

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

PROTESTANT SISTERHOODS, AS THEY EXIST IN GERMANY, AND AS THEY MAY BE ORGANIZED IN THE UNITED STATES.

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On the 13th of September 1869, the Deaconess Institution at Kaiserswerth celebrated its thirty-third anniversary. Among the remarkable facts stated at the meetings, we take this occasion to mention the following:

1. On the 23d and 24th of the previous September was held the third General Conference of the various mother institutions. Of these (forty-two in number) twenty-nine were represented, including delegations not merely from all parts of Germany, but from England, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, France, Switzerland, and the Levant. By the reports presented it appeared that during the preceding three years ten new sisterhoods had been organized, and 500 sisters had been added; the total number at the time of the summary being 2106. These sisters were engaged in 520 distinct stations, being 148 more than reported at the prior triennial meeting.

2. In the line of new edifices the following are mentioned: A new and beautiful church at Kaiserswerth, where the sym-

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tem was first planted, and where is now its largest and most flourishing home.

A new hospital at Alexandria. The old building used for this purpose had been for several years in such a condition that the safety of its inmates was greatly endangered. In the meantime active efforts had been instituted for a new edifice. Two sisters, in particular, had made large collections in England; and, though much was still wanted to put the building in complete order, yet full confidence was felt that the divine aid, which had heretofore been so bountiful, would not fail until the work was finished.

The institution at Berlin had been extended by the erection of a new and commodious hall.

In Serajewo, in Bosnia, a normal school for the instruction of Christian native teachers was provided with an excellent building; and it was on the eve of being occupied by sisters who had been temporarily residing in Pesth in order to acquire the language. As an illustration of the hold that this institution was gaining on the public mind, it was mentioned that the Turkish Governor General had largely contributed to its support.

A new and adequate asylum for the homeless was in the process of erection at Brandenburg.

In Smyrna, principally through English aid, a new orphan house was building, and funds for a Protestant hospital were to be forthcoming as soon as an adequate number of sisters could be secured.

3. The Kaiserswerth Institution, which, as the first and most widely extended, we select as a general type, presents, in its report of 1869, the following statistics:

Dedicated¹ sisters, 361; Hospitals under their charge, 57; Patients in Hospitals, 20,696; Poor-houses and Refuges, 17; Persons provided for in same, 432; Congregations

¹ We have translated "Einsegnung" as "dedication," though perhaps "benediction" would be better. In Germany, the term is used constantly as a general designation of "confirmation." The following is the form of the dedication service, as used at Dresden. It will be seen that it does not constitute an "ordi-

visited, 35; Persons cared for in same, 10,000; Schools for Orphans, etc., 43; Scholars in same, 2000; Sunday and night schools, 32; Scholars in same, 2000; Female Asylums, 10; Inmates of same, 2600; Prisoners visited, 287.

If we multiply these figures sixfold, we shall have a general view of the aggregate work of the sisterhoods of Protestant Germany; sisterhoods which carry on their beneficent work not merely in Germany, but in all sections of Europe and of the Levant. Under these circumstances it may not be now out of place to consider some of the leading principles on which this remarkable institution is based. And in enumerating these principles we have relied almost exclusively on the official reports, and on the addresses made at the nation." It may rather be likened to a service in one of our churches, on the departure of foreign missionaries, male and female.

LITURGIE BEI EINSEGUNG VON DIAKONISSEN. LIED. ANSPRACHE.
ANSPRACHE DES GEISTLICHEN.

Nach der Ansprache legen die Einzusegnenden ihr Gelöbniß in die Hand des Geistlichen ab.

P. Kniet nieder und bittet um den Segen. — Die Einzusegnenden beten: Gott sei uns gnädig und barmherzig und gebe uns seinen göttlichen Segen! Er lasse über uns sein Antlitz leuchten, dasz wir auf Erden erkennen seine Wege. Es segne uns Gott, unser Gott, und geb uns seinen Frieden. Amen.

