

*From the Dublin Review.

Charitable Institutions of Italy— Naples

[CONTINUED.]

Next in interest, though far inferior in extent, is the Spedale della Pace, an hospital for male fever patients. The beautiful building which is now used as the hospital, was originally the palace of the Caracciolo family; but in 1629, it was applied to its present destination, and placed under the direction of the brethren of San Giovanni di Dio, popularly called Fete Ben Fratelli. The revenues of this hospital suffered under general suppression; and the number of patients is now limited to sixty. But it is more the spirit than the extent of the charity that will interest the Catholic visitor. The hospital consists of one long and lofty hall, admirably ventilated, and exquisitely neat and well ordered. The beds are arranged in a double row, one extending along either wall; each bed is furnished with a crucifix and some sacred pictures, which are constantly before the eyes of the sufferer, and the vaulted ceiling is richly painted with frescoes representing the life of the patron, St. John of God. At the end, in a recess visible throughout the ward, stands a beautiful altar. The adorable mysteries are daily celebrated, and all have the consolation of assisting. The brethren are twenty-four in number, and relieve each other by turns, so that two are constantly in attendance upon the patients. It is a curious fact, that since the foundation of the hospital, two hundred years ago, although all, almost without an exception, have been seized with fever during their attendance on the sick, not one has ever died of this dangerous, and fatal disease. The patients are all received gratuitously; and it is an interesting illustration of the spirit which influences their charity, that a separate place, with a superior accommodation, is provided for patients of the more respectable class, whom poverty or a change of fortune places under the necessity of soliciting assistance. This small establishment contains eight beds, each in a separate apartment. It is known by the diminutive name, Pacella, or "little hospital of the Pace."

The Spedale di S. Maria della Pazienza Cesarea is also intended for fever patients. It contains about the same number of beds as that of the Pace; and though by no means so elegant, is very similar in all substantial arrangements. It is situated on the Strada dell' Infrascata, which may almost be called the charity quarter of the city. This street contains two other hospitals,—The SS. Sacramento, and S. Francesco, both under the direction of the government.

But these fever hospitals are for men. There is a third, the Spedale di S. Ligio, for female fever patients. It is a very ancient establishment, having been founded in 1270. In addition to the charitable bequests and other pious foundations for its maintenance, the directors were permitted to open a bank, the profits of which were similarly applied, till the bank was united some time ago with that of the Two

Sicilies. The funds, however, are still considerable. The care of the sick, generally about a hundred in number, belongs to a religious community of ladies similar in their institutions and obligations to the Brigoline, already described in our notice of the Genoese hospitals. The establishment also contains an asylum for young females, which should more properly be noticed under the head of conservatories. These, also, are under the care of the nuns.

The Trinita de' Pellegrini is a surgical hospital for wounds, fractures, and all injuries which are the result of accident or of violence (b). It is under the care of the well known confraternity of same name. The Neapolitan branch of this association was embodied by a brief of Paul II., in 1540. The hospital contains about seventy patients, who are not only maintained, but personally served and tended by the brethren. Like the Spedale della Trinita, at Rome, it is also designed for the accommodation of pilgrims and strangers. The number of these, however, is, of course, much inferior to that in Rome.

But the most extensive hospital, after the Incurable, is that of S. Maria di Loreto, which contains six hundred beds. Originally, it was a school of music, and some of the most eminent musical professors of Italy, as Sacchini, Treatta, and Guglielmi, owe their fame to the training received therein. Some years since, the musical pupils were transferred to another establishment, and this extensive building has been converted into an hospital for the sick of the Albergo Reale, and its dependent charitable asylums. It is subject to the general superintendance of the commission of the Spedale degli Incurabili; but the immediate government of the house is in the hands of the rector (who is a priest), assisted by several other ecclesiastics, and by the brethren of the confraternities, as in the other houses.

There are several other hospitals, as S. Maria La Fede, La Santissima Trinita, (c) Il S. Sacramento, and S. Maria di Piedigrotta. But those already mentioned will suffice as a specimen of the entire. Instead, therefore, of dwelling upon these institutions, which differ but little from the similar ones of other countries, we shall proceed to the second class, the charitable asylums, called either Ospizi, or Conservatori, according to their use and destination.

We shall commence with the Albergo Reale dei Poveri, which partakes of the nature both of the Conservatorio and Ospizio, and which, for its order, extent, and magnificence, may justly be considered one of the noblest institutions of Europe. This immense establishment was founded by Charles III., in 1751, after a design furnished by the celebrated Cavaliere Fuga. The proportions originally contemplated were truly gigantic. The front was to have been two thousand feet

(b) It is for men only. In similar cases females are received in the incurabili.

