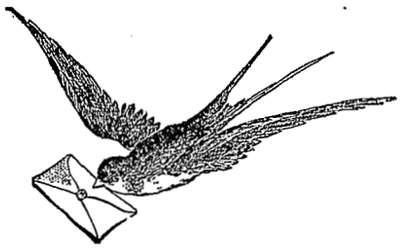

Our Foreign Letter.

THE NEW HOSPITAL OF ST. ROCHUS IN PESTH.

The evolution of perfect forms from imperfect skipped all intermediate stages, and took place with one bound, in the case of the daughter Hospital of Old Rochus.

If Old Rochus can scarcely breathe, New Rochus is bathed in air; if Old Rochus is cramped, New Rochus is extravagant with space; if Old Rochus is a standing evidence of the triumph of "mind over matter," on the part of its hard-pressed staff, New Rochus shows what the same intellectual forces can achieve, when the strains of constant struggle with hampering detail has been removed.

The different pavilions of the Rochus Hospital of Ulloer Street, occupy an area of 60,000 sq. metres 1 metre equals a yard and 3 inches), and were completed in 1885, from the plans of Professor Alois Hausmann. They are built N.W. to S.E.; and I was told that this situation was chosen in order that the coldest and fiercest winds of Pesth might not strike the frontage. Even in the severest winter—and the Hungarian winters *can* be cold—the temperature of the wards is easily kept at 16° to 18° Reaumur. Reservoirs of steam—in connection with a main supply—heat the wards from the centre.

Eight fine Hospital pavilions, besides various dependencies, form the Rochus colony of Ulloer Street. Between each building is an intervening space of at least 36 metres. The recreation grounds are vast, with broad gravel paths, and plenty of space all round, and a fine view on to the hills of Buda, and the queer old rock fortress, that, it is said, will soon be a thing of the past.

A great deal of attention is paid to ventilation, and a form of ventilators termed "aspirators" are used in the wards. I was told that they supply 100 sq. metres of fresh air in one hour.

One of the staff explained to me that an arrangement, called "Volper," on the chimney-stacks, was also introduced for ventilation; but, I am sorry to say, I was not quick enough, or clever enough, to catch his explanation.

An average of 656 patients is accommodated in two surgical pavilions for 69 beds; four for internal complaints for 95 beds; one cancer with 68; one for skin diseases at 70. Mortuary, dissecting-room, and laboratory each occupy a separate building.

In each pavilion are six extra rooms for better-class patients and isolation cases. The former pay double the ordinary rate. The financial system is extremely simple. Each ordinary patient pays 1s. 8¾d. (*i.e.* 1 florin 40 kreutzers) a day (in the Old Rochus, curiously enough, the rate is higher, being 1s. 9½d.), or, when he is quite unable to pay for himself, the Government does for him. The plan seems excellent; yet, from a philanthropist's point of view, it has a flaw: Where the patient has goods and chattels, they may be sold to pay for his expenses. Numerous invalid Slavs, who have left their villages, and risked their little all in coming to the Rochus, have been ruined by money-lenders. The hospital authorities are anxious to collect a fund of 50,000 florins, with a view to relieving similar cases, of which there are many. It is to be hoped that public and private charity will give them a far larger emergency fund, for it is impossible to imagine a more worthy object for either.

Here, as in the Old Rochus, each Sister has charge of about twenty patients, but favourable surroundings appear to modify the tax upon their strength. Here, as in the Old Rochus, Sisters do the house and kitchen work, but among the host of scientific improvements the old adage of "chopping wood with razors" does not come home to one quite so forcibly.

The floors of the wards are formed of tiles. For the surgical wards, a kind of concrete they called "ceramit" had been used.

The length of the larger wards was 16 metres; breadth, 8 metres; height, 5 metres. Such a ward would contain 14 beds, and it was calculated that each bed had an allowance of 45 sq. metres of air.

Of course, the receiving-house forms a separate building, as well as the kitchen and laundry where machines do almost all the work. There is a second laundry-house for infected garments, and the entire linen of 60 patients can be thoroughly disinfected in the ovens within two hours.

Everything was as clean and bright as willing hands could make it. The red of the kitchen copper was dazzling, the steel facings of the range sparkled, and, considering the amount of steam thrown off in cooking, and the mass of work the Nursing Staff had to get through, these were no trifles. Of pots, kettles, plates, cups, pans, pails, chopping-boards, each was relegated to its proper place, and seemed wanted exactly *there* and nowhere else. I paused over the details of this kitchen, and studied them with interest.

Of course, as is usual here, the range was almost central, and allowed the cooks free passage round and easy access to all its parts Cooking was done by steam in eight large cauldrons and numerous smaller ones. Supplies and utensils were calculated for 800 people. All cleaning and washing-up was carried on in adjoining rooms. All plates and dishes returned from the wards were placed in a small receiving room, ready for scullery-work. Here, as in the Red Cross, I admired the practical method of serving up the patients' food. Each single meal was kept warm by hot water tins during its transit from kitchen to ward, the different dishes of "a portion" fitting neatly into one another. Closed tin-lined cars—somewhat resembling small postal vans—trundelled the meals to the doors of the various pavilions where lifts were ready to hoist them to the upper wards. Lifts are also used for conveying patients to and from the operation rooms.

"It is a pity you cannot see our laundry in full work," said our Sister chaperon.

For it was a holiday, and the huge steam cylinders, boilers, and wringers were at rest.

previous page next page