

There was an atmosphere of peace and serenity, and the patients looked content. The men patients smoked on their corridor, and the women had their little belongings about their beds. The whole place had a home-like feeling, and though the work may not have been up to the modern idea in many ways, one could not but feel that the patients were kindly treated. The sisters had kind, good faces, and several younger ones seemed to be flying about and working diligently. No medical school is connected with this old hospital, and "orders" are probably of the simplest.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick and I, who went about together, both agreed that there was something very lovely and consoling about the religious sister, and that, if she could only have the *knowledge*, combined with her sweet seriousness and freedom from modern flippancy and brusqueness, she would be quite perfect.

The dress of the St. John Sisters is very picturesque; it is a coarse serge of ivory colour, and when on duty this is turned up over a black petticoat. A large dark-blue gingham apron is worn over this, and removable oversleeves of ivory serge. There is a black stole, and the white linen cap has very stiff, wide wings, and thrown over these a thin black gauze veil.

In the old City Hall there are some paintings showing scenes of the fifteenth century, and in one a Sister of St. John is seen in this precise dress, except that she has not the dark-blue apron or oversleeves on.

The pharmacy of this old hospital contains treasures of wood carving that make one quite miserable with envy—medicine chests and sideboards covered with most wonderful carvings of old-time hospital scenes. The pharmacy is in charge of a sister who is a skilled pharmacist and a very dignified and imposing woman.

To the world in general the hospital is famous for its art treasures, which attract there hundreds of visitors. Grant Allen, in his "Cities of Belgium," refers to it thus:—

"The Hospital of St. John, one of the most ancient institutions in Bruges, or of its kind in Europe, was founded not later than 1188. . . . It derives its chief interest for the tourist from its small picture-gallery, the one object in Bruges which must above all else be visited. This is the only place for studying in full the exquisite art of Memling, whose charming and poetical work is here more fully represented than elsewhere. . . . Many of these pictures were painted for the institution which they still adorn, so that we have here the opportunity of seeing works of mediæval art in the precise surroundings which first produced them. . . . Hans Memling . . . was born about 1430. . . . The hospital possessed an important relic of St. Ursula—her arm—and about 1480-90 commissioned Memling

to paint scenes from her life on the shrine destined to contain this precious deposit. The chest, or reliquary, which he adorned for the purpose forms the very best work of his lifetime."

Grant Allen does not say, but one of the sisters told Mrs. Fenwick and me that Memling had been a patient in the hospital, and after his recovery made this exquisite painting through gratitude.

In another picture of Memling's in the hospital, the "Adoration of the Magi," a figure is represented as looking in a window at the scene, dressed in the same dress and yellow cap worn to-day by convalescents in the hospital.

Foreign Letters to League Journals.

*From Miss ADA M. WEBB.

Kwitta, Gold Coast Colony,
West Africa.



I thought perhaps some of the readers of our League Journal might like to hear a little about life in West Africa. West Africa

is an almost unknown country to Englishwomen, very few having occasion to live there.

One's first view of the "Coast" is not conducive to high spirits: someone once aptly described it as looking like "a half-worn-out hair brush miles long," and so in fact it does, for after passing Sierra Leone one passes many miles of a low-lying coast covered with scrub, and with surf beating in great breakers on the sand, making one continuous white line.

Axim, our first port of call on the Gold Coast, looked very pretty from the sea; its dangerous rocks are indicated by the wreck of a fine new steamer, which went ashore on her first voyage.

Sekondi, our next port—is, owing to the gold "boom"—the most important town on the coast. Here they have a pier, which, though it does not allow of the close approach of steamers, enables us to land in comparative comfort from the surf boats. Here also is the only railway the Gold Coast can boast as yet; it runs up to the Tarkwa and Ashanti mining districts.

In the course of a few hours we reached Accra, which is the headquarters of the government. At Accra we transhipped to a cargo steamer for Kwitta.

I don't think you would enjoy our only means of landing. The steamer anchors about a mile from the shore, and numerous surf boats—each manned with a crew of either eleven or seventeen natives to paddle it—come to the side, giving vent to deafening yells. The passengers on a mail steamer sit in a Madeira cane chair, which is then lowered over the ship's side (more or less gently) by ropes attached to a steam crane into a wobbling surf boat. On a cargo steamer one is lowered in a tub instead of a chair; one does not look

* From *Chelsea Infirmary Nurses' Journal*.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)