

April 20th.

Erminia died last night. It is wonderful how long she held on. Just a month since we took her the little beast she loved. I wonder if he will be her companion in the other world, and recognize her there by her voice as he did here in the Hospital ward. The change in her would certainly be even greater. . . . I have not been at the S. Spirito Hospital lately, as we have decided to begin the "Scuola infermiera" at the S. Giovanni Hospital as soon as possible, and there is a great deal to arrange. Our Committee is formed, and a notice will be put in the papers announcing the opening course, and the receiving of *aspirante*.

I am also working at a translation of that nice little book on nursing by Miss Wood. It is not quite up-to-date perhaps, but somehow it seems to say what we want said *now*, later we may translate some newer one. Another reason for doing this book is that I already have a rough translation, done in Florence, but never revised or published. It is in impossible Italian; every sentence has to be re-written; but Donna G. M— is good enough to help me, and Prof. C— promises to find a publisher, and write a little preface.

April 25th.

We had a meeting to discuss rules for the "Scuola infermiera." The whole matter is extraordinarily complicated. I am feeling the keenest personal sympathy for the man in the fable who spent his life in getting on and off his donkey in his attempts to satisfy the moral scruples of his friends! I see so clearly the reasonableness of all the objections and difficulties focussed by my friends, that it is most exhausting trying also to visualise my own perceptions, so as to present them at the right angle for perception by my friends.

April 26th.

I went to see Grazia, at S. Spirito, yesterday (I often go, though no longer nursing there). She showed me a letter she had had from a friend, and her belief in what it recounts is so entire, that I asked her to let me have it to copy. This is what the girl says, roughly translated:—"I hope you are getting always better. As for me, I am cured. You know that for three months I have had convulsions, often even two or three times in one day. My mother was told to go and beg for small alms, till she should make two francs, with which to have celebrated a mass for me, at S. Silvia, who is the protectress over convulsions, contractions (*tirature*), and hysteria. Mass has been celebrated, and I had to seat myself on S. Silvia's chair, and thus I was cured. Therefore, I thought to beg alms also for you. I have already had mass said for you, and even carried a candle, and I have had the *fituccia* blessed, which you must wear next the skin without ever taking it off. I trust thus you too will obtain this mercy. I will soon come to see you, and will bring you, too, the picture of the saint, which you must also always carry with you. I send you many kisses, which come from the heart of your affectionate friend.

"Ines Barbanti."

I asked Grazia if she wanted to go very much to this church, and finding that she had implicit faith in the miraculous power of the saint, I told her I would try and arrange for her to visit S. Silvia when the *clínica* closed, and she was sent to the other hospital for the summer months. The doctors now find her non-neurotic, but with actual pelvic deformity. The head of the femur is distorted, and the ligatures function badly, hence her pain in trying to stand. So the miracle would not be merely the result of "expectant attention," if it happened.

I have been wondering what I really believe on this matter, and thinking over the different people I have met who believe faith has miraculous healing powers. Personally, I don't think instantaneous cures happen except to neurotic cases. But auto-suggestion, I think, is a force which may overcome many morbid conditions; and here, probably, lies the root of the healings of "Christian Scientists"—Bethshan, Lourdes, etc. Faith doth make whole, not by any means always, but frequently—when vivid enough. Still, it does not restore amputated limbs, or destroyed organs. I had proof of the latter fact many years ago, in a deaf friend. Lottie L. was the type of a mediæval saint, absolutely without guile, and with the conviction that she had been cured at Bethshan. I shall never forget her radiant face as she told me about the miracle; but yet I had to shout down her trumpet my answer, and even then she had difficulty in understanding. All the bitterness of her deficiency had gone, however, and how much that is can be understood by anyone who has had to face the possibility of losing one of the organs which keep us most in touch with life. If only Grazia could think herself healed, what a comparatively slight matter it would be—her remaining lame. Her deformity is slight enough for a certain amount of locomotion to be perfectly attainable; but she hasn't at present the energy to make the effort (which is painful) of regular exercise.

April 30th.

Contessa S— had been to see Signora P— and came back quite depressed over the nursing question. The dangers of contact with the doctors is what troubles them; it seems that at the Bologna Secular Hospital there have been very unpleasant scandals between doctors and *infermiere*; so much so, in fact, that it makes people feel that nuns are the only safe material for hospitals; but, of course, personally, I only listen to these disasters as useful cautions. We must be very careful to avoid even any semblance of lightness—any intonation that is not purely professional—in our girls; but that we have always understood to be essential, and the power to dismiss must be always in our hands, *and used*, if need be. I always feel that the sense of "proportion" needful where guiding others as the means to success, consists in knowing when to obey the gospels, and "not lead into temptation," and when to obey the transcendentalists, and "trust men, that they may show themselves true." Here, certainly, success must hinge on our having enough faith to trust girls, and enough wisdom to protect them. After all, it seems simplest human-kindness to give women credit for some self-respect, and to encourage them in it by one's friendship and sympathy. One can hardly be considered too optimistic in this venture, therefore, as either the ladies who are "Ispettrice" or myself will be always responsible for their behaviour, and they will never be in a ward without the nuns or myself.

We have decided, after much reflection, that it is best to leave the pupils at first with the nuns—as I am not Italian, we fear starting as "forestiere" (outsiders)—our nurses would never belong to the "family" if they were put at first with me, and for the nursing scheme to become indigenous, it is essential for it to be Italian. Therefore I shall just start the ladies as "inspectresses," having the honorary title of "Direttrice tecnica," and then leave the girls to begin their training with the *Capo-Sala*. There is to be a course of lectures, beginning in June, for nurses and *infermiere*, and our girls will go to them, too, and pass that examination before being admitted to the second

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