

little ward at a temporary hospital (awfully amusing—bed of a straw mattress and sheets as thick as sail-cloth, but clean, and all disinfected with formalin). The people in charge were all so nice and hospitable. The young soldier in charge made a special point of telling me that although the door did not lock he had me under his protection! Next morning we all went to see the Médecin Chef de la Place, and he told us we had come to Bergues. We've been on duty to-day and have found *so much* to do we wish we had come three weeks ago. We have *eighty patients* and most of them are serious cases. It is the first time we've been tired after our day's work.

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I'm sorry I did not finish this last night, but I was so sleepy. I must tell you about the hospital itself, that's the most important. Of course, as might be expected, the conditions are really awful, but we can better them, and are doing so already. We keep on asking for things and we'll get them in time. In the whole hospital there is only *one* big jug for carrying water upstairs. There is only a pump in the courtyard and hot water in the kitchen, but the infirmiers willingly fetch and carry all we ask them. There are only four basins for washing the eighty patients, and no foot-baths at all, and not the sign of a *crachoir*; all the eighty have been using the floor up to now. We began by making all the beds; most of them had not been made for three weeks. The sheets you can surmise about, but the mattresses are dreadful; most of them stained through with all sorts of things. They have *no* pillows, only bolsters. In spite of all the filth, there is positively no vermin, so that is a lot to be thankful for. We've made out a list of things we need, 80 *crachoirs* heads the list, and they have already given us three *seaux*.

Our hospital was originally a school. In August it was made into a hospital for the *blessés*, for only the light cases. And then three weeks ago they turned it into a typhoid hospital. Of course there are *no* conveniences such as drain pipes. The *cabinets* for the wards are on the landings at the top of the stairs—wine casks cut in half and a seat put over the top, quite practicable and good (in full view of everyone).

We've been instituting fresh air, washing, and they all take to it delightedly. We've to-day been struggling to prevent the bad cases from walking about. Up to now they've all been allowed to get out of bed to walk, tottering, to the *cabinet*—delirious ones and all. The poor souls have neither slippers, socks, nor any kind of dressing-gown for when they do get out of bed. So they have to put on their heavy marching boots or go barefoot. *All* their clothes are piled on their beds, on top of their feet.

Of course we have more cases than we can properly manage. We really need four more nurses (These have been sent.—Ed.), two for night duty and two others for day to take charge of the ward on the top floor. Two of us really ought to go on night duty *now at once*. Two infirmiers watch at night now but I won't be

happy till two of us are there with them—they know nothing of pulses and what to do really, but are most willing when directed.

We began at once by taking our own temperatures, charting, and giving the hypodermics. In fact, the thermometers the infirmiers have been using are all broken and useless; we each have our own little clinical ones fortunately. We need four or six *clinical thermometers (half-minute) centigrade*. We can buy nothing here, and they are so easily broken.

Martial law is very strict here; we are so near the front—fixed bayonets all around the town—special permits necessary for everything. Dunkirk the same. If you know of anyone who wants to send things to the soldiers, ask for bedroom slippers, socks and dressing-gowns.

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Yesterday our medical chef asked about one of us being on night duty, so I came on last night for the first month. We ought to be two on at night, but we need the whole four on in the day, so cannot afford more than one on at a time to begin with. There is only one infirmier on duty with me for all the 80 patients. Some of the cases are awfully bad, so many with pneumonia as well. We are continually putting the delirious ones back to bed. I began my night duty with a death—a poor young boy of only 18—he is now up in the attic waiting to be carried away to-morrow. It is awful to see so many bad cases with no comforts—or even necessities. We got a big fright yesterday, when a Red Cross *Dame de France* came over the hospital and wanted to be taken on the staff here! Our Major was going to let her come, and I had to tell him "No." That the Minister of War in Paris had promised us we'd be only English diplomée'd nurses, etc.; that we had tried it in Havre, and it didn't work, etc, so he just said "très bien," and told her she couldn't come.

It is difficult to get in and out of Bergues—a special passport is necessary, and then it's only good for 24 hours.

I'm sorry you have been "inquiète," but perhaps my letters won't make you less so when you realise the conditions for the poor typhoids. One thing is certain—we must have more nurses. I cannot go on for long alone at night with 80 patients, ten of whom are bad cases, delirious and hopping out of bed every little while, and I'm changing their sheets every time they need it—which is sometimes two or three times a night each. I have a different man on at night to help me—each night they take turns, some of them are better than others, but they are all most willing and devoted. The conditions are not bettered much yet, because we've not yet got a jug or a basin more. Fancy washing 80 patients with one little jug and four basins, and the gas rings are not yet in, or any pretence of putting them in.

The floors are filthy, and the windows have never been washed since the place was built (fifty years ago), and when I ask for men to do this work of cleaning they say: "Oh, they have been ordered to come and are coming some time."

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