P. Es segne euch der dreieinige Gott, Gott der Vater, Sohn und heiliger Geist. — Schw. Amen.

P. Friede sei mit Schw. N. N. — Schw. Friede sei mit ihr.

P. Er sende ihr Hilfe vom Heiligthum. — Schw. Und stärke sie aus Zion.

P. Der Herr unser Gott sei ihr freundlich und fördere das Werk ihrer Hände bei uns. — Schw. Ja, das Werk ihrer Hände wolle er fördern.

P. Amen! In Jesu Namen. — Schw. Amen.

Hierauf giebt der Geistliche jeder der Schwestern einen Gedenkspruch und betet über ihnen: Ewiger, Gott, Vater unsers Herrn Jesu Christi, du Schöpfer des Mannes und des Weibes, der du *Mirjam* und *Debora* und *Hanna* und *Hulda* mit dem heiligen Geiste erfüllt und es nicht verschmäht hast, deinen eingebornen Sohn von einem Weibe geboren werden zu lassen; der du auch in der Hütte des Zeugnisses und im Tempel *Wächterinnen* deiner heiligen Pforten erwählt hast; siehe doch nun auf diese *deine Mägde*, die (dir) zum Dienst verordnet werden, und gib ihnen deinen werthen heiligen Geist und reinige sie von aller Befleckung des Fleisches und Geistes, auf dasz sie würdiglich vollstrecken das ihnen aufgetragne Werk zu deiner Ehre und zum Lobe deines Christus, mit welchem dir sei Ehre und Anbetung mit dem heiligen Geist von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit. Amen. Vater, Unser, etc.

P. Schlußvotum. — Schw. Amen!

General Conference of 1869, to which we have already referred.

I. HOME GOVERNMENT.

Let us take as an illustration the admirable institution at Dresden, one of the best organized in Germany, which recently we have been able frequently to visit. Here we have nearly one hundred sisters, of whom about forty are residents, while the rest are employed as missionaries, not merely in out-lying stations in Saxony, but in Egypt and in the Holy Land. The home buildings occupy a large area of ground, equal to a New York block, and contain, not merely a chapel and a suitable building for the accommodation of the sisters, but hospitals for men, women, and children; schools for children; nurseries in which poor women can leave their infants when engaged in their daily work; homes for servants out of employment; and asylums where poor travellers can find a temporary retreat. Now, what is the government of this institution, so far as concerns the sisters themselves?

In this, as well as in the larger institutions generally, a resident clergyman acts as the general superintendent. By his side, and invested with the domestic management, is the sister superintendent, who is herself one of the dedicated sisters. To the pastor and the sister superintendent in concurrent action are assigned the admission of probationers, the reception into the noviciate, and the selection and filling of stations. The general board of direction, by which the secular and financial support of the institution is assumed, cannot, as has been shown by experience, wisely interfere in domestic management. Even the important responsibility of the admission of new sisters cannot safely be shared by the board of directors. The pastor, advised by the sister superintendent, has alone the delicate knowledge and peculiar experience needed for this work; and in them it has been found wisest to vest the entire responsibility. This power is not, however, unchecked. The sister super-

intendent is either elected by the sisters, or, at all events, cannot be appointed without their consent. She is in constant conference with them, and is frequently aided by a council selected by them out of their own ranks. And they have a *veto* on all admissions to the sisterhood.

It will be at once seen what important qualifications are needed for this office. Not merely an even temper, long experience, and great administrative skill are required, but singular piety. "The superintendent," so said Dr. Uhlhorn, in his address on this point, "must be the first sister; a deaconess from her full heart, wholly devoted to the Lord, exhibiting to the sisters an example of all that a deaconess should be. She should show that he who would be truly a minister must be the servant. And, most of all, must she pray for a true mother's heart towards all the sisters." The institution is to be made a real home, not merely for those actually employed within its walls, but for those who return from outer missions weary or sick, as well as for the exhausted and superannuated. The sisters are to be spared all economical cares which conflict with their especial duties of mercy. Their clothes, their food when at home, are to be provided for them; and one of the most beautiful features in the institution is the frugal but tender care with which the dress even of the most distant sisters is forwarded to them from the mother house. In this work the sister superintendent is aided by the sisters who have become unfitted for missionary work.

