THE GREATEST PHYSICIAN OF THE WAR—DR. ELSIE INGLIS.

A most interesting book, which we hope will be widely read, is "Dr. Elsie Inglis," by Lady Frances Balfour, published by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, Warwick Square, London, E.C.1, price 6s. net. It is dedicated "To Serbia, and the Scottish Women's Hospitals that loved and served their brethren 1914–1917." Elsie Inglis, we are told, "had the spirit of her nation and of her race; the spirit of courageous adventure, the love of liberty, and equal freedom for all people."

The attractive design for the cover of the book, a thistle with the motto, "Nemo me impune acessit"—the emblem of her nation and of the Scottish Women's Hospitals—was drawn by her countryman, Mr. Anning Bell.

The early chapters are of interest, as showing the influence of heredity and environment on the character of Elsie Inglis. The inseparable companion of her father, she had the rare advantage of his belief in equality of opportunity for his sons and daughters, and his sympathy in her medical career.

In Edinburgh the "child of her love," amid all other works, was her Maternity Hospice, and "her idea was that everything as far as possible should be made subservient to the comfort of the patients. She disapproved of the system prevalent in so many hospitals of rousing the patients in the small hours of the morning in order to get through the work of the wards. She would not have them awakened before 6 a.m., and she instituted a cup of tea before anything else was done. To her nurses she was very just and appreciative of good work.

There was about Dr. Inglis, we are told, "an atmosphere of high and chivalrous enterprise. Thus in an ordered round passed the days and years, drawing ever nearer to the unknown destiny when that which was to try the reins and hearts of many nations was to come upon the world. When that storm burst Elsie Inglis was among those whose lamp was burning, and whose heart was steadfast and prepared for the things which were coming on the earth.

"The year of the war coincided with that period in the life of Dr. Inglis when she was fully qualified for the great part she was to play among the armies of the Allied nations.

"The Suffrage organisations staffed and equipped with able, practical women, put themselves at the call of the national service, but were headed back from all enterprises. It had been ordained that women could not fight, and therefore they were of no use in war time. In the vast camps which sprang up at the commencement of the war women modestly thought they might be usefully employed as cooks. The idea shocked the War Office till it rocked to its foundations. A few adventurous women started laundries for officers, and others for the men. They did it on their own and in peril of their beneficent soapsuds being ordered to a region where they would be out of sight and out of any seasonable service to the vermin-ridden camps."

In September, 1914, Dr. Inglis went to London to put her views before the National Union and the War Office, and to offer the services of herself and women colleagues. To the woman's heart within her the wounded men of all nations made the same irresistible appeal.

"In that spirit she approached a departmental chief. Official reserve at last gave way, and the historic sentence was uttered: 'My good lady, go home and sit still.' In that utterance lay the germ of that inspiration which was to carry the Red Cross and the Scottish women among many nations, kindreds and tongues.

At a later date, when Dr. Inglis, who had brought her units back from Serbia, having proved her mettle, and, knowing the lack of hospital arrangements in Mesopotamia, urged the War Office to send her out, Mrs. Fawcett writes: "She was not only refused, but refused with contumely and insult."

The recognition "so stupidly refused by her own country was joyfully and gratefully given by the French, and later the Serbian A.M.S and Red Cross, and the Scottish Women's Hospitals went forth one by one to France, to Belgium, to Serbia to Corsica and to Russia. The secret of the loyal service Dr. Inglis inspired was her faith in her fellow-workers. "Not I, but my unit," was her dying watchword. And again her faith was of the quality which removes mountains.

"I suppose nobody here could lend me a yacht," she said at one little gathering at which she explained how she wanted to get to Serbia. She got her ship there!

We have not space to give in detail her experience in Notre Dame with the statue of Joan of Arc. A keen, practical Scotchwoman, she was also "fey," and we sympathise with her desire: "You know I would like awfully to know what Joan was trying to say to me."

Her work in Serbia is well known. Mr. Seton Watson writes in regard to it: "Like the Douglas of old, she flung herself where the battle raged most fiercely—always claiming and at last obtaining permission to set up her hospitals where the obstacles were greatest and the dangers most acute."

For a time she was a prisoner in the hands of the Germans and before she was liberated was commanded to sign a statement declaring that the British prisoners had been well treated. She declined on the ground that she did not know, to which the German authorities replied, "you must sign it." "Well, make me," retorted Dr. Inglis, and that was the end of the incident.

She lived to arrive at Newcastle, but within 24 hours her brave spirit crossed the bar, and she was buried on November 29th, 1917, in Edinburgh. "Why did they no gie her the V.C.?" asked the shawl-draped women holding the bairns of her care, as the coffin, with the Allied flags, was placed on the gun carriage that carried her to her grave with military honours. Certainly she had earned the reward of valour.

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