

## Our Foreign Letter.

### IMPRESSIONS OF SOME HOSPITALS ON THE MEDITERRANEAN.

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#### ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.



This hospital is unique in the way of its being the only native one in the country, and is supported partly by endowment and partly by contributions from

the Syrians of the Greek Orthodox Church. It is under Russian protection, not only because the Russian Emperor is the protector of the members of the Greek Church wherever it is found, whether they be Syrians, Abyssinians, or Greeks, but because the Russians have obtained a firman from the Sultan which gives them power to protect all churches, institutions and schools of the Greek Church in the Turkish Empire.

St. George's Hospital began in a very small way some twenty-five years ago with a plot of ground and a couple of rooms managed by a small committee of good pious men of the middle class, possessing small means, and was attended by a native doctor, one of the first graduates of the American School of Medicine. Thus this embryo hospital struggled on for some time with its ignorant committee and its young doctor, receiving spasmodic help from the rich and a helping hand from Dr. Van Dyck (one of the first and most revered medical missionaries in the country, and certainly the best Arabic scholar) as well as from my father, until gradually they had really quite a fine building; and though the outside of the hospital would not give that impression, yet as regards the interior I think it is the universal opinion that nothing could be prettier or more uncommon. As you enter you come into a quadrangle; in the centre there is a garden, in the midst of which stands a beautiful white marble fountain. Near it are two white marble busts, one of Dr. Van Dyck, the other of a native benefactor. Plumaria, plumbago, poinsettia trees, jasmine and roses grow in profusion about them, and round this square garden runs a colonnade into which all the wards open; some of these are detached, with a strip of garden between, so that the patients seem to be living in a garden of flowers. At the back, divided by a passage, are the kitchen, store-room, bathrooms, lavatories, &c. Upstairs, on the top of the flat roof, the laundry is built, and a better drying place than the large flat roof is impossible. This hospital is, strange to say, built on the site of the old necropolis of Beyrout (the Berytus of history), so that in digging for the foundations many white marble sarcophagi were found and one large stone one, as well as some pottery ones, the latter being used for the poor. The white marble fountain and the pillars of the colonnade were made

out of the marble sarcophagi, but the two busts came from Italy.

There is also a plot of ground which is used as fruit and vegetable garden. When I was asked to undertake the management and reorganisation of this hospital there were two things that give me courage to undertake the task. One was the building itself, and the other the beautiful French instruments which the hospital possessed; otherwise the poor hospital lacked all the elements ordinarily found in an institution of the kind.

There were some fourteen large wards, no bedrooms, one solitary Turkish-bath room, one set of lavatories (which had to serve the purpose for the whole hospital—for patients, nurses, and servants). There was no laundry, no linen-room, no out-patients' department, no operating theatre. One of the wards was used for surgical dressings and as an operation room; another was used as a consulting room for the out-patients, and the colonnade and garden as waiting-room. Such things as temperature charts or prescription and diet cards were unknown. One prescription book amongst six native doctors served the purpose. Imagine the search there was for this book each time, and, when found, the further search for the required name of the patient and the last date and prescription given!

Wicked old Syrian Sairey Gamps, evil-looking male attendants, ignorant servants, filth, dirt, chaos, reigned supreme along with the lofty busts, marble fountains, and pillars: this is the East—love of the grand and beautiful, combined with lack of order and administration, not necessarily dirt, but invariably disorder and confusion.

If the building and the instruments gave me courage, the ridiculous side of things, and the thought that I had a very rich community to which to appeal, enabled me to do what I did.

These rich people live in marble palaces, furnished with very gorgeous French furniture (which still stands exactly where the upholsterers placed it when they brought it from Paris). They wear dresses from Worth and Paquin, and possess numerous jewels. They have given balls and entertained European princes and royalties. The *mise-en-scène* on these occasions is a picture. The suites of lofty rooms with the gorgeous furniture (now uncovered), the brilliant lights, the lovely dresses, the perfect blaze of jewels, such as are only seen at Court balls in Europe, are better imagined than described. Some of the young women are very handsome and elegant, speak French fluently and English indifferently, and have a fair amount of education; but the fat old ladies in their Paris dresses are very funny. Many of the young men and women I have played with and danced with, the old ones have known me from a child, so that when I undertook the reorganisation of their hospital I had good grounds to hope that they would help me, especially as I was an outsider and foreigner to them.

In six months we had built an out-patients' department, bathrooms, sinks, and lavatories for the women, and a washhouse or laundry; we had turned one of the many wards into an operating theatre, with white marble floor, white painted walls and ceiling, and fitted up with the most costly and most up-to-date glass cases for the instruments, sterilisers for water, for instruments, for dressings, glass jars for antiseptics, irrigators that Collin and Mathieu, of Paris,

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