

## Our Foreign Letter.

### GERMAN NURSES.

#### I.—THE DEACONESS.

ONE may divide the Nursing world of Germany into four great classes: Evangelical Nurses, Roman Catholic Nurses, Lay Nurses, and Amateur Nurses—the latter largely represented, and, in rural districts, often holding mediæval tenets.

Each class has various sub-divisions and branch-connections, various orders of labour and utilization of talent, that are characteristic and interesting; and of all, from first to last, it can be fairly said that they work with Teutonic earnestness.

Of the first two classes it is impossible to speak with anything but reverence. The discipline of their training, their steadfastness of purpose, their courage and modesty, are almost proverbial, and comparisons for better or for worse between Evangelical or Roman Sisters are, in this case, more than usually odious and uncalled for. The cases in which religious Nurses of either creed are not a credit to their profession are few and far between.

Most of the Hospitals in Germany are worked by Deaconesses or Sisters of Mercy. The training for the former generally extends over three, sometimes even four, years; and their nomination at the end of that period is a religious ceremony. During the first year of her training the Probationer is "on trial," and does not wear the uniform, or, as it is called, "the dress," of her order. She provides her own clothes, the details of which are regulated by statute. She may be dismissed at any time of her first year's probation, if her behaviour or incapacity prove her unfit for service.

After a year the Probationer becomes a novice, and the "Mother-House" (*i.e.*, Central Hospital) becomes henceforth her home. She receives no salary, nor may she accept presents for herself from the patients or patients' friends, but the institution provides for every necessity and emergency. Should a Novice be incapacitated through any illness or accident, she would be nursed for the rest of her life, and all Sisters are provided for in old age. Only in extreme cases of misbehaviour are Deaconesses expelled from their order.

Before candidates are allowed to enter on probation, they are required to give a satisfactory account of their connections, career, education, literary, and domestic tastes, health, and morals.

Here is a formula, in use in "Bethanien," one of the first Hospitals in Berlin (almost exactly the same is used in the well-known "Elisabeth Krankenhaus," in Berlin, and it may be found, with more or less trifling variations in most of the Deaconess' Nursing Institutions):—

1. Who are your parents, and where and when were you born? Have you sisters and brothers, and what are your family circumstances?

2. What impressions have remained most vividly in your mind of your life at home? Was it usual to read the Scriptures in your home, and to say grace at meals? Were you taught to go to church?

3. What school did you visit, and for how long? What books have you read? Which do you like best?

4. How long did your confirmation lessons last, and who confirmed you? Do you remember your Catechism?

5. Have you lived with your parents until now, or where have you been, and in what position?

6. What were your occupations? Can you knit and sew? Do you understand the rules of house-keeping?

7. What made you think of becoming a Deaconess? Since when did you think of it?

8. What do you consider necessary for such a position?

9. What clergyman, or other person, can give us information concerning you?

It is desirable that you give more than one reference.

Propos of Section 4, I mention that the Lutheran catechism is far more lengthy than that set by our English Church. It fills a little book with explanations and numerous texts, and is taught at the public schools.

The candidate for "Bethanien," for the "Henriettenstift," in Hanover, and for numerous other institutions, must be over 18 and under 36. Regulations as to age vary greatly. In "Elisabeth Krankenhaus," the limit is 30; in other Hospitals, 38, even 40. But a certificate of health and morals is required in every case, as well as proof of fore-training in domestic and mental discipline. Quoting from the statutes of the Elisabeth Verein, the candidate "must show a certain mental capability, she must be able to read, write, and cipher, above all, she must be familiar with Holy Writ." "All Deaconesses, without exception, shall be acquainted with the management of a simple household. They must be willing to undertake any sort of household work, even the meanest." (Ward-maids and scrubbers are rather the exception than the rule. Many of the Probationers are the daughters of comfortable, even noble, families, so that this regulation means no small test of earnestness.)

"Deaconship," candidates are told elsewhere, "means service." "Professional deaconship is God's gift of mercy to the poor, sick children, idiotic, wandering, fallen, and imprisoned. Experienced mercy is its strength, and religion its joy."

At the ceremony of nomination, the new-made Deaconess places her hand first in that of the Matron, then in that of the Clergyman, promising that she "will faithfully obey the statutes of the house, and willingly fulfil all services of Christian love and charity demanded of her."

From that time forth her life is one of constant occupation, self abnegation and courage.

The quantity of work expected of her does not depress the German Sister, who is usually a happy woman—simple, gentle, and placidly cheerful.

All classes of the population are devotedly respectful to her, and her influence for good is very marked. Though the lesson of humility has been inculcated during the course of their curriculum, professional etiquette prescribes reserve and dignity in dealing with outsiders.

The regulations of one large Hospital wisely decree that "the Nurse be always courteous and mild in all

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