

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NURSES.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7th.

MORNING SESSION.

(Continued).

MISS M. A. SNIVELY Presiding.

A GROUP OF GERMAN PAPERS.

"FEMALE POLICE-ASSISTANTS."

Sister Henriette Arendt said that in 1868 the question of women workers in municipal government was first mooted; to-day 12,000 women were employed in all its branches. The fact that the supervision of prostitutes was now in the hands of female police might be looked on as a great step forwards, for women might be the means of reclaiming women.

In 1882 the two first female police assistants were appointed in Chicago by "The White Union," and were supported by private subscription, with such good results that municipal appointment soon followed. In January, 1907, there were 80 female police assistants in America; to-day they were to be found there in almost every large town. In 1903 the first female police assistant was appointed in Stuttgart—Sister Henriette Arendt—and many other towns quickly followed Stuttgart's example. The duties of the female police assistants varied according to the towns. In Stuttgart, Sister Henriette Arendt's duties were as follows:—To see that order and decency were preserved by those who brought women prisoners to the police courts; to superintend all women brought to the police courts, whether they were eventually set free, sentenced to a term of imprisonment, or transferred to other courts. Also to attend the daily medical examination by the police doctor, at which she was permitted to give an opinion as to whether an examination were advisable or could be omitted. Sister Henriette Arendt considered it her most important duty to make provision for the female prisoners on their being discharged, the greater number of whom were prostitutes, barmaids, factory hands, servants, and sometimes girls of the better classes.

It was rarely possible to reclaim those whose parents were criminals, but the female police assistant might obtain influence over—and, thanks to private charity, materially aid—young girls between sixteen and eighteen who came into her hands on their first offence, the result of unfortunate circumstances, levity and bad company, but who were not yet blunted by prison life. Sister Henriette Arendt considered reformatories and homes of refuge to be the most expedient means of reclaiming such cases. Her attempts at placing these girls in service met with little success. As a rule the girls had been out of work for some time and found domestic service irksome,

whilst the mistresses did not always possess the tact and patience necessary for so difficult a task. She found it worse than useless to have the girls sent home to parents who were themselves averse to labour or too weak-willed to keep their children in the right path. From February, 1903, to January, 1909, 6,886 females passed through her hands, and, with the aid of the Evangelical town mission, the Roman Catholic Union of the Good Shepherd, and the district Rabbi, 1,620 women and girls were either placed in reformatories, sent home, or placed in service. As soon as her occupation became known in Stuttgart, girls who had been cut off by their relations or dismissed at a moment's notice by their employers, and mothers with their illegitimate children, came to her for help and advice.

Sister Henriette Arendt laid stress on the fact that the duties of the woman police assistant must not be restricted to the care of prostitutes in all their pitiable weakness, springing from moral hereditary taint, excessive use of alcohol, and weakness of will. She had been instrumental in founding a home of refuge in Stuttgart for youths discharged from their first term of imprisonment, and maintained that a woman's influence is of inestimable value in restraining these youths in their downward career. In the cause of temperance, but most particularly in the rescuing of abandoned, endangered, and ill-treated children, she insisted on the value of the female police assistant. In the course of nine years' activity, she was able to alleviate the sufferings of several thousands of men and women and 1,200 children.

This proved that the career of a police assistant opened to women workers a field of untold possibilities in the cause of humanity. It must be added that the duties of a woman police assistant varied according to the different towns. For instance, in Freiburg the duties of the police-nurse, as she is called, are restricted to the supervision of children who are boarded out. Until now there had been no special course of training for female police assistants, but it was much to be desired that they should be instructed in pedagogics, nursing and criminal law. Hospital nurses especially deaconesses, had proved the most suitable for this difficult and responsible post.

REFORMATORY WORK.

Sister Alyke von Tümping contributed a short description of the reformatory in Gummersbach near Cologne, which, founded in 1900, has grown to be a model institution. In 1900 the law was passed in Prussia which permitted the police to remove ruined and endangered children from their surroundings and place them in a home of refuge, or in some suitable family where, up to the age of 18, they could be educated and taught to become useful members of society.

Gummersbach was the first of the institutions which embraced factory work as a means of education. Seven years ago, fifty girls had already been placed at work at the spinning looms there eleven hours a day, girls under

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