

THE NURSING MOVEMENT IN BELGIUM.

THE EDITH CAVELL-MARIE DEPAGE SCHOOL.—II.

As we pass through life we are often marking events quite unconsciously, both in our own lives and in those of others. About two years ago I was on my way to Cologne *via* Brussels, when I had the pleasure of being a guest at a dinner-party where I met General Doutrepoint, A.D.C. to King Albert, Madame Doutrepoint, and their charming daughter, Mademoiselle Louise. Two facts were impressed on my mind—one was a discussion of the Mona Lisa Madonna, which had been stolen at the Louvre in Paris, and recovered, and my thinking to myself how like her Mademoiselle Doutrepoint was, with her large black eyes and jet black hair, and the unusual outline of her face. Then our conversation turned on the nursing question in the war, Queen Elisabeth, and her work amongst the wounded, her wonderful skill, and intellectual knowledge of her work.

I little thought then that two years later I should return to Brussels, dine at Mlle. Doutrepoint's house, and find her in the midst of her nursing training. She was convalescing from an attack of laryngitis but full of enthusiasm and keen to return to her work.

She told me that her wish was to become a "visiting" nurse to the sick poor in their homes. This scheme was inaugurated in 1917 when it was impossible to receive, nurse, and maintain the sick poor at the hospitals. The work of the visiting nurse and the school nurse are now perfectly organised by the Edith Cavell School, each receiving post-graduate training essential for the two separate branches and each and both based on hygiene and sanitation.

Having received all information as to the Edith Cavell School, I wrote to the Matron, asking her to allow me to see her and the hospital. I received a charming letter from Miss M. Van Weddingen, her most capable assistant, whose knowledge of English has enabled her to train quite thoroughly in England, but on arrival at the hospital Mademoiselle de Meyer received me herself in the public reception room, which I took for her own private room, until I saw her, and most charming and unconventional it was. Portraits of the King and Queen Elisabeth, of Edith Cavell and Marie Depage, photos, pictures, plants, flowers, flowers

and still more flowers, and such charming furniture. But this was only the entrance, only the keynote to the rest that I saw. It was indeed a home-hospital.

Part of the hospital consists of a nursing home for paying patients in separate rooms, and apart from the wards, which are downstairs I was glad to find that the profits of the fees of the paying patients largely supported the nurses' home and public wards, though in the latter I saw that a very large number of beds were endowed by American sympathisers. Therefore, apart from all political actions and motives in this war, both British and American individual and private sympathy and generosity stand supreme.

This hospital though not over large has the beginnings of great things. To my eyes of the impressionist it could not be more perfect. I went round the wards at about 4.30, when the work for the evening was starting. The counterpanes were being removed, the flowers were being transferred to cooler regions for the night, the patients were also being made comfortable for the night.

This brings me to a most important custom which is worthy of note. The patients who are unable to wash themselves are washed in the evening instead of the morning, when only face and hands and hair are attended to. This obviates the necessity of waking up in the very early morning those who are too ill to be disturbed in the morning rush to be ready for the doctor's visiting hour. Several of the wards are still war huts, but they are beautifully lighted up with electricity. There are bathrooms and pantries and such sweet little windows, and the whole hut is enamelled in white and the tables made bright with flowers.

The sweetest of all these huts is the one called the *Pouponnière*, which is a sort of "resident *crèche*, where babies

are received from the Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, who separate these infants from tuberculous parents until they recover or die. The *Pouponnière* helps these infants for about 15 months. I don't think I ever saw poor parents' children so well groomed and with such nice manners and appearance. The very friendly way they greet strangers shows that the nurses are not only kind, but are always refined with them. One little tot shook her head at me and then her finger, and with a chuckle she seemed to tell me, "You mischievous little thing."



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