

excel in obstetrics, and their technique, their deftness, lightness of hand, neatness, and daring in their operations is to my mind unequalled by surgeons of other nationalities. Of course, I am not including Great Britain's greatest surgeons, but those are a handful. The number of good French surgeons by far outnumbered that of Great Britain. I was struck by the comparison on my return from Paris, when I visited the National Gallery. Nothing could be more beautiful than a Gainsborough or a Romney, but what a small space do English painters hold.

As scientists, as bacteriologists, French doctors stand high, too; but medicine seems to have no charm for them. The treatment of medical cases is limited and the nursing is nil, and seems to me to consist mostly in the administration of *tisanes* and the application of *ventouses* (cupping). There is hardly a street in Paris, where you do not see a signboard of the red cross under which is written "*Gardes-Malades—Ventouses.*"

Cupping is performed by burning little pieces of tissue paper inside of the cup. I have seen cupping used on the chest and back of people dying of consumption and for every conceivable pain.

French doctors are not allowed to write their prescriptions in Latin or classical terms, but in clear French language and the weights consist of the simple decimal system, so that after the higher part of chemistry is done—ordinary French dispensing can be learnt in a few lessons and the prescriptions are written in a book instead of on cards over the patients' beds, as is customary in England, so that the patients should not know what they are taking.

French doctors are very quick and impatient with the patients if they do not at once tell them in clear language of what they complain. "I feels dreadful bad" or "I aches all over something shocking" of the English patient would drive a French doctor to shaking the patient and asking them whether they now felt where the pain was.

French doctors take very little notice of temperature taking, even in important cases such as typhoid. With regard to typhoid their treatment of it is still very primitive, and the nursing is nil. Occasionally they lift patients out of bed and dip them in a bath, which in my personal experience has invariably ended in death. In making this statement I do not speak of France, only but of Beyrout and Egypt. In Beyrout three of the French doctors have died of typhoid, to say nothing of their daughters and other French subjects. At the hospital at Beyrout, where I had native doctors

who had studied either in Paris or at the French School of Medicine, they were astounded at the nursing I gave the typhoid patients, sponging, &c., and the four-hourly temperature put them out to such a degree that I was obliged to start a second chart with a morning and evening temperature, and not until I pointed out to them that by no means was the maximum and minimum temperature at the same hour and that sponging and medicines such as quinine and phenacetine were in England given and administered according to the temperature that they grasped the advantage of the English treatment. The wife of a French engineer on the railway line between Beyrout and Damascus was stricken with typhoid, and one of my Syrian nurses was engaged to relieve the French nuns who were only allowed to nurse her by day as they could not be absent from the convent by night. When my Syrian nurse returned she was laden with handsome presents—one for her and one for the hospital and a letter to the committee and one to me on the way she had carried out her nursing and kept her chart. The doctor, too, wrote to me a letter (he was professor of medicine at the French School of Medicine). My answer to them all was: "You mortify me by your praise. My nurse has only carried out the English system of nursing typhoids."

When I asked the nurse what she had done to earn such praise, she covered her face and spluttered with laughter. "Oh!" she said, "I washed her all over as soon as I reached the house, and the nuns stood by and were astonished at the way I did it and kept on saying, 'Mon Dieu!'"

"And what did the patient say," I asked, trying not to smile. She said, "Merci, Merci," and then went off to sleep.

This would seem incredible had I not gone to the rescue of a young French couple when I was in Egypt—she a young bride of 18 and he 24. He was in his fifth week of typhoid, and she had only washed his face and hands "a few times" during that time. Naturally, like my Syrian nurse, I started by washing the patient, and when the doctor came next morning he was told how well he had slept, and added "C'est que mademoiselle m'a fait une toilette." "Oh! oui," said the doctor, "les nurses Anglaises font cela très bien!"

He then sat by the bedside of the young wife (who was lying on her back to prevent a premature birth) and entertained her with stories about Madame X. and Madame Tel, and even his own wife, of how they had to lie on their backs, &c., and how they got over the little incident, and how they were each rewarded by

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)