

Die Berufsorganisation der Krankenpflegerinnen Deutschlands.*

(THE PROFESSIONAL CO-OPERATION OF THE
SICK NURSES OF GERMANY.)

By AGNES KARLL.

The need of an organisation for the hundreds of Sisters who have separated themselves from the existing Nursing Associations is universally acknowledged. It was first publicly proclaimed at the assembly of the German Women's Union by Frau Krukenberg-Conze, widow of the well-known professor and gynaecologist, in her capacity as Chairwoman of the Universal German Women's Union. On that day the 230 representatives of 80,000 German women endorsed the declaration that the care of the sick is a civil profession for women, as opposed to the declaration that it is the monopoly of either the clerical or charitable associations, or merely a branch of domestic service.

Quietly the desire for the co-operation of the independent Sisters of every district took shape—a wish instinctively shared by all, but only openly expressed by individuals here and there. The exacting nature of the work makes it particularly difficult for us sick nurses to bring such desires into practical effect. The events, however, of the past year have powerfully worked to the same end, and thus, on January 11th, 1903, was founded by thirty Sisters "Die Berufsorganisation der Krankenpflegerinnen Deutschlands" (the Professional Co-operation of the Sick Nurses of Germany). The much-abused "independent" Sisters will soon prove by this Co-operation that the hardly-punished transgressions, which caused no one so much pain as themselves, are the exception and not the rule; and that a large number of Sisters have found it possible to devote themselves heart and soul to the noblest calling open to women and yet, at the same time, fulfil all their family duties, or duties to their own personality. The last-mentioned duties must be recognised as being as important as devotion to the interests of others. There are persons who can only achieve the full development of their talents when they are free to live their lives according to their own ideas, and why should this be less compatible with the nursing profession than, for instance, with the teaching profession, which demands an equally high social character.

People must become familiar with the idea that our Co-operation must take its place among the existing Associations. In the first place, it affords a footing for those self-reliant characters whose personality cannot permanently endure the inevitable restrictions of large institutions and training

colleges. Inexperienced, unqualified women will always be better off in a Deaconesses' or Red Cross Institution—according to their views—in which the governing authority plans and decides for them. It will frequently come to pass that some of the aspirants to the nurse's profession will be referred to them by the Co-operation. We who have nearly all of us passed through one or other of the Associations hold in great respect their extensive successful work and incalculable services. This appreciation, however, does not make us blind to the changed conditions and requirements of life at the present day. The rapid development of the world's economy draws also us women into its never-ceasing vortex, and leaves few suitable for the cloister-like routine of the older Associations. There are too many women to-day who are eager to render aid to their fellow-men, but to whom the sphere presented by the Deaconesses' and Red Cross Associations is too narrow. But restrictions and co-operation they cannot do without, and it therefore becomes necessary to create them in a new form. In the rapidly-increasing demand for nursing facilities the primary object must be to provide a means by which all women who feel an inclination to the calling may devote themselves to the profession of nursing. Above all, in our Co-operation we are desirous of preserving, to a reasonable degree, personal liberty and the right of arranging one's private life. We lay equal stress with the existing clerical and charitable associations on the necessity of good principles and spotless character. Our articles of association best express our aims, and therefore I will set them down here:—

I. The name of the Co-operation shall be "Berufsorganisation der Krankenpflegerinnen Deutschlands." The Co-operation shall be registered. The headquarters of the Co-operation shall be in Berlin. The Co-operation year shall be the calendar year.

II. The Co-operation of sick nurses shall promote their interests in every direction and in every particular. The Co-operation shall found Branch Associations or Groups in various places, including among Germans residing abroad, which Branches or Groups shall be connected more or less closely with Berlin. The nature of this connection shall be defined from time to time.

III. This will be effected:—

(a) By means of a Bureau, which (1) will be in a position to place at the service of the public, at any hour of the day or night, a competent nurse. (2) Fill vacancies in Berlin or elsewhere. (3) Give counsel and information to the Sisters. (4) Render possible a united effort in the care of the poor. (5) Keep the members in touch with one another. (6) Establish a Provident Fund.

IV. The following are eligible for membership:—

(a) As working members only, healthy sick nurses of from twenty-five to forty-five years of age (except

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