

The Revolution in French Hospitals.

By Miss L. L. DOCK.

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While the French authorities were struggling unsuccessfully with their problem of training nurses, the women so long and so sorely needed began contributing their share by preparing object-lessons for the eyes of the hospital directors and physicians. Dr. Anna Hamilton, who is half English and half French, having studied medicine, first gained distinction by a Thesis, in which she dealt in so striking and impressive a way with the subject of hospital nursing that her hearers, who at first had expected to pooh! pooh! so unworthy a theme, accorded her spontaneous admiration and recognition for having opened their eyes to a subject to which they had never before given a thought.

For several years Dr. Hamilton has been in charge of the Protestant hospital at Bordeaux, where she has introduced English methods of training, and has evolved an admirable training-school, described in a former number of the Journal in an illustrated article. I did not go to Bordeaux, which I regret, for I would much like to have seen this school, the first one in France to have a home for the nurses, thoroughly graded practical work with teaching, a definite course, and with only educated gentlewomen as pupils. The only suggestion of the smoke and din of earlier battles is shown in this school taking only "Protestant" pupils—at least, this was for a time the case. I do not know positively that this stipulation still exists. Besides her admirable school, which has steadily presented an object-lesson, and which has trained women who are now in their turn beginning to go out to do reform work in other hospitals, Dr. Hamilton has been a vigorous and stirring writer on nursing education and systems. In collaboration with Dr. Felix Regnault she has written an admirable history of nursing, and she has written reports, articles, and criticisms in which the academic methods of the French authorities in the plans for teaching nurses have been truly slashed and incised with the unerring and unsparing knife of the surgeon. One must think that they have sometimes squirmed under the process, but no doubt it has done them good. Well for her that she is a physician and not a nurse! It gives her the right to say what she pleases.

Then in Paris another group of women have established a second object-lesson right under the eyes of the "Assistance publique" of Paris, and they have taken care that the "Assistance publique," in the person of its chief directors, should come to see it, and they have done so with results that cannot help but be most beneficial to the great city hospitals of Paris. This little model of a training-school—truly at present a tiny plant—I went to

see, and it seemed to me one of the sweetest and most hopeful foundations possible to think of—like an oasis in the desert after traversing the great dreary barracks of public hospitals. It is situated in the Rue Amyot, and is under the presidency of Madame Alphen-Salvador, who was present at the Berlin Congress, and who typifies the best spirit of modern liberal humanitarianism without a shade of personal or religious prejudice. As a laywoman, debarred from criticism of professional methods, she has adopted the weapons of persuasion and demonstration only. The Training-School, in which the pupils live, is a charming spot, most simple and unpretentious, but refined and secluded, with a large study and class-room, and an atmosphere of culture. More charming young women I have never seen. There is, indeed, in the "French grace" something peculiarly French and indescribable. The two little private hospitals where the pupils work are very tiny, but they will grow, and the plans and outlook of the founders are large and ample. It was well for this school to begin, if even it had begun with nothing, for the ideal and the stimulus are there. All that it wants is to grow a little larger and stronger (it is still very young) and affiliate with some one or two of the big hospitals. This would make a perfect whole. At present the big Paris hospitals have no nurses' homes or fitting quarters, and are unable to attract refined and educated young women. The school has the home and the garden, and the study and the personalities who are able to attract the most desirable type of young womanhood.

Another thing that is working favourably for the French hospitals is the increased friendliness of relations with England. One of Dr. Hamilton's best helpers, Miss Catherine Elston, who had her training at the London Hospital, has now been placed in full charge of the nursing in the Civil Hospital at Tondu, a hospital of 120 beds. She has established a training-school there. Then some little time ago a deputation of French physicians went to London to inspect the hospitals, and they seem to have been more impressed with the nursing than anything else. Well may they have been so, indeed, and to go from the wards of Paris to those of London is to get the most striking contrast in the world, for of all big hospitals those of Paris are the dreariest, barest, and most unhome-like, and those of London the most cheerful, home-like, cosy, and comfortable. Then, "no hospital smell." The French doctors went home and wrote glowing eulogies of the English nurses, and said, plainly, "Why cannot we have the same kind?"

Within the past year Miss Edla Wortabet, an English nurse, has been called to Bordeaux and Paris to direct and advise in reorganising movements. Her descriptions of the now changing conditions are rich and racy, and should be read by everyone interested in nursing history.

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