

addressed them in our best Italian, asking to be told about their work.

They were most courteous and responsive, telling us that they were members of the Third Order of St. Francis, which he instituted for people who live at home and cannot join regular monastic orders. They have fixed days for visiting certain wards and performing these services for patients. Some go on one day, and others on another.

We asked if there were similar work in the men's wards, and they said Yes, that even princes took their turn in going to the hospitals; they trim the men's hair, wash them, cut their finger-nails, and do all kinds of little services. This seemed to us a most quaint and old-timey custom to find in the twentieth century.

A great, old, historic hospital is the Santa Maria della Scala in Siena, where St. Catherine did her prodigies of nursing work in the times of the plague. Before that she had become famous by caring for loathsome cases of leprosy and cancer that no one else would touch. La Scala is a hospital of about 200 beds, standing just opposite the Cathedral. In early times, besides receiving the sick, it took in and educated foundlings, lodged pilgrims, and distributed alms. Lucy Olcott, in her little book "A Guide to Siena," says of it:—

"It is now generally accepted that the hospital owed its origin to the eleventh century. It was established by the canons of the Duomo, who then lived together like monks, and were obliged to devote a part of their revenue to the assistance of the poor. In time the governing power passed from their hands into those of the laity. Like the Duomo . . . the Spedale can boast a long history of its own. For centuries it served as a lodging for pilgrims as well as an asylum for the sick and poor.

"The names of two of Siena's greatest saints are intimately connected with its history—St. Catherine, who here made her daily and nightly rounds among the sick and dying, and San Bernardino, who, together with his companions, distinguished himself by his heroic care of the plague-stricken during the terrible pestilence of 1400. . . ."

The wards are long, containing about sixty beds each, and are entered from a great hall of noble dimensions, on the walls of which are frescoes representing scenes in the history of the hospital. The wards themselves are rather bare and cheerless-looking, although the beds seemed good and comfortable and well-made.

The characteristic feature of these old Italian hospitals, which were formerly monasteries, is that the ceilings are enormously high beyond all proportion to the size of the ward, and the windows very high up, sometimes just under the ceiling. The height of bare wall above the beds is such that one receives the impression that there are no windows in the ward. Yet there is plenty of light, and it is

possible to have plenty of ventilation. This, however, does not always follow. No doubt for hot Italian weather this makes a far more comfortable ward than our plan, but it looks to us quite strange and rather dreary.

In going through these various old wards one cannot but feel everywhere the entire absence of *real nursing*, no matter how charming the picturesque side may be. So long as the patients do not seem seriously ill, it is not so bad, but when one encounters typhoids, pneumonias, and other grave and critical cases, then all the inadequacy of this antiquated and untrained care becomes most painfully apparent.

The worst-appearing hospitals I saw from the nursing standpoint were the great General at Milan and the three largest hospitals of Rome. In these the crowding was greater and one saw more seriously ill patients. Everything looked slovenly, half or altogether dirty, and discouraging, as if there were mountains of work piled ahead which would never be caught up with. Especially in an early morning visit, before things have been straightened up, one realises how dreadful the conditions must be through the night. True, before training-schools were started our own city and county hospitals were worse yet, and we may still have some in remote corners that are as bad, where the trained nurse has not entered.

The nuns in these gigantic hospitals looked worn and haggard, and I do not doubt that they are all overtaxed, even although nothing is properly done.

It is certainly a mystery to me how the physicians and surgeons get good results in these hospitals, and how they can be willing to go on in that way. In one ward we saw poultices being made which looked like very bad mortar, and in another ward a dressing-case with instruments, appliances, and stimulants was positively pathetic in its unconscious dirt. L. L. Dock.

Guardians Protest.

At a recent meeting of the Metropolitan Asylums Board Mr. W. L. Beurle stated that protests had now been received from fourteen Metropolitan Boards of Guardians against the Managers' decision of April 30th last in the matter of experimental work in connection with the causation of small-pox, while only two Boards had expressed themselves in favour of the decision.

The National Anti-Vivisection Society passed the following resolution on the same subject at their annual meeting on the 17th ult. :—"That this meeting of citizens of London protests against the attempt being made by the Metropolitan Asylums Board to set up the detestable practice of vivisection at the public expense, at a hospital supported upon the rates, and warns the Board that their efforts to force ratepayers to contribute their money to what many of them conscientiously believe to be wicked will be met with determined resistance."

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