

THE NURSING MOVEMENT IN BELGIUM.

THE EDITH CAVELL-MARIE DEPAGE HOSPITAL BRUSSELS.—I.

It seems a very long time since I have taken up my pen to write on nursing questions. In fact, by a strange coincidence, the last time I did so was on the execution of Edith Cavell, when our dear ones were falling at the front, and when our hearts were naturally full of pain and bitterness.

Since then I have been to Cologne, where I have been twice ill, and at death's door. I have been nursed by German Roman Catholic nurses, to whom I was a double enemy by nationality, by religion and by professional nursing training, and if I were to describe those enemy women as "walking angels" I should only be expressing and repeating the words of many English patients.

At the same time I can never flinch or waver about the

that the names of these two wonderful women should be united in death as they were in life; that medals, monuments and hospitals should be made and built in their joint names—for they both fell victims to their cause and calling in 1915.

The Nursing Movement in Belgium is built on solid rock. It is still small, owing to lack of funds, but it is the best thing I have seen done on the Continent through private initiative.

It was in May, 1907, that Edith Cavell was chosen as Matron of the Nursing School in Brussels, and a Nursing Superintendent and two Nursing Sisters were engaged at the same time to begin their practical working organisation and teaching, while the doctors gave the lectures.

That this Training School has been such a real success I ascribe to the wisdom of having started with not less than four fully-trained, gifted and devoted English women, who were given full power to organise and train the nurses in English methods. They were not subjected to being told



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opinion I expressed at the time, viz., that the execution of Edith Cavell by the Germans who carried it out was nothing more or less than a political message to the British nation.

In speaking of this matter, I do not wish to probe an old wound (which, however, the Belgians have taken so much to heart that they make it a personal and daily one), but because we nurses must face the possibility of such circumstances arising again, and the consequences of aiding our own countrymen and those of our allies to escape.

It is a heroic deed, it is human and humane, and it is certainly punishable—but it does not come under the heading of espionage, consequently the penalty should not have been death by a pistol shot.

Again the drowning, by the sinking of the *Lusitania*, of Marie Depage (wife of Dr. Depage), who was returning from America where she had gone to collect funds for the Belgian wounded, made a heroine of her. Dr. Depage had been the chief promoter of a Belgian training school for nurses, and the first meeting had taken place in their private house on March 6th, 1907, and Madame Depage had given every practical help. It is quite natural

at every moment: "This is not our way of doing things in our country." In every country there are political, religious, social and economic questions to be considered, the spirit of the nation and the recruiting of probationer nurses.

In some ways the difficulties which present themselves in Belgium are those I met with in France. In others they are simplified.

The early development of girls, early marriages, and the fact that few girls in the professional and comfortably-situated families ever thought of working for their living, were similar conditions in France and Belgium previous to the war. But the war, the almost canonization of Edith Cavell and Marie Depage, has done for the Belgian modern nursing movement what the Crimea and Florence Nightingale did for the English one. It has also taken away all feelings of bitterness with regard to secularisation. The fact is there never were enough efficient nursing nuns in the world to care for the sick without lay help, and the present modern, well-trained Belgian nurse is replacing the uneducated mercenary nurse.

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