FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

IN CHARGE OF
LAVINIA L. DOCK

THE NURSING SYSTEM OF ITALIAN HOSPITALS

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In our last number we gave some account of the nursing system of Italy and tried to show its mediæval character and the difficulties in the way of modern nursing reforms. This month we shall try to give our readers an outline of what is being done along modern lines, and of the personalities of several nurses, who, realizing the urgent need of improvement, are laboring each in her own way to bring about a more enlightened system of nursing and a more rational environment for the nurse.

These modern nurses seem no less admirable than the reformers of the Middle Ages. Their patience, courage, and love of humanity are as great as those of the saints, and their health is better. If they are not canonized some day, at least they deserve to be.

In Florence, there is Miss Turton; in Rome, Signora Celli; in Naples, Miss Baxter. Then there are Miss Tonino and others of Miss Baxter's graduates.

Miss Turton was the pioneer in Italy. She is English, but through long residence has devoted herself to Italy. For quite a long period of years she has been striving to educate, planting seeds, getting things started, working in hospital herself, and leavening her public with the ideas of an educated and intelligent nursing service.

To revolutionize such a system as one finds in Italy, which has been supreme for a thousand years, is not done as easily as were hospital reforms in England and America, though these were difficult enough, and Miss Turton, believing—as we think, wisely—that it would be fatal to antagonize the existing order, has sought to graft the new on to the old and to introduce new ideas and methods gradually by obtaining permission from the nuns to have pupil-nurses enter the wards and pass through a course of practical work under her own and the physicians' supervision.

It seems altogether probable that in no other way could a beginning have been made—especially as no demands had come from the medical profession for a change. Had they been dissatisfied, as in France, the question might have been different, but here, with no professional or popular discontent with hospital methods, it is hardly conceivable that with less tact, or with more aggressiveness, it would have been possible to gain the foothold which was all-important at the outset.

Miss Turton, having made and held her point of vantage, and being directly occupied in Florence, saw the opportunity of securing wards in Naples, interested the right people, and sent for Miss Baxter, who had just graduated from the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Miss Baxter was born in Italy, of English parents, and grew up in Italy. Her coming to the Johns Hopkins was one of those unpremeditated acts which