

beginning of the war it was occupied by Germans, that during the war it was requisitioned by the Government to be used as a Military Hospital—how this would have pleased the Lady of the Lamp—and that when her husband bought it it was in a very dilapidated condition. Fortunately its restoration could not have fallen into more sympathetic and capable hands, and it has been restored, decorated, and furnished with faultless Italian taste throughout.

The long windows of the Great Hall look out on to a beautiful Loggia, where so much social Italian life is made possible. Three exquisite little frescoes were discovered in one corner of the hall in the course of restoration, and happily have been carefully preserved. In this corner Mrs. Foster suggested there might once have been a tiny chapel or shrine.

From the inner hall a beautiful staircase led to the first floor, and a lovely salon—the principal reception room—a feature of all Italian villas. This room proved how much care and taste had been expended upon its decoration and furnishing—most exquisite and harmonious—many of the beautiful antique pieces of furniture having been collected by the lady of the house.

Near to this salon Mrs. Foster led us into her bedroom, and entered into our desire to locate the very room in which Florence Nightingale had been born. This beautiful room we agreed was probably the birth-place, as Mrs. Nightingale was a lady of wealth and fashion, and it is probable that the best chamber in the villa would be reserved for the coming of the baby in a foreign land.

Indeed it was a thrilling moment for those of us who had been privileged to enter there, and Mrs. Foster, so typically American in her charming sympathy, warmly shared the feelings of the English nurses whom she had so graciously permitted to make this intimate visit.

We were also privileged to see rooms in the villa which presumably date from the 14th century, and the beautiful grounds which Mrs. Foster considers will take another year to bring into perfection.

We learnt that permission to place a memorial tablet on the facade of the villa when in German hands was refused, but happily Mr. Foster has been so interested in finding himself in possession of this historic house that he will readily accede to any request to commemorate the woman of genius, whose teaching of the laws of health has borne such beneficent results throughout the world. These laws are now inspiring the great campaign opening throughout Italy for raising the standard of national health, and the scientific nursing of the sick.

We took leave of Mrs. Foster, full of appreciation of her extraordinary goodness and kindness to three stray English nurses, of whose identity she had little knowledge, but who realised the happy fortune of the Villa Columbaia that it should be in the possession of such charming and delightful people.

Incidentally we could not help reflecting what an opportunity had been lost by the nurses of the world, when for fifteen years this villa was vacant, that it had not been secured as an international memorial to Miss Nightingale and a museum consecrated to her work.

PRESENTATION TO S.E. BENITO MUSSOLINI.

My second aspiration—presentation to S.E. Benito Mussolini, Head of the Italian Government, and recognised throughout the world as its greatest political genius—was indeed a thrilling experience, and it must be realised that only as Founder of the International Council of Nurses was such an honour possible.

The movements of Signor Mussolini are not widely advertised, and though the visitors to the Congress concluded that they would have the opportunity of seeing him and hearing his address at the Solemn Opening on September 25th, we could hardly hope for personal recognition.

On the evening of September 24th a Grand Reception was given to the members of the Congress at the Hotel Excelsior, by the President of the Federazione Nazionale Italiana Fascista for the fight against Tuberculosis, at which some 2,000 persons, the majority of them men of science and leading politicians, and the nurses attended.

Of course we did not expect to see Signor Mussolini at this Public Reception, therefore imagine my excitement when I was sent for by the Marchesa di Targiani Giunti, President of the Central Organising Committee of the Nurses' Reunion, and invited by her to pass into a private salon, where presentations were being made to His Excellency of a few leaders from various countries of the world taking part in the Congress.

Only four ladies were admitted to this Reception: Signora Paolucci, the wife of the President of the Congress; the Marchesa di Targiani Giunti; Mrs. Maynard Carter, League of Red Cross Societies, of Paris; and myself, President of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and a Member of the Committee of Honour of the Nurses' Section of the Congress.

For myself time ceased. Spellbound, I gazed at Greatness, and when Il Duce turned and became conscious of our existence, instantly I was absorbed in two flashes of light from eyes of extraordinary brilliance—purple lightning in a southern night.

A moment later, Mussolini was standing before our little group, and we were presented to him by the Marchesa. For fleeting seconds, our hands clasped, and I absorbed a fierce vital force and power, then in the gallant Italian manner Mussolini raised and kissed my hand.

A few minutes later, this great moment was of the past, His Excellency, surrounded by his entourage, passed quickly from the room, and we returned to the Reception Halls, where the crash of jazz music incited the young, like specks of dust, to whirl in space.

And what of the glove touched lightly by the lips of Mussolini? Future nurses will possess this memento of a supreme moment. Suitably inscribed it will be placed amongst the most valued possessions of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain.

Life without the warmth of romance would indeed be a bloodless flitting shadow.

THE HOLY FATHER.

My third aspiration, to be received in Audience by the Holy Father hung in the balance for several days, and it was only by prolonging my visit to Rome that, together with my colleagues, I was privileged, in a

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