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Editorial.

A BERLIN.

The long-expected comes at last, and the weeks which must elapse before we set out for Berlin to take part in the International Congress of Women, and the meeting of the International Council of Nurses, are fast dwindling into days. It behoves us, therefore, to consider how best we can utilise the great privilege which attendance at the Congress entails, for every privilege has its attendant responsibility, and it is well that we should consider this, and go to Berlin with a settled idea of what we wish to accomplish.

In the first place, no English nurse can set foot on German soil without remembering with a thrill that she is in the country which gave Frederica Fliedner to the world. That at Kaiserswerth, on the Rhine, was evolved, under her control, the system of nursing which sent Florence Nightingale, trained and disciplined, to wrestle triumphantly with the disorganisation of hospital management in the Crimea, and subsequently to found in this country, for the first time on a scientific basis, a training-school for nurses in connection with St. Thomas's Hospital.

The question must immediately arise: "Is there any way in which we can repay our obligation to Germany, and more especially to her nurses?" and surely we may be hopeful that the situation holds possibilities, for, having had greater freedom of action, English nurses have in some respects forged ahead of their German sisters, and in conference with them it is possible that we may be able to indicate the possibility of development along lines at which they have at present only dimly guessed.

Germany is essentially a military nation, and military methods, in the hands of Orders of Deaconesses, pervade even her nursing organisation; thus the German nurse is an excellent worker, precise, exact, capable. Her Order says to her "go, and she goeth," "do this, and she doeth it"; the duty of obedience

dominates her life. The system as a working machine has much to commend it; but there inevitably arises the danger lest the individual responsibility of the worker should be lost sight of, the right of the graduate worker to make her own place in the world, to develop individual gifts, to think for herself, to co-operate with others, to be a free agent, instead of being attached for life to the organisation which trained her, to form professional societies in which she can discuss with others the points of common interest in her work—all these things, which to us have become part of our lives, and which we regard as everyday incidents, are strange to our German colleagues. It were happiness indeed if we could set their feet in the way of professional independence—independence both of thought and action; if we could show them the possibility of providing for times of sickness and old age by their own work, and if we could demonstrate to the German public the right of the worker to her own earnings. Let us, then, in attending the Congress, think chiefly not what we can get, but what we can give. Unquestionably we shall gain much. This is the invariable result of conference, but we may also give: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, and it is in proportion to our gifts that we shall ourselves profit.

Lastly, not only profit but pleasure will be ours, the pleasure of meeting old friends and making new ones, the delight of visiting a country with which we are not familiar, and of seeing its art treasures. The brief week in Berlin will, indeed, be all too short for the amount to be accomplished, and we must carefully plan out our days so that not a minute shall be wasted.

There is every prospect that there will be a goodly contingent of nurses at Berlin, as both from Great Britain and America, as well as from other countries, many have arranged to be present. We must make the most of our opportunities.

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