

Several Royal Orders in 1908 and 1909 led to the Act of July 12th, 1913, reorganising the examinations for the Nurses' diploma. It created three diplomas:

(1) For candidates who have followed the theoretical and practical course during one year at least.

(2) For hospital nurses possessing the first diploma and who have spent two years in a hospital, including six months in the medical and six months in the surgical wards; or who have spent two years in private nursing.

(3) For mental nursing; for those nurses who have spent two years in a mental hospital.

The defect in the order was that the practical training was not compulsory, and that for the second diploma the training was not supervised.

In 1912 two schools were opened:—L'Ecole libre d'infirmières de Mons; and L'Ecole provinciale professionnelle pour infirmières de Charleroi.

The Belgian Red Cross has organised in most of the large centres of the country "first-aid courses."

Holders of this diploma were often attached to dispensaries at exhibitions, reviews, processions.

#### During the War.

Directly the political situation of Europe gave rise to the fear of a catastrophe, a call was made to all those who were willing to help, in case of the worst happening.

At once, after the declaration of war, crowds of nurses and first-aid helpers came to offer their services at the Red Cross, from whence they were sent at once to the different hospitals and ambulances of the country.

Then came the invasion, the retreat of our army, and the occupation of the country.

During fifty-one months an impregnable barrier separated those who fought and those who waited for deliverance; but on both sides there was suffering, and the nurses devoted themselves heart and soul.

*At the Front.*—When our soldiers fell in defending the last inch of our territory, far from their own people, they found women from all lands ready to dress their wounds side by side with the Belgian nurses.

When our refugees, worn out with wandering, dying from privations, begged a home or help, they were welcomed and cared for.

When our worst cases needed to be cured in the mountain air, generous women procured all that was possible to give them back their health.

To all these nurses, allies and friends who came spontaneously to our help, either in the ambulances at the front, the hospitals in the rear, the convalescent homes or refugee camps, we would like to express our deep gratitude.

They have taken the place of mothers, wives and sisters, and we shall never forget them.

There were very few Belgian nurses at the front at first; their professional formation had to be organised.

Those who were fully qualified were sent directly to the military hospitals.

Those who had no training went to the King Albert's Hospital in London, where, for about six months, they were initiated under the direction of an English Matron before being sent as required to the military hospitals.

Besides wounded soldiers there were other victims of the war not less pitiable: the refugees, wounded civilians, and the typhoid patients, who came to die in hundreds in the emergency hospitals.

Here, again, the nurses excelled themselves, organising, without realising it, the Hospital Social Service.

They provided a staff for maternity cases, orphanages, crèches, milk distributions, consultations, nursed in houses under shell fire, seeking out the contagious cases in bombarded towns and villages.

They distributed clothes, and went so far as to found an association of lace-makers to provide work for their convalescents, which helped to keep up the moral standard. Above all our nurses, we can never forget how our Queen worked with her own hands for our wounded.

*In Occupied Belgium.*—The Royal Palace of Brussels was, during the whole war, a hospital for the mutilated or incurable cases sent from the German hospitals.

But our population was weakening through privations, consumption making terrible ravages. It was necessary to organise in order to fight the evil.

The National League against Tuberculosis and the Child Welfare section of the Relief Commission called the nurses to serve their dispensaries, milk kitchen, consultations for weakened children, school canteens, convalescent homes, school colonies.

Then came the evacuation of the people of the North of France. In October, 1918, thousands of civilians were brought into Belgium, and infectious influenza broke out amongst them. The Commission of Epidemics created temporary hospitals worked by nurses from different schools.

(To be concluded.)

#### THE PASSING BELL.

We greatly regret to record the death of Miss Mary Louisa Damon, for many years Superintendent of the Victoria Nurses' Institute, Cape Town. Miss Damon retired from active work in 1920, having gained widespread respect and admiration throughout South Africa for her indefatigable work for the welfare and uplift of the Nursing Profession.

The last two years were passed with her friend, Miss Williams, at Inglenook, their pretty house in Durhamsville, Cape Colony, where she passed to her eternal rest.

Miss Damon was a member of the South African Trained Nurses' Association, and the Guild of St. Barnabas for Nurses, and was an Hon. Serving Sister of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

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