

## Our Foreign Letter.

Bordighera, Italy.



Before I leave Italy after a long holiday, I feel it my duty to remember that I am a collaborator of the BRITISH

JOURNAL OF NURSING. Professional matters in Germany are developing quietly and slowly, and what there is to tell, I hope to report to the Congress. So I will just tell you a little of the life in this country—a country foremost in the thoughts of the whole civilised world for weeks after the dreadful disaster which wiped away thousands of people in a few moments. Being so far from the South, I at first saw only the impressions made on the minds of the people round me, and that was touching enough. All the public buildings at once flew their flags half-mast high and bound with black. A few days after the earthquake a large poster was displayed in the streets, in which the Mayor most urgently invited the help of all citizens, and notified that a Committee was being formed to organise help in this time of national disaster. Just an hour later I saw how they set to work, and never in my life shall I forget that day. To the low, wailing music of their city musicians, a long procession of men of every class of the population passed along the streets—the fisherman and the workman in his blue blouse by the side of the well-clad merchant, each wearing on one arm the Italian colours. All carried small linen bags on long rods in their hands, which they stretched on all sides to collect money. Behind them followed three large carts, drawn by horses, and fitted up quite simply with green baize, bearing in large letters on each side the word "Soccoriama" (Let us help). All the people came out of the houses and huts and small sideways, and brought bundles of dresses, wrappers, and goods of every possible kind, or, at least, a few soldi or lire. Out of the upper stories also, sometimes, a bundle or some coins were thrown. Three times they had to empty the carts, and often the money bags had to be emptied into the large red box on the seat of one of the carts, so that in the evening over 700 lire had been collected, most of it in coppers.

Bordighera is a very small place, and poor, too, and in the beginning of January the foreign visitors are few. Nor were they meant to do the giving, but just the citizens wanted to help their own people. So they marched from one end of the long village to the other, first along the main street of the town, near the sea. Whenever they passed the hotels someone always came out of the gardens to call them in, or to bring large parcels. The strangers, just as much as their own people, wanted to contribute for the poor victims—wanted to show their thankfulness to the beautiful country which is loved by all who have ever seen it.

Hour after hour the procession went from house to house, and, impelled by a magic spell, we followed, and observed with deep feeling the wonderful simplicity, the rare grace of these people in whom so much of the child of nature is preserved. The eager faces, the tearful eyes, the whole behaviour of all, were eloquent. One did not need a knowledge of the language—one understood the pleading eyes of the children when they ran to their parents for money, and the lively gestures of the adults, without words. When they went up to the higher road, with the noble hotels and villas of the rich people, they played, with rare tact, before a large sanatorium, the most joyful tunes, as if they did not wish the sick foreigners to feel their own misfortune too deeply. Then they went on to the old village, towering right away up the mountain, with such narrow streets that there is only one—that leading to the market place—along which carriages can pass. Loads have to be carried along all the others on the backs of mules or asses, and often over steep flights of steps.

All the people of the old village streamed into the market place. Before the Town Hall a table was placed with wine and glasses, so that the musicians and collectors might refresh themselves after their long walk. Such a picture! These old, old houses, the beautiful church, the rare picturesqueness of the narrow streets and of the people, most of them just returning from their work. The most conspicuous of all were a wiry little man, with a very characteristic face, full of life, who seemed to be at several different places at the same time—a Neapolitan, as I heard later—and a strong young fellow in a blue blouse, with the token of the Socialists on his arm ribbon.

When they left the old village to go down the last street to the cottages of the fishermen behind the harbour, near the valley of Sasso, the sun sank into the sea behind the island of Hyères, and a wonderful moon rose over its blue depths. The men who had finished their day's work made a halt before they turned to the palm-clad valley, and their instruments, full of joy, sang their thanks to all who had helped them to accomplish it, and the music, as it reverberated from the mountains, was borne to the farthest end of the town. An elderly man, probably the Mayor, spoke hearty words of thanks to all around him, and was answered with three cheers before those present dispersed. As we walked home along the beach in the moonlight we wondered whether misfortune was sent to humanity to make people feel as these did that day.

Soon after there were requiem masses celebrated in both the Roman Catholic churches. I longed to be again with the people I had learned to love, so I attended a service, and, without understanding the words, it went straight to the core of my heart, the first in a Roman church which has done so. The old church was almost dark, though it was a sunny day; the pillars at the entrance were draped in black; but the altar was in a blaze of light around a wonderful statue of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, with sweet angel heads at her feet. The song of the people was not very musical, and their voices were some-

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