholy harvest of personal gain, not scrupling to rob the dead and dying of valuables. Of the messages which have come through none is more pathetic than a single line from Messina:—

"Nearly all the children in the city are dead."

In the measures for relief, the need of nurses is one of the foremost. It is true that Rome, Florence, and the Riviera can supply a certain number of well-trained nurses, and we may be sure that many Sisters are rendering devoted service, but in the face of such a calamity, the help that can be rendered locally will not suffice.

So we read in one of the reports from Palermo:—"The Red Cross workers have erected many temporary hospitals in

the squares, but they are quite inadequate, so great is the number of the injured. Doctors are dressing wounds in the open air amid a continuous downpour of rain." In one day 800 severely injured were ministered to.

Queen Elena, who has given away her rings to purchase food, is working most heroically in a hospital, and has taken some of the children from the hospital to her own Palace. She is assisted by Queen Margherita, who sent all her horses, carriages and automobiles to Naples to help in the work of transporting the injured, and the Duchess of Aosta has turned the Royal Palace there into a hospital, and is herself acting as nurse, and in Calabria two of the streets have been organised as hospitals. The King has also decided that all Royal palaces, villas, and castles shall be open to the wounded and sick at his personal expense.

From Malta twenty-one surgeons have been despatched to Messina, and another party of military medical officers, nursing sisters, and a field ambulance have left for Reggio and Messina. In Rome the sick and injured in the hospital were overjoyed at a visit from the Pope.

In connection with the Anglo-American Club, a party has been formed, including Major Carlton, a lady doctor, Miss Taylor, and several trained nurses from the Anglo-American Home at Rome, who have left for Sicily with blankets and other comforts. The Anglo-American colony, who were at Taormina in Sicily at the time of the earthquake, are said to have gathered at a station 30 miles from Messina; where, headed by Miss Hill, they are rendering splendid assistance. Ten ladies of the French Red Cross Society have left for Naples, and the American and Russian Red Cross Societies have sent £10,000 and £4,000 respectively.

The British Blue-jackets and Marines at

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)