



Our Foreign Letter.

AUSTRIAN SCHOOLS OF NURSING.—I.

EVERY type of Nurse may be studied in the big Hospitals of Vienna. In the largest of all, "The Allgemeine Krankenhaus" (General Hospital), I was told they take *anybody* on as Nurse; that the recruits learn by experience, "without any regular organized term of Probationership"; and that the Nursing staff is governed by men.

In the Rudolf's Spital, and various branch Hospitals, the Nursing is done by Sisters of the Heart of Jesus (a Roman Catholic Order). The tone that prevails among these religious Nurses is incomparably superior to that which one finds among the heterogeneous staff of the General Hospital. On the Continent, I think it is impossible to deny that religious Sisterhoods have hitherto trained the finest types of Nurses. Women who unite devotion, courage, and humility with limitless unselfishness. They are also better disciplinarians and better workers than average lay-nurses.

The Sisters of the Heart of Jesus place the novice in Nursing in charge of an elder Sister. From her the novice learns, much as a daughter learns from her mother. Her advancement depends on her own energy and intelligence.

A curious division of time exists among these Sisters. Each Sister is on duty in her ward for 24 consecutive hours, then she has a whole holiday, viz.: 24 hours of complete leisure, and on the third day half-duty; that is to say, she assists at the doctor's morning visit, and after that has commissions or messages given her that take her out of doors. After a night's rest she again begins a work-day of 24 hours.

The death-rate among the Sisters is low. As a body, they are strikingly cheerful and healthy-looking, genial, and intensely interested in their work.

Three hundred Sisters belong to the Viennese branch of this Order, which has been employed in the Rudolf's Spital since 1873. Various other Hospitals of this city are worked by the Sisters of the Heart of Jesus. I merely mention the well-known Franz Josef's Spital and Saint Anne's Hospital. The latter is for children.

The Rudolf's Spital is arranged for 800 patients. Large wards contain 31 beds, and each adjoins an extra room for isolation or surplus cases, and an ante-room for domestic purposes. Beds are of iron with wire mattresses, flooring of polished wood, rooms lofty, and ventilation fairly good. Each Sister of the ward

is responsible for 31 patients, but, of course, novices assist, and patients, who are well enough, are allowed to assist in the cleaning if they like.

"They look upon it as a privilege," the Matron told me. We watched one sweeping out a corner of his ward for the evening with laudable conscientiousness. He and all the other patients, convalescent or bed-ridden, wore the regulation dress of the Rudolf's Spital—white linen with a very narrow stripe of red at distant intervals. Bed-linen is woven after the same pattern; counterpanes of a more decided red and white give a touch of brightness to the wards. The general effect is neat.

As in Hungary, all cases either pay themselves, or the Government pays for them. Here the rate was one Gulden (1s. 8d.).

Excellent discipline appeared to exist in the wards, and it was impossible to ignore the kindly feeling that evidently linked the patients to their Nurses. Everywhere smiles and greetings welcomed the Matron. Patients, novices, and Sisters turned to her as stars to their sun. She was distinctly the centre of their world—a light that gave strength and warmth and comfort wherever it shone. She was delightfully proud of her Sisters' good looks: their fresh, bright appearance.

"Don't they look well?" she asked me, and I responded truthfully that they did.

Among the patients it was often pathetic to notice the cheery spirit for which Austrians are noted, fighting to survive some terrible affliction.

An old woman of 60, who had had her leg amputated *the day before*, tried hard to carry off a little joke with the Matron. Another aged lady, who had undergone an operation for cataract, and heard us pass through the darkness, stopped us with a blessing, in which she emphasized a hope, that none of us might ever undergo an operation. There were a good many patients for cataract. I was told that one of the surgeons of the Spital was a very successful operator.

In one of the wards I was introduced to Fritzchen, a great pet of five. Fritzchen recited poetry, and told us about his father's visit, and declared that he had better dinner here than at home, and that "he would not leave the Sisters till he was quite, quite well;" while the patients who were out of bed—and there were a good many here—stood round in an admiring circle, approving of a present there was for Fritzchen with the satisfaction of proprietors in that small patient.

Unlike the hard-worked Rochus Sisters, the Matron and Sisters here have nothing at all to do with kitchen work. Patient's fare is decided by the doctor at his first round, and the order goes direct to the kitchen, which is in the hands of a contractor.

The head cook of the Rudolf's Spital appeared to be a queen in her domain. She was a very tall specimen of brisk, bright, Austrian womanhood, and quite willing to explain things lucidly, down to the meaning of beef 367, milk 468, etc., chalked on a huge black board in the airy larder.

The composite arches and pillars of the lofty vestibule that separates Chapel from Hospital, give an ecclesiastic air to the entrance of the Rudolf's Spital. It is in keeping with the spirit of the Sisterhood, to whom the profession of Nursing is a form of devotion.

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