



## Our Foreign Letter.

KOMMUNE HOSPITAL IN COPENHAGEN.

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(The large number of cases of mental aberration in Denmark has often been commented upon. Reasons have been sought in vain, and theories likely and unlikely brought forward. The fact remains. Its cause is more than ever a mystery to the observant foreigner, who will probably find his Danish hosts finely-balanced and simple-mannered people, canny and far-sighted—not unlike the Scotch in more ways than one.)

The sick poor are nursed free of charge, but all those who are able are expected to pay. The rates vary very much, from sevenpence a day upward, the highest rate of payment is about five or six shillings a day.

The voluntary pauperism, during sickness, of so many of our English workers, their readiness to accept medical and surgical aid gratis, is not known to the same extent on the continent. At the same time, I must say I do not know of any English hospital that accepts as small a sum as regular payment as this Danish hospital does.

Sevenpence a day is certainly no large sum to pay for medical attendance, nursing, feeding, washing, food, light, firing, cleanliness, shelter and kindness. No doubt it barely covers a single item of my list. But it is a regular tax, and, as such, has the wholesome ring of *business*. It saves the physically sick from becoming *morally* sick, *i.e.*, from losing self-respect and sense of independence. The knowledge—even in the prostration of disease—that they are “paying their way” has a wholesome influence. Doctors will tell you it does not retard their recovery.

But honesty is a characteristic of the Dane. The honest sevenpence paid into the general fund will be as balm to his spirit. He will pay more if he can. Though he likes gain as much as a Scot, he will not lightly over-reach you.

In 1875 it was found necessary to reform the system of Nursing. At the instigation of the Mayor of Copenhagen, a council met on this subject. While it was admitted that “many good and conscientious persons had hitherto devoted themselves to the care of the sick in the Kommune Hospital,”—there were yet many arrangements which were not satisfactory.

After several debates the following resolutions were passed:

(1) To exact a more scientific and perfected execution of all duties appertaining to Hospital and Nursing work.

(2) To give that work a higher character by entrusting it to women who have devoted themselves specially to Nursing (that is, to give employment to *professional* Nurses only).

(3) To exact that these women be fitted for their work by their *general* education, as well as by special study.

(4) The Nursing Staff is to be organised exactly,—with careful consideration of the needs of each ward.

(5) The interests of the Nurses employed are to be closely bound up with the interests of the hospital. (This refers, in part, to reasonable salaries.)

(6) Persons who show promise of becoming good Nurses in the future, may receive a practical Nursing education, and be trained for the work under careful supervision and skilful guidance (that is to say, Probationers may be received, and properly trained).

(7) The Nurses' salaries are to be improved.

In accordance with these resolutions the entire Nursing system was reformed in 1876, with the exception of one or two divisions, in which sweeping measures of reform were not deemed advisable. Here, too, however, various improvements were introduced, and the way paved for future progress.

According to this new plan each section of the Hospital has a special Plejemoder (literally, foster-mother, whom we should probably call a First Sister of the Ward). This Plejemoder is responsible for “the proper Nursing of all the patients within her section. She is to convince herself that the physician is accurately informed as to the condition of his patients between his last and present visit.” She is to train the probationers (Elevers, as they are called). Each Plejemoder has six Assistant Nurses, besides four or five Probationers, and two ward-maids.

Only such women are received as “Assistants” as have received full professional training and are well-qualified for their duties.

Two Assistants, supported by two Elevers (Probationers) are responsible for twenty patients, one of the Nurses being on night and the other on day duty. These “Assistenter” (Assistant Nurses), under the guidance of the Plejemoder, care for the practical education of the Elever.

Before these latter are fully received as Probationers they must prove that their subsequent career is likely to reflect credit on their *Alma Mater*. They must have a fair *general education*, and show a *mind* and *talent* “for Nursing.”

Observe that as early as '75 these Danish authorities regarded “Nursing” as an “art” that required a “mind” and “talent” to *begin with*, as well as professional training to follow.

The “Tjenestepigerne” (ward-maids) do all the rough domestic work of the wards, run errands, and obey the orders of the Assistenter.

With regard to the physical comforts of their staff the Hospital authorities are fair and wise. To begin with, they all have first-class food. Each Plejemoder has two rooms to herself, the greater number of Nurses have a separate room, and the Probationers share.

After two months' preliminary trial these latter are paid members of the Staff.

Salaries steadily rise with length of service for all members of the Nursing Staff, so “that their interests” (even financially) are bound up with the interests of the Hospital.

There is a free medical school for students connected with the Hospital, each division of which has at its head a Medical Superintendent, besides a First Physician and three Assistant Doctors.

(To be continued.)

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