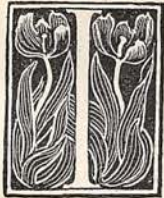




GERMAN GIRLHOOD.

By LADY BLENNERHASSETT

(née Countess Leyden).



IPHIGENIE, Leonore, Eugenie—the priestess of Diana, banished to the Scythian shore, the noble child of the house of Ferrara, whom Tasso loved and lost, the exiled daughter of a Bourbon—such are the messengers chosen to convey to the girlhood of Germany the highest tidings of German poetry.

Their foreign garb may seem at first sight strange, but to those only who are not familiar with the deepest instincts of the German race—cosmopolite in art, impersonal in thought, but distinctly national in its ethical construction of duty. And as to what that notion of duty means to the women of Germany, there is not the shadow of a doubt: as their supreme right they have been taught to claim, not freedom, but obedience.

Iphigenie and King Thoas, who sheltered her in the house of the goddess and under the protection of his unrequited love, meet for the last time. Thoas under the mistaken impression that Orest is a rival and that the hand of Iphigenie refuses to sacrifice, not the brother but the lover, asks from her the life of the stranger. In this supreme moment, Goethe puts into the mouth of Iphigenie the immortal words:

“Von Jugend auf hab' ich gelernt gehorchen,
Erst meinen Eltern und dann einer Gottheit,
Und folgsam fühl' ich immer meine Seele
Am schönsten frei.”

In obedience, first to the parental will, then to the will of the gods, Iphigenie has offered up her life, a willing sacrifice, and in so doing, has freed her soul for ever.

Let Thoas do his worst. To such a soul as hers, what is the power of fear, what the sting of death itself? The only thing she does fear, is contact with wrong, the contamination of a lie. She entrusts her own fate and that of her brother to the Scythian king, and, by her immaculate purity, redeems the last survivor of the fated house of Tantalus.

The scene changes. From the shores of the Propontis to the shades of Belriguardo; from classical to historical days, into the very heart of the Italian culture of the *Renaissance*; from the conflicts of fraternal devotion to the struggles of a poet's love. Here again the solution of the ethical problem rests in female hands, in the hands of one of the fairest of her sex, taught by physical suffering, by mental isolation, by the quickened pulses of female intuition. She, too, has to meet the furies, not without, but within the soul of man—scorn, jealousy, hatred, love, the claim for freedom from social restraint, revolt against the barriers of rank, which shield her maidenly dignity against his impetuous youth, all the feelings expressed in the dialogue in which the man pleads

for passion, the woman for self-control. The claim of Leonore d'Este is the claim of Iphigenie :

“Nach Freiheit strebt der Mann, das Weib nach Sitte.”

Of her love it is said that “it is a light, not a joy,” so complete, from first to last, is her renunciation of all the prizes of life, so unselfish the yearning of that noble, solitary heart.

Once more the scene changes. This time to reveal the fate of another girlish existence, shipwrecked on the shoals of modern life and society. The royal blood of the father cannot obliterate the taint which rests on the birth of his child. She is banished from her native land by a *lettre de cachet* from the king, the head of her house. Will the outcast rise up against the social order which to her has brought ruin?—against the absolute power, the arbitrary will which have destroyed her life?

For a moment, no doubt, the temptation is strong :

“Aus roher Menge
Kündet ein mächt'ger Ruf mir meine Freiheit an.”

But this girl too, German at heart, feels as her supreme need, not revenge against the wrong inflicted, but guidance as to where the path of duty lies.

Safety, happiness, most likely greatness and glory, too, are within reach of the exile on distant shores. But she knows destruction will soon overtake her country, and in that country, therefore, she remains under another name, at the peril of life, ready to save those who destroyed her. “For, if wonders are achieved on earth, they are achieved by loving, trusting and submissive hearts.”

In regard to womanhood, to German girlhood above all, the ethics of Goethe are the ethics of German poetry itself. Lessing or Schiller, Kleist or Grillparzer hold no different doctrine. Schiller's German maidens, Amalie, Luise, Thekla—the meek heroines loved by the outcast, the rebel, the hero—are not pale and passive, broken reeds, unfit to face the tragic issues of their lives. They too are brave, but brave with the tenderness of love, the passiveness of resolute despair. When Thekla hears that Max Piccolomini is slain, the beauty of his youthful form trampled under horses' hoofs, she listens to what is to her like the tale of woe told to Andromache after the death of Hector. She never flinches, never faints. But afterwards, in the fierce struggle which brings destruction to her house, she is never heard of again. “What became of Thekla?” enquired a young enthusiast of the poet. “Do you enquire,” he answered, “what becomes of the nightingale when the sweet melody of her song has died away in the stillness of the night? . . . She lived as long as she loved.”

