

NURSING AND THE WAR.

Her Majesty the Queen has graciously presented to the Cairo Empire Nurses' Red Cross Club a large box of books and games for the use of the members. The gift arrived, accompanied by a card upon which was inscribed, in Her Majesty's handwriting:—

With best wishes from the Queen; for the Empire Nurses' Red Cross Club.

The club membership is upwards of 800. It has provided a delightful retreat for nurses, V.A.D.'s., and their friends.

It is good to learn that the Queen of Bulgaria treated Lady Paget and her staff of 54 nurses with kindness and courtesy, when passing through Sofia, where they had to remain a month, on their way home from Serbia. All were allowed to go about the streets and to visit the 400 British prisoners interned at Sofia, who are reported to be well treated.

Lady Paget had several interviews with the Queen of Bulgaria, and begged for the release of two soldiers unfit for further fighting. One of these soldiers is blind and the other has lost a leg. Their release was granted, and they have now returned home.

The journey home by way of Rumania, Russia, Sweden and Norway was a most interesting one, and proved thoroughly enjoyable. When the nurses had taken farewell of Bulgaria and set foot in Rumania, they felt glad that they were once more on neutral ground and free. The party spent a short time at Bukharest, and then journeyed to Kieff in Russia. Moscow was the next stopping-place, and here they visited the Kremlin, doing the sight-seeing of the city in sleighs—the snow lying to a good depth. From Moscow they came to Petrograd, and here, like Moscow, there was little or no indication that a war of such magnitude was in progress. Soldiers were seen marching through the streets, singing while they marched, and all happy and light-hearted. The large shops were brilliantly lighted, and business was going on just as usual. From Petrograd they went through Finland to Tornea, in Lapland; and from there they crossed the river in sleighs to Haparanda. Journeying through Sweden, they came to Stockholm, and here they had the honour of being presented to the Crown Princess of Sweden by Lady Paget and were shown over the Royal Palace. Leaving Stockholm, they crossed to Norway, and visited Christiania, and Bergen, sailing from the latter for Britain, and reaching Newcastle safely. At all parts of the homeward journey, they were received with every kindness, and their experiences since leaving this country to go to Serbia's aid, until their return home, will for ever live in their memories.

From University College Hospital, 543 men, including students, and 63 nurses, are serving at the Front.

We constantly receive letters from trained nurses who have "tried all they know" to run V.A.D. hospitals satisfactorily, and have failed. They cannot all be incompetent, so we must blame the system. The following letter is typical:—

"One has by no means a free hand as to criticism, and many of these V.A.D. places would greatly benefit by the pure ray of wholesome expert criticism. I had six months in one place and it nearly broke me up. To begin with, the place was just a playground for the local girls, but I got them into uniform and had a real nursing spirit in those who proved at all capable. The doctor who was Commandant, was alas! of quite the old school, and had no idea of a trained nurse's needs. So often I tried to get him to let me have one or two of the keen ones, and pay them to do regular work. Oh, no, he could only toady all round to the local people and the V.A.D.'s and make the post as hard and irksome to me as possible. We had bad cases, of course. I just had to sacrifice everything and do them all myself entirely, and as there was no trained substitute I could not get proper outings. I am only pointing out my woes now because I want to know if you can't make one of your valuable crusades based on the article I sent you. I have got quite broken down over all I have done for that place and you know the result, only to be told I was unpopular with the V.A.D.'s by the doctor who should have known better. He owns the work has never been so efficient or so well done before. When I went there nothing had gone straight and not a surgical case ever 'did.' Of course one is not out for popularity—at least I was not. I have most grateful letters from those who have the real interests of the place at heart, only does it not anger a trained person to find a medical man with so little idea of what is right for the patients, or to be so little help in the matter of discipline? Of course, the idea was that if the girls were asked to do any differently they would not come. That could all have been altered with a little diplomacy. Fortune put some very bad cases in my way and a very good surgeon gave me great praise, but I do feel that if the method of work could be put on different lines the hospitals could do their work without the strain on the trained people the present disorganisation entails. I resigned, as usual in those places, because of the interference with my helpers, and the strain became too great. I do not wish to push a private grievance which I do not feel. My point is that now the war has lasted so long it is time for the matrons of these hospitals to be able to choose (and pay if necessary) women who show aptitude for work and discipline, and so put things on a much improved footing. How trying it is all the time to have to keep overlooking things one would not tolerate in a regular hospital

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