

# FOREIGN NEWS

IN CHARGE OF  
LAVINIA L. DOCK

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## FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT IN LONDON

"DEAR EDITOR:

"It is with the very greatest pleasure that I begin a letter to you, for the news that the Association of American Alumnae is about to issue a journal of its own is welcome indeed, and we in this country, whose aims and aspirations are the same as yours, see in your new venture an added strand to the cable which takes no account of oceans or distance, but which unites in a common purpose the nurses of the Old and New Worlds.

"When I begin to think what there is to tell you of nursing affairs in this country my mind harks back inevitably to the International Congress of Women held in London last year, when nurses forgathered from many parts of the world, and, as members of one of the recognized professions for women, discussed their own concerns. None of us who were privileged to be present on that occasion will soon forget its inspiration, and not the least of its benefits was that members of the nursing profession in various countries, known only to each other by name, or perhaps by correspondence, became personally acquainted, and in some instances formed permanent friendships. Certainly in this country we have felt the impetus of the Congress ever since, its influence has by no means ceased, and I believe it will go on increasing. One of its chief results was, as you know, the formation of the International Council of Nurses, at the Annual Conference of the Matrons' Council held in the congress week, and at which some of the foreign visitors were present. We are very proud that at the election of officers this year, by the vote of the members in different parts of the world, a British woman should have been elected its first president.

"Talking of the International Council of Nurses reminds me of the congress which is to be convened under its auspices at Buffalo next year. Which of us will be there, I wonder? I have heard but one opinion on the subject. Every one would like to go. But nurses, as you know, are not a wealthy community, and the difficulty is how to find the necessary funds. When the Matrons' Council meets again after the holidays a sub-committee will be formed to deal with the financial question. We hope that some of our nursing societies will subscribe to send at least one delegate, so that this country may be well represented. I am sure that we should learn much from you. From the little I know of American nurses it seems to me that public speaking comes easy to them. With British nurses, with a few notable exceptions, this is certainly not the case. They may manage the nursing departments of their own institutions admirably, they can conduct the necessary business with their committees with equal facility, but when it comes to taking the chair at a public meeting, or even speaking in public, they find the ordeal so terrible that they rarely attempt to face it. Such a feeling

—a very real one—is, I imagine, not common with you, but you must remember that in the enlightened West woman is a free creature, whereas in the East she is behind the purdah. It is true that midway between the two we have escaped from the purdah, but its shadow still falls upon us. Besides, the gift of tongues is not a common one with British women, and the power to sway an audience is even rarer. A few have it, notably Lady Henry Somerset. It is pure pleasure to listen to the tones of her well-modulated, cultivated, persuasive voice, and it is obvious that she carries her audience with her. She does so, I think, mainly by her power of sympathy, though her finished oratory is no doubt a factor in the effect produced, but we have few like her. In the nursing profession our most notable speaker is without doubt Mrs. Bedford Fenwick. She is never at a loss for a word, her clear voice penetrates to the farthest corner of the building in which she is speaking, and whenever she speaks it is with a masterly grip of the subject in hand, which she always treats logically and convincingly. She has, moreover, a sense of fun which is a valuable asset in a public speaker, but fun is out of place on a battle-field, and just now in this country we nurses are fighting for our lives, for our right to live and breathe and think as a profession. Mrs. Fenwick is, of course, in the forefront of the fray, and her public speeches bear evidence of it. She speaks in grim deadly earnest, and the lighter vein rarely comes to the surface. When the fray is over and the victory is declared—as by all the laws of nature it must be declared—to belong to the progressives, other sides, and she is many-sided, will come uppermost.

“I do not think you must count on many *speakers* at the congress next year from this country. Miss Stewart, the public-spirited, generous-hearted matron of St. Bartholomew's, and president of the Matrons' Council and Bart's League, of course, and Miss Mollett from Southampton perhaps, but we have not many. Of listeners I hope there will be a goodly show.

“The formation of the International Council has shown us our need of a National Council by means of which we can be brought into touch with it. The Matrons' Council in October last passed a resolution empowering its executive to act as a provisional committee to consider the organization of a National Council of Nurses in view of affiliating with the International Council of Nurses. The executive appointed a sub-committee, which drew up a draft constitution, which was submitted to the business meeting of the council held at the time of the conference last July when many of the country members were in town. The debate upon it was most keen, and finally the constitution was referred back to the executive to be amended in accordance with the light thrown upon it in the course of the discussion.

