

## X.

### EDITORIAL NOTES.

#### PRESBYTERIAN DEACONESSSES.

AFTER, many years of agitation, the Presbyterian churches have at last been brought fairly to face the problem of "the revival" of the office of deaconess. As long ago as 1861 the late Dr. W. Fleming Stevenson, in two interesting papers in *Good Words*, commended the institutions of Kaiserswerth to the Presbyterian public as worthy of all imitation. And the late Dr. Alexander T. McGill recommended the revival of the office, in a somewhat different sense, to many successive classes in Princeton Seminary, publishing his strong appeal at length to the church in the first volume of this REVIEW (1880). The Presbyterians have by no means been the first of Protestants to move in this effort to revive a primitive office or to organize the work of woman for Christ; but they may prove, in accordance with their genius, to be the first to organize this work under general church authority and in complete ecclesiastical control, and perhaps they may be the first to revive the office of deaconess in a truly Scriptural form.

For it need not be denied that the office of deaconess is a Scriptural office, although it must be confessed that the Biblical warrant for it is of the slenderest. We cannot bring ourselves to believe that the Apostle means to speak of deaconesses, in the midst of the requisites for the deacon, in 1 Tim. iii. 11, since this would require us to assume in that passage a double sudden transition from one subject to another, of the harshest and most incredible kind. And we have pointed out in an earlier number of this REVIEW what seem to us insurmountable objections to looking upon the "widows" of 1 Tim. v. 9 sq., who must be over sixty years old, must stay at home, and who were supported by the alms of the church, as an ecclesiastical order rather than as an order of specially honored pensionaries. We are glad to see that the latest Presbyterian student of ecclesiastical polity, Dr. Thomas Witherow, of Londonderry, although only a few years ago (1886) he was inclined to see deaconesses in the "women" of 1 Tim. iii. 11, now accords with us in finding indication of the existence of women-deacons in the New Testament only in Romans xvi. 1 : "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church in Cenchrea." This is no doubt a narrow, not to say a precarious foundation on which to build much of an ecclesiastical structure. The term here employed (*διάκονος*) is of very broad connotation; and Phebe might conceivably have been

only an humble “servant” of the Cenchranean church, or indeed, for all that the term itself declares, only a Christian belonging to that church (cf. John xii. 26). Nor is there any compelling reason apparent in the context, shutting us up to the technical sense of “deaconess.” Nevertheless this seems the more likely meaning of the phrase; and this interpretation receives confirmation from a clear indication, coming to us from the earliest post-apostolic times, that “deaconesses” were then already an established order in the church.

This one fact, however, is nearly all the safe guidance on the subject with which the first patristic age supplies us. He who tries to thread his way among the conflicting notices of “virgins” and “widows” and “deaconesses” which the earliest fathers have preserved for us, will find himself much among the thorns. Dr. Charteris truly says, “The study of that history does not remove the obscurity of Scripture.” In his famous letter to Trajan, written about A.D. 112, the younger Pliny speaks of seeking information about the Christians by torturing *duæ ancillæ quæ ministræ dicebantur*—from which, it is clear that *ministræ* (doubtless, as Dr. Lightfoot points out, Pliny’s own translation of *διάκονοι*) was already a *terminus technicus*, designating a well-known office. But this is pretty nearly the only very early reference we have to that office. Even earlier than Pliny, indeed, Ignatius (about A.D. 107), speaks of “virgins who are called widows”—from which we learn that the term “widows” also was in technical use at this time, an inference placed above all doubt by Lucian’s scoffing remark about “old women—they call them widows.” It is clear, however, that “deaconesses” and “widows” were different classes. And although this settled usage of the words in technical senses, at the opening of the second century, surely implies that the classes which they designate were of apostolic age, yet it is a different matter how far we are justified in assuming that these offices existed as offices in the apostolic age. The churches were already half a century old, and during that period many changes had taken place in the simplicity of the Gospel. Undoubtedly the roots of the “widows” were set in Paul’s arrangements for the pensionaries of the church, given in the fifth chapter of 1 Timothy. He appointed them to charity and honor; but honor had already hardened into office by the opening of the next century. On the other hand, the class of “deaconesses” in Trajan’s day illuminates and is itself illuminated by the incidental mention of “Phebe, the deaconess,” in the Epistle to the Romans, and serves to show us that the apostolic church had, along with its deacons, also a body of deaconesses.

The immediately subsequent history of the two classes presents us with an odd but not unnatural development. The office of service, which was already, by the opening of the second century, matched by the class of honor, was gradually overshadowed by it. Deaconesses for a time almost disappear from history; while “widows,” who rightfully held no office at all, were elevated to the rank of the higher clergy. Amid the confusion of the records that have come down to us, it is only clear that though the two classes were originally separate, yet the latter grew rapidly so great as to endanger the very existence

of the office which could alone claim, as such, apostolic origin. Not only Ignatius and Lucian, but Polycarp, Hermas, and the Clementine Homilies speak clearly of the "widows," while by the time of Tertullian they had attained a station equal in honor with the presbyters themselves. If we could venture to adopt the guidance of Möller's able compend, which presents us with the latest summary of early church history, we should say that the office of deaconess was wholly overshadowed, if not rooted out, by that of the "widows," throughout the whole second century, and was not so much revived as recreated by the Greek Church of the third century. The following is a substantial transcript of his account of the condition of affairs in the ante-Nicene age :

