

OUR FOREIGN LETTER.

Scuola Convitto Regina Elena,
Policlinico, Roma.

[For at least a month I have been trying to find time to bring the report of the National Training School of Italy up to date—but in vain. Events moved too quickly; and only now, when the last days of my actual membership of the school are over, can I attempt to give some idea of the progress made since the summer report sent to the Congress.

The certificates and medals announced for presentation at the Quirinal Palace by the Queen have not yet been conferred. The ceremony will take place the end of this month, or early in February; and the delay has this advantage, that all the seventeen nurses who passed the theoretical exams. in June, but all of whom had not completed their two years' ward work, by December, will have now done so. And the next report from the S.C.R.E. will, I hope, be accompanied by a photo. of the first Italian graduates, and a full account of the ceremony, which will be the outward sign of the most solid rooting of the plant of Italian hospital reform.

The new dining-room was completed early in December, and meets with universal admiration. It holds comfortably 100 people; has 10 large windows, four of which give glimpses of Roman Campagna and distant Sabine mountains. It is painted in brown and cream, has cream muslin curtains in the windows, Vallombrosa brown and cream chairs, and brown tables (which are small, holding 12 to 14 people), all of which form a perfect *fond* for any scheme of flower-decoration. A practically designed pantry adjoins the dining-hall, and a lift communicates with kitchen and servants' hall.

Four more huts have been added to the first—prepared and taken over—giving us in all 37 bedrooms, five sisters' sitting-rooms, a good sewing-room, and charming sick-room; whilst the last hut is turned into a class-room of amplest proportions (12 large windows), so that the professors and doctors have every convenience for lecturing, the massage-sister for her classes; and, whenever possible, to hold preliminary classes for new probationers, the sister has all the material needed for demonstrative instruction.

Before dining-room and huts were really in use, it was decided to take over the third pavilion, with its 72 beds and six to eight bedlets and cots. As it was surgical, a theatre and dressing-room had also to be staffed. All the staff-nurse posts are now filled by Italians, the English holding those of sister and sister on probation.

A very choice smart body of nurses took over the Women's II. Padiglione on December 2nd, at four o'clock, their ward-sister giving them tea previously in the staff-nurses' sitting-room. The chief, Professor Feretti, himself made the evening round; and the idea of being nursed by "Signo-

rine," having now become popular, the nurses found a great difference in the attitude of the patients to that of those at former take-overs. Whilst all the evening doctors from our other wards kept dropping in (exactly as in English hospitals), to congratulate the new sister; and the ward and its annexes looked smart with the fresh paint, plants and flowers, screens, and open and shut-able upper windows (which latter had been extracted by endless *buoni* from the administration).

But a week later, on taking over the men's ward, a most exciting event occurred. We were used as excuse for a threatened strike—the whole staff of the other 14 wards, and the *portantini* (ward maids and orderlies) of our own six, refusing to go on duty at six—the hour they always "mount and dismount"—"unless the Signorine retired from the II. Padiglione."

We, however, received no official or unofficial intimation; and the staff for the men's ward, after tea, went over at four o'clock, as the others had done, to the women's ward. The Professor came a little later and went the round, all apparently perfectly quiet. But the old *infermieri* refused afterwards to give the *consegna* to the new sister; and it gradually became known that all their comrades were in the central hall declining to go on duty, and that carabinieri and policemen were being called in, and the Direttore Generale or Regio Commissario had come to see what could be done to solve the question.

Meanwhile, the *Sorveglianti* (a sort of superintendent of *infermieri*), came to all the wards, with orders that the day staff (only ward-maids and orderlies in ours), were not to leave the wards until they were somehow replaced! Our nurses, of course, came on and off duty, as usual; and at nine o'clock we heard the tramping of many feet, and talking of many voices, and knew that the crisis was over, and the old staff had decided to return on duty. Enquiry elicited the news that—strikes in hospitals being penal—the staff had, after three hours' excited discussion, been convinced that it was wisest to accept an offer of the Regio Commissario, to receive a deputation next morning, and to do all in his power to obtain the various ameliorations for which they had been agitating the last five months, and to refer the question of the signorine to Government.

The papers next morning contained full accounts, ending with the phrase, "Le signorine rimanevano al II Padiglione." And our information as to following events was taken from the papers, as the whole matter—so far as we were concerned—was entirely ignored, and "the signorine remained" most quietly and unconcernedly at their posts, whilst the Regio Commissario informed the would-be strikers that their reasonable demands for better pay, more compensation when dismissed on account of age or "matrimony with too many children," and the finding of posts for all who were worthy, would be shortly satisfied, but that regarding the S.C.R.E.

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