

## THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES.

### A STUDY TOUR IN THE NEAR EAST.

In the recent quarterly issue of *The International Nursing Review* there appears from the pen of the Executive Secretary of the International Council of Nurses, Miss Anna Schwarzenberg, who is also acting Editor of the *Review*, an interesting and informative account of a study tour in five countries of the Near East which she made from February to April of this year. The present article is extracted from this source.

#### Turkey.

As compared with its size before the War, Turkey is now a small country possessing some sixteen million inhabitants. Apart from a small province in Europe, it is entirely in Asia Minor. The capital is now Ankara, and Istanbul, the old Constantinople, has lost much of its importance. For about 10 years Turkey has been a republic, under the dictatorship of Kemal Ataturk, and it is only during this time that progressive work, such as the emancipation of women, universal free education, and the establishment of birth registration has been carried on. There is a Ministry of Health, and Refik Saidam, the present Minister, has held office for 10 years, and is also President of the Red Crescent, so that he has full knowledge of the conditions.

The only Turkish School of Nursing is that of the Red Crescent in Istanbul. It is now under the direction of Miss Hazel A. Goff, an American nurse, well known through her connection with the League of Nations and the International Council of Nurses, and also through her public health work in Bulgaria. The School, which has a good building, give a three-years' course, and the block system is in force, the students being divided into groups and having only theoretical or practical work in each period.

The Public Health Centre, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, has been Miss Crowell's special interest. It deals with a district of 28,000 inhabitants divided into four sections, under four public health nurses and their assistants. There are all types of clinics, including X-ray and diathermy departments, and a children's nursery school comes under the same organisation. Miss Fatmar Acar is in charge, and very good pioneer work is being done.

In general, many more trained nurses are needed in Turkey. At present numerous positions are held by midwives, and although some of these are very efficient, the arrangement is not satisfactory as a permanent one. All the countries which have recently awakened to the realisation of modern health needs are faced with the same problem of shortage of nurses, which can, of course, only be solved by interesting the right type of girl, by good training, time and patience.

#### Syria.

The American University Hospital at Beirut, amongst the 14 or more Hospitals and other institutions visited by Miss Schwarzenberg, ranks, she states, as one of the two best in the Near East. Mrs. Widnes, the Superintendent of Nurses, her Assistants, and the Supervisors of Nurses, are all American, while the head Nurses are mostly Syrian. Candidates for the School are required to have passed matriculation, and they take a three-years' course, which gives them a good and comprehensive training, care being taken to prepare them for the primitive conditions they may meet later in their work elsewhere.

The pupil nurses represent very many different nationalities.

Health work in Syria owes its origin and in many cases its continued existence to charitable endeavour. There is much work still waiting to be done, and in particular a great deal more co-ordination is needed. The country is administered under French Mandate by a High Commis-

sioner, whose Headquarters are at Beirut, and the French Government has been sympathetic to work already in existence, and has given valuable support, but in the past, financial and political difficulties have hindered the full development of the health services of the country. The sympathetic attitude of the authorities gives ground for hope that this development may be realised in the future.

A question was raised as to founding a Nurses' Association in Syria. Miss Schwarzenberg gave her opinion that the time was not ripe for this, as the only nurses qualified for membership would be those of the American School, and, therefore, the Association would not be representative of the whole country.

#### Palestine.

Of Palestine, Miss Schwarzenberg writes: As I look back to my visit to this most appealing country, and read of the events since I was there, all my sympathy goes out to its unhappy people, irrespective of creed or race. The problems of the country are so complex and so bewildering that they can scarcely be imagined until one has been there and listened to all parties and then tried to reach some conclusion. But I must confine myself to the health work, which can best be described under three headings: Government work, Jewish work, and that of various individual groups.

The Government has hospitals in many cities—Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Safed, etc., staffed by English Matrons and Sisters. Training Schools are attached to these Hospitals, and I was glad to hear that in the Schools little or no trouble arises, although Jewish and Arab girls are trained together.

The Hospitals are run on English lines and on entering any of them the English atmosphere is at once apparent—one notices the calm efficiency, cleanliness, neatly served meals, use of screens, etc., that are so general in England. The patients are mostly English or Arabs, as the Jews have their own Hospitals. Miss Cowen, the very able Matron of the Government Hospital at Jerusalem, has the welfare of her nurses greatly at heart and sets a high standard of training.

Miss Schwarzenberg states that she greatly enjoyed seeing the Public Health work, and in particular her visit to the model centre in the Arab quarter of the old city of Jerusalem, where the cleanliness and attractive furnishings are in striking contrast to the dirt and squalor outside.

She describes the Jewish work carried on by the Hadassah Organisation, by the Jewish community, and by the Kupat-Cholim organisation. She mentions the privately owned hospitals used by the different colonies: French, Italian, German, etc., all showing the characteristics of their own nations, and also a number belonging to the many missions that are at work in Palestine.

Miss Schwarzenberg says that if the efforts which are being made in the nursing profession to overcome racial difficulties can once be successful, it should be possible to have a flourishing organisation for trained nurses. She gave a talk about the International Council of Nurses at the Strass Health Centre at Jerusalem, and was told this was the first time that Government, Jewish and Arab nurses had all met together for the same function.

#### Iraq.

Miss Schwarzenberg confesses that she knew little about Iraq, geographically, historically or politically, when she set out from Geneva. She advises others in a like case, in order to gain an idea of it, to think over all the associations conjured up by the names Babylon, Nineveh, Mesopotamia, Euphrates and Tigris, close their eyes and dream, and they will find themselves in Iraq. Before going on to speak of Hospitals, she describes one impression—the mosque outside the city of Baghdad. "Of course," she says, "I was not allowed to enter, but through one of the seven

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