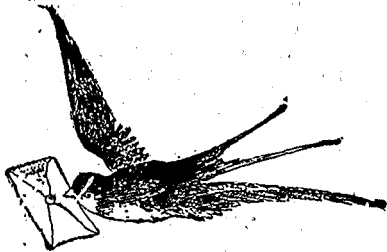


Our Foreign Letter.

SCUOLA CONVITTO REGINA ELENA,
POLICLINICO, ROMA.



Our first year is now well over, and we are fairly launched on the second. On the anniversary of our taking over the two first wards, the Committee telephoned "Many happy returns of the day," and sent us ices and champagne for dinner. A few days later eighteen probationers went up for the first year's examination in the *pratica dell' assistenza*—practice of nursing. This examination was held by Miss Snell and Professor Bastianelli, and was both demonstrative and oral. A week later a written examination on nursing, by Miss Snell, was considered a great innovation. Most examinations in Italy are oral, and many probationers feared the ordeal of writing. They made a charming *coup d'œil*, however, in their big Salon, grouped round some half dozen tables, in immaculate uniform, bending ardent or (a few) puzzled heads as they wrote for dear life, Miss Snell remarking, "Were ever Italians so quiet before?"

The final examination, and the one most dreaded, was that on anatomy, physiology, surgical pathology, and first aid, conducted by Professor Bastianelli and the two doctors who had given the lectures on these subjects. The probationers went in in pairs, and several were too panic-struck to do themselves justice. Eight, however, were adjudged *ottime* (excellent), one having added "*con lodi*" (with praise). Five were pronounced "good," and five only the professor considered "mediocre," and so must go up for an *esame di riparazione* in October, before being admitted to the second year's course.

Amongst the five who failed theoretically were two of the best ward workers, proving the kinship of Italian and other nationality probationers, and the non-finality of examinations as tests of practical knowledge.

But these statistics—13 out of 18 passing—would be considered very fairly good even in England, and in comparison with the results in public schools here the percentage was distinctly high.

We found that the justice of weighing every qualification of the nurse, and adjudging marks in proportion to her comprehensive value caused some astonishment. But this severity (apart from its rightness) will raise the value of the S.C.R.E. certificate, and cause probationers to realise that only steady perseverance in ward work and in study can ensure success at examinations.

So far as regards the technique of nursing, our probationers have proved capable above the average. I think all the English nurses have been

struck by their natural deftness and absence of awkwardness, but . . . they must also all have said repeatedly to the large majority "If you will always do this or that as well as you have now done it you will become *una brava nurse*." For what Princess Rospigliosi phrased as a national characteristic sixteen years ago to me is largely evident amongst our probationers—*ce qu'on aime c'est l'extraordinaire, jamais l'ordinaire*.

But if our pupils do not "love the ordinary"—the monotonous repetition of detail which nursing must entail—they have made enormous progress in accepting it as inevitable, and many of them are helping already to hand on the tradition to their juniors.

The probationers who passed all examinations successfully are now entitled to wear a green belt on completion of their twelve months' ward work. Six are exercising this privilege, and two, being nuns, are wearing instead the same green on pins like army decorations. And it is extremely satisfactory that several of these seniors have proved themselves really fit for promotion, and promise to make quite capable staffs when their two years shall be over next spring. Meanwhile, it is decided to increase the number of pupils in October from 28 to 34 or 36. Applications come in from every part of Italy, though so far we have made very little *réclame* and the idea of training professionally as nurse is still very far from willing acceptance by the majority of parents. In fact, Miss Nightingale's superb appeal to English women (1865) in her "Una and her Lion," might well be translated and given to the Italian public of to-day.

That it should have been necessary to make it in England so many years after the opening of the St. Thomas's Nightingale Training School, is a fact which may well encourage us when we have shortage of the right element in pros. in Italy.

England also did not respond at first, old things were only slowly swept away; but yet they did depart for ever; and viewing the magnificent army of women who entered, and who continue to enter, the field of nursing, who made its standard, and who continue to uphold it high, we feel encouraged to bide our time believing that Italy, too, will find the way and "eventually become like other civilised countries in the matter of hospital nursing."

Amongst other events in May was a visit of some forty *Direttori degli Ospedali*, who were holding a National Congress in Roma. I do not know exactly how to define the post held by these gentlemen in English, or rather to what to compare it. Sometimes we have termed them "male matrons," as they hold supreme authority over the nursing staff (the S.C.R.E. nurses and pupils excepted), inflicting fines for *mancanze*—technical and moral failures—organising their work and their courses of instruction (where these latter exist, which is by no means in the majority of hospitals hitherto). The nearest approach to an Italian *Direttore* in England seems to be Mr. Sydney Holland, but the parallel is very incomplete.

These *Direttori Italiani*, however, meeting in

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