

CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNINGS.

IN the early sixties, so far as I recollect, the only public charitable institutions in Ottawa were the two hospitals: the Protestant, at the extreme east end of Rideau Street, afterwards used for contagious diseases, and the Roman Catholic, on Water Street. As the city grew, however, it began to be borne in upon the minds of a number of the charitably disposed citizens that some provision should be made for orphans and destitute children. The first report of the Orphans' Home says: "An institution, having for its object the relief of destitute orphans and widows, had been long ardently desired by the charitable and philanthropic portion of the community." I have also been informed that Mrs. Bronson and Mrs. Spence, two ladies forward in every good work at that time, often talked over the matter together.

It is sometimes difficult to speak positively regarding the genesis of any movement of this kind. We know in a general way who were the founders and who attended the first meetings for organization, but in whose minds the thought originated, and who took the initiative, it is not so easy, after a lapse of time, to determine; but I think I am safe in saying that the drawing-room of Mrs. W. F. Coffin was the birthplace of the Orphans' Home. Mrs. Coffin had been closely associated with the