The more dramatic heroines of the German stage, Princess Eboli, Countess Orsina, Leonore San Vitale, Sappho, Countess Terzky, Queen Mary, Joan of Arc—the tempters, the charmers, the proud ambitious women who wield the powers of the state, the inspired virgin who saves it, they are not German in the sense in which Eugenie or Iphigenie are German. Not as if the powers for good or for evil, which those names personify, were entirely wanting, and specially not as if no German girl had ever been a coquette or erred in the country of Gretchen—and of Faust. But Gretchen is the exception; Dorothea, happily, is the rule.

In the strife with the elements, German girls have ever displayed great courage, and Grace Darling has had humble predecessors among them. Of their heroic deeds one is particularly well known. Before Weinsberg surrendered, the women of the besieged town, and the girls too, got leave to go their own way and to carry with them their dearest treasures. They appeared with their husbands or their lovers on their backs, and a beautiful ballad of Uhland tells the tale. The girls of the Middle Ages are said to have been very brave. One of them, Jacobäa of Bavaria, when brought into contact with the womanhood of Holland, of whom Mrs. Lecky ought to tell us more, became valiant in her turn and wielded the sword like a man. There is a female element in the patriotic revival which led to the war of 1870, and the tears of the queen who died broken-hearted but unsubdued in 1810 were remembered when the laurel crown encircled the brow of her son.

But notwithstanding many instances of mental superiority and physical courage, the distinctive characteristics of German girlhood tend by no means to interfere with politics and statesmanship, with heroic adventure or heroic deeds, performed on the stage of public life.

In this respect, the poetry of the country has remained strictly true to the realities of national life, and the fancies of the imagination rest upon solid historical ground. Of the cuirassiers who rode to destruction on the battlefield of Mars-la-Tour, of the forgotten sentry, shot ingloriously in the dark, of the thousands who died in hospital with that uncomplaining patience which astonished the French Samaritans and impressed them more than the German victories, of all these victims of silent heroism it has been truly said that, next to Christianity, upon which all true philosophy rests, their deeds were the result of the teaching of Kant. And this although the men who performed them had never, for the most part, even heard the name of the thinker whose doctrine of the Categorical Imperative pervades the very air which they breathe.

Of the German girl it is equally correct to say that her present position in life is the result of a conception of womanhood, the roots of which, although mostly unknown to her, strike far into the very depths of the national soil.

"The history of woman is in truth the history of man," writes a celebrated lawyer, Professor Rudolph Sohm. "For it is from man that she receives her social position, and his own standard of civilization is fixed by his notion of what that position is or ought to be!" And Sohm, too, claims for his people the proud privilege of having first discovered what the female element in woman really means. "Something holy and prophetic," thus Tacitus described what he found to be the prevailing notion about womanhood in the homes of the Teutonic foe. It survived in the Middle Ages, but transformed by Christianity into awe and reverence for the physical weakness of the sex which, by that very inferiority, seemed nearer to the ideal of spiritual life, dear alike to monk and troubadour, to warrior and to king. Women in those days knew the healing power of plants; they shared with the clergy the knowledge of reading and writing and the art of miniature painting; they truly reigned supreme over all the social relations of life.

The position of the German girl was, however, very different, when considered from the point of view of law. To the German legal mind, liberty and equality for everybody are entirely unknown. Freedom belongs to those only who are able to fulfil all their duties towards the commonwealth, *who are fit to bear the burden of freedom*. The prime duty is to defend, sword in hand, the native soil. Whoever, man or woman, was not able to do that, had no claim to the exercise of power in the community, to personal independence, no civil rights, not even the right of administering a private fortune. The child, the invalid, the old man, were temporarily deprived of these rights; women were excluded from them altogether.

With regard to the girlhood of Germany, a change was brought about at the end of the fifth century. The right of the German girl to own property dates from that time. The administration of her fortune, however, was left to a guardian. She was partially free, *eine Halbfreie*, and not until the thirteenth century did she really enter into the independent possession of her fortune, did she become a legal person, not indeed according to public, but to private right, and so she has remained to the present day.