But the main charge of the superintendent is the education and training of her associates and pupils. And for this a firm discipline is needed. The forced renunciation of natural ties which the Romish church in such cases exacts is thoroughly reprobated. But at the same time the sisters are required to feel that when in the institution it is their home, on which their loyalty is to be centred, and to which a child's obedience is due.

To the superintendent is assigned the charge of the correspondence with missionary sisters, and of the journals

and records of the house ; and to her the reception of visitors is committed.

Above all things, the sisters are to be charged to remember that the true and only unity is unity in the Holy Spirit of God. Hence all the means of grace are to be sedulously resorted to. There must be stated instruction through preaching and Bible-classes. The sisters are to have in the home the centre of their religious life. There is the gospel preached ; there the sacraments administered ; there, in the beauty of holiness and Christian communion, religious peace to be found. It is not the peace of the anchorite, but the peace of Christians, who, separated from other ties, here meet to worship in work and worship in rest.

As between the pastor and the sister superintendent the first is supreme in spiritual matters, the second in all that concerns the domestic management of the house. It is true that in some cases, as in Kaiserswerth, under Pastor Flicdner, the pastor has in all matters the ultimate control. But in most of the institutions the sister superintendent is supreme in domestic affairs. "If it is a female monarchy," said Dr. Uhlhorn, in answer to an objection on this point, "we must remember that it is limited by an aristocratic element — the sisterhood, and by a spiritual element — the pastor."

II. OFFICIAL DUTIES.

The primary office of the deaconess is to attend the sick, either of a particular congregation or of a particular district. This is, of course, mainly confined to the poor ; and her charge is to care for the nursing, medicine, food, dress, and household comforts of the patients thus assigned. When the mother of a household is disabled by sickness, the deaconess is ready to superintend the dress and food of the children. Under other circumstances, her particular duty is to instruct the immediate attendants as to the proper management of a sick room.

As, on an average, a deaconess has charge of from twenty to thirty patients, her visits must be limited as to time ;

though in the severer cases she visits the patient twice or three times daily. In chronic cases her duty is to exercise a general, thoughtful supervision, in which her personal visits are less frequent.

It is always to be remembered, at the same time, that her object is not to preach, but to render material aid. Her whole work, however, is sanctified and irradiated by the love of Christ, which speaks through her life and labors of mercy. This enables her, when the occasion requires, not, indeed, to undertake the pastoral office, but to direct the burdened conscience to the true and only source of peace and life. And no agents of evangelization among the poor and sick can be more effective than those who make poverty and sickness the objects of their tender and unselfish care.

Of the material blessings of this system it is scarcely necessary to speak. Few among the poorer classes understand the proper management of a sick-room; a subject on which in the deaconess house the most thorough instruction is given. It is only necessary to visit the family of an ordinary laborer, when sickness sets in, to observe the confusion that follows, and the crudeness of the remedies that are applied. The presence of a physician is shunned, on account of the cost; or if sought, his prescriptions are very imperfectly followed. Of the proper order, diet, and quiet of a sick-room little is known. Here it is that the example and skill of an experienced nurse, even though her visits be limited to half an hour or an hour a day, are of such immense use; and peculiarly is this the case when this experience and skill are armed with an authority based on love.

Then, besides this, proper food and clothing can thus be supplied, through the agency of the deaconess, who acts as almoner of the rich who are ready to bestow their contributions on the institution. It is part of the duty of the deaconess to advise the rich of her district of the wants of their poor neighbors; and she acts, therefore, as a connecting link between rich and poor. Both she thus aids. The rich are taught to know and feel for impoverished distress; the

poor, that they are not forgotten or despised, and that the tenderness of Christian humanity links them to the whole church of Christ.

