



Our Foreign Letter.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. ROCHUS IN PESTH.

JUST where the pulse of the city throbs most feverishly, where the ebb and flow of traffic is at its height, stands the busiest Hospital of Pesth—the old Rochus-Spital.

Like some of our own city-centred Institutions, it is hampered not only by its noisy position, but by peculiar architectural disadvantages. The last century had not the modern enthusiasm for fresh air; consequently, the wards are low, the windows small, there is little or no scientific ventilation—added to which, necessity obliges overcrowding. On financial considerations, the authorities at present oppose the enlargement of the staff; consequently, twenty patients fall to the share of each Sister, besides a certain amount of house and kitchenwork of every description, no lay-helper, in the shape of scrubber or scullery-maid, being employed to assist the Nurses in the work. Mortality from over-work is considerable among them.

I have summed up drawbacks at the outset, because each one of them emphasizes the merit of the really good work done. For these harassed Sisters *do* keep their wards clean, their instruments speckless, their kitchen sweet, their persons neat. They *do* maintain discipline and composure among their charges, and pull through cases that require constant watching by *going without sleep themselves*. Only Sisters could do "this," I was told. But I confess, this fatal expenditure of noble energy appalled me, and every subsequent evidence of watchfulness and care appealed to me with the pathos of martyrdom.

The north and west wing of the Rochus-Spital belong to the past century. The eastern and southern wing were added during the middle of this century. Twenty years ago, the mortuary and dissecting chambers were separated from the main building. There is also a separate house for ambulance cases, brought in in an obviously hopeless condition.

The Old Rochus (a beautiful new Hospital, of which I shall write in another letter, has been built under the same name, and animated controversies are being carried on between city and ministry as to the neces-

sity of erecting another centre) shows a curious combination of disadvantages and privileges. It has for its Director one of the most eminent and energetic men of Hungary—Professor Müller (Vice-president of Sanitation), its medical staff is first-class, its Matron and Nursing Sisterhood are devoted women, but it is crowded, cramped, and overworked beyond belief!—20,000 patients, in 1893, occupied wards that should hardly hold half that number. 403.67 sq. metres of air go to a ward for 21 patients, nurses, and visiting doctors. The wards are heated by stoves.

The most interesting feature of the first floor surgical division is the operating theatre. It owes its existence to the genius of the late Professor Alexander Lunnicz, a man whose professional talents were only equalled by his kindness of heart. He died two years ago, leaving the scientific world a legacy of profound researches on the subject of antiseptics. Professor Dr. Réczey has taken his place in the Hospital.

The room in question is a veritable miracle of ingenious contrivance—the flooring between an upper and lower ward was removed to give necessary height, and an immense window, 20ft. high, made to occupy the wall facing the operating table. The 200 students who attend lectures here never pass the scene of action, but enter from the second floor, taking their seats on graduated forms (as in an amphitheatre). Below, the operators find in a limited space the best contrivances that modern invention has to offer; instruments and dressings are preserved on glass shelves in cases made entirely of plate glass. All precautionary measures are exemplary, and every nook is utilized. There is a miniature library adjoining on the left hand, and an ante room for ambulance cases on the right.

I was told that Sister Fidelia was a wonderful assistant at operations, a strong-hearted gentlewoman, armed with brain, and nerve, and tact—ideal qualities for a Nurse in any country.

The second division contains six large wards and another smaller compartment in the way of operation rooms. One of the cleverest men of the day, Professor Navratil, is the mainstay of this part. He is famous as an authority on diseases of the larynx, and well-known in the scientific world for his researches on cerebral disorders. Other divisions are reserved for eye, ear, and throat diseases. A large department is set aside for obstetrics.

Among the many patients, Sister Fidelia (who holds the position of Assistant Matron or First Sister of the Wards) introduced us to, I shall always remember a delicately featured mite of about five, who sang us a long Magyar rigmarole with plaintive sweetness, and was overjoyed at the doctor's present of nickel Kreutzers.

The patients seemed singularly patient. I heard not one complaint, and saw some actual cheerfulness that did not fall short of the heroic. One black-eyed girl who had, a day or two before, undergone a severe operation, and who must have been suffering considerably at the time of our visit, smiled a courteous welcome at us, and gave a general impression of kindness and pluck, that was but a type of many others.

Courage and good-temper were the more commendable, as they were not fostered by any of the cheering

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