

## OUR FOREIGN LETTER.

## NOTES OF VISITS TO MUNICIPAL TYPHUS HOSPITAL AND SZPITAL IM KAROLA I MARYI, WARSAW.

The Karl and Mary Children's Hospital is one of the best-thought-out buildings ever erected. It contains at present 125 beds and is "*pleine de pensées!*" It was built and gifted to the city by Mdlle. Sophie Szlenkier in memory of her father and mother—a beautiful monument! Mdlle. Szlenkier went to London some ten years ago to train as a nurse but was recalled after two years owing to the fatal illness of her mother. She had, however, seen sufficient to convince her that no matter how *dévouée* a woman may be, she must be scientifically trained in order to render good service to the sick. Mdlle. intended to found a training school for nurses, but the war has temporarily prevented this; meanwhile she has "civil" nurses—trained for some time in Munich or Vienna—working in the wards as "charge." The innovation of the "civil" nurse with her neat and sanitary uniform is a step in the right direction, though the additional cost is constantly quoted as a reason for retaining the *Sœur Religieuse*, as evidenced at the Municipal Typhus Hospital. There one saw voluminous "stuff" skirts shrouded in overalls, yet acting as general "sweepers"; altars with all their fly and germ-attracting adjuncts erected in every ward, pencil charts which would have tried the patience of our medical staff, and utensils reposing on lockers which we relegate to the sanitary block. Flies crawled over walls and patients alike, and were regarded as beyond control. Even when we suggested known remedies they shrugged their shoulders and looked resigned! I object to *le bon Dieu* being held responsible for so much of this world's slackness, and reminded one lady that "the Lord helps them who help themselves!" They felt they had done their duty when able to report "that all milk was boiled," but I was filled with apprehension at seeing it lying about in ward and kitchen totally uncovered; one wondered was it possible they did not realise the added risk of contamination by exposing boiled milk?

## THE TYPHUS HOSPITAL.

The wards in the Typhus Hospital were clean, so was the bedding, the day I visited it, but one missed the practised guiding hand of the efficient Sister, and positively itched to pull out pillows from beneath the semi-conscious patient, whose body was cocked up and whose head had fallen to the side and rolled off the mound of unnecessary pillows. One noted the absence of screens round dying cases; the mouths were beyond description, and certainly their cleansing did not form part of the daily routine, though they may have been excellent aids to diagnosis! The receiving and bathrooms were apparently well arranged; but when one considered that the "Sisters" are untrained and more likely to pray over the patient

than attack him with soap and water in a professional manner, one realised possibly why so many of the staff caught the disease which is transmitted by the bite of lice. The wardmaids lived out and seemed likely to afford a daily source of fresh infection, though one hardly dared doubt the conscientiousness of the aged Sister who presided over the steam sterilizer which she demonstrated with such enthusiasm. Yet, one saw her long skirts trailing over the infected and "non-infected" floor, and over the floor where the sacks of clothes lay awaiting attention! (*We wear, on our anti-typhus campaign, long enveloping overalls which tie round neck and wrists and enclose the feet; then we slip on long boots and a tunic with head-piece and sleeves reaching to the wrist again, rubber "p.m." gloves with long arms complete the kit!*)

## THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.

The Children's Hospital—where one longed to work and just add to science the nursing touch—though well planned and built, and possessing arrangements which made one rejoice, was lacking in many of the essentials which demonstrate good nursing. The wards were lofty, bright, and cubic space was sufficient; but the spacing of beds was bad; plenty of windows, but a minimum amount of fresh air admitted. Ventilation was not attempted. At the end of each ward there were French windows opening on a cheery convalescent ward, through which one passed to a wide balcony; but each of the three times I visited the hospital—bright, sunny, breezy days—the balcony was empty. I thought of the use Dr. Truby King made at Earl's Court of our limited balcony space, and regretted such waste, especially as tuberculosis in all forms is very prevalent in Poland; specially noticeable were the pale, pasty faces of the little occupants of the high cots. In this hospital, also, the storage of food worried me. Parents were encouraged to bring little extras for their children; all such were carefully labelled by the nurse, but bottles of milk (sold all over Warsaw as sterilized) were opened and left uncovered, often on the window-ledge in the sun.

The hospital admits medical, surgical, and infectious cases, and the arrangements to prevent cross infection are as ingenious as they are simple and efficient. The patient arrives at the O.P. department, where he is interviewed by the nurse through a window with sliding glass panel. If the child has no evidence of an infectious disease, but diagnosis is doubtful, he is admitted to the department and placed in a stall—there are three such—and examined there by the physician in attendance. If, on the other hand, the child is decidedly medical or surgical, he is sent round to the surgical or medical waiting room belonging to the O.P. department. Here again, the seats are so arranged to permit of plenty of space between waiting patients. Should the child, however, show decided signs of Scarlet Fever, Diphtheria or Measles, the nurse directs the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)