

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

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

No. 1,321

SATURDAY, JULY 26, 1918.

Vol. LI.

EDITORIAL.

THE NEED OF TRAINED WOMEN NURSES IN RED CROSS HOSPITALS.

A most interesting report on "Medical and Surgical Experience in the Balkan War" has been contributed to the *Lancet* by Mr. C. Max Page, M.S. Lond., F.R.C.S., Eng., and Mr. S. V. Appleyard, M.R.C.S., Eng., late Medical Officers to the British Red Cross Society in Turkey.

The base hospital, of which the writers of the article were in charge, in succession, was situated at the Musée des Beaux Arts, Stamboul, and was capable of containing over 100 patients.

They report "During the first few weeks the only bedding available was in the form of mattresses, which were placed on the floor. . . . This arrangement made it difficult to keep the floors clean and rendered all nursing and dressing very laborious. . . . Within a few weeks either light bedsteads with spring mattresses, or camp beds made locally by stretching canvas on a double X frame, were provided for all.

"The large number of cases with acute enteritis made waterproof bed sheets a necessity, the Willesden canvas we had taken out proving very unsatisfactory for this purpose. Some American cloth purchased locally was useful, but a good supply of stout jaconet would be invaluable under similar conditions."

We have no hesitation in saying that if the British Red Cross Society had secured the services of ladies possessing experience as Matrons of hospitals on their committee, as it should have done, they would have foreseen the contingencies which actually happened, and have advised that bedsteads and mackintosh sheeting were necessities in any hospital. Will the Red Cross Society, even if it "Makes haste slowly," be wise after the event, and invite nurses of experience to take seats on its committee? If

not it is certain that the nursing department of its hospitals in war cannot be efficiently organized.

In regard to the personnel the judgment of the medical officers of the hospital coincides with our own, expressed from the outset.

"Each unit consisted of three medical officers, three dressers, and 12 orderlies. No female trained nurses were included. Mrs. Doughty-Wylie obtained the services of some French sisters and Turkish ladies, and subsequently of some Armenian nurses. . . . The dressers were unnecessarily numerous; they should rank as assistant medical officers, and have delegated to them definite duties, such as store and dispensary keeping; a large proportion of the actual dressing can be done by properly trained nurses. The numerous orderlies proved a great stumbling-block, for, unless some system of money fines be instituted, the discipline it is possible to exact in a voluntary unit in a foreign country is very limited. The work of the general orderlies was done equally well, in fact better as far as ward work was concerned, by native labour; the work of a few good male nurses was invaluable. A carpenter is essential, and a reliable ex-non-commissioned officer to act as quarter-master and generally supervise the men can be of great assistance."

There is no question that a base hospital should have a staff of trained nurses with a highly qualified Matron or Sister-in-Charge, and that it cannot be efficient without them. In a hospital where French sisters, Turkish ladies, and Armenian nurses can be employed, surely British nurses might be permitted to venture. The public should understand that the good will was not wanting on the part of nurses in this country, they made every effort to be included in the Red Cross units, but the British Red Cross Society persistently refused to send them.

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