

## The Nursing System of Italian Hospitals.

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(Concluded from p. 417, Vol. XXXII.)

An important paper on this subject was written by Signora Angelo Celli, of Rome, in 1901.\* Signora Celli deals with the subject as fearlessly as does Dr. Hamilton, of France, in her articles. Space does not allow us to give it in full, as we should like to do.

Beginning by sketching the reforms of Florence Nightingale and the systems of the great "free" nursing institutions of Hamburg and Berlin, she goes on to describe the nursing system of Italy, and we are glad to find that the articles on that subject which have appeared in this journal are verified by her statements and descriptions. After mentioning the Sisters of Charity, she says:—

"The servant-nurses are the ones who really attend to the sick. Few indeed are the hospitals where this is done by the Sisters—for example, to a certain extent in Rome at San Giovanni Hospital, at the Cottolengo in Turin, at the Civil Hospital of Udine, &c. Still fewer are the examples, as at Pavia and in the Hospital S. Maria Nuova in Florence, where semi-religious orders of women who have taken no regular vows are in charge of the wards and perform all the most important and delicate duties for the sick. In all the other large hospitals the service is regulated as before described."

After discussing the economic side, of cheapness to the hospital where religious orders are in charge, she says:—

"The discipline of the religious orders is certainly vastly superior to that of the lay nurses, and this is of extraordinary importance for those attending upon the sick. But the admirable discipline of the Catholic Church has this one defect: instead of recognising first the medical authority, it places first the religious authority. From this cause arise various stumbling-blocks. The service of the sick is looked upon as labour rewarded in heaven, and it is not considered necessary to teach it as a profession. It is regarded as a religious function.

"It has happened that Sisters have refused to carry out medical orders for children, saying that it was much better they should become angels. In one instance, when a patient had a severe hæmorrhage, instead of calling the physician the Sister went for the priest. Another on a winter night allowed a patient with pneumonia to get up, and the latter was found by the physician, half-dressed and dying, kneeling upon the cold floor to pray.

"This is not said to criticise, for I am the first to recognise the great merits of the Sisters. But

\* "La Donna Infermiera," by Anna Celli, in *Unione Femminile*, Nos. 3 and 4 and 7 and 8. Milan, 1901.

science is to-day too far advanced, and to be a competent nurse it is absolutely necessary that the nurse be thoroughly taught, and not limited to the religious service.

"The nurse should occupy herself solely with the sick and leave all else to be done by others. She should be exclusively subordinate to the medical officers and follow rigorously all their orders.

"She should be put through a practical and theoretical course, and be capable not only of recognising grave symptoms, but also, in times of emergency, of applying the remedy. And before practising, she should be well instructed, partly by the physicians and surgeons, and partly by the trained and qualified head of nurses.

"She should not, from reasons of false modesty, leave the most important parts of the care of the sick to attendants, but it should be her highest duty and honour to have no ignorant person touch the patient.

"She should not wear a dark habit and immense head-dress, which impedes work and becomes a vehicle for micro organisms, but choose a light, washable dress.

"Until such reforms can be made the religious Sister can never be a real and model nurse in the modern sense of the word.

"To-day, the care of the sick in Italy is largely in the hands of lay persons, illiterate, and engaged as servants. In general they are admitted from the age of eighteen to forty years, in one hospital at fifteen, in another at sixteen. In another there is no rule. Usually only unmarried women are accepted, because the work requires that they should live in the hospital. However, this rule is not in force in a number of hospitals. In two\* before being engaged as nurse the applicant must spend six months in the laundry. In other hospitals she is engaged without condition. In five she must give some unpaid time—in one two months, in another three, in another two years, in another forty days—before being definitely accepted. In one it is compulsory to attend instructions, in another it is voluntary. In some practical instruction is given. In others practical and theoretical instruction. At the end of the latter an examination is given.

"At Pavia a physician gives a course of two months' teaching after the nurses demonstrate that they can read, write, and do simple arithmetic. At Ferrara the course lasts four months, with one lesson a week, and comprises medical and surgical work. At Siena the physicians give a theoretical course of six months. If the applicant cannot pass a satisfactory examination in this, he or she is not accepted. In Florence, every year, the physicians and surgeons give a practical and theoretical course of six

\* In the original paper the names of all hospitals are given with the facts, but are omitted by us for the sake of brevity.

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