

The Fred Victor Mission, Toronto

By Bartle E. Bull, B.A.

WHO is responsible for that?" was the mental query of a Toronto lady, hearing the oaths of some street boys as she passed along, and the answer came, clear and God-given: "You, in so far as you neglect your duty toward them." She was an active worker in the church, and the teacher of a large and interesting class in the Sunday-school, and many said she had mistaken her line of duty and privilege when she left her class and school and went up two long flights of stairs into a little room and gathered a few of these rough and neglected boys around her on Sunday afternoons; and yet, looking backwards over twelve years, we can see all the way the Lord hath led her and her associates and those

who have succeeded them, from the time of that Divine message and the willing and obedient answer until we come to the Fred Victor Mission with its magnificent equipments, its aggressive Christian work, and its zealous and consecrated workers. Many were the struggles, both spiritual and physical, of those early days. Had Demosthenes tried his eloquence on boys such as those he would never have required to resort to the shores of the loud roaring sea. It

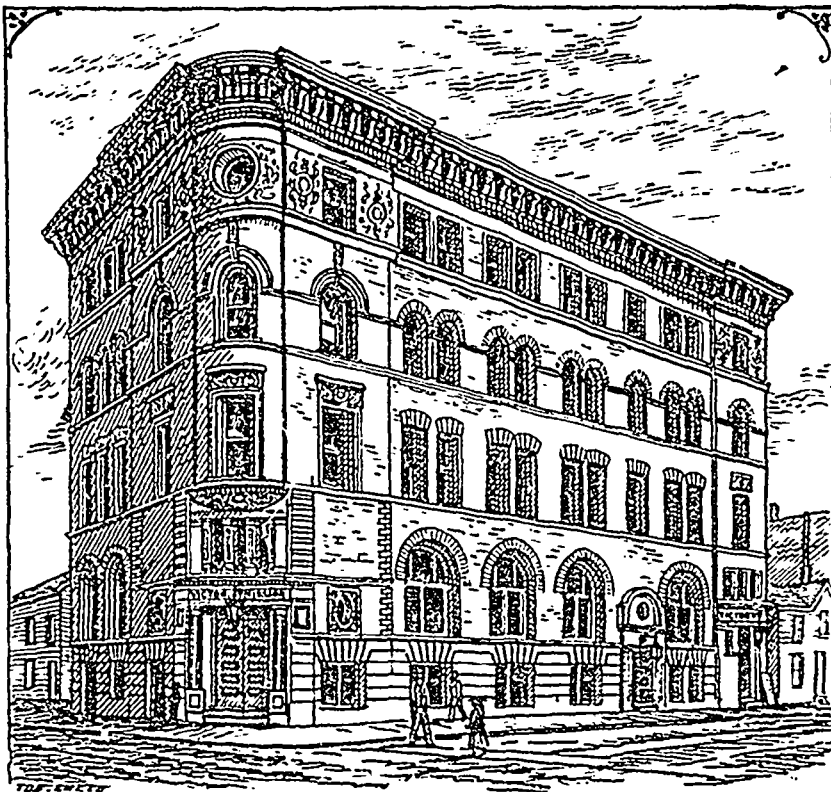
was discipline, though, both for the teachers and scholars, and not a worker now regrets the weary hours, the many discouragements, and the self-imposed and thankless duties, willingly and cheerfully borne. God was preparing them for a larger sphere, while, at the same time, blessing the work their hands found to do.

For four years there were Sunday and night schools and gospel meetings, and the number of attendants increased until there were about a hundred—nearly all of them the roughest and toughest element, Roman Catholics largely—and yet it is astonishing what real affection existed between these outcasts and the refined and cultured ladies who taught them. Some of them would find their way to prison and penitentiary,

but even then regular letters would pass between teacher and pupils, and when set at liberty the first visit would be made to the teacher.

Then came the more aggressive work, and the introduction into the services of men who had come up from just such boyhood days—the tramp and the drunkard, the wretched, unfortunate victims of vice, laziness, and intemperance. The results now were, apparently at least, more fruitful, for nothing is easier than to convince these men of their sin and misery, and of their need of salvation. They know all this, and often in agony cry out under their burden of sin, but their manhood is shattered and their wills a wreck, while the chains of habit are forged in brass, and

the power of evil seems stronger than the power of good. But it was found that no lasting good could be accomplished while they remained among the low and vicious surroundings of the ordinary cheap lodging houses. The felt want begat the remedy, and "The Central Lodging House Association Limited," was organized—independent, as it always has been, of the mission organization, and under different management, and yet growing out of it and auxiliary



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to its work. Here a good clean bed for ten cents with healthful and helpful influences and surroundings brought many from the low dives where they had been accustomed to stay—14,000 beds were furnished the first year, and the next, with improved facilities, over 27,000.

Among the workers was a young man who, just when life seemed most promising, with every opportunity that wealth and affection could offer, was taken away from love and home and usefulness. Mysterious Providence it seemed, but out of the sorrow-stricken hearts came the thought of a lasting memorial, where not only the memory of a beloved son should be perpetuated, but which also should be a centre for religious and philanthropic work. The little mission among