

## THE HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE.

As Seen by Rama.

Away down in the east end of the city a stately pile of buildings stands back from the street, behind a high wall that shuts out from the passer-by the sight of the pretty grounds still gay with the glory of the late summer flowers, which contrast so well with the smooth green lawns, overshadowed by many fine old trees.

A palace it is, this mansion of which I speak, and yet within its walls you will find only those who are absolutely destitute of this world's goods—for it is, indeed, a palace of the poor. The name it bears is a very beautiful one when one realizes the meaning of it and the absolute truth of the fact which it implies, a name you will already have guessed, I am sure—the House of Providence.

I spent such a pleasant afternoon lately within its grey walls and I was so touched and interested by much I saw there, that I think you will like me to tell you about it.

"I am going to see the House of Providence," I said to Mary, "don't you want to come with me?"

She was delighted at the idea, and the wee one, having also implied that it was the will of her ladyship to accompany us, we started out, a happy trio, saying, as we walked in the bright sunlight, that it seemed good indeed to be alive on such a glorious day.

Mary has always lived in the west end of the city, and so the quaint old shops and houses one sees east of Berkeley street interested her mightily.

As we passed inside the high gateway, up the wooden walk to the principal entrance, we noticed groups of old men and women out in the grounds enjoying the warm October sunshine, which seemed to me to be typical of the warmth which love and kindness had brought into the declining days of their own lives.

Wee children, too, ran about merrily, as happy and unconscious of aught but the enjoyment of the hour as are any of the petted darlings so safely cradled in the homes of our wealthy friends.

The door was opened for us by a Sister with a bright, cheery face, which was surrounded by the snowy linen worn by the members of her order, the Sisters of St. Joseph.

"Why, certainly, we are always glad to see visitors," was the answer to my enquiry as to whether it would be convenient to show us through the building, and we were at once taken up stairs to a small reception-room, where, presently, two other Sisters came to us, and, after a few words of kindly welcome, offered to be our guides.

First we visited the house chapel, a beautiful place indeed, with gothic arches and clorestories on either side.

"This chapel is quite full when we are all here," said my Sister, "for there are over six hundred of us altogether."

Of course the doors are always open as they should be in all God's houses everywhere—and, I fancy, it is seldom, if ever, that the quiet chapel is without some silent worshipper within its consecrated walls.

"The Sisters form the choir now since the children over four years of age were sent to Sunnyside," continued my Sister. "We miss their young voices, for they used to sing so sweetly."

We next were taken up more stairs to see the nurseries—first into a room with rows of tiny cribs, in one of which lay sleeping a beautiful baby boy, about six months old, with fluffy curls of gold around his head, and his fat thumb stuck in his mouth, making a picture an artist would love to paint.

As Mary's Sister opened the door into the next room we saw, for a moment, a circle of tiny chairs, containing two tots of from two to four

years, with two or three still younger children playing on the floor in the centre of the ring, while a woman, with a baby in her arms, was amusing them by telling them a story.

I say we saw this for a moment, for as soon as they saw us there was a perfect stampede towards us, and a friendliness shown by uplifted faces and hands held out to us that was quite remarkable. Fear there was none, and it was very evident that, while these children regarded the Sisters as indeed their best friends, they were quite willing to include us also among the objects of their attentions.

Some of them were puny, delicate little creatures, with odd old faces that seemed to speak of hard lives and wretchedness long before their feeble span began.

"Many of them are just left at the gate," said the Sister. "We take them in and try our best to bring them up to live good and useful lives."

The woman with the baby in her arms is a poor young wife, with four children, whose husband has gone away to seek the work he could not get here, leaving her in the meantime destitute.

As soon as her baby can be left she will go out to service, and in the meantime she and her four little ones have found a home and a shelter.

In an adjoining room stood a row of little cradles, nearly all occupied by babies, some asleep, some enjoying a bottle of milk, and one or two sitting up and amusing themselves in true baby fashion. Here, again, there was a marked contrast in the appearances of the children, some being beautiful babies in form and feature, plump and rosy as one of Raphael's cherubs, while others had pinched faces, sunken heads, and that starved appearance which is so piteous when seen in young children.

Two, in particular, looked as if their little lives were ebbing fast away.

"Poor wee lambs," said Sister, as we passed out.

Down stairs again, we went into room after room, devoted to the old women. Cheery old souls, most of them, in spite of the cruel rheumatism which racked so many of the enfeebled frames.

"Well, granny, how are you to-day?" said Mary's Sister, to an old woman of ninety.

"Nicely, thank you, Sister," was the reply.

"How long have you been here? Ever since the house was built?"

"Why, Sister, don't you know? I came before this house was built at all, when we were in the little old house, nigh forty years ago," the old woman answered.

Several of the old women are bed-ridden, either from old age or disease, and one poor creature's hands are so deformed and twisted by rheumatism that they are quite useless to her.

One could not help being struck with the spotless cleanliness everywhere throughout the building, with the cheerful brightness of the rooms, and, more especially, with the good fellowship and affection that evidently exists between the Sisters and the old and young under their charge.

"A bright, merry family they seem to be," I think to myself, as we move about, noting mentally the allusion to jokes and fun which had gone before.

In the large work-room I saw that many of the women were sitting idle, and the Sister in charge explained that their stock of yarn and "pieces" was quite exhausted.

"Poor old women, they love to have a piece of knitting or patching to do," she said.

"You would like some contributions of yarn, then?" I queried, thinking I could rely on the generous hearts of my *Globe* readers to give some.

