

Hospitals of the day, their filth and indecency, can scarcely be exaggerated. Civic authorities seemed habitually indifferent or callous to their disorder, and any girl thrown for training into such a den could scarcely fail to deteriorate.

Frederika pondered—with her thought always meant action. She had no money, but in 1836, on the 20th April, she bought herself a house with borrowed capital, and in opposition to the Mayor and people of Kaiserswerth—who were afraid of a Hospital in their midst—arranged all preliminaries and received her first patient on the 16th October. Whether the professional Nursing of that patient would meet with to-day's approval I cannot tell. At all events he was kept clean—and that was a great step forward. On the 20th October the first Deaconess-Sister arrived, "and who," writes her chronicler, "was happier than our dear Mother? Fifty times a day she would run from Vicarage to Hospital, and from Hospital to Vicarage, carrying necessary articles for domestic and culinary use, with indefatigable energy, arranging rooms and beds, &c." Work was joy to her, and one kind as welcome as another.

The organisation progressed with unexpected rapidity. Probationers came from distant parts of Germany, among them in 1839 two fine girls in the pretty national dress of Swabia. They entered the room just as Frederika was busy bathing her children. She was so delighted with them, history tells us, that she left the child sitting in its bath, and carried them off to her husband as "a fruit of the seed he had sown during a journey through South Germany," during which he had endeavoured to animate respectable German Protestants into entering upon the task of Sick-Nursing. One of the Swabians was Sophia Wagner, who eventually reigned in Kaiserswerth Hospital for 40 years as Sister Superior. She is described as a "pillar of the work."

In 1840 Elizabeth Fry came from England to visit Kaiserswerth. Just after she had stepped into the house Frederika received notice of the death of her husband's young brother, a dearly loved member of the family, and one of her own favourites. She made no sign of grief, so as not to disturb the harmony of the day, said nothing to her husband, and entertained her guest with smiling hospitality. Only in the evening when she was alone with her husband she wept and told him all. A few days afterwards a little son was born.

Elizabeth Fry expressed private and public satisfaction with the work carried on in the Reformatory, the Magdalen Home, and the organisation of the Young Deaconess Sisterhood, and as Elizabeth Fry was an authority of the times, her opinion increased the popularity of Kaiserswerth.

In the autumn of 1841 Frederika was asked to send Deaconess-Sisters to manage two town Hospitals in X and Y, but she would not do so without inspecting them herself.

A description of the frightful condition of these Hospitals—types, alas, of many of that time—is preserved to us. The dirt, the neglect, want of ventilation, are so revolting in detail, that I cannot bring my pen to write them. The hideous want of decency and sympathy in the wards seem scarcely credible to our reformed ideas. To Frederika—after the first wave of horror had passed over her soul—they suggested *action*.

In a letter to a friend she naïvely describes some

of the work she found Hospital inspection for her Sisterhood necessitated. "They have a drunkard in the Hospital, a man who nearly cut his throat. They wanted to *put him on guard*. I have opposed this. . . . To-day we finished the inventory. Most of the bedding will have to be dragged out into an out-house with prongs and tongs. This we intend to do on Monday. . . . I want to stay here a few days longer in case the Sisters should feel deserted, until I have got in all necessary provisions and the rooms have been cleaned. . . . I have told the Commission that if this internal havoc is not entirely remedied the Sisters should not stay, for we will not let them work themselves to death without fruit, and this can never exist in such houses of indecency. I must close by asking you to pray for me. . . ."

The loss of two of her children in this year filled her with intense silent agony. As she stood at the window watching the last little coffin being carried away, her friends were frightened by the expression of her face. They spoke words of comfort. She answered: "I am homesick." Shortly afterwards she wrote to her parents: "I do not grudge my children all their happiness."

The sight of the small empty beds gave her a new idea for new work. She told herself that she had not done enough by merely caring for the sick and imprisoned. True Christian charity should care for orphans too. And carrying out her inspirations, as was invariably her way, she went to the house in which a poor widow had just left two little unprovided girls, set aside her grief, took the children by the hand, and led them to her own little ones, saying, as she brought them in: "God has given you two new sisters."

And it is on record that the little Fliedners were not much pleased, but that the seven-year-old Pastor's daughter exclaimed in tones of disappointment: "Those didn't come from heaven! They are only the two Cohns!"

That was the beginning of the Orphanages of the Kaiserswerth Sisters and their work among destitute children.

It was the last work of Frederika Fliedner.

She expected her death, and faced it fearlessly. On the last page of a diary of hers that has happily been preserved, there are passages that read like the farewell reflections of a beautiful spirit pluming its wings for flight.

" . . . Rest and peace," she writes, among other things, "are not to be thought of in this world. Above in our Fatherland is the heritage. . . ."

On April 18th, 1843, she fell ill. Fliedner sat beside her, and at her request repeated the principal thoughts of his sermon for the following Wednesday. "Yes," she said, referring to what he had said, "unselfishness! That is what we want."

On the 22nd a dead child was born. An hour afterwards Frederika died. Her last words were, "All things last for a time. God's love is eternal."

(Adapted from Records of the Deaconess Institution of Kaiserswerth on the Rhein by

LINA MOLLETT.)

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