

daughter of Ste Elisabeth of Hungary and wife of Henry II, Duke of Brabant.

In gratitude they bear the name of Ste Elisabeth.

The "leproseries," or hospitals for lepers, were particularly noticeable at this period. These hospitals were served by a brotherhood of brothers and sisters placed under the episcopal authority, who wore on the sleeve a little piece of red cloth to show that they had accepted the livery of the lepers.

After the crusades and the development of towns and of commerce, growing riches allowed private people to relieve the misery of their brothers.

That was the period of the foundation of numerous guilds and confraternities which were established in our towns, and of which many still exist.

At the death of the donors most of these foundations went back to the care of the town councillors, and were the beginning of the present "Commissions des hospices."

The most important nursing brotherhoods of this period are:—

The "Frères Cellites," who devoted themselves to the care of the insane.

The Brothers of Mercy, who buried the dead.

The "Bogards," ancient members of the Weavers' Guild, who became religious and cared for the sick members of their old profession.

The Capuchin priors, who devoted themselves especially during epidemics of plague.

Amongst women:—

Les Sœurs Noires had convents in the whole country, and still nurse the sick.

The Augustines, who received grants from the Dukes of Brabant and Counts of Flanders in acknowledgment of their devotion.

The Grey Sisters, or "pénitentes," gave their time to visiting the sick.

The Cisterciennes Bernardines work the hospital at Ghent since the year 1228. They still wear the white woollen habit, which they now cover with a large linen overall.

The seculars of the Third Order of St. Francis lived in the world devoting themselves to the care of the sick.

One interesting group is that of the Béguines, who appear at the end of the twelfth century at Liège.

They are good women who, without entering a convent, give themselves to works of mercy. They take complete or temporary vows of celibacy, and live adapting their religious life to the needs of their fellow citizens.

When they grouped together it was often near a hospital to care for the sick, which they did in many towns.

Every Béguinage had an infirmary in the centre where the oldest and the weakest were gathered, as well as sick people from outside. There they worked under the orders of the "Maîtresse," or matron.

All the Béguines were not nurses, but, in the case of an epidemic, they spent themselves generously.

It was because of their charity that the French Revolution spared them.

Still, to-day, some Béguines continue to visit the sick in their homes.

Later on, the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul were sent to work in many hospitals.

Besides these, there were many orders of more recent date of nursing sisters.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, the care of sick people was almost entirely in the hands of the religious orders, and many hospitals and dispensaries are still actually worked by them. They also still do private nursing and visit the sick poor.

Their amount of training is varied, but many among them have submitted to the State prescriptions, and some even now follow the regular course of training.

The first idea of establishing a school of nursing, opened to educated girls in order to raise the standard in the lay profession, so little known in Belgium, was put into practice by Dr. Depage, and on May 16th, 1907, he opened "L'Ecole Belge des infirmières diplômées."

The first matron of this school was from the London Hospital, and is immortalised by her martyrdom. I speak of Edith Cavell. This school has faithfully followed the Nightingale traditions and exacts four years of training.

Before the war the school distributed twenty-three nurses' certificates.

The same year, in the month of October, Dr. van Swieten opened the "Ecole Saint-Camille," where the nursing course was given, followed by a practical training in different hospitals and dispensaries.

The school was later established at Hôpital Ste Elisabeth Uccle.

A six-months' obligatory training was required from all the pupils; 223 certificates were given.

In 1912, during the Balkan war, the school sent a mission comprising a number of doctors and nurses to Belgrade.

The hospitals of Antwerp opened a training school for nurses in 1907 at the Stuyvenberg. It was completely organised in 1912.

The Sint Berlendschool was started in Antwerp in 1908.

The Ecole Provinciale de Liège opened the same year.

In the sanatorium for nervous diseases of Fort Jaco, Dr. Ley had a training school for mental case nurses.

Public interest began to rise in favour of the profession, through the influence of doctors and prominent people, who helped to create these schools.

The State began to move in the matter, and on April 4th, 1908, a Royal Order created an official certificate for nurses. This Act, though elementary, decided the programme and the matter of the examination to be passed, but did not insist on any practical training.

In February 1909, the Hospitals of Brussels opened a training school at Hôpital St. Jean.

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