

green silk, and muslin, draped the length of table in the centre, whilst dishes of dried fruits and oranges, sprigs of holly and mistletoe, carried out adornment of tables, and lanterns and garlands were lightly poised above. Turkeys—stuffed and with other “accessories”—were promptly served, hot and in overwhelming abundance! Plum pudding being a penance to most Italians as well as prohibitive in price, was replaced by a delicious “zabaglione” (eggs, marsala and sugar, all frothy and hot); this was followed by dessert of figs, nuts, tangerine and other oranges, chocolates and marsala—all gifts of H.M. Queen Elena. After this “healths” were started and most enthusiastically “clapped,” beginning with the Queen and Committee, the Matron and Sisters, followed by the Professors and Doctors, staff-nurses and probationers, whilst the cook and maids with Guiseppa, the gentlemanly old manservant, ended the list.

All “went on wheels,” so to say; the tradition is formed now, both in wards and Home, both in work and play. Miss Snell’s creative gifts have struck roots and thrown out branches which evolve as circumstances—with more or less strain and stress—exact. Here in Italy, as all over the world, workers are growing scarcer where sacrifice is incurred (I hear that many religious Orders also find increasing difficulty in obtaining novices, and perhaps the majority of one’s friends of modest means are servantless), but the S.C.R.E. has always held ground and tided over seemingly desperate crises of shortage of nurses, and this Christmas stands as proof that tradition is formed, and our patients are nursed in the wards, and our nurses can play in the Home, very much as in English Hospitals.

The next gaiety was on the 29th, when each nurse was permitted to invite two guests from nine to midnight. The original plan for acting and music by members of nursing staff had to be abandoned—too much work for necessary rehearsals. Up to the 28th no programme was fixed, but the wife of one of our Professors had promised to hunt, and Matron trusted to Providence that something would turn up; continuing with invitations and food preparations, as well as the most marvellous decoration of passage and staircase leading up to dining-hall. Actual tree trunks and branches were annexed; carpenter, gardener, electrician commandeered. Two patients (man and boy) with deft fingers spent hours in Salone helping nurses create almond trees, rose trees, &c., by fastening paper flowers or little silver balls to various real branches. (Their leaves don’t fall yet, but have only turned autumn tints.)

#### OFF TO FIUME IN EIGHT HOURS.

In the thick of this, at 10 o’clock, Professor Bastianelli walks in and announces departure for Fiume, requesting Matron to send—if anyway possible—three or four of her surgical nurses with him. He had been radio-telegraphed for from Fiume; the need was urgent, and the Red Cross authorities were arranging for journey; train to start in eight hours.

So preparations for party, and departure for Fiume, continued side by side. The Professor’s wife came to announce that she had found a lady who sang and recited in “Roman society,” so the entertainment at party was provided; and three-nurses willingly gave up being present at it, for, though most of us lament the megophomy of d’Annunzio, the feeling for Fiume is intense, and the idea of nursing there could but appeal strongly. They started as arranged, in their green war uniform, joining Red Cross contingent at the station.

The party was a great success in every way; relatives, friends and doctors mingled with the nurses in their charming uniform in the vaulted Salone. The singer was warmly applauded, whether gay or serious the songs. But the most enthusiastic clapping ensued when one of the nurses entered with her viola and another sang—the clapping then seemed as if it would never cease!

Refreshments in the dining hall were thoroughly appreciated in an interval of music, and only at 12.30 was request given by Matron for the “Marcia Reale” a sign that the entertainment was over. The singer, after the Italian national march, played one verse of “God save the King”—both being vigorously applauded—whilst one of the nurses played the Fiume march as the guests took leave of their hostesses.

On the last day of the year the staff were permitted a “family fete,” only the few doctors “on guard” being invited to dine with Matron and Sisters, and afterwards enjoying the music of the viola and songstress nurses, after which dancing followed and was carried on with interval for refreshments—till a few minutes before midnight. Everyone then stood with glass of marsala in hand, watching the clock as the last moment of 1920, with its memories of gifts of joy or sorrow became a thing of the past. As the first stroke rang out a doctor exclaimed, “Don’t you see that old man run past?” and everyone clinked glasses and drank to all happiness in 1921.

The cycle of Christmas festivities will be closed on the Epiphany with a Tree in the Home for all the children well enough to be brought from their wards, but rumours were already afloat that for Carnival another “intimate dance” may be hoped for!

#### COMING EVENTS.

*January 15th.*—Association of Trained Nurses in Public Health Work. Lecture by Miss Evelyn Cancellor on “Methods of Combating Venereal Disease,” 10, Orchard Street, Portman Square, W. 3 p.m.

*January 29th.*—The Matrons’ Council Annual Meeting. By kind invitation of Miss Marsters, Superintendent Q.V.J.L., Paddington and Marylebone District Nursing Association, 117, Sutherland Avenue, Maida Vale. 3 p.m.

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