Only in so far as the legal position of the married woman must exercise a moral influence on the life of the unmarried, is it necessary to say a word of the legal foundation of marriage in Germany. It rests entirely on the view of the superiority of man, of the subordination of woman. Even the notion that she is bought by her husband, survives, in however slight a form, in the ceremony of betrothal. Her husband is her master, her guardian, her natural supporter—above all, he is her educator. She shares his rank, his name, his dignities, his fortune, but without him she cannot administer her own. "In the domain of law she remains a subject," Sohm concludes, "and if she reigns at all, it must be by the free will of man."

In a country like Germany, where in all matters connected with moral and intellectual life, the links of tradition have never been severed, the present is explained by the past. Disdainful silence is the mildest form of criticism opponents will offer whenever on the platform or from the professional chair the attempt is made to plead in favour of women's political rights. On this point, all the female advocates of the emancipation of their sex are unanimous in their lamentations. The introductory page of a pamphlet, by Hedwig Dohm, on "the scientific emancipation of woman," opens with this sentence: "In Germany, to defend the political rights of woman at the present hour, would be nothing short of folly, a radical anticipation of the future. A seed for which

the soil is so totally unprepared can bear no fruit. It is therefore indeed advisable to keep the counsels of the wise and to strive after what is possible." Equally despondent is the tone of Fräulein Helene Lange, another energetic champion of women's rights. In a speech delivered this year at Erfurt, on the occasion of the fifteenth meeting of the Women's Association of Germany, she complains of the "resolute opposition" offered by influential circles whenever the necessity of a radical change in the position of her sex is so much as touched upon, and she too acknowledges that the German ideal of womanhood, "a decidedly passive ideal," as she calls it, is partly accountable for this hostility. The tone of these and other female writers who share their opinions is, indeed, remarkably bitter whenever this question comes within sight. In the excitement of warfare they are often tempted to forget with Hedwig Dohm that to write a spirited satire against men is not quite the same thing as to vindicate the claim of their own sex to perfect equality with them. When they want the support of male authorities in favour of their views, they are obliged to quote foreign writers—John Stuart Mill, for instance—or the names of American politicians, because not one of the leading German newspapers, not one German politician or scientific man of note has ever been on their side. August Bebel, the leader of the social democrats in the Reichstag, who advocates the emancipation of women in the socialist state of the future, has found a vigorous opponent in Carl von Raumer, who very justly points out what German girls would lose if the materialist ideal of Bebel ever became the ruling power of society. But it is most significant that Bebel himself, while rejecting the ethical doctrine of his race and country, strictly adheres to the German legal notions about woman, and actually asserts that the German girl of the future must take arms in the defence of the Fatherland.

The aspect of the debate is different when transferred from political to social grounds, and limited to the inquiry as to how girls are to face the difficulties of modern society, how they are to fight for their very lives and earn an honest living under the high pressure of the wants and competitions of to-day. According to the statistical reports of 1875, the districts or towns of Germany where eighty-four out of one hundred girls had a chance of marrying at all, were considered as favoured by circumstances. In other parts of the country, the average was between forty or fifty per cent. The question therefore as to "what we are to do with our girls," is very far from moving in metaphysical heights.

It is an undisputed fact that, in the struggle for existence, those are most to be pitied who by birth, outward position, and rank in life, are either supposed not to be in want at all, or forbidden and in most cases also incapable of maintaining themselves by the work of their hands.

Even in cases where brainwork is possible, it is too often of such an inferior kind that it is rejected by the unrelenting laws of supply and demand. Recourse has therefore been taken to the principle of association. In Austria, in Bavaria, partly also in Prussia, there exist so-called "Damenstifte," accessible to the daughters of impoverished aristocratic families. They are supported by legacies and by donations from the crown and the various Orders of German nobility, for instance, the Knights of Malta, of St. John, the Teutonic Order, and the bulk of the aristocracy which benefits by them. One of these institutions, the Stift on the Hradschin at Prague, is presided over by an arch-duchess, and offers to its inmates not only comfort, but luxury. Every lady inmate has an apartment, servants, and a carriage of her own; residence is obligatory for only a part of the year; she is perfectly free to marry, and thereby to leave the Stift.

