

## A Ghastly Case.

A MIDNIGHT INCIDENT AT THE HOSPITAL OF  
ST. LOUIS.

THE Matron of a famous English hospital once told me that, after an experience of many years, she had ceased to feel surprise at any case, and that horror of any patient was a sentiment she did not tolerate in her youngest probationer.

Perhaps this wise woman would have modified her views had she formed one of the staff of the hospital of St. Louis in Paris, at whose gates a visitor knocked shortly before midnight on April 6th, desiring to speak to a doctor.

"This is not the hour for doctors' consultations," said the porter; "come again to-morrow morning."

"No, no," replied the stranger, "open at once! I must show the head of my brother to a doctor."

As he spoke, he began to fumble with an ominous round parcel he was carrying.

"Wait, wait," cried the terrified porter, "wait! I will let you in."

Several officials gathered round. The door opened. The man entered.

"Here," he remarked, quietly taking from his bag the recently decapitated head of a child of 12, "here is the head of my brother; I wish a doctor to examine it."

The assistants recoiled with a common impulse. The stranger was calm, apparently astonished at their demonstrations of horror.

"What are you afraid of?" he cynically observed. "This is nothing but the head of my little brother Alphonse. Here is what I killed him with."

With these words he held out a revolver and a double-bladed knife.

"Wait," he was told. "The doctor will soon come."

"Very well," was the quiet answer, "I will wait."

A message was at once despatched to the police. While it was on its way the nocturnal visitor quietly waited. Placidly, and with much frankness he answered all questions.

"My name," he said, "is Baptiste Laboire. I am 27. I have been a groom in the service of M. Bauvais, Mayor of Vert-Saint-Denis. My brother, a boy of 12, was my godson, and I loved him very dearly. He was unhappy with his father at Senezergues, and I travelled to him, with the intention of taking him back to Paris."

Possibly the unhappiness was in Laboire's fancy. At any rate, according to his own account, the young Alphonse refused to leave his father, upon which he was taken into a wood, shot by his elder brother, and neatly decapitated. It was the head of little Alphonse he had brought to St. Louis, persisting repeatedly in his demand that it should be examined by a doctor of the institution.

"Truly," he observed when questioned as to the motives of so horrible a deed, "truly everyone would have acted in the same way. My father was a bad man. My brother was unhappy with him, and I obeyed voices that commanded me to sacrifice him. I could not resist these inspirations from above. When the painful sacrifice demanded of me was accomplished, I climbed a sacred oak, and invoked the Druids. Then I took the first train to Paris, and arrived there at seven o'clock. I dined with some

companions on the way, at the Orleans station. While I was eating, I kept my game bag well in sight. It stood beside me on the table. The officials of the custom house did not find it, hidden as it was in my blouse."

The sensation created by Laboire's ghastly narrative may be better imagined than described. He himself was quite unconcerned, and wound off his account glibly, much like a lesson he had learned by heart. He always gave the incidents in the same way, each time he was questioned, and retained his placidity under every following circumstance.

As a lunatic of the most dangerous order he was at once placed under restraint, and departed to his new quarters earnestly requesting the bystanders to "care for his brother's head."

The body of poor little Alphonse was discovered in the wood in which he had been "sacrificed."

The ambition of his maniac brother has been realised. The head was legally examined by Dr. Socquet, and photographed in various positions.

An oak-leaf was found sticking to the dead boy's chin. It was possibly a fragment of the "Druid's oak," under which he had fallen a victim to his brother's hallucination.

## Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by Royal Charter.)

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

STADFAST & TRUE.



MADAM,—Your editorial article in last week's NURSING RECORD has called my attention to the very surprising and suggestive alterations proposed to be made in the General Council of the Royal British Nurses' Association for 1895-6.

While there is not one gentleman's name proposed for retirement from the Council, I find thirty-four Matrons' names suggested, among them being those of ladies who from its inception have worked hard and successfully for the perfecting of the scheme for which I believe our Association exists.

As one of its oldest members, and being one of those to whom the Charter was granted, I am deeply interested in the present and future of the Association, and I feel that some explanation is due to us why such a sweeping change in the constitution of our Council has been suggested. We have hitherto had the benefit of the experience which the permanent members (*i.e.*, the *ex-officio*) have gained in the general working and management of the Association, and we are suddenly asked to deprive ourselves of the advantage of their advice and co-operation! I believe the only result of such a course of action would be loss of energy and a confession of disunion, which I, for one, would most deeply deplore. The Association has done wonders in the short time it has been in existence, and I would ask as one who is an interested on-looker, why in the name of common sense cannot we "let well alone"? Why rouse among our members the feeling of uncertainty which *must* follow if our known leaders in the Nursing profession are set aside in order to replace them by untried, unknown names. If it be wise to add new members (as I quite believe it may

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