

2

The new hospital consisted of four twenty-four bed wards, which soon proved inadequate to take care of the large number of sick immigrants, and it was always necessary to crowd in additional cots to provide for the overflow. At this time it often happened that as many as 5,000 immigrants were examined daily, which needless to say, made the work of the hospital very heavy. In the early years we had a staff of only eight nurses to do the work. It is not difficult to imagine the difficulties this small number had to contend with. Two years later a new wing was built, adding about fifty beds to the hospital capacity, but even this was far from adequate. As a result, ground was filled in for another section of four wards, bringing the total capacity up to 267, quite an increase from the 97 beds when I first came to the Island.

In 1906 I was promoted to *chief* nurse. The years flew past, and in 1912 a new island, built by fill-ins, reared itself above the tide, and a complete contagious hospital of about 380 beds was erected on the site and opened for service. Up to this time all contagious cases had to be sent to the City of New York Contagious Hospital at Riverside. This was an expensive and inconvenient procedure and the opening of the new contagious hospital was definitely a step forward.

Late in the summer of 1914 the Great War burst like a volcano on the world. It had an instant effect on immigration, and for a short time the hospital staff at Ellis Island had a breathing spell affording a little relaxation which was sorely needed. But this did not last long. In May 1917 the immigration officials commenced gathering in the enemy German aliens, and naturally a considerable number fell sick while being detained in the Main Building. The hospital machinery began to function again with gradually increasing speed. We had also patients from the coastguard and militia divisions on duty at the Island.

Those were stirring times at the Island. We had some trouble with the Germans, but on the whole, they were well-behaved. The air was tense with unrest, however, and one felt that turmoil and violence might result at any moment. Looking back at the affair now seems like some horrible dream. Think of it! Enemy aliens, coastguardmen, and militia, all commingled in the same hospital - some humorous, others sullen, and more anything but amenable to discipline. Many of the German interned were wealthy, some cultured, and practically all spoke English well. Several ~~claimed~~ to be members of the German aristocracy. It was indeed a cosmopolitan crowd, and many amusing and interesting situations developed, which served to relieve the tension. Some of our patients remained in the hospital until March 1918. At this time the nursing staff consisted of *20* ten female nurses and two male nurses.