

## Our Foreign Letter.

### THE SURGEON'S VISIT IN A FRENCH HOSPITAL.

(Eight a.m. in the Men's Surgical Ward.)

"Eight o'clock!" says the cheftaine (sister) as she comes in for a last look around, and she begins her inspection of the temperature charts.

"Eight o'clock already!" says the nurse. "We shall never be ready in time!" And the little probationers are hustled about, and the patients are told not to stir any more unless they wish to be severely punished.

"Eight o'clock!" say the patients. "Dr. Soupoult will soon be here!" and they settle themselves in bed, trying very hard (and very unsuccessfully, some of them) to keep their bed-clothes straight.

Ten minutes later the whole ward is clean and tidy from end to end. It really does look fresh and bright this morning, with the sunlight shining through the large windows on the polished floor, the blue enamelled beds, and the neat, pale-blue dresses of the cheftaine and nurses.

The patients are all subdued and expectant. What will to-day's visit bring them? Comfort or despair? They depend entirely on the "chef de service." He alone can satisfy their smallest wants.

"Mademoiselle," says No. 14, "I am going to ask Dr. Soupoult to let me have a bowl of milk during the night; I need it more, I am sure, than No. 18, who has a whole litre every day."

"Mademoiselle," whines No. 6, "do you think Dr. Soupoult will allow me a second pillow?" "But you don't want it," says Mademoiselle. "You sleep very well without it!" "Oh! how can you say so. I have not closed my eyes for three nights!"

The nurse turns away with a little sigh. If No. 6 asks for his pillow he will surely get it, and she is already so short of pillows.

No. 16 is sitting by his bed; he has just come in from the bathroom, and is now dressed in the white flannel dressing-gown and white stockings of the "opérés," for, as soon as the visit is over he will go to the theatre and undergo a most painful and dangerous operation. The nurse gives a last look at his nails, but has to hurry away, for there is the "interne," in his long white blouse and black velvet skull cap. This last, together with the white linen apron, is his insignia of office, and he would no sooner part with it than with his newly-gotten wedding-ring. Hurriedly he goes round the ward, stopping only one or two seconds by each bed.

"Nos. 6 and 8 will be examined to-day; you will get everything ready, Mademoiselle."

"Bien, Monsieur!" But hardly has she said the words than the door opens, and half-a-dozen students hurry in. "Le patron est là!" (The chief is there!)

Dr. Soupoult is indeed there. He has taken off his coat in the lobby, and now comes majestically into the ward, wearing the traditional white blouse and linen apron.

He is tall, massive, and clean-shaver; his linen apron, which should come down to his ankles, he

wears rolled up around his waist, so that it reaches only a little below the knees. He looks like—and his enemies say he is—a first-rate butcher.

A probationer is quickly despatched to get the many things needed for examination, another one is sent to look for the cheftaine, whilst the nurse herself comes forward to meet the great doctor. The students gather around him, the nurse stands ready to answer all questions concerning the patients, and the visit begins at bed No. 1.

A meek figure follows the procession; it is the newest probationer, carrying on her arm a towel and in her hands a jug and basin. Her duty is to pour some water over the surgeon's hands, as each patient has been examined, and it is with no small trepidation that she comes forward to perform her task.

No. 4 is a sad, but interesting case—tuberculosis of the kidney, developing with alarming rapidity. The man is young yet, with a wife and small children in a far-away country village, but what matters the man in the surgeon's eyes? Dr. Soupoult seems to see and to hold in his hands that swollen and infected kidney, and gives a learned and clear description to the assembled students; the words "tuberculosis," "infection," often comes to the professor's lips, and the patient, hearing them, knows that he is doomed. He grows pale and sick as the doctor leaves his bedside; but what matters the man? The lecture has been a brilliant one.

Coming to No. 6, Dr. Soupoult asks, "Have you prepared everything, mademoiselle? I am going to examine this man." "Everything is ready, monsieur," and the examination begins forthwith. No screens are put round the bed, this being thought a useless formality in France. I knew a brave nurse once who did try to introduce the fashion of screens, and—but that is part of quite another tale.

"We have two more kidneys coming in next week, we must make room for them. Is No. 9 better now?" "Not quite, monsieur," answers the interne. Not yet? I must have a bed, though! Well, my friend, you must think of going soon; I want your bed." And so the visit goes on.

"Ah, you are ready!" exclaims Dr. Soupoult, as he sees No. 16. "You need not feel afraid; we shall soon put you all right! Mademoiselle, you may take him to the theatre."

No. 16 marches off, nodding bravely as he goes past his fellow-patients. A nurse and one of the dressers take him to the anæsthetising-room, where he will be scrubbed up for the last time and chloroformed, quite ready for when Dr. Soupoult comes.

The visit is nearly over. No. 14 has asked for and obtained his precious bowl of milk, and No. 6 has got his pillow, much to the nurse's dissatisfaction.

Dr. Soupoult now comes to the table and calls out the names of the students; he also verifies and signs the patients' diet sheet; then with a stately "Bonjour, mesdames," leaves the ward for the theatre. It is just nine o'clock.

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