But the mere fact that a pedigree is required for admission in this and in similar other institutions, renders them accessible to a very limited number of girls. The principle, however, on which these institutions rest, has been adopted by many others, intended to provide, although on a much more moderate scale, for the daughters of public servants, men of science, officers, and others, left destitute by the death of parents or by unforeseen calamities. A very small amount of capital, a very moderate yearly contribution secures for them a home, where meals are generally taken in common, but where every inmate is free to dispose of her time as she likes during the rest of the day.

Institutions of that kind are particularly required in a country like Germany in which, as in older times, Antigone is only too ready to sacrifice herself for a prejudice. An aged father, an invalid mother, a helpless brother or sister have always and everywhere a claim on the devotion of the daughter or the sister whose help they require.

But in Germany these notions of duty are complicated by circumstances which do not necessarily belong to them. It is one of the most common occurrences for a girl to give up an attachment, not only because of the difference of creed, a question in which her conscience is involved, but also because of the difference of rank and station. Sometimes simply because parents choose to withhold their consent, although they may have no distinct reason to give in support of such a decision. In other cases, not at all rare, every pecuniary advantage is secured for the sons in the family. The girls have uncomplainingly to resign themselves to a future little short of poverty in the name of what is emphatically called "the honour of the family." When independence comes in the shape of isolation, it is too late for them to think of themselves, too late to begin really useful work. Antigone has become an old maid and may call herself happy indeed if the humble tragedy of her life ends in the real or comparative comforts of the "Stift."

By the very nature of these associations they must, however, remain the exception; for this reason chiefly, that the girls who belong to them cannot earn much, supposing they earn at all. In Germany, therefore, as in all civilized countries, the choice lies for them between education and training for science and art, and purposes more or less connected with them, or with charitable work in all its varieties.

First, with regard to education:

Whenever a German, be it a girl or a married woman, advocates women's rights—"the rights of man"—as they are called by female orators—she means the girls' right to University education, and specially the right to study medical science and to become a physician. This is precisely the point on which she will finally win her case, even in Germany. To the gifted, resolute girl, who has no ties and no domestic duties in life, and who wishes to devote herself to the tending of the sick, not only as a nurse, but as a doctor, none of the arguments apply which are drawn from her supposed mental inferiority or real physical weakness. Provided that, by her moral still more than by her intellectual qualities, she justifies her pretensions to be considered an exception among her sex.

First-rate German doctors, Professor Leyden at their head, are unanimous in asserting that the female nurse is far superior to the male attendant. They are less clear as to the advisability of giving them a medical degree. Partly because, with Dr. L. Meyer and other celebrities of the medical world, they fear the strain on the nerves, partly because of other reasons, connected with the views of the country at large in respect to the woman question. They are all more or less inclined to believe in a certain inferiority of the female brain for some branches of mental discipline, and they deny that the female doctor is wanted or popular in Germany. Besides, the medical profession is overstocked. Nevertheless, the University of Leipzig and several others have conferred degrees on women in exceptional cases. These cases would have been more numerous, were it not that Russian female medical students at Zürich gave grave offence by their misconduct. It must not be forgotten that the German Universities at all times conferred degrees on women in every faculty, but rarely and under special circumstances.

There is no doubt that the German girl who exchanges the work which she alone can do, for the work hitherto done by men, will remain an exception for a long time to come. As a general rule, not only can she not obtain a degree, but the doors of the lecture-rooms of the twenty-eight German Universities are closed to her. It has therefore been thought advisable to provide lectures on scientific subjects for women in special establishments. The first founded of these, and the most important of them, is due to the efforts of an Englishwoman, Miss Archer, and to the enlightened protection of the Empress Frederick, then Crown Princess. The Victoria Lyceum at Berlin was founded at the close of the year 1868, and supports itself by the fees paid for instruction. The subjects lectured on were natural science, history, literature, art. A few years afterwards it became evident that most of the girls who attended the lectures contented themselves with very superficial acquirements. Miss Archer then introduced stricter methods of teaching and regular instruction in mathematics and classics. Later on courses in modern languages and literature, botany, music, and drawing were added, and the Lyceum took gradually equal rank with the Gymnasium for boys. Before Miss Archer died, in 1882, she had the satisfaction of knowing that she had not worked in vain and that the future of her institution was secure. Since then a similar institution has been founded at Leipzig with equal

success, and many private establishments in different parts of the empire aim at analogous work.

