

## NEWFOUNDLAND

# Monthly Messenger.

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### OUR MEETINGS.

#### NO. II.—THE INFANTS' FRIEND SOCIETY.

This society, as its name implies, has been organised with the view of helping poor married women at the time of their confinement; to whom a little temporal relief at such a time is often one of the greatest of charities. Like the Dorcas Society, it is presided over by a president, secretary, and committee of ladies, who meet for one hour in the schoolroom on the third Wednesday evening of every month, at half-past six o'clock; and any member of the society is open to attend these meetings, indeed the secretary heartily welcomes such, and would be glad to see more take a deeper interest in this important work.

Our subscribers—all married ladies—at present number thirty-seven, each lady receiving nomination cards in proportion to the amount of her subscription. Those subscribing five shillings and sixpence receiving one card, ten shillings and sixpence two cards, and one guinea four cards. These cards are given to the necessitous poor women within a certain area around the chapel, careful inquiries being made respecting them to prevent imposition, and to ascertain that the candidate is not expecting to receive a box from any other similar society, some women having actually obtained them from three or four societies.

On giving a card, the donor informs the recipient of the rules of the society, and tells her to bring her card for the secretary's signature to the next monthly meeting, at which the lady is either present to give the secretary the necessary information respecting the candidate, or she sends a letter to that effect. No card is given for a first child, as we do not wish to encourage the too early and improvident marriages which, among the poor, frequently occur between mere boys and girls, with no prospect of a provision for the future, and who, when a young family comes, rapidly sink into pauperism.

At our monthly meetings the ladies are ranged round a long table, the candidates on some of our comfortably backed forms at a little distance, so as not to hear what is said respecting them. Before coming to the meeting each candidate's card must be signed with the name and address of some respectable householder, who will be responsible for the box of

linen lent to her. In most cases this signature is either that of the landlord in whose house she has taken rooms, or one of the tradesmen with whom she deals. After the ladies have shaken hands, inquired after each other's welfare, and the secretary arranged her books, papers, etc., she requests one of the ladies to go and speak to a candidate, and after asking her a few questions, the lady brings the candidate's card to the secretary, and any lady present who knows her states what she knows, or the secretary reads any letter or letters she may have received respecting her; or, if she has applied to the secretary during the month for a card, she states all she has ascertained about her. If her case be approved, as it usually is when she is known to one of the ladies, the secretary signs her card, and she gratefully departs; another lady being deputed to speak to the next candidate, and so on. Sometimes a candidate appears without a card, but bearing a letter of recommendation to the secretary from some lady or gentleman connected with the chapel, or from one of the tract distributors or sick visitors, when, if the secretary has a card for disposal, she gives it to her, or promises to obtain one for her from some lady who has not used hers, or some lady present volunteers her one. Sometimes applicants present themselves of whom no one knows anything; the secretary then appoints a lady to make inquiries during the month, and tells her to come to the next meeting, unless she live too far from the necessarily prescribed area, in which case a card is refused, lest we should not have sufficient to supply those in our own district, and the members of our mothers' meetings. As the cards must be used in the year in which they are issued, no old ones being available, else there would sometimes be a greater demand than the resources of the society could supply. After the candidates are disposed of, and their names and addresses taken down by the secretary, she reads from her minute book a *resumé* of the proceedings of the last meeting, with the names of those present; states the number of cases relieved during the month; and gives particulars of any special case of distress or suffering, and the means taken to relieve it. These minutes are then signed by the president, if present; if not, by one of the committee, and the secretary then brings forward any matters for consideration. The