

## Eight Months in French Hospitals.

(A RETROSPECT.)

In writing about any subject, I always prefer putting down my impressions or, looking back after events have taken place and thinking over the matter, giving a *résumé* of my experiences and the opinions and conclusions I have formed on the question.

For some time past the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, which I consider the most zealous, the most up-to-date, and most far-seeing journal for nurses, has contained articles on the French nursing question; otherwise, until I went to France and worked myself, I knew little else about this question. In fact, was it not only last spring that in this very journal I had a shower of letters poured over my head for heading my article "Well done, France!"; the subject being the new college which M. Mesureur was building for nurses? I, perhaps, now look upon it in a different light, but the simple fact that the French Government had taken up the nursing question, and was dealing with it from a legal and educational point of view, is what appealed to me then, for I could but think of ourselves here in Great Britain on bended knees begging the Government to acknowledge and protect us. I little thought then that in another few weeks, on landing at Marseilles, I should receive a wire from Dr. Anna Hamilton asking me to proceed to Bordeaux to help her for a couple of months, and that in another few months I should be in Paris interviewing M. Mesureur, witnessing the building of the college, and attending the municipal lectures to nurses at the Salpêtrière, and that the reason of my presence in Paris was, by request, to start a training-school for French nurses on English lines, and that after eight months' nursing experience in France I should be hurriedly crossing the Channel for family reasons; so here I am in dear old England taking a retrospect, and wondering whether destiny is going to lead me back to Paris to continue the work I have started there with so much pleasure and interest.

On reaching Bordeaux I was kindly met by Miss Elston, who was then the nursing superintendent of the Protestant Hospital, where Dr. Hamilton was resident doctor. In driving to the hospital, Miss Elston explained to me that she was going on a couple of months' trial as directress of the new training-school in the big civil hospital which Dr. Lande, the Mayor, had started.

About this enterprise and its results I will explain afterwards, for, to make things clear, I must first start with the Protestant Hospital and its training-school.

As far back as forty years ago—evidently dating as far back as the Florence Nightingale movement

in England—Madame Moméja, the widow of a pastor, took up the Matronship of this hospital and started a lay training-school. Madame Moméja was a very good woman and through her extreme kindness to the patients and devotion to her work became very popular, and under her the funds grew and flourished and the hospital was enlarged to contain sixty beds, and as there are only 6,000 Protestants in Bordeaux it was a good deal to keep up. But either the times were unpropitious, or Madame Moméja lacked the knowledge and gifts of organisation, the hospital failed as a training-school until Dr. Hamilton took it up some three to four years ago.

Dr. Anna Hamilton is a French lady of British origin, who, having found on the completion of her medical studies that the nursing question in France was in a most unsatisfactory condition, had the courage of her opinions and expressed them boldly and relentlessly in her "Thesis." This book deals with the historical side of French hospitals and the nursing question in France, Germany and England. She extols the English nurses and nursing system, seems indifferent to deaconesses as nurses, but attacks both the nuns and the mercenary class in France. The result of such a book could but meet with the approval and admiration of some and call forth the hatred, enmity and antagonism of others, viz.—the clerical party and the nuns, and the low male and female attendants.

Before starting on her nursing campaign Dr. Hamilton came to England in order to visit the hospitals and to study the English nursing system, and after many efforts to find a field for her projects, destiny led her to Bordeaux where she was elected Resident Doctor. Soon after her arrival Madame Moméja retired after thirty-six years' labour. This gave Dr. Hamilton a freer hand to develop the nursing question, and considering the size of the hospital and the limited means, she has attained great success. She has unquestionable organising gifts, added to that her theoretical knowledge gives her a decided advantage over the usual run of English Matrons and Sisters, who practically know nothing more than their nurses; the only disadvantage she had was that she had never been a probationer and a nurse herself and was unable to understand their difficulties and struggles as probationers and as full-fledged birds out in the world. But the times were ripe and the fact of there being a lady doctor and no students in the hospital enabled French girls to enter into the hospital, and she was soon able to gather around her a bevy of nice, bright, intelligent girls whom she has fired with the nursing reform movement.

This nursing reform movement has been brewing for several years all over France, and whether it is going to burst forth in full strength and succeed, or whether it is going on dragging and smouldering remains to be seen. It will be a

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