

A Visit to the Hospice of St. Loup.

By Miss MARY BURR.

It was a perfect day in early summer when we started to pay a visit to the "Home of the Deaconesses of St. Loup." The birds showed their appreciation by singing with all the ardour of their small bodies, filling the heavens with their sweet notes. The flower-scented air, the glorious sunshine, and blue sky all added to the charm (for those who love Nature) of the always beautiful country.

St. Loup is a short train journey from Lausanne, then comes about two miles' walk or drive before one arrives at the Hospice. To be correct, I should say colony, as it consists of six or eight buildings of different sizes scattered about a lovely park-like estate.

It is situated on the flat top of a small hill, surrounded on three sides by wide stretches of green fields dotted over with trees; whilst on the fourth is a ravine—not deep enough to be mysterious, but enough to be fatal to any adventurous folk who may go too near the edge. On the far side of the ravine can still be seen the cave of St. Loup—*i.e.* wolf—after whom the Hospice is named (Protestant though it is). The story goes that many, many years ago a man took up his abode in this cave. How he got there I cannot imagine, as the face of the cliff is steep, and does not appear to afford much foothold; but possibly the result of ages of weather, good and bad, has somewhat altered its surface. But be that as it may, we were told he did live there, and became in course of time very friendly with his near neighbour, a wolf. Being a hermit, and also friendly with the wild animals, as well as kind to the poor, he became recognised throughout the district as a holy man, and finally was known as Saint Loup; hence the name of the Hospice.

The faithful came to him to be cured of their ills, both of body and soul, and according to tradition many cures were wrought; some by a wonderful ointment which he made from herbs, others by faith and prayer.

The work he began, away back in those far-off times, has been recommenced, brought more up to date, and is most faithfully carried on by the Sisters.

The Hospice was founded in 1842 by Monsieur Germond at Echellens, a village a few miles away; he spent much time in good works, and, realising the great need of the sick poor, took a house in the village and began his work of teaching ladies how to care for the sick in their own homes.

In 1852 the Hospice was transferred to Saint Loup, which at that time was a small hamlet with one little inn, the owner of which becoming bankrupt, and the place being for sale, Monsieur Germond, either by inspiration or remarkable foresight, saw the splendid possibilities of the situation,

bought it, and, after some alterations, the Hospice was removed there.

In course of time the other houses were bought, and now the "Hospice" is Saint Loup, and, where once stood a few poor chalets, now stand several big buildings, in which the Sisters accord a warm, loving welcome to all the sick and needy who go to them for help and succour.

According to the articles of the Hospice, it was founded "To prepare for their tasks persons who wish to consecrate themselves freely, for the love of God, to gratuitous works of mercy and Christian benevolence, especially as nurses for the sick poor."

"A nursing home is attached to the Institute, where the sick poor are received gratis, and cared for by the pupil deaconesses."

The Director, as is customary abroad, is a married man, who has in this case been a missionary. He is supreme under a committee; and although there is a "Mother," who is the chief nurse, yet everything of importance is referred to the Pastor.

Very slowly, and thoroughly enjoying all the beauties about us, we wended our way to what appeared to be the administrative block, but, being uncertain, asked for information from one, whom later we discovered to be a pupil, who was wheeling a perambulator containing a poor morsel of suffering humanity. Our idea being confirmed, we made our way to the door indicated, and after ringing the bell a maid ushered us into a large old-fashioned room, exquisitely clean and simply, almost plainly, furnished.

Whilst waiting, we naturally examined our surroundings, after admiring the extensive view; discovered a shelf of books, and there, among sermons and other religious books, found translations in French of the lives of Elizabeth Fry and Sister Dora. Then I felt how those grand pioneers bind all of us together, and how they belong, not alone to England, but to the whole civilised world.

Our meditations were soon interrupted by the entrance of the Mother, a tall, spare lady, with a firm, clever face lighted up by the most loving eyes possible. We quickly explained the reason of our visit, and were then told that she would send us a Sister, who would show us everything. In a very few minutes Sister Eliza appeared, a dear, garrulous old lady, who seemed kept for the purpose, so keen was she to show "les Anglaises" everything.

First we went all over the house which used to be the inn, but is now much altered and enlarged; in fact, only recently a new chapel has been built, and also many extra rooms for the Sisters, some of which are not yet furnished. The chapel was very interesting, but, of course, very simple; we should call it plain. Its chief interest, apart from its highest use, were the stained-glass windows, one of which, over the Communion-table, was a picture of Christ surrounded by the weary suffering ones,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)