The primary school, as it at present exists, must be attended by girls as well as by boys. It is not under the supervision of the State, but under control of local bodies, and has been accepted as the standard school of the world. The sexes are divided. The girls are taught by schoolmistresses; religious teaching is obligatory, except for children whose parents proclaim themselves agnostics. Religious instruction is given separately by the clergy of the various denominations. Governesses and private teachers of all kinds have nearly disappeared, because, during the first years of education, the children of the rich are associated with the children of the poor in a common training which costs nothing and could not be equalled at home. A young girl, when she leaves the primary school and goes to one of the high schools for girls, controlled by the State, is able, when she comes out of that, without further preparation, to present herself for the State-examination, and to become a teacher in her turn. The instruction in the high school is almost exclusively given by men, but it is the aim of the advocates of womens' rights to replace male by female teachers.

Notwithstanding the advantages which the German girl at present enjoys, a certain number of female writers demand for her absolute equality in education with the German boy. The majority of those who have a right to speak reply that the severe uniformity and methodical accuracy of modern training is even more dangerous to the faculties of the average woman than to those of the average man, because the female nature has a tendency to overwork the brain, to strain the nervous energy till collapse ensues. Moreover, they assert that it is ruinous to the health of the girl to work in the school more than six hours a day, and that a longer time spent in lessons must interfere with the duties which even the tiniest little girl owes to the household. They prove, by the hard test of statistics, that the liberal professions are already overcrowded, that the pressing necessity would be, not to provide classical training for girls, but to diminish the number of men who are supposed to know Latin and Greek, and yet are incapable of finding employment, and prove fit only to augment the increasing crowd of social failures. It is further contended that the qualities essential for good house-keeping have diminished instead of increasing, and that they are just as important to the girl who does not marry as to the girl who does. One of the most important elements in the state is not the lady artist or the lady novelist. It is the experienced housekeeper, the good servant. In this respect, the plucky, hearty German peasant girl is much better trained, much more independent, and well acquainted with the requirements of her work, indoors and out of doors, than the rich middle-class girl, who despises what does not cost money or suit her fancy, and the destitute middle-class girl who has learnt what to her is totally useless, and does not know what she ought to know. "The training of the mother," says Sophie von Hardenberg, in a very able pamphlet, "has not improved in Germany, and this is a loss for which no other gain will ever compensate." It is of particular importance in a country where the house is not managed according to fixed rules, as it is in England, where servants are trained for their work, and rather inclined to resist any attempt to change or to improve it. In Germany, the comforts which may be obtained with the very slight means at the disposal of the majority of families, are, for the most part, the result of the exertions of the German girl, be she daughter or servant, in the house. Even in families which are very well off, the dinner is frequently cooked by the daughter under the mother's eye, and the bill of fare is not expected to repeat itself in the course of the month. In small households less meat is often consumed in a week than a similar household in England consumes in a day. The ingenuity of the housekeeper has therefore to provide a change of farinaceous and vegetable food. In most cases dressmaking is the exclusive task of the middle-class girl. She is constantly reminded that by cleanliness, thrift, and needlework she can often save more than she would earn, were she to exchange indoor for outdoor occupation.

These and similar considerations have led to the organization of societies and schools for the promotion of the employment of women, with the special view of training them for the practical pursuits of life. The first of these associations, the "Lette Society," founded by the philanthropist, Dr. Lette, at Berlin, in the year 1866, and placed under the protectorate of the Crown Princess, supports at this moment a commercial school, a drawing and modelling school, and a cooking school. It gives

"instruction in washing, ironing, cutting, dressmaking, hand and machine-sewing, the manufacture of artificial flowers, and many other kinds of manual and art work. The pupils of these various schools are prepared for the State examinations for drawing teachers, and instructors in mechanic arts, and subsequently find employment in boarding, private, and girls' grammar schools. In another building is a printing office, where women are taught to set type. The society also conducts a boarding-house for women (*Das Victoriastift*), and in connection with it a women's restaurant. A shop for the sale of female handiwork, known as the *Victoria Bazaar*, a free intelligence office, and a bank where women may make on easy terms small loans, with which to commence or enlarge their business, or to buy sewing machines, are some of the other admirable features of the *Lette Society*."

Such is the account given of that organization by an American writer, Mr. Stanton, in his excellent book on *The Woman Question in Europe*. Since 1872, Mrs. Schepeler-Lette directs the society called into existence by her father. Many German towns, from Cologne to Dantzic, and from Bremen to Breslau, possess institutions on the model of the *Lette Society*. The "*Alice-Verein*" at Darmstadt, mostly due to the exertions of its illustrious patroness the late Grand-Duchess, Princess Alice of Great Britain and Ireland, proceeds on similar lines.

