

REVIEW.

THE WAY OF THE RED CROSS.*

"The Way of the Red Cross," by Mr. E. Charles Vivien, and Mr. J. E. Hodder Williams may be regarded as an official exposition of the aims and work of the British Red Cross Society, since it has a Foreword by Queen Alexandra, President of the Society, and all profits are to be given to *The Times* Fund for the Sick and Wounded.

QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S MESSAGE TO NURSES.

The inspiring message sent by Queen Alexandra to nurses is:—"It gives me the greatest pleasure to take this opportunity to thank every individual nurse, one and all, who is nursing our brave wounded soldiers and sailors—for their splendid and unequalled devotion and gallantry on their behalf—for which I and the whole nation owe them our undying and unending debt of gratitude."

The book is a collection of quite slight studies, eminently readable, giving a general survey of the work and "typical instances of how this organization of pity and healing is served in individual cases, things seen and heard during the last few weeks, while the writers were allowed to join the ranks of that noble army of men and women who follow the Way of the Red Cross."

We note that the writers acknowledge help and information given to them by many earnest Red Cross workers, but there is not included the name of one trained nurse, yet, as regards personnel, nurses are the very back-bone of Red Cross organization.

ABROAD.

The first chapter, under the heading, "Aladdin's Lamp," deals with the organization, administration, and equipment of the Medical Service of the Army concerning which we read:—

"In connection with these it must be understood that although the nation had made provision in a medical sense against any emergency that could be foreseen, the colossal and utterly unforeseen task involved by the present war rendered the medical staff inadequate, so far as official preparations are concerned. . . . If the official medical and nursing staffs of the Army had alone been available for the care of the sick and wounded from the firing line, then the British Army would have been in sorry case, for the emergency was too great. Against all reasonable emergencies provision was made, but a situation such as this demands, not an official effort, but the energy of the whole nation."

Unquestionably the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem have done excellent work in providing stores, equipment, hospital comforts most generously, so that a Nursing Sister at a base hospital remarked that they had come to regard the Red Cross Society as a sort of "Aladdin's Lamp," saying, "we have only to ask for a thing and we get it."

"She pointed with pride to a number of feather

* Published for the *Times* by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton. Price 2s. 6d.

pillows which she was fitting into their cases, 'This is the very last thing we asked for,' she said, 'for we had to think of necessities first.' But you know what a hard unsympathetic thing the regulation bolster is, and you can guess how much we wanted something of this sort, especially in cases of wounds in the head and back. Now we have them, thanks to the Red Cross Society." But why should the regulation bolster provided by the War Office for base hospitals be "hard and unsympathetic?"

Of the busy fleet of motor ambulances two out of every three seen by the writers seemed to have "British Red Cross Society" marked on their varied bonnets, or on their uniform grey curtains, and in every department it was the same, the Red Cross Society had done something, provided something, or arranged something always on the most liberal and comprehensive scale. The voicing of a need, apparently, is equivalent to the provision to meet the need, and "Aladdin's Lamp" is an apt descriptive phrase for this truly great organization that has sprung into activity to supplement official channels of supply."

The story of the Guardsman in the Kursaal hospital at Boulogne, gives an interesting insight into the enemy's methods of treating the wounded. Incidentally a little touch is worth recording: "That man over there—he was hit just under the belt, and he'll never see England again. They've put him on one of the Red Cross air beds, and that's about the last."

The point of view of the doctor, whose impressions are recorded in the next chapter, is not just the same. "We have to thank the Red Cross people for things like that—air-beds and pillows, and all the little luxuries that we want for the bad cases. It has made a wonderful difference, being able to get things."

This doctor told of the neurasthenic cases. "There's one sitting over by the door there. The constant shell fire on them in the trenches does it, and they come in partially deaf, absolutely apathetic and depressed—pitiable cases. They get right in time, of course, but they all need absolute quiet and careful treatment in convalescent homes, if ever they are to be pulled back to normal health again. And here and there a case of insanity—they go through awful experience before they come in here, and it's too much for the nerves with some men. The insanity cases recover, as a rule; it's the neurasthenic cases that are the trouble—one can't rouse them."

One thing which should be noted is the need of the hospital patients for fruit. Thirst is always attended by loss of blood, and the men would lay down pipe or cigarette for an orange, apple, or bunch of grapes. It seems the need cannot be satisfied, for fruit must be bought on the spot, and of this particular hospital the writer states, "had I taken a cab-load every day it would not have been enough."

Just one quotation from the Sergeant's story:—

"He was a good man, that doctor of ours, and a brave man, too, for he went around those trenches

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)