

Our Foreign Letter.

IN THE GESÙ MARIA HOSPITAL, NAPLES.
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After sending off last week the few notes on our earthquake patients, I saw Miss Dock's kind notice regarding a scheme of Miss Baxter's for starting a small Nursing Home in Naples was quoted in the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING (January 16th).

As this scheme has since been greatly modified I should like to say a few words about it before returning to our patients.

Last spring Principessa di Strongoli offered a very fine Villa to be used as a Casa di Cura, and nursed entirely by Miss Baxter's pupils of the "Croce Azzurra" Training School.

Miss Baxter worked out the plan on lines which would have entailed a minimum of expense. She as Direttrice and I as her assistant would have worked the first two years without salary. Signorina Adelaide Pagliara, Secretary to the Croce Azzurra Committee, would have arranged the furnishing and commissariat on extraordinarily economical lines, and paying patients would have provided for the keep of the free beds necessary for the preliminary training of the pupils.

Consequently the very small sum of 15,000 francs was calculated as sufficient for the execution of this scheme, and Miss Dock, with her unfailing sympathy and kindness, gave us her aid in seeking to obtain it.

By the autumn the money was almost entirely promised and I came to Naples to help in the organising of the future little model hospital. But, alas, we discovered that the Villa so generously offered by the Principessa was considered far too distant from town, requiring over an hour's train journey; no good doctor, consequently, would have sent either rich or poor patients to us.

We then tried to find some other suitable Villa in a good position, but either the rent was too high, or the owner refused to let for such an object, therefore, very reluctantly the scheme had to be renounced, at least for the moment.

But we still have hopes of, and are making efforts towards, finding the right rich person who will endow a small hospital, where Miss Baxter would have the opportunity of training on the lines which she knows to be essential for the formation of the really efficient and trustworthy nurse. But in this country of "after to-morrow" it is likely to be long before we actually succeed in doing this, and therefore we have not reported our hopes in the nursing papers—but quietly continued working in the Gesù Maria Hospital as the best milieu at present obtainable for the training of better class nurses.

And then this earthquake, with its wide-spreading upheaval, came, and God only knows where its results may not leave us. This month of January has brought the question of nursing imperatively before the public. Will what is good remain of the chaotic mass of infermiera who have rendered assistance in our hospitals, institutions, or wherever the wounded have been received? Will a better organised preparation of professional and of Red Cross nurses result? Or will the wave of enthusiasm sink into a greater indifference by reaction? Time will show. Meanwhile we will continue to work on patiently, thankful that the Croce Azzurra has been able to present at least a small body of disciplined and well-taught Italian nurses, as type of what is needed in all our hospitals.

And now to return to our "feriti." They are mainly progressing so favourably that the day of their exit is at least within sight. One more death only this last week, and one which was always expected. Signora Letizia, No. 1, was brought to us in a state of exhaustion and inanition, with compound fracture of the arm, and nothing but her mentality ever showed signs of recouping. I do not remember when she came, but now it seems as if she had been a prominent figure always, that little old lady with the iron will. I noticed her first one morning because of an extraordinary coiffure. She had ordered one of the young nurses to put a large band of cotton wool enclosed in gauze outside the grey handkerchief which was tied under her chin, and outside this again was a grey shawl, so that she reminded one of an exaggerated Cruikshank drawing of the immense poke bonnets of our great-grandmothers. And then gradually character began to tell, and we one and all became obedient to the old lady, whenever it was possible to content her without harming the others. Till one day, when suffering greatly, but making no effort to control her moans, I reasoned with her, appealing and commanding, for the sake of the others, some measure of self-restraint. She understood at once, and made the effort, whilst after that she seemed to feel the need of my "suggestion" as her cry was constantly for "la Signora" the nurses told me, and even in the midst of receiving Extreme Unction, she lifted a radiant smile to me. The last two nights she had no power of control, but every few minutes her cries rang through the ward, "Oimé," "Misera me," requiring much patience on the part of the other patients, as nothing could quiet her until she again sank into stupor, to awake once more with the same involuntary cry. But still she knew what she wanted, and directed, by signs when voice failed, where the crucifix was to be placed, how many spoonfuls she would take, etc. Her one arm retained a certain vigour till the last twelve hours, and she found strength to place the crucifix on her head the night before she died. All that last day though (she passed gently away at 5) she lay without movement, refusing drink, her eyes fixed on the crucifix, to which the day before a nurse had heard her repeating over and over again, "Gesù, perdonami, perdonami."

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