The *Fröbel System*, which provides for little girls the institutions known as "*Kindergärten*," has found an energetic promoter in Mrs. Johanna Goldschmidt, of Hamburg. Under her guidance, courses have been opened for the instruction of girls who want to become teachers for such schools, or children's nurses.

The *Housekeepers' Societies*, "*Hausfrauen-Verein*," owe their origin to Mrs. Lina Morgenstern, to whom are also due the *Soup Kitchens*, "*Volksküchen*," where the poor are fed at very moderate prices, beginning from twopence and never exceeding sixpence. In both these institutions most of the pupils and attendants are girls. At Cassel, *Fräulein Marie Calm* is at the head of an industrial school for girls, which she has founded, and which served as model for various establishments of the same kind in other towns.

Of the ladies who are at the head of the *Press* in the service of "*The National Association of German Women*," three able writers, *Auguste Schmidt* of Leipzig, *Marie Menzzer* of Dresden, and *Marie Calm* are unmarried. One of the difficulties they have to contend with is this, that in Prussia the State objects to the employment of girls in the *Postal and Telegraphic service*. The States of South Germany are more liberal in this respect, and allow female candidates to pass the examinations for such employments.

Finally, there is one department of female labour which has been marked by the most signal success, without any but the inevitable drawbacks which attend all human efforts: it is the nursing of the sick and wounded—hospital work in all its forms.

Its present organization is for the most part due to the impulse given to national energy by the wars of 1864, 1866, and especially by the great war of 1870. The girls of those days who became nurses under the *Red Cross* were for the most part *improvised* nurses, who after a few weeks' training assisted doctors and professional nurses in the emergency of the moment. They had proved so useful and had come to like their work so much that they resolved not to give it up when peace was restored. The combined efforts of the girls who returned from the hospitals and of their mothers and sisters, who had provided at home for the wants of the wounded officers and soldiers, led to the organization of the "*Women's Patriotic Society*," *der Vaterländische Frauen-Verein*, due to the exertions of her Majesty the Empress Augusta. Institutions under that name exist now in every one of the German States under the patronage of the sovereign. They hardly differ as to the end they have in view, for to all of them the training of thoroughly reliable, clever and experienced nurses is the principal object. The oldest and one of the best of these societies is the *Badisch Frauenverein*, due to the special care of the daughter of Emperor William, the Grand-Duchess of Baden. Faithful to the traditions of her house, she has ever vied with her illustrious mother, Empress Augusta, with her sister-in-law, the Empress Frederick, in enlightened care and charitable work for the destitute and suffering members of society. Besides the instruction of nurses, the *Verein* for women in Baden makes its special object to succour the poor and aid the working women.

In Bavaria, the girls who wear the badge of the *Red Cross* live in common, are remunerated and provided for by the Association, and go out nursing in town and

country. Like the Deaconesses, they wear a special dress, and are free to marry. If, however, they prefer to go on with their work, they are provided for after the age of sixty, or in the case of illness and decline. Nearly the same rules are applied by the Victoria-haus, at Berlin, for the training and support of nurses, which is under the special protection of her Majesty the Empress Frederick.

In the course of a few years the number of girls in this establishment increased from eleven to ninety, and is expected to increase much more. Some of these nurses went to the battlefields of Bulgaria, there to take care of the wounded; others are regular attendants in the great hospitals of Berlin, and look after the poor of their respective districts.

Thousands of German girls are thus employed, and thousands more would be not only useful, but wanted for the work at hand. In this field of labour the supply, however generously given, never seems to meet the demand. The Deaconess and the Sister of the Red Cross, the trained nurse and the devoted girl who never had the opportunity to get a regular training, are alike insufficient in number for giving help to those who ask for it.

At this point, when lay assistance and the organizations of Protestantism have exhausted their resources, another kind of charity, in the dress of the Catholic nun, steps in and claims from society the right to help. Nowhere in Germany has this been refused. The nun is hardly less popular in the Protestant countries of the north than among the Catholic populations of the south. In her favour two circumstances plead which are peculiar to all the religious institutions of the Church to which she belongs. They are the most ancient forms of association called into life in the service of suffering humanity, and their members alone devote themselves to that service entirely and for ever.

