

Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

THE RAMBLERS AT CANTERBURY.

"It is the bounden duty of every English-speaking Man and Woman to visit Canterbury twice in their lives."—*Archbishop Temple.*

The Ramble to Canterbury, in which Members of the Association and the British College of Nurses participated, was a memorable experience. Soon after 9 a.m. on the 12th of March, Miss Liddiatt (the Chief Rambler) appeared at Queen's Gate with her huge yellow chariot, and picnic luggage was gaily stowed away in available corners of this; then, at 9.30, we set out on our pilgrimage. We picked up a "Rambler" or two at different points, and before very long had left the London streets behind, and were out on the Pilgrims' Way, of which Chaucer writes in his Prologue:—

"And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Caunturbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir to seke
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke."

And so we already felt ourselves to be in historic country and were on the watch for every new interest that we might discover. Just outside Sittingbourne we stopped for a roadside picnic, and enjoyed good cheer provided by Mrs. Temple, Miss Muriel, Miss Graham, Miss Coleman, and Miss Macdonald; that over, we called back to the char-a-banc those truants who were bent upon tracing the first evidences of Spring in a roadside wood, and soon we were on the broad highway once more, out on the last stage of our pilgrimage to historic Canterbury, for over fifteen hundred years a focus of aspiration and inspiration for Englishmen.

A turn on the road and the city lay before us with its Cathedral, of exquisite beauty, set against the blue sky. Later we were welcomed at the south door of the Cathedral, by the Vice-Dean, Canon Gardiner. After conducting us into the Nave, he gave the Nurses a short address of welcome as follows:—

"I have been asked to convey to you all a very sincere welcome to Canterbury Cathedral from the Dean and Chapter. We have, I may say at once, many pilgrims throughout the year to this Cathedral, but there are none so welcome as the Nurses. We know something of all that you do for the sick and the sorrowful; we deeply appreciate the value of those services. But there is another reason why you are particularly welcome within these Cathedral walls—nursing has, at all times, been very closely connected with the activities of the Church, and the beneficent work which you are carrying on to-day had, in the past, no small share in the making of the great traditions of the Christian Church. I hope you will realise how sincere is our welcome to you all; I hope you will understand how we regard it as an honour and a privilege to show to you the beauties of our great Cathedral. I am now going to hand you over to Miss Babington, and I know of no one else who has so comprehensive a knowledge of the Cathedral. I was delighted when she so kindly said that she would meet you here to-day."

We soon found that Canon Gardiner had by no means over-estimated what it meant to be shown the glories of the Cathedral under such guidance. It is quite impossible to compress into a few short paragraphs any but the most inadequate report of all that Miss Babington pointed out to us. It was no ordinary cicerone whose acquaintance we made that day in Canterbury. Not only does Miss Babington know every inch of the Cathedral, but she has so made herself one with its traditions, if one may so express it, that we felt, as we walked round with her and she pointed out to us some window exquisitely set in the old grey walls, or perhaps some spot rich in tradition, that the whole place was become vibrant of the past; so vividly did Miss Babington reconstruct many a scene for us, that we realised that she had learnt the gift, so rich in its rewards for those who can attain to it, of "living back" in the scenes that she describes.

The nave of the Cathedral is only a little over five hundred years old, and we were given a very interesting account of the circumstances which led to its being built. From it we passed to view the windows before the choir; these are of surpassing beauty, and we were fortunate in being able to see them in a favourable light; they are the oldest stained glass windows in Europe, with the exception of those at Chartres. Next we were conducted to where the ancient Roman Church had stood, and Conrad's choir until it was burnt down. Miss Babington told us how distraught the Monks were over this catastrophe, and gave us the history of how they set about choosing an architect to rebuild their church and the romance of how this rebuilding was accomplished; we listened to it all, feeling as though she held us spellbound.

Next we climbed the stairs (worn by the feet of thousands of pilgrims to the tomb of St. Thomas à Becket) to view the tomb of the Black Prince, whom Miss Babington described as the first great English Captain. The six hundredth anniversary of his death occurs next June, and he is specially interesting to Nurses as the son of the great Philippa of Hainault. The tomb of the Black Prince is close to the spot where Thomas à Becket was laid, so that we can understand something of the admiration in which he was held; his effigy is perfectly moulded in copper and was formerly covered with gold. The face has the beautifully chiselled features of the Plantagenets, and the hands are folded as though for the prayer of this great soldier, who, when told of the might of the forces against him, said, "God is my help; I must fight them as best I can." The whole monument is a marvel of the craftsman's art, and the sword is of specially fine workmanship. Round the tomb are the escutcheons of the Black Prince—alternately the arms of England and of France. On the tester above is a representation of the Trinity with the symbols of the four evangelists in each corner; above it are displayed the helmet, crest, coat of arms, gauntlets, shield and sword sheath of the Prince.

We were shown the fine Archbishop's throne, the Chair of St. Augustine, the site of the tomb of Thomas à Becket

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)