

OUR FOREIGN LETTER.

SCUOLA CONVITTO REGINA ELENA,
ROME.

The special feature of the last two months has been the amount of applications from would-be probationers. Seldom a day has passed without one or two requests for the regulations—either by post from all parts of the Kingdom, or in person from the “aspirante” herself, or some friend or relation who came at her request. The large majority—and this is especially encouraging—have been from girls of the educated classes—even daughters of doctors and other professionals, or of “possedenti” (some sort of proprietors), are now either allowed or encouraged by their relatives to apply.

As the difficulty of persuading the right class of women (or rather of their persuading their parents) that nursing was a possible career to embark on has always been one, if not the greatest, stumbling block to our schemes in the past, the fact of its having been so far overcome in just two years augurs well for the future. We have not been writing, we have not advertised (only one briefest notice, by the way, was put in the *Domenica della Corriere* in December, without our knowledge), but the school is now getting known, and its having survived and increased, has given confidence in its future.

The next event is taking over a “baracca,” as temporary means of obtaining ten extra bedrooms. These baracce are meant for the overflow of patients, and six stand on an avenue just outside the Convitto. This will help a little to relieve congestion in the Home, giving a salottiero to the staff nurses, who so far have shared one with the Sisters, and making it possible for Matron to take over new work without waiting till the authorities decide on building a Nurses’ Home more in some proportion to the size of the rest of the Hospital. In the summer we gained a laundry, class room, and two bedrooms, built in one of our little gardens; and so gradually we strike out roots and prove the wisdom of *having started* even on the smallest scale, but on *right lines*, and trusting to develop as our forces grew.

As the two years for which the first nurses signed are drawing to their close, several are leaving us. Miss Bryant left first, to help at Bordeaux in a new private Clinique. Miss Conway went a month later to a Hospital in Madrid where she has a post as Sister.

Sister Reece and Sister Brunt, who were the first Night Sisters, and have since held the women’s surgical and men’s medical wards, are leaving the 1st April, and fear that for family reasons they may not be able to return. I have persuaded Sister Brunt to let me copy a testimonial (!) she was presented with by her three “portantini” (ward-men) so soon as the news of her intended resignation reached them (news travels miraculously

fast in this land of “words, words”). It is a most typical document; and viewing the fact that we are foreigners who are effecting a *beneficent*, but still an *invasion of their hospitals*, its testimony has real value (morally—though not officially!)

A more or less literal translation is as follows:—

Sister

We, the undersigned, venture to repeat to you with these lines, the duty of how truly we respect you and how much our heart is grieved at your departure. Therefore we present you spontaneously a reverent greeting, with the pleasure of telling you that we wish you the most satisfying of futures.

Even though far from us, the good thought will well remind us of how much we owe to your treatment, so sincerely demonstrated us.

Keep us also present in mind in the moments when you are far from here.

With homage, we are

Your GABRIELE PRIVOLI, GIGANTE.

So far the wardmaids have not exposed their feelings in typewriting! but there is still time for some expression of the regret which the patients feel at her “abandonment,” and of gratitude for “her treatment so sincerely demonstrated.”

Signora Bastianelli has had the delightful thought of inviting Miss Brunt and Miss Reece to stay with them on leaving here, to be perfectly free to visit the sights and do any of the things which are not possible when on duty.

Miss Snell is inviting Miss Reece and Miss Brunt’s friends to a good-bye party on the 30th, and as most of them are musical it will turn into a sort of concert.

Apropos of concerts Rome has been fortunate this season in having a series of delightful ones, and as Princess Doria gave Miss Snell her poltrone (stall) tickets, all her staff have in turn enjoyed (or are enjoying, for they continue still) the best orchestral music on Sunday afternoon, or Thursday evenings at the Albert Hall of Rome, the old Roman Mausoleum, L’Augusteo.

It was there we first heard the Hungarian violinist Von Vecsey, who is now playing, we see, in London. He afterwards gave three concerts at the Costangi theatre, moved by the extraordinary enthusiasm he aroused here. But it is wonderful to feel certain of receiving complete æsthetic satisfaction—and most restful. To feel you can safely abandon yourself to the enjoyment of being carried by the violinist’s soul’s voice to the what Shorthouse termed “the silence of Heaven”—is a gift worthy of enthusiasm—and not often granted.

Any nurse—to whom music speaks—who may still have the chance of hearing F. Von Vecsey, in London or some other town, should not fail to do so.

Whilst on the subject of “diversions” mention must be made of very delightful motor drives given by Professor Bastianelli. He is a magnificent chauffeur, and frequently carries Matron and what he calls “my Sisters” to visit sea or mountain town or hamlet, or his own vineyard—where he and Signora Bastianelli are restoring and furnishing a charming little villa.

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