



Our Foreign Letter.

THE SEA-SIDE HOSPITAL AT REFSNAES IN DENMARK.

“Blue waves at Cattegat welcome our little ones,
Rock them as you would a brood of ducklings,
Wash amber and sea-weed up to them,
Console them when they are lonely,
And when the day is long, sing them a cheerful song,
Waves all—blue waves—sing and play with our little ones.
But Thou, who feedest the gull, and weavest the lily’s
dress,
Yes, Thou, our God and Father,
Make Thou Thy waves powerful,
Let Thy angel touch the water
As at Bethesda’s sea,
And lend strength to us by the waves’ high crest !”

Thus, at the inauguration of the Sea-side Hospital for children, sings the Danish poet, Christian Richardt; and he begins his beautiful poem (which I am afraid of spoiling by translating) by telling us a weird and mournful legend of Refsnaes, a legend heavy with hatred and blood and an old man’s curse—a curse that (in the words of the poem) “falls like a blight, laying waste the beauty of the forest.”

“But now,” sings Richardt, “broom and hawthorn, may again smile to the sun !” For the enemy of death, “Charity,” has built a house on Refsnaes. “And, therefore, we hail our home behind the sand-stone cliffs with happy thoughts glad as those with which we hail the beech-leaves of Spring.” And the poet ends with words of blessing and love, that form a powerful and artistic contrast to the opening strain. The last word of the poem is “Love.”

The spirit that rules the Children’s Hospital in Refsnaes is, indeed, one of tenderest sympathy. It is impossible to any woman who knows children to doubt if, if she will only reflect on the genius of kindness, that has suggested to the organisers the following regulation:—“In the garden, every child who is well enough shall have its own little plot of ground of which it is lord and master.” In this plot stands a small arbour with a table and a tiny bench. Here the children visit each other in turn, playing hosts and guests with endless variations.

Before 1872 (when the idea of building Refsnaes Hospital was first formed into a decision) most sea-side Hospitals closed during the colder months (as many do now). In pleading the advantages of keeping such a building open all the year round, Dr. Schepeleirn writes:—“The little patients generally belong to poor families, in which the sanitary conditions leave much to be desired. It is precisely during the winter season

that they suffer most, without taking into account, that long and wearying journeys made in the fall of the year at the close of the Hospital are positively injurious to delicate children.”

For the greater part of the information given in the following account of Refsnaes I am indebted to Dr. Engelsted. I much regret that space obliges me to contract, instead of giving in literal translation, the interesting details of the paper courteously placed at my disposal.

One fact, however, that Dr. Engelsted carefully and entirely suppresses (and that I have obtained from other sources), I take pleasure in publishing here, namely, that it is to *himself*, his own energy and humanity that Refsnaes largely owes its origin and success.

It was after visiting the Maritime Hospital of Berck, in France, that Dr. Engelsted first entertained the thought of organizing a Hospital on a like plan; a Hospital that (like Berck and Margate) should be open all the year round, that should fulfil all exactions of modern science, and yet not rest content there: Refsnaes was to be a *home*, for the time being, to the children who found shelter there; a well-regulated home, in which they might benefit psychologically as well as physically. Thus, one rule enjoins that the children shall never be unemployed (naturally, with necessary exceptions), and that everything they do shall be done in order, with a certain time for every occupation. Those who are able, rise at six in summer, at seven in winter. At regular hours there are baths, walks, dressings, school, and five meals.

Very careful meteorological calculations prefaced the decision of erecting the Children’s Hospital on a narrow tongue of land overlooking the picturesque and busy Kallenborg Fjord. The Hospital is sheltered by hills on the north, east, and west. The frontage of the principal building faces south. The foundations are in gravel, on an incline. The town of Kallenborg is near enough to be useful, not near enough to be a nuisance. Mountain streams bring down the necessary water; neighbouring farms supply the Hospital with eggs, milk, and, as Dr. Engelsted says, “fish can always be had.” The coast is convenient for bathing, and even tiny children can do so without danger.

The well-known architect, Mr. Herboldt, planned the buildings, which were executed under supervision of Mr. Ottensen. This gentleman is now inspector of the Hospital.

It was inaugurated in 1875 with 100 beds. In 1881, two further houses were added, one being for infectious cases due to accidental epidemic. The present accommodation is calculated for 125 children. The number seems small, but, as Dr. Engelsted argues, it is likely to “respond to the needs of the country,” and “it is better to build another Hospital than to run the risk of over-crowding.”

The 125 patients occupy two large mansions.

The staff consists of a superior medical officer, an assistant-surgeon, an inspector, a “mother-inspectress,” six nurses, a house-keeper, a female cashier, a governess, twelve servant girls, a stoker, and a man of all work.

The Hospital is extremely popular, and various legacies have insured its financial prosperity. It is calculated that each child costs two kronas daily (a krona is 13d. in English money). This sum is paid

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