

no equivalent, intentionally because he perceived the difference between the "assisting" of the *infermiere* and the almost "motherly care" of the nurse.

Professor Baccarani proceeds to state that the reason why in Italy the "hospital question" is so little talked of, is that the conditions of the nursing there are not sufficiently known. He expresses sympathy with the present staff of *infermieri*, who, he says, "in the large majority of cases do fulfil their duties. If the nursing of the sick is, until now, antiquated and deficient, the fault does not lie with the staff."

"Italian *infermieri*, few in number in proportion to the patients confided to their care, badly taught as to their profession, held in smallest consideration, do execute a remarkable amount of difficult work, but they can never give the nursing required by modern exigencies, because they do not possess the qualities that are essential for its execution."

And here Miss Baxter's good old English term, "Gospel truth," is especially appropriate. It is not the fault of the present staff that *they are themselves!* It is, to continue to quote the Professor, "a little the fault of us all, because we ask of them that which they cannot and do not know how to give, however much they may desire to do so."

He closes his preface with the words: "I have written this work frankly, because I think that 'pour panser une plaie la première condition est de la bien connaître.'"

And certainly he has written frankly. I will cull a few examples as I turn the pages of my much-be pencilled copy of his work.

"To be well assisted—or, to be more exact—to be well served, many patients, all in fact who have the means, give presents to the *infermieri*. The hateful 'tip' (*mancia*) (detestable from every point of view) is in full vigour. The patients best served are those who can be generous."

"Discipline leaves much to be desired. The staff do not possess the moral elevation which would enable them to even understand the necessity of conscientiously carrying out the doctors' orders . . . nor can they conceive that nursing should consist of constant delicate ministrations. They find it quite enough—and not always!—to keep to the hours of service and execute just anyhow (*allo meglio*) the orders of their superiors."

The moral question he touches very slightly: "Young *infermiere* talk too much to students and young house doctors. In France, it seems, the same thing happens, judging by Jules Claretie's novel, 'Les amours d'un interne.' How different are Baudoin's impressions regarding the nurses of the Johns Hopkins Baltimore Hospital! 'Their uniform of perfect whiteness, their respect for the patients, the refinement of their manners, their kindness, professional knowledge, and irreproachable behaviour (*tenue*) made a most vivid impression on me.'"

After explaining how carefully probationers are chosen in England, Professor Baccarani continues: "In Italy, instead, the *infermiere* are chosen without any reasonable criterion. One might almost say that with but a few most honourable excep-

tions, our hospital nursing staff is composed of individuals possessing none of the qualities adjudged indispensable by other nations. According to Miss Nightingale, a good nurse must possess the habit of observation, love of order, kindness, intelligence, activity, and perfect morality."

My own experience would lead me to state that the majority of the *infermieri* possess two, or even three, of these qualities—intelligence or kindness, quickness to observe, or morality—but the combination of all these "indispensable qualities" in one individual is, indeed, most rare and honourable, indicating genius and saintliness—genius, because these qualities must be self-developed; saintliness, because the exercising of them entails persecution from others who dread comparison.

Professor Baccarani goes on to explain that the economic question is largely the cause of the unsatisfactory choice of the staff. Until recently it was not even universally exacted that *infermieri* must know how to read and write; and the quality of these accomplishments is still so rudimentary that the lessons (theoretical, practical, given by the doctors), are frequently abandoned, as they find "that the *infermieri* gain nothing by them, the majority being so ignorant that it means sowing in completely refractory soil."

"To expect better nursing," he continues, "without first changing the quality of the staff, is an absurdity . . . and to obtain the right persons and to imbue them with the true spirit of nursing, it is necessary, before all else, to raise them in public opinion, and to improve their conditions, giving them serene and comfortable surroundings in which to live and work."

The Professor sums up his conclusions as follows:

"Nursing does not correspond with the progress of medicine and surgery [in Italy]: our patients are served but not nursed. Our hospital authorities believe that nursing should be reformed."

"To obtain a staff capable of nursing properly, it is necessary to offer them better economic and material conditions; divide the staff into two categories—i.e., nurses and servants, and, above all, to choose them with a different criterion. That is to say, choose for nurses persons who are really educated, refined, absolutely moral, and who possess the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion."

"Nursing of the sick, to be complete, should comprise the moral care of the patients (mental and moral). This part of nursing can only be carried out by persons possessing intuition, dignity, intelligence, delicacy, tact."

"Women possess these qualities more than men. Those nations where the nursing standard is highest, use women for nurses, and keep men for the rougher work."

I should like to quote some of the Professor's appreciations of English hospitals and nurses, but they can be reserved for future letters, when he will have had the opportunity of seeing the English nurse at work in the Polyclinic Hospital, where, we trust, she will be learning to appreciate in her turn the qualities of Italian nurse pupils, chosen for their moral and intellectual, as well as their physical, endowments.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)