

to pay the first fortnight in advance, suggested that I should wait till the 1st of next month, saying the room would have remained empty had I not come, as they had not found anyone they liked to let it to. As Italians are usually considered people who expect payment for all their courtesies, I must not forget this instance of quite contrary behaviour. On returning to dine with my late hostess, I found a telephone message from the Prefettura, saying the Bucca family were perfectly respectable, so I am very glad not to have waited, but to be now ready for hospital to-morrow.

*Sunday, January 26th.*—To S. Giovanni at 7.30; no probationers so early, so I went to mass in the little church leading out of the ward. At eight found Professor and house doctor going the rounds with the Suora and two of our probationers. The Sister of this ward (it is Prof. T.'s own), Maria Cristina, is such a sweet woman. I am thankful we are to work first with her. The Professor told her he would like her to put four beds in my hands for teaching the pupils, and she was quite pleased, and anxious to give the worst cases, saying, "Then they would have more constant attention." That is the true nurse spirit, and the real Christian sister attitude. But what a contrast to my poor old Suora Maddelena's! We have two pneumonias, one obscure fever case, and another obscure without fever. The ward is very heavy just now, and, of course, I can't help seeing how want of system makes it heavier. I realise the progress we have made at Naples, where the beds really are not only kept in order, but backs are rubbed, and hair combed, and a fair amount of washing done daily.

What is well done here is the administering of medicine. It is not given out to the patients for the twenty-four hours, as in Naples, but is kept on a neat tray and carried round and given by a Sister at the proper intervals, as at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh.

*January 29th.*—First lesson to our five probationers. I began more on the moral side of nursing; then started on the set of gynecological lectures I had noted at Edinburgh—Sir Halliday Croom's. They were keenly interested, so I hope I made myself clear (one is never quite certain of one's powers of expression in a language learnt after childhood). I want to give these lessons myself, and leave physiology and pathology to the doctors whom the Direttore has promised to find to lecture.

When we returned to the ward, the Suora exclaimed: "Come li ha infervorite; sono tutte rosse!" ["How fervid you have made them; they are quite red!"]

*February 1st.*—Such a sad event this morning. During the rounds, a poor woman who for days had been crying over the death of her soldier son in Africa, but who had been strangely quiet all yesterday, began to cry, as usual, when the doctors came to her, complaining of her constant abdominal pain. One doctor had already passed on to the next patient, when she suddenly went off her head, and, shrieking aloud for her "Cesare," tried to jump out of bed. The second doctor helped me to hold on to her, as at first we thought it was simply an hysterical crisis; but, after, they believed in some brain lesion, caused by the shock of hearing suddenly of her son's death. Her cries were terrible, poor soul; many women wept, and, as several are *enceintes*, they began crying over their fright. Nothing could calm her. "He was so good; why did they shoot him? So good, so handsome—like you" (to the doctor), &c., &c., she strug-

gled desperately to get up and go to the colonel or the regimental doctor. The Professor arrived in the midst of this scene, and quieted her comparatively, but later on the screaming fit returned, and he told the Suora to let her get up, and led her himself to the side room where delirious patients are generally put. He had her well wrapped up in blankets, as she refused to get into bed, and told the Suora to make her say the rosary. She quieted down gradually, and they let her come back to the general ward, where she wandered around, going up to *facchini* (porters), stroking their faces, and asking them for her Cesare. Everyone was very gentle with her, and she listened with pathetic gratitude to injunctions to pray for her son, and to be good and patient. She was never violent again all the day, and at night they gave her sulphonal, finding she was quite harmless like a child, not exactly idiotic. The doctors find it a very interesting case; she had been in the ward only a few days, having come in for treatment for severe abdominal pains which commenced after the shock of hearing suddenly of her son's being killed, January 6th. Poor soul! and she is only one of how many mothers!

*February 10th.*—It is rather serious lecturing to pupils who have no sense of humour. The notes one of my girls made on my lesson (the first on the practice of nursing) would rather astonish the doctors. In telling them of the harmfulness of a large number of people congregating in a patient's room (I am aiming at preparing them for nursing private cases), I touched upon the nurse's duty of persuading relations or friends to take turns in remaining with the patient. Knowing how much the habit in Italy exists of many visitors or amateur nurses accumulating in the sick-room, I tried to explain how the nurse could suggest the saving of their strength for helping during convalescence, the need of cubic space for sufficient air, and the advantages of quiet. But, remembering my comrade's experience at Naples, when called to help a doctor who was ill, finding him with half-a-dozen doctors and as many relations, I told them that if it was a case of a doctor the nurse could not make any suggestions, but must just pray that they might depart—meaning only, of course, to express the hopelessness of a nurse trying anything in such a case. But Elvira has faithfully written:—"La troppa assistenza può nuocere, ma se trattasi dei medici, bisogna pregare Iddio che se ne vadino, non potendo a loro fare alcuna osservazione." ["Too much nursing may be harmful, but if it is done by doctors you must pray to God that they may go, not being able to make any remonstrance to them."]

I can quite see her really doing so—for she is a most pious little soul—whilst the doctors (unconscious of the spiritual force being put in motion) were swearing at her for being *distratte*! The other girls had simply noted that "nurses must not make remonstrances to doctors," which is funny enough, too, knowing the position nurses are likely to hold for a long time here in relation to doctors. Remonstrancing is, of course, not to be thought of; and it will be long before they will be able even to suggest.

Regarding a matter I have more at heart, they all seem to have understood; I mean the sacredness nurses should feel in regard to what they see and hear when people are in trouble. I told them plainly that if we found that a nurse repeated things in one

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)