

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES.

THE LADY READING HOSPITAL, SIMLA.

BY ANON.

IN a beautiful garden in the midst of pine trees stands the Lady Reading Hospital. Up to last year the Zenana patients were treated in the Dufferin block of the Ripon Hospital, but the wards were small, inconvenient and quite inadequate to the needs of the community. Her Excellency the Countess of Reading saw this at once, and with her usual energy collected money to build and equip a hospital worthy of Simla, the Summer capital.

In April last year the new building was opened by Her Excellency. A short time ago I had the pleasure of visiting it. The main building was a private house, this has been altered and converted into wards and quarters for some of the staff. An imposing porch leads into a hall; leading off this is the doctor's office, the suite of rooms for the House Surgeon and the staff dining room. The last is a large cheerful room with a bow window and a fine view over the surrounding hills. The Indian and European staff take their meals in this room, but there is a separate table for the Europeans. The tables were laid for luncheon and looked very nice with the beautiful flowers which decorated them.

In this building is the medical ward in what used to be the drawing room it is quaintly shaped but makes an excellent ward. French windows lead to a wide veranda, and thence to the garden. A little room with a big window is attached to the general ward, this is used for patients requiring more quiet than the general ward gives. Next to the medical ward is the children's ward, gay with Teddy Bear quilts on the little brass cots. A doll's house and baby furniture are among the treasured possessions of the small patients. One or two large beds are provided for the mothers who refuse to leave their children. A double storied new block contains the surgical and maternity wards, each of 14 beds. The up-to-date theatre is at the end of the veranda, complete with sterilizing room and a fine high pressure sterilizer. The equipment is as complete as possible, and the theatre is the joy of doctors and sisters; it has a large window and marble floor, rounded corners and numerous cupboards for instruments. No menial servant is allowed inside the theatre, the nurses keep it clean. This is rather unusual in India as nurses consider cleaning is menial work, and therefore *infra dig*. Over the surgical ward is the maternity ward with the labour

room over the theatre. The ward has the most charming little brass cots for the new arrivals. I saw a Cæsar case with a dear little baby, the mother was so proud of it.

There is a smaller labour room which is reserved for cases which have been attended by untrained dais, and so are possibly septic.

Another block contains what are known as 'Family Wards.' These consist of suites of rooms each complete in itself and separate from its neighbours. Each contains a kitchen and bathroom, also a piece of veranda. Here the whole family can come and bring a servant. Sometimes the patients come from villages many days' journey away, and the patient is very timid and will not stay alone, and so in these quarters she can have her husband and the other children. This system is very popular in India. The matron's office is in the central block so that she can keep her eye on all that goes on.

Fifty patients can be accommodated but this number is often exceeded as they sleep in the wide verandas.

The staff consists of a fully trained matron, two English sisters, and fourteen Indian staff nurses. Four probationers are in training, these come for four years and take midwifery in the fourth year. Lectures are given by the doctors and matron. It is hoped that Indian girls of good family will come forward and take up the profession of nursing. In this up-to-date hospital in a good climate there is every inducement.

The staff nurses have a block to themselves which has beautiful rooms and charming views. The furnishings all over the hospital and also for the staff were personally chosen by Her Excellency. The staff rooms are all done up with a lovely shade of blue, for curtains and the comfy chairs and couches; and large black cushions with blue embroidery complete a beautiful colour scheme. The sisters and matron's rooms have bathrooms with white tiled walls and real porcelain baths, a rarity in India, each sister has a sitting room as well as a bedroom to herself. The probationers have a large room cut into cubicles by pale green curtains and each portion contains a dressing table and chair and is made as comfortable as possible. A wide veranda runs outside the long windows.

The garden is laid out in terraces down to a tennis lawn; and at the time of my visit was gay with all kinds of English flowers, one patch of sweet peas was gorgeous. From every part of the hospital beautiful views are obtained of Simla and the hills and villages for miles round.

The nurses and patients in this fine hospital will have cause to thank Her Excellency for her kindly thoughts for their comfort and welfare. No one can fail to benefit from a stay in this institution.

The doctor in charge lives in a little bungalow about three minutes' walk up the hill, but the House Surgeon lives in the hospital.

Her Excellency often visits the hospital and takes the keenest interest in every detail of its administration.