

This very brief presentment of the case seems necessary to point out to those who may not be informed on the subject that the modern employment of women to so large an extent in the English and American Churches, as Deaconesses and associated in Sisterhoods, is no innovation, but a revival of one of the most helpful and beneficent organizations of the earliest days of Christianity.

In these excessively practical later days however, the argument of antiquity alone, would be a very ineffective and unconvincing one to recommend any institution to general support. Happily, in the case of Sisterhoods, which is that I have more especially to present to you, it is fortified by considerations so obvious and so powerfully appealing to every sentiment in us that is true and tender, human and holy, that none can resist their force.

In every work of mercy and gentle ministry to the sick and needy, in every duty where love and patience and sympathy and delicate skill are called for, woman is pointed out by her very nature, as the true and only efficient helper. This is her gracious sphere, the office she was created to fill, to be a help meet for man, in his pains and sorrows as well as in his joys. There is nothing new in this—it has always been so, but it has been recognized more and more as true, blessedly true, as advance has been made in the spirit of christian charity and human philanthropy. And since that noble type of all that is truest in womanhood, Florence Nightingale, proved that a lady of delicate frame and refined nature and highly sensitive nervous organization could face unflinchingly the horrors of the battle field and witness bravely the sickening sights of its murderous work, and bind up the most ghastly wounds with untrebling hands, and calmly breathe words of heavenly comfort into the ear of the suffering and the dying, men have done homage to the gift of woman for heroic self-sacrifice, steadiness of nerve, ready skill and power to soothe and comfort, in the most heart-appalling emergencies, where they themselves would, to use their own undeserved and contradicted taunt, turn woman.

The wide-spread establishment in recent years of training schools for Hospital nurses is a tribute to this triumph of woman over the prejudice of ages, and her restoration to her rightful supremacy in her true mission.

But the order of Sisterhoods introduces a very important advance in the whole question of woman's work in the church. Its claim is, not only that, to the most efficient and systematic discharge of the offices of Christian philanthropy, is superadded the ministrations of spiritual advice and consolation—that the souls of the objects of their mercy are cared for and tended with even greater solicitude than their bodies—but that a principle of work is laid down which is vital to the fullest efficiency of the workers for such spiritual ministrations; the consecration of the whole life to the service of christian charity, and the associated life in community for the deepening of the spiritual life by the practice of constant devotion, self-denial and simplicity of living, frequent and regular hours of united worship and soul-strengthening communion.

It is no part of my duty to enter here upon an apology of the principles on which Sisterhoods are founded; but I suppose no one would deny that the practice of the rules which they lay down, must be calculated to render the members eminently fitted to go out upon their errands of mercy into places of wickedness and misery, shielded by the safe-guard of a deep personal piety, fortified with the strength gained from prayer, inspired by the very spirit of their Divine Master, of burning zeal for souls.

It must be recognized that all women who would work for Christ and their fellows, are not called to be sisters. There must be a vocation, as truly as in the call to the sacred ministry of the Church; and that vocation is to be truly discerned in the providential indications of circumstances.

The ordinary and proper sphere of most women is undoubtedly the Home; but there must needs be many cases which, if prayerfully considered, would present themselves as a call for complete devotion to a life of holy service. Married women have their opportunities, in which they can do good and useful service in promoting works of charity and

bettering the condition of the poor and advancing the cause of religion. And, right nobly do many use them, as witness the many charitable institutions and missionary organizations of this city, whose prosperity is mainly due to the active, benevolent labours of married ladies. But there are duties to crying fallen humanity, more deeply sacred than the diligent attendance on Committees, and the visiting of Homes and Hospitals. There are cases of deep spiritual and moral and physical degradation, that can only be efficiently ministered to by those who can give a consecrated life to tend them and bring a spiritualized experience to bear upon them.

But why need I theorize upon the blessedness of the work, which a Sisterhood is calculated to accomplish, when experience is at hand to prove it? Happily we have one of these most admirable orders—a Canadian Sisterhood—successfully established in this city, where there is such ample scope for its work; and in pleading its cause with you to-day, I am asked to give you a short sketch of its history and operations.

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine, is the outcome of a consultation upon church life and work among some earnest Christian people, who had been aroused by a mission held in Holy Trinity Church, before Lent, in 1881. The idea was broached that an institution might be undertaken—to be established by church people generally and put in the charge of Sisters. On recommendation, an application was made to the Order of St. John Baptist in New York, but the Sister Superior being in England, nothing further was done till the autumn, when, at a meeting held in a private house, it was agreed that an effort should be made at once, and a circular issued asking for a small sum of money to begin a Church Home for aged and infirm people to be in charge of Sisters.

