

Our Foreign Letter.

THE NEW POLYCLINIC HOSPITAL IN ROME.



Rome has just completed a truly magnificent and model hospital, to accommodate 1,200 patients and to unite in

one all of the various clinics for the students of medicine which are now scattered over the city. It was not yet ready for the reception of patients in February, when we visited it, but was practically complete.

It is built according to the very latest dictates of science, and is not only hundreds of years ahead of everything else in Italy, but probably ranks with the few most complete and perfect hospitals in construction, sanitation, and practical detail. We know, too, that it will have medical science second to none, but the thought of the nursing it will probably have makes one sad, as one examines the beautiful details and imagines the messy slovenliness that will most likely prevail in the wards; for no suggestion of establishing a training-school suitable for this beautiful hospital had been made in the history and description of the hospital printed lately. It was projected in 1874 by Guido Baccelli, a Minister of the Government, and was begun in 1888.

The wards are situated, like the Johns Hopkins's, in the upper part of single pavilions, connected by corridors. The latter are three-storeyed, one underground being for service, the travel of food-carts, drug supplies, &c., the ground floor for the passage of the public, and the second floor for the patients. The main kitchen is in the centre of the general plan, and is fitted up with steam cookers of the latest German manufacture. The brass cookers are all suspended on a steel and iron circle in the middle of the room. Nothing touches the floor except the iron stoves with charcoal fires for broiling small meat, and the coffee-roaster with its charcoal bed, over which the coffee beans are hung in a revolving brass globe with an outer protecting shell, and the stove with its spit turned by a pulley-wheel, for roasting large meat over a charcoal fire, under a closed top and chimney hood. There is a very complete system of baths. Besides the small ordinary porcelain tubs for each ward, there are special baths, alike for men and women. Of these, one is a deep marble pool, sunken in the floor, so that one goes up two marble steps and down five or six. It can give a complete immersion up to the neck, and is almost big enough to swim in. Then there are sitz-baths with spray douches—rectal, vaginal, spinal, and diaphragmatic. Either one or all of these at once can be given.

There is a skeleton bath, like a set of ribs, continued to the floor. The patient stands up in this

while each rib sends forth a line of spray, and a rectal spray comes up from the floor and one from above comes down on the head. Then there are Turkish baths, ordinary sprays and showers, and a number of porcelain tubs. The mechanism for the special baths is all worked by a keyboard at one end of the room, where also there is a pressure-regulator and a thermometer to get the correct degree of heat wanted. All over the entire institution all the hot-water pipes are painted in blue, and the cold-water pipes in pink.

The wards, intended for eighteen beds, each have four small rooms as well, one of four beds and the others for a single patient, a little kitchen (and so pretty), and a small disinfecting-room of its own. This is for the first disinfection of clothing before sending to the laundry, and the disinfection apparatus, which stands in the middle of the room, first expels by means of a special extractor all the air contained in the interstices of the material, and then steams it. The soiled articles for the laundry (which is fitted up with the best steam appliances) descend through a chute into a receptacle.

The lavatories, water-closets, and slop-hoppers are very complete and convenient. A small room or closet is arranged near each ward for keeping the vessels in which are kept discharges for the physician to inspect. These vessels are placed in an iron casket which is in communication with the ventilating pipes of the drainage system. A granite bowl and drain-pipe in the same room receives these materials when they are to be thrown away. The walls of the room are faced half-way up with slabs of granite. Details like this show that the practical details for getting work done have been very carefully thought out, and every department shows the same scientific forethought in all details, and the same perfect finish as to materials used. It will be the greatest pity if it does not have a nursing service capable of appreciating it all, and of keeping it in the exquisite order that it should be kept in.

L. L. DOCK.

IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFINE THE PERIOD OF INFECTIVITY. —The Medical Officer of Health for Woolwich has made some candid remarks respecting the apparent failure of infectious hospitals to diminish the occurrence of scarlet fever. It is very interesting to find, in this connection, that the Metropolitan Asylums Board—which has the administration of all the fever hospitals in the metropolis—as a result of complaints arising in consequence of the premature discharge of patients, appointed some time ago a medical officer to conduct investigations as to the causation of scarlet fever, and also as to the period of infectivity of patients suffering from the disease, and the report of this officer is expected to be ready very shortly, and is likely to throw much new light on the subject. It is now acknowledged that the period of infectivity is not confined to the desquamation stage, and that it is impossible for anyone to assert positively that infection has or has not ceased in any given case.

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