"Oh, yes, indeed," she said, earnestly, "or patches of any kind, or old

clothes and old linen—indeed, we can use almost anything here."

"I think I can promise you some," I said; and you will help me to keep my promise, dear reader, will you not? for your charity is as wide, I know, as that of these Sisters, who make no distinction of creed or race, but who provide for all who need their help.

And you, out-of-town reader, cannot you make up a parcel now, at once, and send it by mail, express or freight, addressing it simply to, "The Sisters of St. Joseph, House of Providence, Toronto"? If you have any copies of illustrated papers, even if they are back numbers, put them in also, as well as some stories, in good-sized print, and the old eyes that will read them eagerly, and enjoy them, will bless you for the treat you have given them.

One blind girl was doing some beautiful knitted lace, and it seemed wonderful to see how faultlessly she kept the somewhat intricate pattern and how even were the stitches.

Several cases of epilepsy are cared for within these walls, one of which is a young man who, the Sister said, made himself extremely useful in helping to care for the sick and in dressing wounds.

The old men's rooms were a counterpart of those of the women—the beds, with their snowy counterpanes (tufted by the women) and neat pillowshams, looking most inviting.

One man we spoke to had been in bed for sixteen years.

"Well, John, how are you to-day?"

"Quite well, Sister," he answered, brightly.

"A little tired of lying there, though?" she said.

"Well, yes, I do get tired some times," he replied, "but then, you know, it can't be helped."

There are several dining-rooms in the building, the tables in which are covered neatly with white cloths, and the white dishes with which they were set fairly sparkled in their cleanliness.

Down in the basement we visited the big kitchen, with its huge range and iron boilers. A savory smell of soup came from one of them, which made one feel quite hungry.

We next crossed the court-yard to see the laundry, and the Sister in charge showed us the big washing machines and the wringer, driven by steam power, also the long rows of drying racks to which the heat is conveyed by iron pipes.

"Sister has to work very hard," said my Sister, "for the women who help her cannot do very much, and six hundred people make a good deal of washing every week."

On to the bake-house we went, and, as we opened the door, the sweet smell of freshly baked bread greeted our senses agreeably.

Great big ovens are there, you may be sure, for the Sister who works here says that two barrels of flour are used each day to supply the house with bread!

The stone floor, the big bins of flour, and the wide shelves which hold the bread when it is finished, all were duly inspected and admired, and a sample of the bread was tasted, which proved conclusively that it was as good as it looked.

In a low building in the yard there are tailor and shoemaker shops, where some of the men find plenty of work in repairing to occupy their time.

The old convent, at the south end of the grounds, is used for more dormitories for the men, and also provides a large storeroom for extra bedding and things of that kind.

The afternoon was waning by this time, so we returned to the large house to rest a few minutes before we said good-bye.

As we sat and chatted, a kind Sister brought us each a glass of rich milk and a plate of biscuits, "for,"

she said, "I am sure your walk must have made you hungry."

There are at this present time about one hundred and fifty old men, two hundred and fifty old women, and over one hundred young children and infants to be cared for by the thirty Sisters, who devote their lives to this work.

A grant of money from the Government, and a smaller one from the city, together with the proceeds of an annual picnic held in the grounds on the Queen's birthday, and voluntary subscriptions from the charitable supply the money needed for the support of the House.

"People say this is going to be a hard winter for the poor," I said.

"Indeed I fear it will be," was the answer. "Why, already we have many coming here for meals because they are out of work and destitute, and, of course, we cannot refuse them."

"Then you will need even more financial assistance than usual?" I said.

"Yes, we will, for all our expenses are necessarily heavy. For instance, it takes a ton of coal to light the furnace, and the fuel for the winter costs over \$2,000."

"And you take in others than those of your own branch of the church?" I asked.

At this question the Sisters laughed, and Sister Isabel said, "Why, of course, charity must be as broad as the Church—universal. Yes, we have several Protestants here, and would certainly never refuse any who needed our help."

And so our visit came to an end. "You will come back and see us again, said my Sister, "and tell us about the World's Fair?"

"Indeed, I will," I answered. "That would only be a small return for the kindness you have shown us to-day."

"Why do those ladies live there, with all those poor people?" queried the wee one, afterwards.

And, as I answered her, "there came to my mind those sweet words spoken long ago:—"I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; \* \* \* Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

There is talk of establishing in Florida a home for aged and infirm priests.

The Catholics constitute a little over one-third of the population of the German empire.

Fifty-four Catholic orphans from New York recently found homes in Wisconsin.

On Sunday, the 17th of September, there was a procession through the Tower hill district of London, in honor of Our Lady. Litanies were sung, and a Statue of the Blessed Virgin was carried.

Maurice Francis Egan made some bold suggestions in his address on the needs of our Catholic colleges. Dr. Egan, while he can tolerate the dormitory system for smaller boys, wants to see it abolished for students over 16.

Father Croke-Robinson gave a course of sermons at St. John's Wood, London, during the Sundays of September. On the last Sunday the subject of his discourse was Our Blessed Lady and her relation to England, his text being "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners." He gave the names of a number of places in England that were in past days dedicated to Our Lady, and conclusively showed how England was Mary's Dowry.

THOUSANDS LIKE HER.—Tena McLeod, Severn Bridge, writes "I owe a debt of gratitude to DR. THOMAS' ELECTRIC OIL for curing me of a severe cold that troubled me nearly all last winter." In order to give a quietus to a hacking cough, take a dose of DR. THOMAS' ELECTRIC OIL thrice a day, or oftener if the cough spells render it necessary.