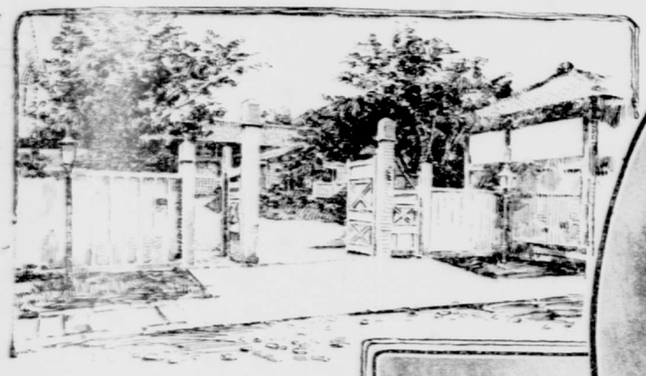
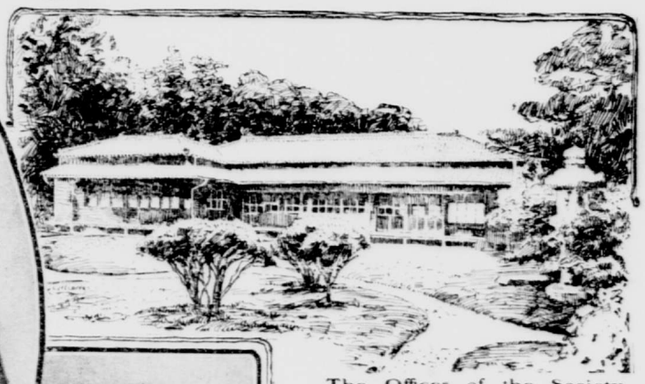
THE RED CROSS IN JAPAN

By Yone Noguchi



Front View of the Society's Headquarters at Tokio

Princess Iwakura, President Ladies' Patriotic Association



The Offices of the Society at Tokio

Baroness Senge, Vice-President Ladies' Nursing Association

Baroness Hanabasa, of Volunteer Nursing Association

ON several occasions in the present war charges of inhumanity have been made against the soldiers of Japan. To those who know the facts such charges cannot possibly have any general bearing, as they are in direct conflict with the Japanese policy, pressed, as it is, by discipline, and inforced with rigor. In order that all may know the facts, I shall give an outline of the interesting and novel experience which the Red Cross Society has received under the flag of Japan.

In 1886 our country entered into the Red Cross Alliance, and under the international laws of war was placed on the same footing as all other nations with whom we are in treaty relations. The society is solely a philanthropic institution, not connected with any religious movement or any single class of the people, and it was indorsed by our nation as a whole. The Emperor headed the movement, the members of the imperial household followed his example, the aristocracy did likewise, and before the war with China began sixty thousand of the people had become members.

In 1888 the Emperor gave one hundred thousand yen from his private purse toward the establishment of the Red Cross hospital at Tokio upon land which belonged to the imperial household, and Dr. Hashimoto, the Surgeon-General of the army, was made the superintending officer. A military hospital in time of war, it was used in times of peace for the benefit of the people, as on the occasion of the eruption of Mount Bandai in July, 1888, and the wreck of the Turkish man-of-war on the coast of Kishu. At the time of the earthquake of 1891, and after the tidal wave of 1896, the society saved and met the needs of four thousand six hundred persons. These incidents give an idea of the size of the organization and the completeness of the equipment.

When the war with China broke out our patience and our ideals of charity met the severest possible test. Desiring and endeavoring to conduct war in the most humane fashion, we were in conflict with two nations, China and Corea, which entertained no such ideals and met our humane endeavors with the most barbaric and ferocious return. They were utterly ignorant of the work of the Red Cross Society, and their unjust and brutal behavior often enraged our soldiers and presented the greatest possible obstacle to the growth of the movement. They repeatedly, if not invariably, fired upon our society officers and the soldiers under them when they were engaged in the burial of the dead. They frequently attacked our Sanitary Corps when engaged in its work, and once, having made prisoners of some of these officers, cut off their hands, flayed their faces and treated them otherwise with unspeakable barbarity. Probably no nation ever met with such difficulties in holding its own troops to a policy of humanity as we did at that time.

None the less, despite the barbarity of the enemy, we held strictly to that course. The first thing necessary was to impress upon our own rank and file that no acts of the enemy could affect in any way our own policy, and the following three points were emphasized in the general orders:

1. That though the military physicians were well versed in the principles of the Red Cross Society and devoted themselves in earnest to them, yet special care should be taken on this occasion, since we had to deal with those who were not members of the Red Cross Alliance.

2. That soldiers should be well taught in the principles of this work, but that they should march to the field with great caution, since their foes were totally ignorant of them.

3. Special plans must be adopted for impressing upon the minds of the enemy the principles of the Red Cross work.

The result, though slow in its development, was pleasing to contemplate. It was due largely to the following orders issued by the Marquis Oyama to the generals in the field, and through them to the soldiers:

"The whole world recognizes our merciful conduct shown to captive and wounded enemies in wars with foreign countries. This especially has been the case since our beloved Emperor became a party to the Geneva treaty, which proclaims the principle of the Red Cross work to be binding upon our soldiers. Therefore, it is enjoined that our soldiers always shall keep in mind the fact that enemies who have lost the power of resistance, or those who have surrendered their arms, must be treated with mercy. Therefore, however cruel our enemy may be, we must be particularly careful to act justly and righteously, thus obtaining, in the eyes of the whole world, credit for our nation."

Instructions covering thirty articles were issued to the military physicians, to which the following special articles were appended:

"1. You must not forget that you have to do with a class of people who are outside the Red Cross treaty, and whose barbarity is a matter of history and well-known to the world. You must not leave the wounded in the field, as sometimes happens in a maneuver, lest they should receive cruel treatment at the hands of the enemy.

"2. It is not necessary to dwell upon the barbarous conduct of our enemy; but we, on our part, must show them every possible kindness. There may be many ways for doing this, but nothing will be so effective for the purpose as the medical treatment of the sick and wounded. Moreover, the Emperor and the Empress, always are rich in mercy, and their faithful subjects

Marquise Nabeshima, President Nursing Association

Caring for the Russian Wounded in the Temporary Hospital of the Japanese Red Cross Society at Chemulpo

Princess Kanin, Patroness of the Patriotic Association