Collecting books were issued and, though amidst many difficulties, the project met with encouragement and warm sympathy, enough at least to keep up interest, until the present Mother Superior came on a visit to Toronto, on her way to St. Mary's Sisterhood in New York, where she was about to enter her novitiate, with a view to becoming a Sister of that Order. After prolonged and earnest entreaties she consented to undertake the arduous work of founding a Canadian Sisterhood, which should, as it grew, undertake works of piety and charity wherever required and whenever possible in any part of Canada. Meanwhile affairs took a more business shape, a strong Committee of ladies and gentlemen being formed, and it was agreed that an endowment of \$25,000 should be raised to ensure a small permanent income for the Sisters.

At length the Sisters took possession of the Mission House in December, 1884. It consists of two small rented houses, 71 Robinson St., and was formally opened with a service of prayer, by the Bishop, on St. John's Day, 1884. The work done there has consisted of active mission work, providing dinners, invalid cookery, and night nursing, distribution of clothing and food, and much house to house visiting. Since the Hospital was begun much less work of this kind has been possible. The Mission House has been useful to many visitors, and has afforded shelter to some persons needing special care. A Dispensary was established in the Mission House at the beginning, when twice a week a medical man has been in attendance, to give advice and prescriptions, which have been made up by a chemist at half price, and often paid for by the Sisters. A Hospital for the treatment of the diseases of women, was opened on the corner of Euclid Avenue, next door to the Mission House, by the Bishop, in September, 1885. Number of patients nursed up to 14th April, 1887, 112 in all, 56 of whom were free, while 18 paid \$8 a week, and some less. Forty-seven of the cases have been surgical. The advantage of having the Sisters in attendance has been intensely appreciated by the patients, and their care and skill have won for them the hearty esteem of the medical men. There have been four deaths. The Hospital is in part, but only in part, self-supporting, enough however, has been given in voluntary contributions to cover the balance of expense, and only about enough. The Hospital Fund is separate from

finds for maintenance and endowment. One of the Associates has been responsible for the rent, which is always promptly provided. The Hospital has become very crowded, both office and linen-room having to be given up to patients. It would be a good work for some good Christian who had the power, to make the Sisters a present of a new building for their House and Hospital. St. George's Church Home, situated in that parish, was opened on 9th March last, by the Bishop, and placed under the care of the Sisters, a home for aged people, and already almost full. It is hoped that other branches of work may be undertaken, as the number of Sisters becomes greater, including a House of Mercy—a School, and, some day, Foreign Mission Work.

The Embroidery Room represents a department of work which has been very useful, affording occupation to many of the Associates of the Society, and turning out a great deal of valuable work for the adornment of a good many different churches, much of which has been sent to other parts of Canada, from Winnipeg to Frederickton. Very little of the work has been done by the Sisters, except the designing preparing, and finishing. The money received for surplices, stoles, and altar-hangings, covers a large part of the Hospital coal bill.

Such is a rapid summary of the various works hitherto undertaken by the Sisterhood. Of the value of the results accomplished, there is ample testimony borne, whether by the grateful patients of the Sisters' loving care, the medical witnesses of their capable skill and devotion, or the voice of Christian workers of all denominations. To these results the faith and zeal of a few earnest friends, especially some who are members of this congregation have contributed, but more than all, under the good blessing of God, the power, ability and devotion of the Mother Superior beloved of all who labour with her.

I appeal to you earnestly for your aid to enable these devoted Christian ladies to carry on and extend their beneficent designs. The means which you entrust to them, as your almoners for the relief of distress, will be both wisely and faithfully administered. It is for the maintenance fund that your offerings are invited, a fund required to meet current expenses whilst the endowment is incomplete. Of the needed endowment fund of \$25,000, only some \$8,500 has yet been contributed. If you are sired to make your gift to this rather than to the maintenance fund you are requested to mark it accordingly.

I cannot more forcibly couch my appeal than by reverently adapting that of the great apostle on behalf of the first "sister" of whom we have personal knowledge in the Church of Christ: "I commend unto you our sister, who is a servant of the Church, that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you; for she hath been a succourer of many and of myself also."

## Home & Foreign Church News.

From our own Correspondents.

### DOMINION.

#### MONTREAL.

**Christ Church Cathedral.**—An association for young men, called the "Young Men's Cathedral Guild," has been organized lately in connection with this parish. Canon Norman's great success in influencing young men and the large number of this class who attend the services of the cathedral has already given this new society an impetus which will continue increasing. There is no doubt of the usefulness of such a society in a city like this, which is crowded with young men from the Old Country. The following officers were elected:—Rev. J. G. Norton, honorary president; Rev. Canon Norman, president; Mr. Rielle and Mr. W. Lyman, vice-presidents; Mr. R. Dorf, secretary; Mr. Binmore, treasurer. Fortnightly meetings will be held during the fall, winter and spring months.

Rev. H. Kitten will read a paper on "Athletic Games" at the next meeting. It has been at last