

THE OFFICE OF DEACONESS.

At an interesting service which took place in Holy Trinity Church, Philadelphia, on the occasion of the setting apart of five trained women to the office and work of Deaconess in the Church, Bishop Whitaker, of Pennsylvania, made an address in which he said:

This is a service appointed for setting apart of women to the office of Deaconess in the Church. They are set apart for any office which woman may render to humanity in the name of Christ, but especially for such work as required training. The Deaconess is bound by no vows but those similar to a Deacon; she is not pledged to unmarried life, and is under the direction of the bishop of the Diocese or a Presbyter. The warrant for this is two-fold—it has historical precedent and inherent propriety. The office of Deaconess is not an innovation of modern times, but simply the revival of an office largely used in the early Church. The revised version in the New Testament places the word "Deaconess" in the margin, where the translation is "Servant." In I Timothy the writer, speaking of the work of Deacons, goes on to speak of the work of woman. We find recognition of the Deaconess in the second, third and fourth centuries. It is beyond question in the Church of Constantinople, when St. Chrysostom was Bishop, there were at least forty Deaconesses attached to the mother Church. For six centuries in the Church of the West, this office was exercised in a greater or less degree; it was distinctly recognized by Bishops and Councils. In the East it was replaced by a new type of womanly piety; that system is admirable in some respects. There was a time when the cloister and convent were the only retreat for devotion and study. It had one fatal defect which soon vitiated its whole life—it divorced the life of those who entered it from the common life of the Church, and there grew up a conception of the Christian life altogether false, and that those in the order were holier than those on the outside of it. Woman gave up her baptismal name as too profane for holy life, her hair was cut short and her vesture indicated that she was dead to all human affection. From that day to this, it can be proved, I believe, that in proportion as the severity of the monastic discipline was extended, the beneficences diminished, and those orders that preserved the freest life always produced the most effective Sisters of Charity.

From the twelfth to the fifteenth century the order of Deaconess disappeared, and with the Reformation we find it first in Prussia and in Holland, but it developed slowly. The work soon revived in England, and Miss Fry established the first Deaconess House in London.

In 1859, Pastor Fliedner established a Deaconess House in Pittsburgh. The movement for the restoration of the office began in our own Church with the late Bishop Alonzo Potter, in 1850, when he introduced a resolution in the House of Bishops. In 1856, the first Deaconess House of our Church was opened at Baltimore. In 1857 or 1859 there was one in Alabama; in 1861 one in Long Island. In 1862 such a house was opened in Philadelphia, and in 1869 a committee was appointed by the Board of Missions to consider the matter. It reported in 1870 recommending the establishment of the training House, and in 1871 direct action was taken by the General Convention. It passed through different stages until, in 1889, a canon on Deaconesses was enacted, which is now the law of the Church. The Woman's Auxiliary is a manifestation of the same spirit that there is a great power in the women of the Church not yet bearing all the fruit of which it is capable. There has been a strong tendency to community life. It is true that it is as strong here as in the Church of England. It is possible for a

community to live under the rule of sisters, and yet keep in touch with the interest of the Church at large. It is essential to the preservation of the Diaconate of women that it should be kept in touch with the Bishop and not be independent. There is nothing antagonistic to the right idea of a Sisterhood in the office of Deaconess. In this land women exercise a commanding influence such as can be found nowhere else in the world. In all our large cities we see conditions not met by the ordinary parochial administration.

EPISCOPACY.

