

RELIEF WORK IN ASIA MINOR BY THE BRITISH RED CRESCENT SOCIETY.

Now that there is an armistice with every hope of peace, and the existing hospitals are sufficient to deal with the remainder of the wounded, every one of whom is receiving care and treatment, the attention of the British Red Crescent Society is being turned to the serious problem of relief for the thousands of refugees who are scattered about the country homeless and starving.

Much temporary help has been given by the staff at Scutari, outside the city walls of Constantinople, and in the various surrounding villages, wherever the refugees have camped or are passing through.

But besides this temporary help, it is proposed to give permanent relief by building villages, giving ground, cattle, seeds and implements, as well as starting industries. In fact, to establish these poor wanderers in homes of their own in surroundings best calculated to give them a fresh start in life.

For this purpose the British Red Crescent Society have formed a central local committee in Constantinople to work under the Committee in London, whose object it is to administer permanent relief in the various centres where it seems most needed. The questions of land, amount, situation, soil, water, drainage, roads, railway, industries, size of villages, &c., are discussed by this committee, members of which make personal investigation of each place, report, and give temporary relief *en route*.

Damad Ferid Pasha has kindly consented to be President, and the other members are:—Ferid Pasha (ex Grand Vizier), Sherifa Bey, Sir Edwin Pears, Lieut.-General Vinicombe Pasha, Colonel Surtees, C.B., M.V.O., D.S.O., Sister Wheatley (ex-officio).

The two latter have been to Broussa, and a detailed account of our visit may interest you, as it is very typical of such undertakings in Turkey.

We embarked in a small Turkish steamer, the *Bashliujik*, for Macedonia *en route* for Broussa at 8.15 a.m., the scheduled time for leaving being 9 a.m., but barge after barge of grain and sugar came alongside until 2 p.m., and it was not till 2.30 that we weighed anchor and started on our journey. But not direct. The crossing to Mondania takes three to four hours, and we might have expected to reach Broussa some time in the evening, but, alas for our hopes! the Captain informed us we had to go into quarantine at a place called Monastir, near the Black Sea entrance to the Bosphorus, and which we reached by 4 p.m. in drizzling rain. The doctor refused to come on board till the morning, and we had to make up our minds to a night of discomfort in a boat crowded with refugees, their oxen, donkeys, dogs, furniture, and wagons. At 10 a.m. the following day, after hours of unpleasant rolling,

the doctor sent us his blessing in the form of some papers and a little disinfectant, and with that we were allowed to proceed on our way.

I made a frantic effort to wash, but it ended in the waiter pouring water over my hands as the basin had a hole in the bottom and no plug. Seventy-four hours late, we steamed down the Bosphorus, the beauties of which cannot for want of space be here described.

Through the captain we found out and relieved the poorest of the Muhadjiler who were proceeding they knew not where, in a sort of blind panic.

At Mondania we caught the train, which was comfortable, with no incident except an amusing late arrival who leapt on as the train started, leaving a porter with various parcels and a small dog wound round his legs running alongside. All were somehow hurled in after him, and the poor little dog slept peacefully under my rug to Broussa.

It was getting so late, and darkness comes on so quickly that beyond a glimpse of incomparable olive groves, vineyards and fertile valleys, the magnificent scenery through which the line passes was lost to us, and it was not till the next morning that I saw Mount Olympus with snow on even the lower slopes.

There are two hotels in Broussa, one kept by an Armenian on the side of the mountain and some way out, very cold at this time of year, and another in the town which we preferred, but which was very dirty and over-heated. Surface cleanliness prevailed, but when in searching for a lost stud I moved the chest of drawers, behold, the dust of centuries was revealed.

The British Vice-Consul called during the morning, and with him we visited some of the Muhadjiler whom we found huddled together on bare boards without mattresses or covers, with no fires, very scantily clothed, and almost starving. Shelter of a kind had been procured for them in every available empty house, of which there are always plenty in this country in a more or less ruinous state. The Government were giving them 2½d. a day per head for bread, but in the face of the bitter weather the dire need of these poor people cannot be overstated.

We decided on the behalf of our Society to spend between £200 and £300 in charcoal and wood and food, besides sending bales of clothing, all of which were to be administered to the most deserving cases from a portion of the Consular premises.

We enquired about land and industries. Of the former there was plenty for sale, but dear, except in the most unget-at-able places. There is a strange law in Turkey that permits a man to claim a piece of waste land if when he stands on it and calls aloud a person in the nearest occupied village or demesne is unable to hear him. That is to say, if no other habitation is within range of a loud halloo.

Needless to say, for our purpose this is not practical. We need to establish the village near

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