

City of Paris Municipal Nursing Home (La Maison Dubois).

The French nation have understood a word which exists in both our dictionaries, and yet which is either unknown or obsolete in England. That word is *Solidarity*—"mutual help," and not "charity."

Born in the East, where in my early childhood slavery still existed, and feudal laws were but just abolished. Brought up with English ideas that a crowned head exists by Divine right, and that birthright is the only means of keeping up the prestige of a nation, I cannot adapt my mind to understand the reverse side of the medal, nor the intricate ideas and feelings of a Republican nation, which has overthrown one social ladder to form another. But, there is one great point which I have grasped and admire and applaud, and that is that the French Government—the French nation—have taken it on themselves to look after the aged and the sick, and to open all their Institutions to the people without the stigma of the workhouse, without the humiliation of charity, and the degradation of pauperisation. The inequalities of birth are given a chance of equality; the misfortunes of life over which the creature has no control are met and dealt with according to their need.

The Municipal Nursing Home, better known as *La Maison Dubois*, is one of the instances to which I refer.

This home-hospital, meant for educated people of limited means, who would be ineligible for the public municipal hospitals, was first given by a philanthropic gentleman of the name of M. Dubois, and contained about 40 beds at that time. Since then, the street in which it stood has been pulled down, and the patients removed to the present building, which contains 320 beds (and which is always obliged to keep patients waiting for admission, as it is always full). This hospital is now in the hands of the "Assistance Publique," and it is subventioned by the Government, as the fees of the patients do not cover the expenses.

The fees and regulations are the following: Private and medical wards, 5s. 6d. to 7s. 6d. a day. Private surgical wards, 6s. to 8s. 6d. a day. Double-bedded rooms: Surgical, 6s.; Medical, 4s. 6d. to 5s. Rooms containing three to four beds, from 4s. to 5s. These fees include: Medical attendance, operations, dressings, medicines, food, linen, fire, and light; baths, fumigations, and hydropathic treatment. Extras: Special nurses for whom

2s. 6d. and 5s. daily are charged; also isolation wards for infectious diseases and delirious patients, who would disturb others sharing the same ward; and X-ray treatment.

Patients are required to pay their fees a fortnight in advance. Should their stay be shorter, the balance is returned. The day they come in and the day they go out are counted as one.

Two surgeons and two physicians are attached to the hospital (and paid by the Government), but the patients are at liberty to call in, in consultation, any surgeon or physician on the honorary staff—at their own expense.

Two house surgeons and physicians take it in turn to be called up at night, while the medical students are in charge of the dressings and medicines.

There is a pharmacy and resident dispenser in the hospital.

The patients are allowed the use of the gardens.

The dietary alters according to the seasons of the year, and is under the supervision of the doctors. The menu is presented to each patient daily, from which, when convalescent, they can make their own choice.

Visitors are allowed daily in the private wards from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and in those shared by others from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Patients on leaving the hospital, are requested to write in a book any complaints they may have to make.

The nursing is done by *infirmières* of the Assistance Publique, and, needless to say, they are picked women, and present a tidier, less hard-worked aspect, than those of the public municipal hospitals.

The patients look quite smart and tidy in their beds, in their own pretty and dainty nightdresses, and their hair seems as if it has undergone French maiding and dressing. I can, therefore, imagine that in private nursing these municipal *infirmières*, when they are not driven with hard work, and are nursing well-to-do patients in their own homes, would make very good nurses. The religious asepsis carried on and enforced by the French surgeons, the large number of operations and surgical work (which it is impossible to excel in any part of the world) in the Paris municipal hospitals, which they see daily, the natural innate deftness of their hands, are advantages they possess which are not to be despised. When, therefore, they nurse private patients, all these admirable qualifications stand them in good stead, and I have known English people who have been nursed

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)