The first Deaconess was Phœbe, mentioned by the Apostle St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. Since then, empresses of the east and west, descendants of the great Roman houses, royal ladies and ladies of high rank in the world have shared with the humblest of their sex the glorious task of serving Christ in the persons of the poor and the afflicted. Under one form or other the nursing of the sick formed part of the work of the female religious communities of early days. At the beginning of the thirteenth century Pope Innocent III. instituted the hospitals of the Holy Ghost, and Guy de Montpellier founded a religious Order for both sexes, whose special object was the nursing of the sick. This work has been carried on in Germany from his day to ours by communities, lay and religious, the best known of which and the most numerous is the Grey Sisterhood of St. Vincent of Paul, best known under the name of Sisters of Charity. This institution has proved most attractive to the South-German peasant girls, who are numerous in its ranks. Its merits are so well known that they need not be touched here. Great as they are, they must not be allowed to throw the achievements of others into the shade. The nuns of the Good Shepherd open a refuge to the poor erring girls of their sex. Benedictines, Sisters of the School of Cîteaux, Dominicans, Franciscans, Sisters of St. Clare, St. Elizabeth, of the Infant Jesus, of the Redeemer, Carmelites, Servites, educate the poor, nurse the sick, attend the dying, train servants, take care of invalids, of abandoned children, of the insane, and of the incurable. In the Kingdom of Bavaria alone these nuns number between 8,000 and 10,000, and are steadily on the increase. The newest foundation, a sisterhood for mission-work in Africa, which follows the rule of St. Benedict, has proved particularly attractive to young girls since one of these nuns met with a violent death at Pugu, in East Africa, January, 1889, and the palm of martyrdom seems within reach.

If the picture drawn by poets of the ideal of German girlhood be not the dream of their imagination but a living reality, the attraction exercised on them by a life of self-sacrifice, of perfect purity, of entire obedience, hardly requires to be explained. Well may many of them tremble and hesitate on the threshold of married life. The more such a girl loves, the more she will have reason to remember, with Goethe's *Eugenie*, that henceforth, if one heart proves faithless, "no one will give back to her what she has lost." No such hesitation darkens the future of her who has given up her life to Christ. Behind her lie not all the temptations but certainly all the disappointments of the world. Before her is a life of toil, but also a life of rest. Of the affections of the heart she is not deprived. She has become the mother of the orphan, the support of the lonely, the companion of her fallen sister. The face of the German girl is often serious; the expression of the German nun is nearly always

bright. To her have been addressed these charming lines of the greatest poet since Schiller:—

“Das bittere Gefühl wie arm dies Leben,
Wie trügerisch des Glückes Gunst
Derselbe Wunsch, dasselbe Streben
Gab Dich dem Glauben, mich der Kunst.”

Here the question may well be asked: Are German girls always at work?—do they never amuse themselves?—and are we to believe that their whole life is spent either at school or in the kitchen, in the hospital or in the convent?

If anything of the kind had been implied, it would indeed be time to correct it. Not at Vienna only, where the mixture of races has produced a more frivolous type, but everywhere in Germany young people are particularly fond of dancing. During Carnival, between New Year and Lent, balls are numerous, and last between six and eight hours. The German girl is fond of games, a good skater, and a resolute mountain-climber. She is very fond of riding; but in most cases the quadruped indispensable for this exercise is wanting. Country-houses are so far distant from each other that a set of lawn tennis outside the family circle is not easily procured.

To resume. Girls in Germany are simple in their tastes and habits, hardworking, rather serious. Frivolity among them is still quite an exception, but of course it exists. Attractiveness is not their prevailing characteristic. Partly because they are shy, partly also because habits of self-control and renunciation, early acquired and steadily followed, do not always make it easy to sacrifice to the graces, particularly in a country where the art of conversation is not cultivated. Their powers of acquisition seem greater than their creative power. Both in literature and in art no German girl has ever produced anything first-rate; no German novelist has equalled one of the second-rate female novelists of England. In regard to poetry, an exception, however, must be made. Annette von Droste Hülshoff has produced works which, for depth of thought and beauty of form, rank with the best lyrics ever produced in the German tongue. She has had distinguished followers. Betty Paoli, Emilie Ringseis, and others have written beautiful lyric poetry.

Still the purely intellectual work achieved by the German girl might have been left undone without considerable loss. What the country will never be able to spare is the self-sacrifice and the loving obedience with which she silently shapes the national life:

“Aus Märchen gränzt was sie für Andre konnte,
An Heilgenschein, was sie sich selbst versagt.”

