

OUR FOREIGN LETTER.

WOMEN'S EXHIBITION AND CONGRESS AT BERLIN.

The Women's Exhibition continues open until March 24th; the Congress closed on the 2nd. Both have been enormously successful. At the Congress the hall was filled three times a day with more than 2,500 people. The greatest interest was taken throughout, and the papers and speeches were, many of them, of the very highest merit and interest. No point of woman's work or woman's life was missed. The titles of the papers, the subjects chosen, were a revelation in themselves as to how far the woman's movement has progressed in Germany—how much it embraces. From the care of the home, the question of a compulsory year of domestic service for every woman (analogous to the German man's military service), through the problem of women in the agricultural world, problem of the education of women in industry, Art, and manual labour, on to the burning questions of the competition of the sexes in professional life, the social duties of the woman to the community, women in political life—all these questions and many others crowded the busy hours of the Congress, which revealed all the depth and thoroughness of the German character at its best.

On March 1st Nursing was discussed and four papers were read on the social and domestic position of women; that by Oberin Countess Hertzberg was "In the Deaconesses' Homes." She pointed out that the ancient Christian deaconesses' Order was revived in 1836 by Fliedner, and that the evangelical deaconesses are servants of Christ, carrying out his will and aiding wherever body or mind are in need of help. Their work is not casual, but constant; it is their life's work and is actually and morally, though not legally, a branch of the Church which is the origin of its strength and which gives the work its aim and object, *i.e.*, the building of the Christian community. The Countess gave the number of deaconess mother Homes in the Kaiserswerth Union as being 84, of which 54 were in Germany, with 21,000 deaconesses and 6,031 centres of work. The income of the houses and Homes reaches the enormous sum of 205,285,000 m., or £10,264,250. The mother houses are the Homes and training schools of the Sisters, who are required to be of good morals, perfectly healthy, and to love Christ. The management of each Home rests in the hands of a Pastor, with a deaconess as Matron. The Pastor acts as the House Father, is the religious head and protector of the Sisters and is the executive manager of the community. The Matron (Oberin) does not seek to take the place of a real mother, but to advise, educate, cherish and serve the Sisters. The period of probation is from two to five years and ends with the initiation.

A Government examination has been voluntarily accepted by the deaconesses' Homes. The aims of the Sisters' education are to combine the

highest professional proficiency with the development of a Christian personality whose individuality is not crushed, but sanctified. No one is sent to work in foreign missions where there is danger to life without their personal desire. The professed Sister is socially protected, the mother house takes full charge of her in sickness, disablement and old age, and this absence of all care for the future enables her to be independent and whole-hearted in her professional work. The Countess claimed a lower death-rate for the deaconess than the independent nurse. The private fortune of a Sister remains at her own disposal or that of her heirs. The Sisters have a month's holiday yearly, which they spend either with their families, travelling, or in the rest houses of the mother house.

Sisters may leave the community either for marriage or any other reason if they desire to.

Surgeon-General Dr. Werner spoke on the "Red Cross Organisation," the backbone being, he stated, the Sisters of the Red Cross. They lived and worked in times of peace much on the same lines as the ordinary deaconesses, except that they receive a regular salary of from £12 to £30 and have received official permission to wear the Red Cross.

The number of these Sister houses in Germany is at present forty-five, with nearly 5,000 Sisters. They are bound, in the event of war, to contribute by the tenth day of mobilisation at least half their fully-trained nurses, also to aid in case of public need (presumably plague or pestilence), or to send Sisters to foreign countries if the Red Cross Convention requires them.

The third paper on nursing was by Sister Agnes Karll on the Duties of the State and Society towards the Professional Nurse. The main points of her address were the urgency of the alteration of the practical training of probationers from one to three years and the special training of Matrons and Sisters in their educational duties. She also urged the recognition as training schools only of hospitals having a certain number of beds and that the hours on duty should be legally regulated to prevent overwork in hospitals.

She called upon the public to take more interest in nursing matters generally in view of the great social duties of the profession, and to be more ready to make provision for their care in sickness and old age. She also touched upon good home training as needed to fit young women for the nursing profession.

Count Hans Praschma, member of the Reichstag, spoke of the Catholic orders, of the sacrifice young Catholic women made who left their homes and their families for their religion and their duty. Of the 75,000 Sisters in German Catholic orders, 25,000 were nurses. A. K.

Miss L. L. Dock will sail for Europe early in July, and will visit Holland, and Belgium to see the new Nursing School at Brussels, on her way to Cologne.

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