Abstract.

THE JAPANESE HOSPITAL SHIPS.

By LIEUTENANT-COLONEL J. E. NICHOLSON.
Royal Army Medical Corps (Retired).

(From an article by Surgeon-Major Varenne, in the Archives de Médecine Navale for October, 1904).

The Japanese practise during their actual military operations a system of evacuation of the sick and wounded which, by its organisation and state of perfection, is worthy of attracting the attention of those who appreciate all the importance of such a service in modern wars.

The degree of perfection to which the Japanese hospital ships have reached is due not only to the marvellous faculty of assimilation peculiar to the Japanese nation, but also to its combination with an originality and an initiative which many of the large European nations might well envy.

The evacuation of the sick and wounded towards the Japanese hospitals is carried out by two services: (1) The Medical Service of the Japanese Navy; (2) the Japanese Red Cross Society.

(1) The State Hospital Ships.—The State has specially fitted up two hospital ships, the "Kobe-Maru" and the "Saiko-Maru." These two sister ships are of British construction, with a displacement of 3,000 tons, and a speed of 15 knots. They fly the Japanese commercial ensign, and the flag with the Geneva Cross at the main mast. Although specially fitted up for war they retain their mercantile complement of officers and men. Their medical staff consists of a surgeon-in-chief, 5 surgeons, 2 assistant surgeons, 2 compounders, 30 sick attendants, but no female nurses.

Arrangements.—The sick officers are accommodated in roomy cabins, which are usually fitted with two berths. The ordinary sick are placed in berths of metallic construction, superposed in two ranks in large wards, which are perfectly ventilated. The walls are covered with so-called "Japanese paint," which can stand being scrubbed with boiling water. There is also an isolation ward and a lunatic ward. All these compartments are in the after-half of the ship.

Forward are the accommodation for the sick attendants, a steam laundry, a large disinfection stove, and a cold chamber for the preservation of corpses. Amidships are the operating theatres and the surgery, both of which are sufficiently lighted by large port-holes. The walls are covered with white lacquer. The surgical equipment represents the
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latest thing in modern perfection of its kind. The whole of this service is organised to perfection, and a scrupulous degree of cleanliness exists throughout the ship. Adjoining the operating room is a very comfortable laboratory for radioscopy and radiography, which has been in constant use since the commencement of the war and of the utmost service.

On the upper part of the deck is the laboratory of pathology and of bacteriology, admirably equipped and well lighted; the microscopes are all of French or German manufacture. On this deck are also the medical officers' quarters, the medical inspection room, kitchens, &c., &c.

A ship of this type can accommodate 30 sick officers, 200 sick or wounded, and 80 contagious cases.

(2) The Japanese Red Cross Society.—This Society is one of the most complete of its kind, with a membership of close on a million, and a budget of 8,000,000 yen. It consists of 110 companies, each consisting of 4 surgeons and 40 sick attendants (male and female); the total personnel at present employed either on the hospital ships or in the ambulances being 3,099. It has equipped and actually maintains two hospital ships, the "Hakuai-Maru" and the "Kosai-Maru," for the evacuation of the sick and wounded, and they are fitted up as regards their interior arrangements on practically the same lines as the "Kobe-Maru" and the "Saiko-Maru."

The Red Cross personnel on one of these ships consists of 1 physician-in-chief, 2 physicians, 2 surgeons, 40 trained sick attendants (male and female) and one functionary (appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs) to carry out the administrative work and the upkeep of the ship.

These vessels have always kept pace along the coast with the onward march of the Japanese armies.