

Our Foreign Letter.

Mlle. Luigi At Beziers.



Down in
S o u t h
e a s t e r n
France, in
B é z i e r s,
quite near
to the coast,
and built on
a hill from
which one

has a beautiful view of the distant foothills of the mountains, there is something that I think it will surprise the readers of the Journal to hear of, and that is a flourishing and hopeful little training school for Nurses on the Florence Nightingale system, under the direction of a young, trained Frenchwoman. Surely the South of France is full of fair prospects and surprises in more ways than one, and not the least of her attractions is this fresh young shoot grafted upon an ancient tree. The ancient tree is the hospital, which looks—let me say it without disrespect to its feelings, at least a thousand years old, but really only dates from the 16th century—a mere nothing—when the oldest part was built as a monastery. After the Revolution, it was turned into a hospital and enlarged, and today, to its great astonishment, I am sure, it is being ruled by a youthful and gracious *Directrice*, Mlle. Luigi, who is there developing a training school composed of about fifteen pupils, with the help of a staff of certificated Head Nurses, some of which are from the Bordeaux schools. Dr. Hamilton's finger, of course, has been in this pie, for, in 1900, when she was preparing her M.D. thesis on Nursing in Montpellier, she said to Mlle. Luigi, "Why not go to London to be trained?" and she went. They were old family friends, and Mlle. Luigi's affiliations and position such that she was born to be useful in hospital work. She went to the London Hospital and was there four years. Is it not quite an interesting coincidence that the "London" should have its graduates in two pioneer nursing schools, one in the East and one in the West of France? It is certainly a feather in its cap, and I would advise Mr. Sydney Holland to run down some time in vacation, and visit Bordeaux and Béziers. I hope, though, he will not put any of his antiquated ideas about keeping Nurses as a paying investment for the hospital in their heads, for this is really a relic of the monastic system, which France is now trying to break away from.

Mlle. Luigi went directly from England to take charge, but the hospital had been laicised a year before, and an interregnum of rather chaotic character had filled in the time, so that her problem at first was really a knotty one.

The hospital is an extensive and rambling one of 400 beds, with civil and military divisions, and a maternity. It is a remarkably interesting

specimen of the old-fashioned provincial hospital, and, like Albi, it has an extensive domain surrounding it, including vegetable gardens, quarters for a dozen cows, the abodes of many rabbits, which are raised as food, and beautiful gardens for the Nurses and the patients, in one of which we sat under an arbor to have tea.

Making garden is a national trait. The patients' garden had been simply a large square court until the new *Directrice* told the men convalescents they might do as they liked with it. Under their fingers all sorts of flower beds, ivy borders, etc., magically appeared, and under a tree in a corner they have built a little summer-house, the roof of which is made of hospital linen. It is all covered with vines, and there the patients sit with an expression of absolutely endless virtue and self-satisfaction.

Mlle. Luigi is here, as Mlle. Nectoux at Albi, the chief officer of the hospital; yet the Secretary and Econome have a considerable amount of autonomy, as this hospital is one of a group of institutions on the plan, so common in France, of centralising functions. She has an excellent and intelligent Administration, who support her cordially. I have wondered several times, in seeing the progress and feeling the atmosphere in these southern hospitals, whether Dr. Lande's influence was not pretty widely felt among them on the side of the municipal governments, as that of the Bordeaux schools is in their interior spirit. This makes an admirable combination. The wards are very large and have thirty beds each. They are quite lacking in modern labour-saving devices—realise, for instance, that all the water needed for giving two baths daily to three smallpox patients who were just then in the isolation wards, had to be carried in buckets the entire length of the main corridor, and that almost everything else is just as inconvenient, and it will be understood what nursing means in these picturesque buildings.

The Maternity is in charge of a trained Midwife, who passed her sixteen months of rigorous preparation in Montpellier. Both she and Mlle. Luigi have concentrated their powers of improvement on this division, and it is now one of the three that I have seen in France that seemed to me the most model, not so much with regard to building and fittings, as to sweet cleanliness and careful details, also as to refined privacy. Another of the three was that at the *Maison de Santé Protestante*, and the third was at the *Tenon*, in Paris, where, under the charge of a very able *Surveillante*, who had had it for many years, it presented a remarkable contrast to the rest of the hospital. Of course, there are many that I have not seen.

Mlle. Luigi told me that when she came there was absolutely *nothing* in this Maternity in the way of appliances, utensils, and furniture, outside of the beds and chairs; and can you believe that the *accouchements* were conducted by an old dame of sixty, quite untrained, and that the patients sat on a chair to be delivered, after-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)