It is true that in this view the office of the deaconess is one of great labor and sometimes of much peril. She is engaged in constant and anxious labor during the day; and though, in consequence of this, the rules of the community interdict night-nursing as a general thing, yet there are many special exigencies to which this rule is obliged to yield. She is brought into frequent intercourse with vulgarity and crime. She is constantly burdened with the coarsest and most distressing of confidences; the mutual complaints of husband, wife, and child, who resort to her as the common arbiter of their petty but degrading strifes. Her intercourse with the rich is not without its temptations; too often they seek to lead her into the circle of those refinements which must have to her so peculiar a charm, in the trying circumstances to which she is exposed, but which she cannot indulge in without withdrawing herself from duties which demand her whole time. And in the mysterious subtlety of human nature, the very character of her labors may tempt her to look to creature-merit and creature-labor as a reliance, and thus to turn away from the exclusiveness of Christ's righteousness as the sinner's sole trust. Nothing but a constant dwelling on the cross of Christ can meet the last temptation. As rules designed to meet the other difficulties, the following are recommended in practice, though of course, with many variations, dictated by local peculiarities:

(a) The work of a deaconess is not properly in a city or large town. For such neighborhoods, ladies selected from particular congregations, can be found adequate to the work.

(b) The deaconess should enter on her work, not as an independent agent, but as the representative of the parish minister, or of the benevolent society, by which she is employed.

(c) In no case should the deaconess be expected to collect, or be permitted to receive, pecuniary or other aid for herself; she must be utterly independent of this.

(d) It is recommended that she be supplied with two chambers, one as a bedroom, the other as a kitchen. She is strongly advised not to take her meals with her patients, or in families outside of her own dwelling. In this dwelling she is supplied with means for her own table, as well as for preparing broths and other nourishment for the sick poor. In addition to this — to take Mülhausen as an illustration — she is allowed a stipend of one hundred francs monthly, to be spent in the material relief of her patients. Of this she is expected to render a strict account. She is permitted to receive no personal remuneration for her services; and only her personal expences are provided for, there being no salary allowed. Her labor is to be the pure, gratuitous labor of love.

(e) Permanency of station is strongly recommended. Of this there are frequent effective illustrations; thus, in Cologne, a single deaconess has served in one station twenty-two consecutive years. In this way confidence is established, and a settled, recognized channel of sympathy opened between rich and poor.

(f) When practicable, especially in populous communities, two sisters are joined in the work; living together, and dividing the services.

(g) Voluntary societies, in aid of the deaconess, are to be encouraged. Thus in Silesia, Dorcas societies, of the ladies of the parishes, unite in the preparation of the needed clothing under the direction of the deaconess.

(h) Collateral agencies of benevolence, under some circumstances, can be undertaken. Thus one of the Kaiserswerth sisters takes charge, in a manufacturing town, of the young girls engaged as operatives; meeting them periodically for the cutting out and preparation of their dresses, and forming them into a class to be gathered into the parish church.

III. EVANGELICAL FREEDOM AND EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE.

Of course this is the critical point to which the attention of American Christians is most anxiously turned. Is the

“obedience” of the evangelical sisterhoods of Germany based on a vow in any respects similar to that of the Romish church? In answer to this question we collect from the addresses and reports made at the Kaiserswerth Conference the following, as the views of those by whom the sisterhoods are governed :

(a) Every Christian is at once, by virtue of his Christian discipleship, in a position both of freedom and of obedience (1 Tim. i. 9; 1 Cor. iii. 21; 1 John v. 3; Matt. xi. 29). Paul, in his own case, expressly recognizes this (1 Cor. ix. 20-33; Phil. iv. 11). In this a vow of Christian obedience is implied if not expressed. And in the church a baptized person promises and vows obedience specifically. This is eminently the case when clergymen are ordained, when obedience is vowed to the human organization of the church. There is nothing un-Christian, therefore, it is argued, in the vow of a deaconess, on her dedication, that she will be obedient to the regulations of the house she joins. This is sustained by the opinions of Calvin and Luther in parallel cases; and by the valuable work of Wiese, a Protestant divine, on this very point.

