

**Our Foreign Letter.**

IN AN ITALIAN HOSPITAL.  
PAGES FROM AN ENGLISHWOMAN'S DIARY.

(Continued from page 120.)



October 17th.

The first pupil nurse Assunta began to-day. They thought by now my presence was sufficiently a matter of course, to permit that of a pupil without alarming the

existing employés. I begged Padre Filippo yesterday to say a few words to the girl about nursing as a mission; and he spoke very nicely to her, simply and decidedly, whilst she responded sensibly and modestly. Assunta moves well, and has good manners, but I do not know if she cares for patients, or can make them happy—one must not judge the first day.

The Professore told Donna Angelina to prepare a list of the women nurses, as he hoped to begin his elementary course of lectures on Sunday. I urged his having the male nurses at the same time; for they are rather more educated than the women, and nicer (some of them), so are certainly as worth teaching; whilst it will not be possible to repeat the lessons, he has so little time.

October 19th.

On the strength of having a pupil, I ventured to ask the chief for a mackintosh for bed-baths. The whole bathing system (!!) has been incredibly elementary here, but I dared not risk innovations in the beginning, so endured the extraordinary process of stripping a patient, sitting her on a chair, lathering her with soap (this latter forgotten often when I was not there) and hot water, and then drying her. This taking place in a so-called "bath-room," with a marble bath which was out of order, and the key of which had to be sought for from ward to ward. The said bath-room was also on the opposite side of the garden to the women's ward, necessitating the patient's walking round half the open arcade before and after the bath. Happily we shall now be able to release the weak patients from this ordeal; and as the weather grows cold, bed-baths will probably become the rule for all of them.

Sunday, 20th October.

The first lesson took place to-day; just a month after my advent. I can see the chief is delighted at our having got so far, though he says very little. After rounds we collected two nurses from each ward, leaving one in charge for the hour, and requesting Donna Angelina and Don Ciccio to supervise. In all we had eight men and six women, beside Assunta, and such curious types? They sat in a semi-circle, looking very puzzled, and very out of place in the lovely old library which is the only unspoilt thing left of the old convent. It has 6 *cento* wood carving all round it, in excellent preservation.

The Direttore did not give the lesson himself. He wished the course to begin with the elements of

anatomy, and therefore asked his surgeon colleague to lecture, merely giving a little introductory speech himself. He said how necessary it was for nurses to have more than the often inaccurate knowledge picked up by experience. He wished them to become instructed in why they did things, and how they should be done, and, to understand that, they must first learn a little about the human body. He told them that they need not fear being sent away, but that new nurses would have to get the certificate given after this course of instruction before being employed. He added that nurses who wished to qualify for private nursing must go through a further and more advanced course later on.

Professor S— then began the lesson, making it as simple as possible, merely enumerating the bones and their especial points of interest to nurses for practical purposes. It was evidently entirely new to them, and I fear very little was registered by their poor brains! But they thought the skeleton very interesting, and asked me after if I would go over what the Professor had said.

Another chief entered, as he was finishing (one of the Clinical Professors), and wished all manner of success to the movement, which inaugurated so much progress, etc., etc.

I asked the Direttore after, if he did not wish now to take other pupils, and he agreed. I do not think it wise to keep on Assunta, by herself, it gives her too much importance in her own eyes—she is a good girl, but almost as ignorant as the servants, I find; I want better material to work at.

October 27th.

The Chief is really admirable with the patients; never have I seen anyone more tender, or more gently humorous. The way he soothed a poor half silly woman with acute (syphilitic) head pain, who cried during the rounds, was simply beautiful; he made her smile at last, as she held on to his hand, kissing it in true Neapolitan fashion. She is repulsively ugly, poor Annunziata, and no one likes her; but after this little scene, I noticed everyone was kinder to her. This evening he was equally admirable as he looked quiet reproach at a young student, who could not resist laughing at some extraordinary Neapolitanism used by our angina pectoris case. The poor fellow was sitting up in bed, with that peculiar strained look which is so typical, and as the chief passed up the ward, he paused to ask how he was.

"Ah, Signor Professor," he answered, "It may be foolishness what I say, but if you *could* only open me and cut out the ill?"

The infermière also smiled, but the chief looked gravely and sadly at them and the student, as he said, "You should not laugh; conceive instead what that poor man must be suffering to make him ask such a thing."

And knowing the horror that the knife inspires in hospital patients, these few words of the chief gave a vision of what the man was really enduring, and I do not think anyone will feel like laughing again, however quaintly he may express himself.

Would that there were more chiefs like ours—here and everywhere.

October 30th.

Rather an amusing incident to-day; at least, it is best to look at the funny side of it, otherwise one would feel discouraged. A new pupil came yesterday, sent by the Principessa. She was a young married

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