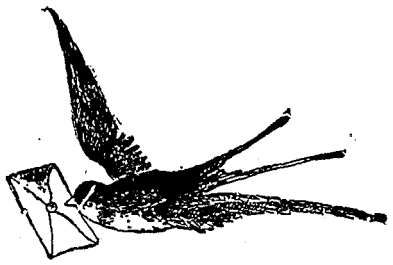
Our Foreign Letter.

FROM ROME.

Policlinico, Roma, 17th April.



Fourteen days ago the little band of pioneer nurses, with their first ten Italian probationers, took over the nursing of the first surgical pavillon here—a small beginning, seemingly, but one which we believe will have wide-spreading results, and is consequently worth whatever it may cost in effort.

The fourteen days and nights have been strenuous—physically and mentally. Five to eight operations alternate days, dressings of the majority of the 75 patients, and "specialing" operations and hopeless cases, have proved the need of further staff, and Miss Conway has come on from Bordighera (kindly spared by Miss Bryant), and Miss Beaufoy is starting from London, to aid with hands, minds, and tongues (they speak Italian) in the "great endeavour."

It is difficult to give details of the work—of what is being reformed—for we are—in a way—guests in a foreign land. We want to help, not to criticise. Years ago Miss Nightingale wrote me, when I returned to Italy after my year at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh:—"Patience and prudence, as e.g., not extolling English things to Italians, or saying, 'I do so and so in Great Britain.'"

Theoretically speaking, this standard is the only one compatible with courtesy; but reformers cannot always wear velvet gloves. Much must be wrestled with, much uprooted—only . . . we should always aim at *doing silently*. And consequently it is not an easy matter to write anything that is really true all round.

Another saying of Miss Nightingale's often comes back to me. A year later, when I was going to Naples, leaving our first Roman pupils to the nuns at S. Giovanni, she wrote me:—"I am sure you will remember it is only *personal* work that can *do* thinks. . . . Stand your ground and kiss your enemy's nose is one of the secrets of life. . . . A large Tom cat of mine came into the room and ran at my two little kittens. The larger and handsomer kitten ran away. The smaller stood her ground till the big Tom cat came quite close, and then . . . she kissed his nose and made peace. Now, take up your ground, my dear Miss Turton, and stick to it. . . . Go on preseveringly and prosper."

For all of us these are words of really inspired wisdom. If even half of us really succeed in *living* them, success will be a certainty, nay, since our leader does live them, even one-third of us by following her, will ensure victory.

"Hold your ground, but kiss your enemy's nose." A smiling insistence of attitude in other words, whenever *certain* that the point to be gained is undisputably right.

The first point thus gained, I think, was—screens. In our hospitals here such "luxuries" are obtainable only (and not always) for the dying. But the first pavilion now possesses scarlet twill screens, a vivid note in the colourless wards, and one which, with the really charming green and white frocks of the probationers makes up the red, white, and green of the Italian flag.

The first corollary of screens, systematic washing, is an innovation which is almost invariably appreciated. The routine evening, "face, hands, and back washng" causing gratitude and surprise.

The first night drew forth the remark from the Suora in charge, "How quiet the wards were; no one seemed to ring." And the *cure amorose* of the new nurses seem to make even deeper impression on the patients than their skill. The real nurse touch, voice, and manners are a revelation, even when the words are limited by being in an unknown tongue.

Petruccio, the pet boy of the men's ward, holds conversation with his Sister, clinging on to her finger, each holding to their mother tongue. In the women's ward a five months' baby, left by its mother to the nurse's charge, thrives on its biberon, sleeps its six or seven hours at night, plays with its nurse's cap strings in usual baby fashion, and . . . after four or five mornings of experience discovered that it *liked* a bath. The men take off their white caps with a royal sweep as the Matron speaks to them; many try to explain how well contented they are—even with the increased ventilation!

Already patients are leaving off calling perpetually for attention: they have learnt that everything will be done for them in due time—that ought to be done—and without "the hateful tip"!

In conclusion (for to-day—but soon more news will follow) I must quote an extract from Goethe which chanced to be on the Worker's Calendar the 4th, our day of taking over the wards:

"Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute:
What you can do, or dream you can, begin it;
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.
Only engage and then the mind grows heated;
Begin, and then the work will be completed."

Could there have been a better omened quotation for us, and for Italian sick folk?

M. A. Turton.

Practical Points.

Hiccough. Obstinate hiccough may sometimes be successfully checked by depression of the tongue by a spatula or spoon.

Substitute Feeding Cups. When nourishment has to be given to a helpless patient, and a proper feeding cup is not available, a good substitute is a small teapot. This method of administering nourishment to the helpless is frequently resorted to in poor districts of the Metropolis.

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