

Our Foreign Letter.**IN ITALIAN HOSPITALS.***(More Pages from an Englishwoman's diary.)*

November 1st.
All Saints' day.

—The surgeon continues giving elementary anatomy lessons to my two probationers, and to as many of the servant nurses as can

be collected from the wards. The latter understand next to nothing, but the Chief thought it wise not to hurt their feelings. I hear that the chief impression left on one infermiere was that the "coda" (tail) was longer in the woman than in the man. We presume he meant in our pre-historic ancestors! but evidently he confused descriptions of the coccyx and the larger diameter of the female pelvis.

Cajati and Ida, my two pupils, come irregularly. The Principessa says it is necessary to be lenient in the commencement. Unless people are paid it is impossible to enforce exactitude here, she says. Later, when we have proved that our nurses have embraced a career that is both financially and morally satisfactory, it will be possible to obtain daily attendance of probationers. Now, they would only leave if we insisted. I expect anyhow we shall come to that. Neither young woman seems to me suitable; one too feeble physically and morally, the other not old enough to be depended on.

I do not feel that time is being wasted, however, for I am gradually getting firmer foothold myself by seeing exactly how things go, and by making all the little improvements that are at present possible, quite quietly, with the chief's help.

Yesterday I went into Sala III, and found that Arzolina had died. The priest was sitting at the table near; but no infermiera, no screens. I called for Vincenza, who was in charge, and told her she must fetch the screens, the chief wished it. She told me they always used them if there were a "lunga agonia," but this woman had died quietly. Of course I insisted, and she fetched them from some other ward: it gives so bad an impression to the other patients this want of kindly reverence! At present they do nothing to the body, except close the eyes and remove the nightgown, wrapping it in a sheet in which they lift it on the bier. Padre Filippo told me that *he* instituted the use of the sheet! We will soon institute all that is right, I trust. After leaving the hospital I went to visit a poor expatient, one of our phthisical boys. I found him slightly better, and so happy to be at home. But what a home! Thirteen people in two ground floor rooms, apparently all sleeping in two huge beds in one of them, conceive the propagation of disease this boy's return means! There was no sun, the street being far too narrow, so they have not even that microbe destroyer.

I went after to a church close by, S. Giroloneo, it is very rich and beautiful. A service was going on, chanting, organ, incense, but very few people. The

quiet and beauty were very satisfying, only very old wonderings came back forcibly as I looked at the crucifix, could it be right for modern Christianity to be so far removed from its prototype? Christ's simplicity, His giving of everything seems so curiously evolved into this gorgeousness, this luxury of gold and silver ornaments and embroidered vestments. Perhaps it struck me more from having just come from that poor boy who took it as a matter of course that he should live on three or four sous' worth of broth, and have no medicine until the Misericordia Dispensary should open some ten days hence. Things certainly are pretty upside down here. They have such a barbarous custom for instance to-day. Nearly every child you meet runs about with a little wooden box painted in imitation of a coffin, with skull and crossbones on the lid, which they hold out to passers-by begging for "soldi per i morti." I thought that at least they were collecting for some religious purpose, but not at all; they use their pence to buy sweets and cakes with *for themselves!* Where can the connection between commemoration of the dead and goodies for the children exist unless they argue, "They, we hope, are feasting in Paradise, and so will we on earth"?

November 19th.—A very busy morning, and neither probationer appeared. Six new patients came in after rounds to be found beds and bathed. One was so ill that we could not complete washing him. I was helping an infermiere do so between blankets (a great novelty still) when the chief and the Principessa walked in and stood looking on. He forbade washing below the waist, as the boy was very exhausted. If better to-morrow I will finish the bath myself; but, anyhow, the poor boy will not need washing long, he is evidently dying.

An extraordinary patient, hated by the others, and who was rude even to our dear Padre Filippo the other day, gave us a great deal of trouble in the midst of all the extra work. He is quite "ignorante" (which is the worst term of reproach you can give in Italian) though syndic of his village! He has some obscure gastric trouble, and goes half off his head with desire to have the stomach pump. To-day he kept half howling, half crying: "Ho roba fracida in corpo! Levatemi questa roba fracida dal corpo!" and no one could appease him. One of his neighbours, an irritable phthisis, jumped out of bed and threatened to strike him, only we flew to the rescue. But it was Pandemonium. At last Dr. B—— came and washed his stomach, more to quiet him than because he considered it desirable.

November 20th.—Another tremendously busy day, and still no probationer, seven new patients, the chief putting five of them in the "camerette" (three little rooms up a back staircase) *with the syndic!* I found Babel this morning in the ward where he was, everyone speaking at once, and describing the awful night he had given them. Never silent, they said, crying all the time, his usual "Levatemi questa roba . . . etc.," or putting his fingers down his throat in hopes of their acting as emetic. Poor old man, he is really off his head with the discomfort, and it is quite useless reasoning with him. He does not believe the doctor's encouragement; his one desire is the stomach pump.

I washed and tidied him up, but went to tell the Chief the exact state of the case before he went the rounds, so that when he came to the bed he quietly told the poor creature that he would put him in an-

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