(b) It is expressly taught that obedience is not a merit, nor the result of a compulsory engagement, but the prompting of love to Christ, and a free gift to his service. Hence none are received into the sisterhood except those who, after a probation of several years, have come to the determination that it is their heart's desire to devote themselves wholly to the work. During the probationship, every encouragement is given to them to retire from the work if they are not assured of their calling. And afterwards, no legal or ecclesiastical hinderance is opposed to such retirement. The essence of the “vow” is this: that they ought to give up their whole energies to the office they thus undertake, according to the rules of the community they join; and it, in return, prescribes their official duties, and provides for them a home to the close of their days. It is admitted that in cases where there are eminent religious and administrative

gifts, and independent fortunes—as in the case of Miss Nightingale—a similar work can be carried on in individual freedom; but it is urged that in Germany, at least, these cases are not numerous, and that in dispensing with communities like the deaconess houses, based on the obligation of voluntary obedience, the church would reject an immense means of usefulness, and almost the only agent for utilizing a large amount of female religious power.

(c) But this vow of obedience is not exhaustive. Intercourse with friends and relations is in no sense forbidden. The community is to be the home to which the chief affections of the sisters are to be summoned; but it does not, as does the Romish system, require renunciation of natural affections. So, as to liberty, Rome, in its convents, undertakes to direct every action, leaving nothing free; the deaconess institutions lay down specific rules, leaving everything else free. With regard to these rules, the institutions greatly vary in detail. But in all of them, the common principle obtains, that obedience to the commands of the home authorities is to be thorough. By them—the sister superintendent and pastor, with or without a council of sisters, as the case may be—the official duties of each deaconess are prescribed, her station selected, and her labors in it limited or changed. By it the religious and social services of the mother-house are determined, and its home arrangements settled. From the decisions of this authority there is no appeal.

It should be observed that in no case a specific vow of celibacy is made. Of course a sister cannot marry and remain in the community. But it is open to her, should she leave the community, to marry, without any ecclesiastical reproach.

(d) Renunciation of vows. On this point Pastor Krabbe, with the assent of Pastor Uldrich, to whom the point was referred, stated expressly as follows: “In the place of an irrevocable vow, the evangelical church establishes the service of free love. Far different from the Romish vow is a

promise tendered voluntarily on the basis of a voluntarily assumed ecclesiastical office. The office is not assumed in subordination to the vow, but the promise is made as a part of the legal acceptance of the office. When the deaconess tenders such a promise, it is on the silent assumption that she has undertaken the office for her life. An engagement for a series of years is inconsistent with this. *To each deaconess the liberty is reserved to leave the community on any ground she may prefer.* The 'vow' of the deaconess, therefore, limits itself to this: to live, when in the community, according to its rules. In this way, true evangelical liberty is in no wise infringed."

IV. SPECIAL SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION FOR THE SISTERS.

Very significant and instructive was the discussion of this topic at the Kaiserswerth Conference of 1868. From the points made we select the following:

It has sometimes been objected that in deaconess institutions there may be a tendency to adopt the Romish doctrine of creature merit, or, in other words, of righteousness by works, which has proved the bane of the monastic systems. Practically, however, this fear has proved to be unfounded. It is true that the leaven of Pharisaism introduces itself in greater or less degree in all hearts; but experience, so it is stated, shows that in its Romish form — that of dependence on self and self-merit for salvation — it finds no place, as a theological dogma, in the sisterhoods. The peril is not from the theological, but the moral side; it does not arise from the idea that the deaconess state is one of peculiar merit before God, but from the vanity common to Protestants as well as to Romanists, which is so apt to associate itself with an ecclesiastical office. "When, for instance, a deaconess" to quote from Pastor Schultz, of Berlin, "is not praised or commended, when her labors are for a time unnoticed, then arises the temptation to despondency, and she cries, 'I have lost my religious joy.' If, however, praise or commendation should follow, even though it take merely the shape of a

kind word from a casual visitor, she breathes more freely, and her joy returns; and yet in each case it is vanity; the joylessness is vanity, suffering from want of food; the joy is vanity when fed. This self-deceit it is the pastor's office to meet and correct. And the danger arises peculiarly in cases when some of the sisterhood are employed within the walls, where there are no strangers to notice and praise, while others are engaged in outer duties, where this notice and praise are constant. If the pastors do not here reach the true moral source of the despondency which may follow the one case, or the exhilaration which may accompany the other, much spiritual detriment and practical deterioration may ensue." The doctrine must always be preached, that all must be done for the love of Christ, and that human praise and human station are to be despised, when in the doing of his will.

