

## The Progress of the Nightingale System of Nursing in France\*

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For the fourth time I have the pleasure of giving you a paper on the Nursing Question in France. In my first paper at the Buffalo Congress, in 1901, I gave you a short historical account of this question in France concerning the monastic Orders, the Lyon nuns, the Order of French Deaconesses, the management of the Parisian Poor Law establishments, the School for Helping the Sick (founded in 1900), and, lastly, I mentioned the School of the Maison de Santé Protestante of Bordeaux, to the Matronship of which I had just been appointed (May, 1901).

Later, in Berlin in 1904, I told you about the Congress of Public and Private Charities, which was held in Bordeaux in 1903, which discussed the problem of nursing schools. Immediately after the meeting, members of the Congress visited the Nursing School of the Protestant Hospital, and were surprised to see a practical realisation of the principles expounded in the Report I had just submitted—the conclusions of which had been tabooed by the élite of French hospital authorities!

Indeed, this school was founded on the principle of only admitting educated women, on an educational basis, who consented to follow a regular hospital curriculum. The Nursing School of the Protestant Hospital of Bordeaux had, therefore, grown its wings, and was able to help to staff other institutions. Consequently the new Nursing School of St. André Hospital (clerical and secular), opened after the Congress of Public Charities, had appointed as Matron Miss Elston (London Hospital certificate), formerly Nursing Superintendent at the Protestant Hospital, and as Sisters several other nurses from the same school.

But when the Berlin Congress was being held the new school had come to a standstill, owing to the nuns being in rebellion against the lay Matron and Sisters. We were wondering then what would become of this school.

Thanks to the influence of the Prefect and other political people, a hospital was chosen where an undivided authority was possible, and the school of lay nurses was transferred there, whilst the pupil nuns were left at the St. André Hospital, under the management of the Superior.

At the Béziers General Hospital, secularised the previous year, the Committee had also appointed an English-trained nurse, Mde. Luigi (London Hospital certificate), under whose strong and capable management a nursing school was opened, which is progressing very satisfactorily.

At last, in Paris two years ago, I read a full account of the organisation and results of the two Bordeaux schools.

As to the Parisian schools, I leave them to the care of those interested in their welfare to describe their rules and principles.

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I find my task as Honorary Vice-President for France very much lightened now that each school can speak for itself. I will limit myself to-day to give you a short account of the movement as far as the Bordeaux schools are concerned.

The Nursing School of the Protestant Hospital has, since the year 1901, admitted seventy-nine candidates, of whom forty-seven have obtained their certificates, and sixteen are still pursuing their studies.

Since 1903 this school has sent out certificated nurses as Matrons or Sisters to the civil hospitals of Bordeaux, Issoire, Reims, St. Quentin, Cambrai, Romains, and to the civil and military hospitals of Alais, Béziers, Albi, Amiens, Elbeuf, Evreux, as well as to numerous nursing homes and private hospitals.

Everywhere in secularised hospitals is the fight hard and long for those courageous pioneers of hospital reform.

The Nursing School of the Tondu Civil Hospital, Bordeaux, has entered on its register ninety-seven candidates since the year 1903, and awarded fifty-one certificates. The school has at the present time nineteen probationers in course of training; it has sent out nurses (Matrons and Sisters) to the civil hospitals of Bordeaux, Cambrai, Castelnau, Bagnères de Bigorre, and to the civil and military hospitals of Elbeuf, Evreux, Dijon, Lorient, Philippeville, Albi, Alais, and to the military hospitals of Bordeaux, Lyons, and St. Briève, as well as to other establishments of various kinds.

The certificated nurses of both these schools often work together in hospitals where the Matron is one of our certificated nurses; they are sometimes helped by nurses from the Béziers training school.

Wherever they have worked, even in those places where the struggle has had to be given up, our trained nurses have left beneficent traces of their passage, so far as the care of the sick, the organisation of the work, and the welfare of the staff are concerned.

The question of hospital reform in France is more intricate than it was in England when Florence Nightingale and her co-workers began their campaign. In England it was only a question of replacing incapable and coarse nurses of the Sarah Gamp type by capable and well educated women. In France the question is rendered more complex by *secularisation*, which means the replacing of untrained nuns and their subordinates by lay nurses, themselves capable of giving the needed care to patients of both sexes, whatever their illness may be. So that, religious passion aroused by the sending away of the nuns and disestablishment, which has given a new intensity to the quarrel between the Clerical and Republican parties, has greatly complicated the re-organisation of hospitals; the march forward being impeded by well-nigh insuperable politico-religious struggles.

Finally, the constitution of hospital committees also creates difficulties, for those establishments are placed under the authority of a group of from five to nine men, who very often do not possess the slightest knowledge of hospital management, and who are at the mercy of political fluctuations, so

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