"They all"—(i. e., the early Fathers)—"concur in proving the one point in question—that none can preach except they be sent; that none was permitted to become the teacher without authority from those to whom the power of ordaining had been committed; that the primitive Church, in its first ages, adopted the very system which has been handed down from the days of the apostles to the present hour, and is maintained in its greatest purity by the Episcopal Churches—that there should be in every Christian society, the teacher who ordains; the teacher who joins the ordainer, but without him has no power to send the laborer into the vineyard; and the teacher who assists the former, and is the candidate for the higher offices in the Church of God. Thus it is that primitive antiquity confirms the general truth. All societies must have some government, and the principle of Episcopacy, rightly considered, will be found to pervade every system of polity that has ever been adopted by mankind. Among the Christian Churches it is called bishop, priest, and deacon; or ruler, teacher, assistant. It corresponds with the polity of patriarchal government, the father, the first born, and the younger children—with the high priest, priest, and Levite of the Mosaic orders—with that of the Jews after their dispersion, in the apostle who visited their synagogues, the elders of the synagogue and the chazan, or minister—with that of the Romans in their Pontifex Maximus, the pontifices, and the lower priesthood—with that of the Presbyterians, in the moderator, presbyter, and the coadjutor. It is the language of nature, of Scripture, and of law, and there should ever be in every society, Church, kingdom, or family, the authority to rule, the active agent to administer the plans of the ruler, and the assistant to the two in all things. I mention these things because I believe that Episcopacy must be the chief means of union among Christians; that as Popery is the perversion of Episcopacy to despotism, and Presbyterianism the perversion of Episcopacy to the destruction of all authority; the government of Christians by bishop, priest, and deacon, according to its outline in Scripture, and its completion in Catholic antiquity, ever is, and ever will be, the best bond of union to a conscientious clergy and a divided people. Episcopacy was the offspring" [of Holy Scripture] "of the best and purest ages, when Christians were more wise, more holy, more united than any subsequent age. It preserves the Church from the usurpations of the Papacy, and the confusions of the rabble-democracy of sectarianism. It is worthy of our admiration and support, for it commends itself to our consciences, as Scriptural; to our reason, as useful; and to our desire for happiness and repose, as the blender into one holy union of order, peace, and truth."—*Ecclesiastical and Civil History.*

FOR VESTRYMEN.

I have on more than one occasion spoken plainly enough to my brethren who were about to be admitted to holy orders on this subject of

their relation to their brethren of the laity who were office bearers in the Church, and I must now be equally candid with those whom more especially I address to-day. If I were asked for three rules to govern one who holds office as warden or vestryman under any rector or minister, they would be—

Do not expect too much at first.

Cultivate kindly relations at whatever cost.

Be loyal!

The Ministry has its treasure in earthen vessels, and its success in bringing treasure forth is dependent, in a large proportion of cases, on the sympathy and encouragement that evokes it. But there is no one in holy orders whose gifts are so modest and whose aptitudes are so meagre that you and I, by judicious co-operation and by kindly encouragement, cannot make them greater. There are parishes in this diocese where it is a perpetual delight and refreshment to me to linger, because there is in them what I can not better describe than a family feeling—the burdens and the triumphs, the discouragements and the aspirations, all shared in common, and love gilding the whole with a radiance forever supremely its own. Instances of maladjustment there will be—the right man in the wrong place, and alas, unfitness, and even unworthiness, sometimes; but even then a manly and brotherly tenderness can soften the inevitable wound, prudence and charity can cultivate a discreet reserve, equity can be kept from passing over into cruelty and Christ be not wounded in the house of His friends.

And, on the other hand, where the pastoral relation is one of mutual confidence and regard it is possible for those whose act has mainly created that relation, and who, next to the rector are the official representatives of the parish, almost indefinitely to multiply a minister's efficiency. Without flattery or affection of partizanship often a more evil thing in its effects in a parish than open hostility, a layman officially related to his rector may continually make him sensible how the cause of Christ and His Church is with both of them, a common cause, and how sincerely the one, with the other, desires its truest prosperity. How many vestrymen, I wonder, are in Church on Sunday afternoons? How many even visit the Sunday school? How many in a country parish, if they cannot give their means, give a day's work to the church or the rectory? These are extremely homely questions, it may be objected, even in such a connection as this, but indeed, dear brethren, unless I am to leave the whole matter up in the air, they belong to the class of questions which I am constrained to ask, and which you may well try, at least, to answer!—*Bishop Potter.*

EDITORIAL NOTES.

We call attention particularly to the circular issued by the Committee of the Diocese of Fredericton, in regard to a memorial of the late Bishop of Fredericton, which appears in our "Home Field" columns. The object is one which will doubtless commend itself to Churchmen in all parts of Canada. Certainly, the work which the Rt. Rev. Dr. Medley was able to accomplish has had and will still have an influence far beyond the bounds of his own Diocese and his administration, so prolonged, was one of undoubted ability and power. Some are disposed to cavil at the appointment of English priests as bishops here, but the Episcopate of the late Dr. Medley as well as that of Bishop Fulford and others might be used as an argument in favor of the practice.