

Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

ON ISLAND STREWN SEAS.

DEDICATED TO THE SWEDISH NURSES ASSOCIATION.

When the Hindoo poet Tagore visited Stockholm he always rose two hours after midnight to meditate on the ever varying lights of the Scandinavian morning; they were to him an unending source of inspiration. There is buoyancy and hope in this northern summer where the light is hardly dimmed when other lands are dark. The city lies like a town afloat, and so lovely is the whole aspect of it, that you cannot think of it as a town, but rather as some wonderful harmony materialised into stone. Imposing cliffs on one side form a fine background to a lovely picture while, dominating the town, is the simple impressive Palace of the Kings, and close to this, the Parliament House. We wandered to the National Museum to find there the most wonderful traces of an ancient culture; the fine old carvings in wood seem almost to live, so strong is the impression they give of the feelings and the conceptions which gave them birth. The old stained glass, the pictures and tapestries were a source of both wonder and joy, and, as we passed from room to room, certain words of Goethe kept rising in our mind:—

"All things transitory
But as symbols are sent."

Standing before these works of art, one had, very strongly, the impression that, whatever may have been the extent of their book learning, those old artists of the northland had indeed a mighty conception of nature, a curious power to understand her "symbols" and, through this, to rise beyond nature to the Spirit that nature reveals. However this may be there lies in these old works of art something that reaches a consciousness that is beyond the realm of words.

You may ramble in parts of old Stockholm, through its narrow, tortuous streets, and yet not have the heart to criticize, even if every law of sanitation that ever you studied rises up to condemn them. The houses here must teem with associations with Scandinavian history. Here, for instance, must be the town house of some noble of other days, with rich carvings on its portal. You stop to admire a gateway with a finely chiselled coat of arms, now an old carved door attracts you, now some strange, crooked stair or quaint grey tower. Yes, the very soul of history seems alive in houses that serve to-day but as offices, small shops or cheap lodging houses. Of the truth of how many tales and legends would they bear witness, had we but time to study them closely. On one of the islands stands a church close on seven centuries old, it is the burial place of the Swedish Kings and is exceedingly interesting and beautiful. We revelled in the joys of Skansen, a fine natural park surrounded by water; you could spend a whole day sight-seeing there, and in the evening, there is the folk-dancing to enjoy.

But the most lovely incident of all our experiences in

Stockholm, the most pleasant and beautiful thing that happened to us there, in the city of rocky heights and flowing water, was the friendship of the Swedish Nurses. The BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING had been known to Sister Berta Wellin since the Congress of the International Council of Nurses in London in 1909, and when Sister Elizabeth Lind stayed at the Club a few years ago, she came across a copy and immediately became a subscriber. We ourselves had forgotten the incident, but it bore good fruit for us. When we stepped out of the train at Stockholm there was a contingent from the Swedish Nurses' Association to welcome us, to help us to find our hotel and, later, to carry us off to lunch with other Members of the Association. This was just the beginning of a delightful round of sightseeing and unstinted hospitality of which the grand climax was a visit to Saltsjöbaden, one of the most lovely islands of the Archipelago. From its sunlit heights the view just beggars description, but the memory of these shining seas is to us a great gift indeed from the northland. And when we set out to continue our journey it was not so much of the beauties of this land that we talked as of the wonderful welcome it gave to us, a welcome that seems now as the swinging open of a beautiful gateway into the last, and, perhaps, the most wonderful stage of our journey to Helsingfors; incidentally, when a week or so later we departed from that town, the last episode connected with our stay there was a gift of red roses from that most exquisite of friends, Sister Elizabeth Lind. Berta Wellin, M.P., J.P., Elizabeth Lind, dear Haus Mutter with your strong, beautiful face (you would have us call you Haus Mutter, and so we forgot your other name), Elin Steen, Marta Brandberg, and many others, we, daughters of an Island Kingdom, are glad that you saw to it that we "spoke one another in passing" there, by your island strewn seas, you with your minds fresh as the flowing waters of Stockholm, ideals strong as its shadowing cliffs, and friendship that is like the shining of the sun on your garden of Skansen. We think of these "symbols" many times and—of you.

Stockholm sinks into the distance, and soon one feels as though a bit of the Western Isles had drifted up to the North. But the islands are less barren, the cliffs less lowering here, and the grass is greener too. Great clumps of pine trees grow stalwartly out of the hard rock, and the reflections are wonderful. Some among us sat up all night to watch the gloriously setting sun, the long after-glow, and then, in the mystery of the morning, to experience the wonder and the reverence that is inseparable from seeing the sun rise over northern seas. Every moment brought new aspects of its brilliance, and we sailed through the changing waters, content to pass on in silence through the majesty of the morning.

"Thou spann'st the bridge of Bifrost,
The pathway of the gods;—
O name the mighty heroes,
Draw pictures of the gods."

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