(c) This and the following are military hospitals. S. Maria di Piedigrotta is an hospital of marriages.

in length, and the vastness of the interior may still be seen. It was to have consisted of five spacious courts, the centre being occupied by a magnificent church, five naves meeting at the great altar, on a plan very similar to that which has been carried out in the Albergo dei Poveri at Genoa. Of this majestic design, however, a considerable portion is still unrealized; the work having been interrupted by the financial difficulties which have beset the government since the end of the last century, and never fully carried out since the restoration. But even as it stands, it is a stupendous edifice. The church is entirely unfinished, and the interior courts have not risen beyond the first story; but the front is completed, and presents a striking facade twelve hundred and fifty feet long and a hundred and forty in height. In the centre a magnificent double staircase leads to the great entrance. The right wing is set apart for the males, the left for the females; but though the great entrance is common to both, they are entirely separate, and under distinct management.

The Albergo Reale was originally intended to have contained all the poor of the city. Hence it is at once a retreat for the old, and a place of education for the young. The male inmates are at present two thousand two hundred. Of these, about eight hundred are old and infirm, the rest are of all ages, commencing from seven, the time fixed for admission. The old, if not decrepit and incapable of active exertion, are all allowed to work in their own trade, if they have learned any; if not, they are employed in some office of the establishment, according to their respective strength and capabilities. The young, during the first years of their residence, receive an excellent elementary education, and are afterwards trained up to some trade selected by themselves:—tradesmen of all classes, sailors, shoemakers, carpenters, weavers, printers, &c., being found within the institution. Should they manifest a taste for the fine arts, they are instructed in drawing, engraving, modelling, and painting; and there is an admirable school of music, containing about two hundred pupils, from among whom almost all the military bands of the kingdom are supplied.

There is also a school for the deaf and dumb, the pupils of which number at present thirty six. It would be difficult to find a population better predisposed than that of Naples to receive instructions in the deaf and dumb vocabulary. Such is the copiousness, variety, and expressiveness of the gestures (c) which they use naturally and without instruction, that the master's work would seem to be anticipated by nature herself. To judge from a cursory observation, the system of training is extremely judicious and successful. The pupils are taught to read and write, not only Italian, but French and German; and propose and answer questions in these languages with great quickness and precision.

But the Catholic visitor will be particularly edified and delighted by the atten-

tion which is paid to their religious education. It is the same at Rome and the deaf and dumb institutions throughout Italy. We can hardly conceive a more interesting sight than the public prayers of one of these little communities. It is of course unnecessary to say that the whole scene is a pantomime, and to the uninitiated stranger, little better than dumb show. But the simple fervour of their manner, and the solemn reverential air which their expressive little features wear, bespeak the untutored piety, which, destitute of the ordinary organ of communication, they thus imperfectly endeavour to convey. Scenes like these are a literal assurance that God is not worshipped with the lips only; that religion is not a thing of words but of feelings, and that, although the favours of Heaven are not equally distributed to all, yet, in the eyes of charity, all are heirs of the same promise, and included in the general command, "Let every spirit praise the Lord."

We once had the happiness of assisting at the spiritual exercises of a retreat for the deaf and dumb. It was during the three first days of the Holy Week; which, in all Italian communities, are devoted to retirement and preparation for the great mysteries of our Lord's passion and death. It may seem a contradiction to say that silence was enjoined, but at least the ordinary intercourse of the pupils was prohibited; and the exercises, as prayer, meditation, instruction, &c., were conducted with the same order and regularity as in the other communities. The instructions especially were extremely interesting. The preacher, of course, appealed to his youthful audience by signs only;—signs, too, which to a stranger were utterly unintelligible. But it seemed as though he possessed a magic power over his little flock;—to see the intelligence which sparkled in their eyes as they followed his rapid and expressive gesticulations; to watch the gradual warming of their young minds to the subject—the alternate joy, and sorrow, contrition and hope, which chased each other across their features during the successive stages of the meditation. It was a scene from which the most practiced spiritualist might have learned, and which the most indifferent spectator could hardly contemplate without emotion.

The children are admitted at the age of seven, and are maintained in the Albergo until their eighteenth year; and which time they are at liberty, either to leave it, or to remain and work at the trade which they have acquired. The military tastes of his present majesty have left their traces in the institution.—The uniform of the house has always been an undress military costume; but the army, of late years, has drawn many more recruits than formerly from the youths educated therein. Indeed many enter expressly with this view, and all who have not learned some trade during their stay, almost as a matter of course are drafted into the army when they attain the military age. The arrangements of the house are very excellent, and most creditable to the humanity of the