“Another important step in the direction of nursing organization, which has been taken during the past year, has been the formation of the League of St. Bartholomew's Nurses by Miss Isla Stewart. It is the first association of the graduate nurses of any hospital in this country, where professional associations of women are by no means encouraged as a rule. The idea, however, when proposed by Miss Stewart was taken up most warmly, and already over three hundred graduates have joined the league. The qualification for membership is the certificate of the hospital, but, up to June last, a few nurses not holding the certificate, but who had filled, or who are filling, positions of responsibility in the hospital, were enrolled. The league publishes a small journal twice a year called *League News*, of which I am sending you the first copy.

“The Matrons' Council during the past year has brought before the Govern-

ment Departments concerned with the nursing of the sick the necessity for reorganizing these departments on modern and professional lines, and of placing such Nursing Departments under the control of a fully trained and experienced administrative nursing officer who should act in conjunction with the head of the Medical Department. A deputation from the Matrons' Council, which was accorded a courteous hearing, was received at the Admiralty by Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Civil Lord. The request to be received as a deputation by the War Office has so far not been acceded to, but there is little doubt that in the wholesale reorganization of the army which must come after the present war is over, the question of the Nursing Department, and more especially the organization of an effective Nursing Reserve, must come up. Complaints are made on all sides by the matrons of hospitals that no official inquiries have been addressed to them by the Committee of the Army Nursing Reserve concerning the qualifications and suitability of applicants for membership; indeed, the policy throughout seems to have been to ignore the assistance which those matrons acquainted with the work of the nurses were able to give, and would willingly have given. The consequence is that although much good work has been done many most unsuitable women have been sent out, who, if half the stories which reach home are true, will unfortunately do much to discredit in the public estimation the really invaluable services rendered by others. It must, however, be clearly understood that the haphazard shipping off to South Africa of some six hundred nurses, with no real superintendence, no central office at the Cape, and no superintendent-in-chief to whom these nurses could apply for assistance or advice, and who would have authority to deal with and send home any whose conduct was wanting in discretion, has always been strongly condemned by the matrons here. The War Office must, I suppose, learn its lesson, and a bitter lesson it is likely to be,—namely, the need of nursing, instead of social and medical, supervision and control in nursing matters, and the necessity for placing the discipline of women in the hands of women.

"There are other things of which I should like to speak. The Midwives' Bill, for instance, which, having passed its second reading, and having really some chance of getting through, was, strange to say, talked out by the member in charge of it. This is not to be regretted, for a bill giving legal status to practise midwifery to women with only three months' special training cannot be considered satisfactory. It met with very little opposition from trained nurses, who do not seem as a body to understand how prejudicial it is to their own interests. This is partly due, I think, to the fact that so few of the matrons of our hospitals are certificated midwives, and while they realize the futility of the three-months' midwife, they do not recognize the necessity of including obstetric training in the curriculum of training of every nurse, and so putting a better article on the market. Whether every nurse should be required to have obstetric training before graduation is a very debatable question; personally I am inclined to think she should. But at least she should be *encouraged* to acquire it as an extra qualification, and should not, as is too frequently the case now, be obliged to sever her connection with her training-school in order to get it at a special hospital. The outcome of this is that we want a bill, not for the registration of any one class of specialists, but for the registration of medical, surgical, and obstetric nurses. It is a curious fact that persons who support the former will vehemently oppose the latter, though how they can logically maintain such a position is difficult to understand. However, we are getting percep-

tibly nearer to registration, and this war is doing much to open the eyes of the public to the necessity for it. On a future occasion I hope I may have the opportunity of giving you some more details as to nursing affairs in this country. Wishing your journal all success and prosperity,

"I am, dear Editor,

"Yours cordially,

"UNION JACK."

"ATLIN, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

"... As you know, when we first came here no hospital was thought of. We were supposed to nurse the sick where we found them, in their cabins or tents. We did this to some extent, but some were on the creeks miles away, others were destitute; some place must be found for these.

