

Report on Hospital Training in Italy.*

By Miss Amy Turton,
Hon. Vice-President for Italy, International
Council of Nurses.

At the last International Congress of Nurses Italy was unable to report any progress. We could only express hopes, founded on increase of interest in the nursing question. These hopes have, fortunately, been largely fulfilled, for though a training school which can serve as a national model has not yet actually come into existence, the preparations for its birth are almost complete, and the date announced for February, 1910.

Before describing the *modus operandi* of the future Roman Polyclinic Hospital School for professional nurses, I will summarise to some extent what has been accomplished by its forerunners.

First and foremost of these is the "*Croce Azzurra*," or Blue Cross Association, of Naples. Founded by Principessa di Strongoli in 1896, the Blue Cross Training School has pursued its course, combating all but unconquerable difficulties. It has continued to train, by the unaided technical and moral efforts of Miss Baxter, biennial classes of eight to ten probationers, many of whom on graduating have assumed posts of direction in the wards of other hospitals or in private nursing homes.

During the earthquake episode this winter the Blue Cross nurses assisted the hundred and odd sufferers brought to the Gesu e Maria Hospital. And the same class of eight pupils are at this moment undergoing exhaustive examinations at the hands of five Professors, after receiving from Miss Baxter a grounding in practical-theoretical technique which would enable them to hold their own with Anglo-Saxon fellow-students.

The pity is that such excellent instruction should be received by so small a number of pupils. But, although the Blue Cross Association possesses a matron of perfect training and capacity, and the Gesu e Maria Hospital offers a sufficient variety of material in medical and surgical patients, neither board nor lodging have been obtainable for the pupils, and the responsibility of the nursing is shared with the nuns and the "*camminanti*" (these are equivalent to the orderlies of military hospitals and the extinct "*Sairy Gamps*" of civil ones). Consequently many most desirable pupils are lost from inability to live at their own expense whilst training; and the development of many moral and intellectual qualities essential to a nurse—such as resource, conscientious thoroughness in repetition—is not obtainable from pupils in a hospital where the *official* staff already exists. At the most you succeed in obtaining it from exceptionally endowed women (morally and mentally endowed), but not from the moderately gifted, and these are, of course, the large majority. It is inevitable that the average young woman should slide out of whatever she does not like doing when

she knows that *officially* it is the duty of the servant-nurse.

The *Croce Azzurra* cannot, therefore, serve as a complete model for Italy to imitate, though the standard of practical-theoretical teaching evolved by Miss Baxter is undoubtedly one which can serve for all future Italian training schools, comprising as it does all that is considered essential in the training of nurses of any nation.

Signora Anna Celli comes next amongst pioneers. As *Directrice* of the Medical, Pediatric, Oculistic, and Pathological Cliniques in Rome this lady has worked unwearingly for the improvement of nursing, and has formed precedents of the utmost value. In the cliniques her nurses—called Signorine, equivalent to the "Miss" of American, the "Mademoiselle" of French nurses—receive board and lodging and a fair stipend. She has also arranged the time-table of work on accepted lines, dividing day from night duty, dividing responsibility, etc. Perhaps the most far-reaching service given to nursing reform by Signora Celli lies in her declaration that the spirit of nursing had not yet been understood. In an admirable article in the *Nuova Antologia*, October, 1908, she said that "nursing was not such an easy matter," but "called for special aptitude and inclination and profound preparation"; that no woman's profession exacted so much devotion, so many sacrifices, none was so in harmony with the womanly temperament and character, nor made such demands upon those qualities which are the "*forte*" of our sex, viz., patience, pity, and charity.

There is no doubt that Signora Celli's noble and persistent efforts for raising the hospital standard of nursing can never be too greatly appreciated, either by her fellow-pioneer nurses or by the doctors and patients, with and for whom she has so undauntedly laboured.

Signora Rita Sciamanna, in the Roman Surgical Clinique, has recently given much the same object lesson as Signora Celli, though only during a brief period; her nurses have likewise been of the more educated classes, and have been given board, lodging, and salary, whilst the entire responsibility of nursing was entrusted to her and them by the Chief, Professor Durante.

The Queen has taken great interest in her work of reform, visiting personally her wards and sending gold watches to the two nurses who displayed most conscientiousness and intelligence.

To Signora Sciamanna a special debt of gratitude is due, in that she brought the need of nursing reform most vividly before the public in her speech at the National Woman's Congress, May, 1908, an act requiring no small amount of courage.

In Rome we have, therefore, the precedent of nursing entirely entrusted to *direttrici* and their pupils and of living in hospital and receiving salaries. The especial drawbacks to these schools are, however—

(1) That the nurses are not allowed to work in other wards than their own. The pupils of the Medical Clinique consequently get no surgical training, and *vice-versa*.

(2) The hours of service are too long to permit of sufficient study; nor are there regular courses of

* Presented to the International Council of Nurses, London, July, 1909.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)