

## Notes on Some Paris Hospitals.

### HOTEL DIEU.

Our final visit was paid to the Hôtel Dieu. So far wherever I had been there were distinct signs of awakening, even progression. But I did want to see the bad conditions that I knew existed, and without any amelioration, and my wish was granted.

It is almost impossible to describe the conditions under which the sick poor struggle back to existence, or die, in this splendid building; for under proper management what grand work for suffering humanity might be done in it. We were shown first a female surgical ward. It was for that ward operating and visiting day. What a combination in these days of advanced surgery, when the patient's friends must pass the door of the operating-room, and the door is not always kept shut, when the surgeons stand in their holland overalls spattered with blood just inside the ward door, so that everyone must pass them who enters or leaves the ward!

This is what we saw:—A long ward of many beds close together; a young woman, evidently the next to go under the surgeon's knife, was having a much-soiled sheet taken from beneath her by the Sister (religious), dressed in the usual black stuff dress of her order. No effort was made to hide this article, and, merely gathered together, it was carried the length of the ward, past the group at the door, and outside. Here some friends of a patient were met, and the dirty sheet was still held up to the public gaze during the whole of the conversation. In the meantime an infirmier, or porter, had placed a blanket lightly round the patient, and carried her out of the ward, past surgeons, Sister, and visitors, to the operating-room with her very soiled linen hanging down behind her.

Perhaps sterilisation is only used here for major operations; certainly nothing had been done to prepare this patient, not even a change of linen, and her condition had better be imagined than described.

We next saw a male surgical ward, much more crowded with beds and patients than the female ward; not only were they close together all round the ward, but several were placed across the middle as well. Here we spoke to the Sister, and I asked "How many infirmiers she had under her?" and she said "Two." That seems to be the proper staff, two for a ward. The number of beds is a detail; there may be twenty or forty, but the attendants are the same in number.

Then we passed through a male medical ward and many small wards. Here we saw no attendants at all. In these wards also it was visiting day, and the patients' friends were endeavouring to do their little best or worst for the patients, no supervision being exercised, and I thought of the days when I

used to mount guard and watch the friends for smuggled dainties.

Utensils used and unused were standing by the bedsides uncovered, making the foul air still fouler, ventilation apparently being an unknown quantity.

On we went to the large theatre, evidently lately improved, and were shown the huge sterilisers for clothes, as well as the smaller ones for instruments.

Here were two attendants, one in charge of the sterilising-room, the other cleaning the theatre floor. They were very curious to know about the hours and pay in England. There is evidently a feeling of discontent among them with their long hours and condition generally.

"Come," said our guide, in a tone of disgust "and I will show you where we eat." Forthwith we were taken through a subway into a long light cellar. "This is where we have our meals." Again the sanded stone floor, &c. "Do you have no tablecloths?" I asked. "Not here, but they do in some hospitals." "Who is responsible for these things?" "The Director." We saw the kitchen, which might have been cleaner, and then followed complaints of the food, which I must confess had a very familiar ring in my ears. "The food itself is good enough, but it's so badly cooked and served." We were told that the President was coming on the morrow, and the whole place was being cleaned up to do him honour. Not before it is needed, we mentally added. I cannot describe the sickening feeling of disgust with which we left the Hôtel Dieu. Could it be possible for such things to exist in a so-called civilised country at the beginning of the twentieth century, or were we out of our reckoning, and was it only the beginning of the nineteenth? Could medicine and surgery progress whilst nursing—the handmaid—was neglected? No! Emphatically, no!

There can be no true progress when only one part develops. The strongest chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and of what use is it to spend large sums of money on improving theatres, in erecting costly sterilisers, when those who have the after-care of the patients seem to know nothing and care less about those whose lives are in their hands.

If any nurse would like to see conditions similar to those under which I imagine the pioneers of the trained nurse in England worked, I should advise a visit to the hospitals of Paris. We are told comparisons are odious; but no matter how odious they may be, I am quite convinced that it is impossible for a nurse to visit a hospital without making these so-called odious comparisons. Therefore, I plead guilty, and confess I visit all hospitals with that object. But one cannot compare the non-existent with that existing, and there is as yet no trained nursing in the Paris hospitals.

In regard to the buildings I have little to say

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