Some danger springs, also, from the variety of social rank which is represented in the sisterhood. To those coming from a lower station in society there is a natural temptation to undue sensitiveness — to the feeling that their personal claims are not duly estimated; and this may tend to sullen pride or sensitive irritability. "These cases, however, are much fewer than we might suppose. I must testify," said Pastor Schultz, speaking of his large Berlin experience, "that in the great body of cases simplicity and humility remain untouched." But still the danger is to be remembered, and warded off. And so, also, of the opposite temptation, which approaches those who come to the sisterhood from higher social ranks. "It should be always remembered by such that the sisterhood is not a place for social dignity. In all there must be the same simplicity and humility."

In such a community there must necessarily be a distinction of offices. There must be governors and governed. But, beyond all things, pride of office must be suppressed; and each member of the society must be taught to rejoice equally whether as serving or served. And yet, on the other hand, so it is recommended, the dignity which belongs

to a mission of mercy must not be forgotten; and, with Paul (2 Cor. iv. 1), each sister must learn to feel that the office of mercy is one in which none should faint or despond.

The temptation to "eloquence" to those whose main work is to nurse the sick is to be especially repressed. Few words, but tender—these are what turn the suffering or dying to Christ.

Then, it is hard so to crush out natural pride as to be willing to provide nothing for self, but to receive all from the common home. But this must be done. The sister's whole care is to be given to mercy; no money, no presents, is she to receive for herself. Her food and raiment come from the home, and in this she finds a refuge in sickness and old age.

"Another danger comes from the confusion of feeling with faith. Sectarian attractions [so speaks Pastor Schultz, referring to such movements as those of the Plymouth brethren and of other associations of mystics] have found no converts in the sisterhoods, nor do we observe among them the unhealthy, manneristic religionism which springs from such sources; but the confusion of feeling with faith is not infrequent. Thus faith in the forgiveness of sins is made to give way to a feeling of forgiveness; and hence come many deceptions and many unnecessary, exhausting anxieties. In such cases the address should be made: 'Thank God that he has placed you in a state of spiritual fasting, rather than in one of spiritual exaltation; for in the first is found faith; in the last, too often, intoxication and fall.'"

With regard to marriage, it is to be taught that the unmarried condition is a state that has its peculiar conditions and requirements, as well as dignities. Christian women called to it have one of the chief requisitions for the deaconess office. Those not so called—those whose affections and opportunities point towards a married life—should be advised not to become deaconesses, or to leave the office, if it be already assumed.

The Lord's supper should be dwelt upon as an especial means of grace, and self-examination and preparatory instruction should be solemnly observed on the eve of each reception. For this the tenderest pastoral care should be invoked. The sisters in the house meet together for this purpose in their prayer-rooms for special preparatory devotions; those in outer missions correspond in writing with the pastor. All is done to make the occasion one of the most solemn and spiritual. Mutual confessions of sins among the sisters, and confessions to the pastor, accompanied by personal and intercessory prayer and close pastoral advice — these are specially recommended.

It should be remembered, in this connection, that a pastor is placed at the spiritual head of each of the several mother-houses, that in most cases he is a married man, and in all cases is selected on account of his experience, spirituality, and administrative gifts.

Such is a summary of the German Protestant deaconess system, as developed at the Kaiserswerth Conference. In studying it, it is impossible to suppress the inquiry how far such a system could be established in the United States. In considering this question, the following thoughts may not be out of place.

