

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

No. 1,442

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1915.

Vol. LV.

EDITORIAL.

DIED OF WOUNDS AS PRISONERS.

From time immemorial the lot of prisoners of war has always been one commanding sympathy. Aliens in a strange land, they suffer not only from the monotony of captivity, but from the home-sickness inseparable from their banishment. More especially is this the case with those who have never been far from home, and whose duties and pleasures have been circumscribed.

The feelings of the captive have never been more beautifully or pathetically expressed than by the Psalmist in the lament of the Jews during their captivity:—

“By the waters of Babylon there we sat down, yea we wept when we remembered Zion.

“We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

“For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Sion.

“How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?”

And at length when the dreary days of their captivity were over they broke out into a song of triumph.

“When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion we were like unto them that dream.

“Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing.”

From that day to this, home-sickness, *mal du pays*, *heim-weh*—call it what we will—has not only caused acute grief, but so intense has been the longing for home that it has even caused mortal illness.

Writing of the Austrian prisoners in the present war, who acted as orderlies at the Third Hospital Skoplje, Lady Paget says:—

“No one can live among prisoners of war—no matter of what nationality—without

realizing the agony of home-sickness they suffer, and realizing also the thousands of families waiting till the end of the war for news of their men folk, many of whom will never return. My experience has shown what a little kindness and humanity will do towards helping prisoners to bear their lot, and one must be hard-hearted indeed to withhold it. Ever at the back of my mind I have but one thought—God grant that our men, prisoners in a foreign land, are receiving the same fair and just treatment, the same human sympathy, to help them through their home-sickness.”

If home-sickness is so overpowering in the case of the able-bodied, what must it be to prisoners who are so grievously ill and wounded that their sufferings terminate in death?

It is difficult, if we have not witnessed it, to gauge the mental anguish super-imposed upon that which is physical, when a prisoner realizes that never again will he see his native land, his home, and his relatives, perhaps a much loved wife, and idolized children, that in increasing pain and weakness he will be dependent on the ministrations of those of enemy blood, that alien hands will close his eyes in death, and the last offices be performed by them.

As our hearts go out to our own wounded prisoners, friendless and alone, we may well remember that whatever the nationality of our patients the claims of sickness are paramount, and that as we should wish our own wounded and dying prisoners to be treated by those responsible for their care in their exile, so it is our duty to treat those dependent on us in their illness and loneliness, giving them sympathy and kindness, and such solace as we may by promising that, if opportunity offers, their last messages shall be conveyed to their relatives. To do this is only a duty. To do less would be inhuman.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)