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## Impressions of the Congress

BY JUST ONE NURSE AMONG THOUSANDS

My impressions! How to give them, so intense, although so varied, so sweet although so strong . . . ? It seems almost an impossible task. No one, however, could well resist dear Miss Breay's requests and therefore I will try to express something of what I felt so deeply during a well-filled fortnight in Montreal.

First, the aspect of the town and the hearty welcome of its inhabitants. The "man in the street" looked as much interested in our coming as the nurse in the hospital—"You have come for the Nurses' Congress? How do you like our town?" And when I had expressed my enthusiasm—"Oh! you are French! Did you never as yet come 'to the country' (au pays)? This was asked by the French Canadians using the dear old-fashioned term, "le pays." Everything is in this word, of what is best loved and cherished.

Then the Opening Session of the Congress, I don't remember having ever witnessed such a solemn and serene ceremony. The crowds of nurses, amounting to more than 6,000, seated in the immense amphitheatre of the Forum Hall, silent, attentive, breaking into unanimous applause, when the orators ended their speeches or when some of them touched those invisible strings that move the hearts of men—nothing more impressive could have been seen. On the platform, the official representatives of the Government of Canada, of the province of Quebec, of the City of Montreal, and our dear President, Miss Gage, quite solemnly uttering the words of welcome and thanks.

Then the smaller meetings, of Sections or Round Tables—at the High School or in different Halls of Montreal, grouping hundreds of eager nurses always ready to listen and to learn, even sometimes to speak and join in discussions. And the Standing Committees' Meetings, so well worked-out, in such near and confident co-operation, with such earnest debates, fruitful discussions, and with one and unique aim in view: to better and improve the Profession of Nursing. Each country represented was bringing the best of its learning and experience, devotion and service, the young ones impatient for immediate realisations, the older and more sedate bringing the weight of years of steady work and the more prudent result of ancient effort and achievement.

And meantime, the cordial receptions, where English and French Canadians united to give us their affectionate welcome, cordial and lovely receptions illuminated by the Canadian sunshine, refreshed by the Canadian ice-cream, made more "nursy" by a few uniforms and by many religious gowns, more brilliant by the array of exotic costumes: Chinese, Philippinese, Japanese, looking like beautiful birds or multi-coloured butterflies. . . . And the closing session, again in the gigantic hall of the Forum, with its attentive and stirred audience of nurses, I may perhaps be here somewhat more personal in my impressions. The mingled feelings of wonder and of pride, of inadequateness to the task, and gratitude for having been chosen, were almost too much for me. Had it not been for the fact that this terrible microphone had to be spoken into, and stood as a mysterious screen between the 38 represented countries and myself, I believe I would have collapsed there and then.

But life is made of contrasts, is it not? And when we all came out of the big Hall, into the sweet Canadian night, I felt again with deep relief and joy that I was just one nurse among thousands of other nurses, ready to work with all of them, hand in hand for four years, a fellow in the team, until the Paris Congress brings us together again for another loving contest and puts forward another President.

L. CHAPTAL.

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