First, with regard to the work to be performed. Now we need not be reminded that a large part of the work which in Germany is undertaken by the deaconess, is performed in America by voluntary associations of ladies. With us, from the general diffusion of wealth, there is a far greater amount of leisure available for such purposes than in Germany, where almost every woman is engrossed by household cares. When these our American benevolent associations are based on merely humanitarian principles, they afford great physical relief to poverty and suffering, though with limitations that we shall proceed presently to state. When they are based on Christian principles, and when they are so guided as not merely to supply the sufferer's physical wants, but to lead him to the cross of Christ, the benefits they bestow are

priceless. They unite in themselves the chief riches of the gospel of Christ. By them the gospel is preached to the poor, and the sorrows and sufferings of the poor are allayed. They are among the very chiefest of the ameliorating influences by which American society is rescued from the ruin of a sordid and godless materialism. By them Christ is represented in his fulness at once of grace and of mercy; by them many of the wounds of society are healed, and the gaping chasm between wealth and poverty at least partially bridged by the offices of Christian sympathy. They are our best missionaries. They are our most effective almoners. They are among the most powerful agencies we can summon for the maintenance of social order and content.

But do these agencies suffice? If we view them in connection with the work of nursing the sick poor — the especial work of a deaconess — we find that they have great defects. In the first place, nursing is the work of an expert. Untrained volunteers, who serve from time to time, as convenience may prompt, are apt to produce a very unsatisfactory work. We do not take this course in any other form of social economy. The waterworks of a city, for instance, are not in any sense more complicated than the tissues and valves of the human frame; but we would never think of surrendering the oversight of the waterworks of a city to committees of benevolent gentlemen, to work them at such moments as they may be disengaged, and according to the particular notions in which they may from time to time indulge. Nursing, to be effective, either morally or physically, is an important branch of social industry, to be carried on with fixed principles and with an even hand. We do not, of course, wish to fall back on the positions lately taken by Mr. Göschen, well-established as they seem to be as economical truths, as to the bad public effects of irregular, volunteer, sporadic benevolence; though these are positions which all closely settled communities will sooner or later accept. But we do say that this important Christian and social duty of nursing the destitute sick should

be performed, as far as may be, by skilful and systematic hands. Nor can we delegate this work to the ordinary hired nurse. Even supposing that Mr. Dickens's sketches of these functionaries are entire caricatures; even supposing that when attending in the houses of the poor they can be relied on as tender and vigilant, yet, after all, this is a costly remedy, which can only rarely be secured; while the service thus rendered is perfunctory, and is but a partial and inadequate representative of the great principle of Christian love. The hired nurse, even when she may be obtained, enters on her work as a mere inanimate mechanism. Through her thrills none of the power of Christian love. In this respect she is a non-conductor, both as to those who send her, and those to whom she is sent. It is a system of material charity alone that she represents, even viewing her in her best estate. It is a system hard, cold, and material; recognizing, it is true, a sympathy of the body, but suppressing all recognition of the sympathy of the soul. It is the charity of the almshouse, not of the sanctuary; it is the gospel of Malthus, but not of Christ.

It is here, indeed, that we notice the cardinal defects of the benevolent societies by which the charities of our large cities are conducted. In the country, indeed, it is different, for here in the country, where no such large benevolent societies exist, the work of charity is largely performed by parish committees, acting under the supervision of the pastor himself, and going forth in their work at once as the confessors and the ambassadors of Christ. But in our large cities there is a growing tendency to withdraw the church from this work, and to concentrate it in the hands of what are called "non-sectarian" boards. Thus exclusive of municipal poorhouses, we have established on this principle provident societies, union benevolent societies, soup societies, houses of refuge, Magdalen asylums, and asylums for the deaf, the dumb, the blind, and the deranged; in which it is a settled compact that no "denominational" religious teaching shall be given. But what is "denominational"? What

