

NURSING IN RUSSIA.*

(Concluded from page 238.)

If we accept our time to be one of constructive regeneration in the wide sense of the word, we must consider the means to attain this object by suppressing the irrelevant, and by buying what is worthy of being bought.

In line with the greatest political experiments, and with the occurrence of seismic sociological phenomena, the coming future is evolving from the chaos as the earth was evolved from matter.

Wealth, fame, religion, beauty, art, and the peace of domestic life, all the attainments of our modern organisation of society are perishable goods. Our children, and even ourselves, will be witnessing a wonderful transformation similar to that which will occur in another sphere of human interests and concerns, when the exhaustion of solar energy—radiation of light and heat—will lead to the contraction of animal and vegetable life towards the terrestrial equator. Artificially conceived, our whole life, in its most varied manifestations, will be built on another plane, eliminating all elements comprising most of its political predecessor.

When our laws, temples, institutions, together with most of our coveted ideals will go down into oblivion to join the glories of the old past, man alone will remain; and it will be your triumph if he enters this newly-built Paradise free of disease, stigma, and physical deformity. You realise that medical as well as other science is regressive; that men of knowledge use their powers to conceal, and that it is your own freewill and instinct that as the thread of a revived Ariadne will bring you out and make you see the day. Your group is small, your soul discouraged, your work is minimised, and you, the nurses of Great Britain, are merely regarded as a detail in the life and development of a unique Empire. All the praise, all the fame, is lavished on politicians, judges, bankers, and military commanders, who sentence, send, or starve your progeny to death. It is not the time or the place for me to embark on a detailed description of this dangerous injustice, but to conclude it, I will repeat: It is not your form of domestic or foreign politics, nor your Manchester inferno, nor the number of your Dreadnoughts that appeal to the imagination of mankind.

What we Russians and all other European or Asiatic people invariably admire is the racial qualities of your people, realising that if it were not for the 700,000 of those who were born and nursed in English homes less than two decades before the war, and who have laid their lives on the battlefields and the seas, your country by now would have been humiliated and ruined, and the victors of the story would be wearing pig-tails and running about like Cubans in flour sacks.

[Captain Ilovaisky, who states that it is as difficult to describe nursing in Russia as it would

be to picture "Fasting in Abyssinia," then traces the most interesting history of his country from the year 862 to the present time, from which we extract the following paragraphs.]

Born in the year 862, the great country had originated from an Eastern Slavonic stock, equal in size and beauty to the splendid ancestral Teuton you yourself were claiming to derive from.

As we all know, in 1917, the country experienced a revolution—the springs of life, the economical conditions undergoing a vast and profound modification directly or indirectly affecting its whole structure, rhythm, and appearance, and extending an unknown, fresh and undetermined influence over the whole field of its varied and most inaccessible departments.

Religion was abolished; parental tutelage substituted by a uniform State control. The aims of the old organisation of society uprooted, ridiculed, and eventually swept away. From the past remained the body—the Golem, the mechanical wonder. "The lungs antedating the bellows, the heart the pump, the hands the lever, the eye the photographic camera, with telephonic and telegraphic apparatus mimetically duplicated by the nervous system, and always by the aid of the same force" (Dr. Albert Abrams, of San Francisco, U.S.A.) It is only too obvious that a transformation of economic conditions had so affected all the widest ramifications of human life . . . the period comprised between the first phase of the first economic revolution and the present is really beyond the scope of scientific investigation.

No fame, no title, no scientific qualification seemed sufficient to stay the tide of revolutionary zeal of those combating the flower of the old order. Foreigners, as you know, traditionally beloved in all parts of the Empire since time immemorial, were now being weighed according to a new scale, a certificate of usefulness taking the place of obsolete distinctions—ambassadorial prerogatives, banking accounts and political wire-pulling. It is unnecessary for me to mention that alone among all the others who moved freely and unmolested were the representatives of those foreign organisations which dealt with the question of hygiene, maternity, practical physiology. If those who were born in Russia, and whose interests are still there, have not gone to pieces as a consequence of aggravated despair, it is chiefly on account of this striking, fortunate omission in the programme of her destructors.

When dispersing after this meeting, when returning to the localities where you are all engaged in the work which brings you little reward but the silent gratitude of the weak, you can rejoice knowing that it is recognised there across the border, even in the great land that seeks a pride in a heresy of passionate disbelief. Multiplying your efforts, remember that of all the activities running concurrently with yours, and indispensable to the life of all segregated communities, few will remain, most will be swept away, and only yours will survive the fundamental changes that are

* Read at the Nursing Conference, at the Central Hall, Westminster, April 4th, 1923.

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