"The government put at our disposal a log cabin with a saw-dust floor and one small window which would not open.

"By crowding, as many as four beds could be accommodated in this cabin, but more room was needed, so a tent was put alongside of it, which had the luxury of a real floor, and while the nice weather lasted we got along very well. When winter came the thermometer ranged between thirty degrees and forty degrees below zero. Yet the discomfort from the cold was not as bad as that experienced on days when it snowed outside and rained inside the tent. Certainly it was not an ideal place for patients. Finally, it was determined to build a hospital which could belong to, and be under the control of, the Presbyterian Church in Canada. At this time men were idle, and all work on the building was given free. The value of the labor thus given amounted to over a thousand dollars. A debt was incurred for materials, etc., which we hope our Eastern friends will help us to wipe out.

"The hospital is a plain wooden building, containing one large ward, a bath-room, and a small room which we use either as an operating-room or as a private ward. At the back is a tent kitchen; a fine range and cooking utensils were given us; they are a great comfort. One of the churches in Victoria sent us a dozen pairs of blankets, sheets, pillows, and pillow-cases, and things are assuming quite a hospital air. . . .

"We have found the climate less trying than we expected, and have not suffered the least little bit from all the cold. We are both in splendid health, and manage to get along quite comfortably without many of the luxuries and so-called necessities of life. . . .

"HELEN BONE."

[Miss Bone and her colleague, Miss Mitchell, are Canadian nurses who went out to the Klondike a year or so ago.—Ed.]

[MISS MACDONNELL, assistant superintendent at Roosevelt Hospital, has kindly sent us letters and reports of the work of her sister, who is in charge of the nursing in the Mission Hospital at Neyoor, India.

Accounts of Miss MacDonnell's work appear from time to time in the "Chronicals of the London Missionary Society."—ED.]

" . . . It was in October, 1892, that I first went out to take charge of the nursing department at Neyoor. In Trevandrum, the capital, there is a well-equipped government hospital under a European doctor, and in various places throughout the State there are branch hospitals and dispensaries with native apothecaries in charge. Of late years the government has been encouraging Hindu women to train as apothecaries and nurses by offering scholarships for their maintenance. The Neyoor is a general hospital with wards set apart for women. It had at first thirty beds. Since I am here eight beds have been added for isolation cases, eight maternity beds, and two for private patients. Before we came, nursing, as we think of it, was practically unknown. The friends of the patients came with them, and in their own way did what nursing they could. Even yet we have not reached the point of being able to dispense with the presence of these friends entirely. Fifteen or twenty often insist on remaining with one patient, and families consider themselves strictly dealt with when not allowed to keep all their food stuffs, cooking utensils, firewood, and even chickens under the bed, and do their cooking at the bedside or on the veranda. We have considerable difficulty in training native women in nursing. It was thought too degrading for a respectable woman to clean and attend the lowly and destitute. Besides, the fact that hospital work meant a more or less public life kept them back; it is altogether contrary to social customs to allow women to work outside of their own homes. For this reason we can only get rather elderly women, certainly not younger than thirty-five. Meantime we are encouraged by having frequent requests from the more enlightened Hindus for one of our nurses to come and stay in the house to carry out a doctor's orders, and we see that a few years' training has made some of our nurses into capable and helpful women. . . . We aim at educating a band of nurses for Travancore such as will compare worthily with our own District Nurses at home.

" MARGARET MACDONNELL."

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THE committee of the London Hospital now require all accepted probationers to sign an agreement to remain four years in the service of the hospital. The certificate of training is granted at the end of two years, but the four cannot be completely filled up as evidence that the nurse has fulfilled her engagement to the hospital until the expiration of four years from the date of her entrance into the wards.

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Two London nurses, Miss Morgan and Miss Dickinson, were sent from the hospital to Copenhagen to study the method of applying Dr. Finsen's light treatment for the cure of lupus, as the London Hospital proposes establishing a department for this new treatment. Four patients can be treated at one time by one apparatus. Each patient is required to have either sunlight or electric light applied daily. The treatment takes an hour and a quarter, and the undivided time and attention of a nurse is needed for each patient while the treatment is going on.