

Our Foreign Letter.

DEACONESSSES IN GERMANY.

By Miss L. L. DOCK.

It so happened that in going down through the Rhine country and Southern Germany we saw a good deal of the work of the deaconesses under various



conditions. And there can be no question that, as workers, they deserve all praise, and that, as persons to meet, they are admirable and lovable. In physique and muscle they seem so sturdy and strong—many of them with the shoulders and backs of field-workers, able to do the hard work of men. Their faces, without exception, as far as I have seen, are gentle and good, serene and kind. Their manner is most amiable; they meet one with a gentle kindness, and are ready to take any amount of trouble for visitors. While a certain proportion are well-educated, many are apparently of limited education and know little or nothing outside of their work. Of nerves they evidently have none, and of critical requirements none, and of desire for change and new experience little.

They get up at five o'clock in the morning and take turns in doing all kinds of hard work besides the regular ward work. I have seen them hanging out clothes, scrubbing floors, washing ward linen, carrying wood and water, &c.—besides keeping wards and patients clean, carrying out orders, doing night duty and special duty—and go to bed after fourteen hours' work with, perhaps, a church service or some singing of hymns as their only relaxation. With all this they are patient and cheerful, and do good, conscientious nursing. The beds I saw under their charge were immaculately clean, the patients' finger-nails clean and trimmed, and surgical dressings neatly made, rolled and pinned, sterilised, and solutions and appliances all well kept. No wonder that women like these, each one able to do the work of three, are looked upon with covetous eyes by hospital managers! Add to this that they are satisfied with twenty-five cents a week pocket-money. I not long ago heard, in a charities conference at home, a medical man and philanthropist advocate the training of an order of women similar to these for district nursing in our American cities. His idea was that one such woman could stay with one patient at a time, nursing the sick person, doing the housework and cooking, dressing the children and seeing that they went to school, washing and ironing, marketing, and managing the finances of the father and wage-earner. Now these German deaconesses could do that just for their living expenses. But what man would do the work of three or four people for his keep only? To be sure, the wives and mothers of poor families do it, but should it become a universal custom? I doubt if the American self-supporting woman will take to it.

One of the most attractive spots I visited in charge of the deaconesses was at Rothenburg on the Tauber, in South Germany, that beautiful old walled town. The hospital, now called the Heilige Geist Spital, is

very ancient. Long ago it had been founded as a stopping-place for pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, afterwards opened to the poor and sick of all kinds, and enclosed in the city walls in 1280. On the grounds there are a church, the hospital proper, almshouses, offices, and granaries. A beautiful bit of architecture is the "Hegenreiters' Haus," where mounted watchmen were always on guard in the old days. The fine old vaulted cook-house is now used as a laundry, and the old baking and brewing buildings are now turned into extra wards for contagious cases. The wards are small, from three to eight beds each, with fine old beamed ceilings, deep window-seats, and each window filled with flowers. The floors were painted and were spotless. Beds made up entirely with white—no bedspreads were used, but only sheets over the blankets. The living-room for the Sisters is a fine old room dating from 1565, and its details of doors, ceiling, and windows are so beautiful that there is almost always an artist or two there sketching. The hospital has new plumbing, kitchen ranges, telephone, &c., of which the Sisters are immensely proud. They do all the cooking and kitchen work, with the help of several maids. The deaconesses in this hospital come from the Augsburg Motherhouse, and we found the same order in charge at the "Marta Heim" in Nürnberg, where we lodged.

This is one of the places spoken of by Miss Lampe in her article some time ago, and we found it, indeed, as charming as she said. I had not quite understood before just what these homes were. It seems that there are different societies here, some Protestant and some Catholic, for the protection of young girls coming from the country districts or going from one town to another to look for service or employment of various kinds. In all the railroad stations and in the third-class railway trains one sees the placards of these societies warning young women against dangers and advising them to ask for the addresses of the Homes. They all have agents at the station. The Protestant have pink signs, the Catholic yellow and blue. They all maintain large establishments in the cities and do immense good, sheltering thousands of respectable girls and finding them positions. The charge made to the girls is from fifteen to twenty cents a day. Then these places nearly all take lodgers to help out with the expenses, and for women who travel in a modest way there are no pleasanter or more home-like stopping-places to be found—quiet, orderly, spotlessly clean, and of very moderate prices. They serve breakfast in one's room; supper, if one wishes it, also—just a simple supper. Dinner they do not always furnish; one must get that outside. It is not hard to find them, even without the "pink book." They are all called "Martha Haus" or Heim, or "Marien Haus," or "Mary-Martha" house or home, or "Vereinshaus." They are found all over Germany; there are some in Switzerland and several in Paris. Many of them are managed by the deaconesses, whose faithfulness cannot be over-estimated.

Many savage and semi-civilised races of the Orient, says the *Scientific American*, have some curious customs regarding the sneeze. When the Sultan of Senaar sneezes every woman in his harem or within hearing turns her back on him and makes a sign of contempt—so disgusted that so mighty a personage should have to sneeze like an ordinary mortal.

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