

## Our Australian Letter.

(BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

FIRST of all, I think it is right to caution those English Nurses, thinking of emigrating to Australia, of the fact that the people of these Colonies are strongly imbued with the belief that Australia was created for the Australians; and that, in my judgment, English Nurses of the highest and best type are not appreciated or wanted, and, in fact, the majority of Nurses who do come, are far from happy. I myself, although circumstances compel me to remain where I am, shall never take root in this strange country, and "home" and "England" are, and always will remain, synonymous terms, the thought of which ever causes a wild and strange yearning of my heart. All the same, as in other English-speaking lands, Nursing is making great strides out here, and as the Hospitals replace their Matrons (untrained), trained Nurses, principally English and Scotch women, are appointed in their stead. When first I was appointed Matron here, the Head Nurses and Pupils deeply resented the new order of things, and discipline and etiquette, which I, by very slow degrees, introduced; but since I have insisted upon the wisdom of disqualifying the domestic classes for eligibility as Probationers, the improvement has been steady and progressive. It is a mistake for Englishwomen, coming to fill positions of authority in the Australian colonies, to rush at reformations; it means failure. I speak from experience. One excellent clever woman, longing to introduce English customs and order, set every one against her by lack of caution and tact. No Matron from "home" has a smooth time at first, and Colonists bitterly resent the criticism of a new comer, and have an unceremonious way of treating their seniors and superior officers, which is equally offensive to the educated Englishwoman. In fact, in reality, Colonial Nursing is hardly out of its infancy. Although, no doubt, there are many *clever* Nurses now trained in Sydney and Melbourne, the true spirit of Nursing is lacking sadly—sordid motives actuating them in an extraordinary degree. It *pays* to be clever and know one's work; and as the main chance is everything out here, no doubt clever Nurses are to be found. I have, in times past, heard the Head Nurses in this Hospital exhorting pupils leaving here, "to look out for themselves, get the highest fees they could, and study no one's interest but their own." But, thank God, the calibre of my pupils is altered, and my long years of exhortation and teaching are now bearing some fruit after many weary, almost despairing, seasons. One thing in which Australians take a real pride, is their buildings, many of which are palatial; then here, unlike our dear, *green*, sweet little island, space is at a discount. To give you an idea of the extent of such

buildings, the following is a description of the New Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital:—

This Hospital, which was opened lately, stands in the Municipality of Concord, on the Parramatta River, about three miles from Burwood. It is reached by steamer in an hour from Circular Quay. For three years past the building has been slowly rising, and lately it has formed a very striking and picturesque object, for the red tiled roofs show brightly against our dark Australian foliage. The Hospital stands on 32 acres of land, a broad, roomy stretch, with a large frontage to the river. The landing place is unique. It is by means of a Dutch water-tower, such as one meets occasionally in some sleepy old town in Holland. But this modern tower is made of bright pressed brick, with red tiled roof, and possesses a boat-house, a landing pier, a smoke-room, and a cosy verandah for convalescents who desire to enjoy the Indian weed.

Through this water-gate is a large garden, just now in process of being laid out and beautified. Two or three years in this lovely climate on the banks of the Parramatta River will make it a perfect Paradise. The building crowns a gentle slope, and is a beautiful specimen of a lordly mansion. There is nothing of the "hospital" or "public institution" about it. It is simply a magnificent dwelling-place. It is built of pressed brick, with stone facings. It has a handsome clock-tower, the roof of which is supported by gigantic stone goddesses. The building is in a florid Italian style, fitted to the climate and necessities of Australia. It is the handsomest, most complete, and convenient building in New South Wales. When it is stated that the building and furniture alone have cost nearly £75,000, it will be readily understood that everything has been done in a style which is perfectly unparalleled even in this country.

Inside the building the walls are marble-like a cool; the furniture is nearly all of Australian red bean, stained to a walnut colour, resembling mahogany. The massive desks, wardrobes, tables, and other furniture, freely embellished with plate glass and other costly fittings, are suggestive of great wealth lavishly used.

The library, the day-room, the covered "ambulatories" for promenading in rain or sunshine, the great wide verandahs, and the lovely views from every window are suggestive of luxurious restfulness, and it is strange to think that all this has been done for the poor, the sick, the friendless, and the helpless of our young colony. In the bathrooms the patients have hot and cold water and electric bells. In the kitchen there is such a complete installation of all that goes to make good cookery as would be difficult to match in the world. All the newest inventions, the most recent discoveries, and the most perfect fashions known to the modern *coron bleu* are here in use, and whatever lack there may be in the culinary depart-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)