is it that is left untouched by this term? When everything that is "denominational" is removed, what remains? Does the atonement? Does even the Bible? Have we not recently had sad occasion to discover that when "denominationalism" is excluded then revelation is dismissed? Of course it is not denied that these societies do a noble work. It is not denied that in lack of a better system we would do much to sustain them in their efforts; but there is a better system, to which this bears about the same proportion as does the body to the soul. Contrast for a moment that dumb charity which, when it has bound up the broken limb, or relieved the feverish thirst, can only turn speechless eyes towards heaven, as if to say, "as to him who sent me, and whose grace sustains and charms me in this work, I am not permitted to speak"; contrast this with the charity whose whole life, when engaged in works of mercy, is radiant with the language of faith. It is hard for Christians, when in Christ's work, to be compelled to suppress Christ's name. It is hard that the "sympathy of humanity," which it was one of the first offices of the gospel to inaugurate, should now be detached from the gospel which inspired it, and sent forth into the world as the product, not of revealed, but of natural religion; as the preacher, not of Christ, who regenerates humanity, but of a humanitarianism which refuses to acknowledge Christ. Christians must and will aid such societies, as long as there are none other to do the mere mechanical work; but this aid must be given with heavy hearts. It is not the way that Christianity should speak and work. Christian charity, inspired as it is by love to Christ, should exult in Christ, and lead to Christ. And hence it is, that this office of nursing is one which the church should specifically assume. And if it cannot be done by mere voluntary and occasional benevolence, let it be done by bodies of Christian women, duly trained for and religiously devoted to the work. Let not the church distil unbelief by the side of the sick and dying, whom Christ has commanded her not merely to serve, but to save. And if the divisions of Protes-

tant Christianity are such as to make any general union for this purpose impracticable, let it be remembered that there is no one of our great evangelical communions that has not in its ranks numbers of women, as well as of men, whom it has been able to devote to life-long missionary labor in foreign lands. And if abroad, why not at home?

For, indeed, the time is coming, if it has not already arrived, when the numbers of women who will be able and ready to devote themselves to such a mission will be by no means inadequate to the mission itself. We do not speak now of the question of an inner divine call to the way of mercy, though this is a call which, with the views that we entertain as to the solemnity of similar calls in other departments of the ministry, we cannot consistently ignore. We do not desire to insist upon the fact that the office of a "deaconess" is one expressly recognized in the New Testament, nor to reiterate that Phœbe is there spoken of as a "deaconess," as much as is Stephen as a "deacon"; though it is well known that when the ministry of preaching and of the sacraments is concerned, theologians have not hesitated to regard similar scriptural intimations as of permanent divine obligation. But we do say, that in the growth and increasing centralization of American society, there are many circumstances which utter an outer call to this form of ministry, even though, as an ecclesiastical institution, it was meant by our Master to be mutable and occasional. There are even now, in our Protestant communions, many religious women who have no natural homes. There are many whom God has stripped of domestic duties, and whom, by his ordination of sorrow as well as of grace, he has consecrated to the ministry of mercy to man. There are many with noble and holy yearnings for such a ministry, and who desire to exercise it, not restlessly, not in mere self-will and self-responsibility, hindered with all the cares and anxieties of self-direction and of self-support, but in dependence on a settled system; in voluntary obedience to a chosen, settled head; and in the protection of a peaceful, settled home, in which, when in health, they can

find direction and sympathy, and in sickness and old age, a peaceful and secure refuge. It is absurd to call such a system Romish. It is no more Romish in its seclusion than are our asylums for widows and for the sick and old; no more Romish in its vows than are our vows of baptism and of ordination. And in its action it is essentially anti-Romish. There have been those, it is true, who abandoned Protestantism, and sought Rome, because in Protestantism, under circumstances of great desolation or agitation, they could find no harbor of peaceful obedience and rest. There have been those also, who have been won over to Romanism, by the mere spectacle of sisterhoods of mercy, in which, with so much that is corrupt, so much that is truly Christian is maintained. But it was a significant statement of one of the speakers at the Kaiserswerth Conference, that among the thousands of deaconesses whom German Protestantism has enrolled, not one had ever become a convert to the church of Rome. It is true that they sprang from various phases of Protestantism. It is true that they had been ready, when occasion called, to carry on their labors of mercy under the superintendence of Lutheran, of Calvinistic, and of Anglican divines. But to one trust they remained true; that of justification solely by faith in the merits of Christ. Love to Christ for his finished work was the spring of their labors; quiet trust in this finished work their faith and peace. With this in their lives they labored, with this on their lips they have died, to this, by their ministry, they have led. So it has been with them. So it may be with us.