

Our Foreign Letter.

AN OUT-PATIENT AT THE INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL AT NAPLES.

Truly a boon for the sick traveller is such an institution as the International Hospital in Naples.



all wanderers on the Continent of Europe know, to die in an hotel is expensive and inconvenient to the last degree. I remember an invalid, poor as regards worldly goods, telling me that for one cupful of beef-tea he paid two shillings in an hotel in Egypt. And an American woman who was taken ill at Shephard's Hotel, Cairo, said that not only had she to pay a full price for board and lodging, but also, when unable to take any solid food, she was charged extra for all invalid nourishment. "In fact," she remarked, "I think that every time I rang the bell it was an item in my bill."

Take the case of a patient who sickens for typhoid fever on board train or steamer, on arrival at Naples he can be carried from the platform or the landing stage straight to the hospital. The Ospedale Internazionale, as its name indicates, is intended for all nationalities, but is chiefly used by English and Americans, as the Germans have their own hospital in Naples. There are three rates of payment for the patients, the ascending scale being six, ten, and sixteen lire or francs per day, doctor and nurse included.

The villa, which is charmingly situated on the Via Tasso, far removed from the noise of one of the noisiest cities in the world, has a good sized garden and terraces overlooking the Bay. The rooms, for I will not call them wards, are prettily and suitably furnished, and, for the most part, open on to the terraces, which form ideal lounges for convalescent patients, commanding as they do a glorious view of the far-famed Bay of Naples.

There is a resident doctor, a matron, and three or four nurses. A nursing home better describes this little hospital, which has a decidedly "homey" feeling in its atmosphere. My visit within these walls was not in the character of an inspector or even of a journalist. No, I was that nondescript creature, an out-patient; for, after consulting the doctor, his advice was that I should undergo a very slight operation which would not necessitate a residence, even of a day, in the hospital. The trouble was a cyst in the left eyelid, and the little affair was not exactly easy, for the lump was right in the corner of the eyelid; but, as the doctor had promised, I was able to walk away from the hospital about an hour afterwards. The operating room—one

can hardly call it a theatre—is very small, though probably large enough for the requirements of the house. The doctor has a good sized and comfortably furnished consulting room, with some pretty water-colour drawings and prints hanging on the walls. One charming little sketch, taken on the island of Capri by a Swedish artist, caught my fancy. Indeed, there were plenty of opportunities for examining the pictures and books in that room in my capacity of out patient.

So well is the hospital thought of by those who know it best, that many members of the English colony go in as patients when they are ill. Indeed, quite recently I was playing Bridge with an English resident in Naples who was a patient in the hospital, and was ordered not to talk but allowed to play games. The doctor came in while we were playing. He does not know the game, but one of our party suggested that it was his duty to learn in order that he might take a hand when required.

Doctor and Matron are German, but they speak and understand English very well. One of the nurses is a Swede, but at least one of the others is English. The hospital is managed—and very well managed—I am told, by a committee of the foreign residents.

One other point I wish to mention with regard to the establishment of International or English and American Hospitals or Nursing Homes, for sick travellers in foreign cities. I approach the subject gingerly, for it is an ungrateful one, yet still, I think, worthy of note. In most of the large Continental towns English doctors are established, and, as the majority of English and American tourists do not speak or understand any foreign language well, for this reason only, apart from any other, they prefer to send for an English doctor when ill. His usual fee in Switzerland or Italy is twenty francs or lire a visit, whereas most Swiss and Italian general medical practitioners charge five lire a visit. If these English doctors were on a higher platform of medical knowledge and skill than their foreign brethren, this would be all very well, but it cannot be said that such is usually the case. It is argued that an English doctor understands an English constitution better than the foreigner can. But it is just as easy to argue that a Swiss doctor, for instance, understands the effect of Swiss climatic conditions on an English patient better than a stranger (English) can.

In conclusion, I would observe that "lookers on see most of the game," and I do not believe that I have stated the case in favour of International Hospitals for sick travellers, on the lines of the one already in existence at Naples, too strongly. Also it should be borne in mind that the English-speaking races constitute the majority of these travellers.

RAY MERTON.

An official document issued from the offices of the Apostolic Visitations gives the Pope's approval to the work of providing a home in Rome in which only English-speaking patients will be received. It will be conducted by a community of nuns known as the Little Company of Mary, who are also British.

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