‘ Female deacons (deaconesses) certainly spread freely abroad, but the official institution of Deaconesses, which is referred to as early as Pliny's letter to Trajan, apparently wholly disappears in the second century until the third, while the institution of Widows (*χήραι*), who, supported by the congregation, occupy a position of honor and perform their service, is witnessed to everywhere. They bind themselves to live henceforth unmarried, receive a seat of honor, and (at least by Tertullian) are reckoned among the clergy and assist in the instruction of female catechumens. They doubtless also assisted in the labors of the diaconate. Lucian testifies to the visits paid to imprisoned confessors by widows and orphan children in their service. Their chief function seems the guidance and instruction of the female part of the congregation, though it is to be noted that public official teaching in the assembled congregation was excluded from this.

‘ It is only toward the end of this period that an *ordo* of deaconesses appears in the Greek Church. The widows, as a body supported by the congregation, who should give themselves to prayer, recede from that official position, which is transferred to the deaconesses. The high estimate of virginity conduced to this result, the widows giving way to virgin-deaconesses (for this was the rule); and no doubt also the heightened conception of office, which no longer tolerated a clerical status for the widows, who (*πρεσβυτιβες*) corresponded more to the presbyters than to the deacons. The official position of woman in the church recedes from the presbyterate to the diaconate ; and this is in accordance with the increased need of female service for the female part of the congregation, as also with the need of female organs for directing and carrying on the ordinances of divine service for the female catechumens of the congregation. Perhaps the transition was made by the deaconess service being given to one of the widows. It is already presupposed at the Council of Nice, especially with reference to the Greek East, that the institution of deaconesses was general, although without special ordination, and therefore with denial of all special clerical character. Later, in the course of the fourth century, the Council of Laodicea forbade the further appointment of overseer-widows (*προκαθημεναι*). On the other hand, this institution of deaconesses received no acceptance in the West, where the widows still held their own for some time yet, and performed also functions in part belonging to the deaconess service.’

The later portion of this history concerns us very little. The ascetic tendencies of the second century gave early birth also to a third class—that of "virgins." The three classes—deaconesses, widows, and virgins—are still clearly distinguished in the Apostolical Constitutions, which may, in parts, represent a third-century view. This document places the deaconesses on a level with deacons and the widows on a level with presbyters. The three were, however, very early confused together ; and from the fourth century their ordination began to be prohib-

ited by councils and their slow decline set in, although another thousand years passed away before they were entirely extinct.

When we speak of a revival of the primitive deaconesses, all this later history is, of course, out of court; but it is important that we should begin with an effort fairly to face the extreme meagreness of our information as to what the primitive order was. When we seek Biblical warrant, we have only the isolated phrase, "Phebe, the deaconess;" when we ask after the testimony of the first age of the church, we have only Pliny's witness that the church in Bithynia had *ancillæ* which they called *ministræ*; and after that all is darkness until the deaconesses emerge into light again as part of the already considerably corrupted ecclesiastical system of the third century. We have no Biblical account of the qualifications for the office or its duties, and no very early account of the functions it actually exercised. We are left only to the meagre inferences that as Phebe was "a deaconess of the church that is at Cenchreae," the office was a local one and inhered in the individual congregation; that as Pliny tortured two *ancillæ*, there may have been a plurality of deaconesses in each congregation; and that as the name was primitively the same and the functions exercised by them from the third century were parallel, they constituted a female diaconate similar to and of like standing with the board of deacons which, in the New Testament, we find in every church. Theories aside, this is all we know of the primitive deaconesses.

The Scriptural form and the Scriptural offices of the church were re-established at the Reformation; but no attempt was made then to revive this woman's office. Perhaps the first Protestants to make a serious effort to reinstitute it were the English Congregationalists of the sixteenth century, as Dr. Hackett has pointed out in his interesting notice printed in the American edition of Dr. Smith's *Bible Dictionary* (p. 574). The occurrence is so interesting that we transcribe Dr. Hackett's account:

"It may not be known to all readers that the earliest Congregational churches in England, in the sixteenth century, recognized fully this order of female laborers as a part of their organization. Robert Browne (1582) speaks of the deacon as 'the reliever,' and the deaconess as 'the widow' (Hanbury's *Memorials Relating to Independents*, I 21). The Separate or Congregational church of Gainsborough, England (1589)—out of which came the Scrooby church, the Leyden church, and the Plymouth church—had 'relievers' or 'widows,' who must be 'widows of sixty years of age at least,' whose work it was 'to minister to the sick,' etc. (Hanbury, i. 30, 31). Johnson and Ainsworth's Congregational church in Amsterdam (1606) had 'one ancient widow for a deaconess.' Though sixty years old when chosen. 'she did frequently visit the sick and weak; . . . and if they were poor, she would gather relief of them that were able, or acquaint the deacons; and she was obeyed as an officer of Christ' (Young's *Chronicles*, p. 455, Boston, 1841). The Cambridge Platform (ch. vii., § 7) recognizes this office of deaconess. 'The Lord hath appointed ancient widows (where they may be had) to minister in the Church, in giving attendance to the sick, and to give succor unto them, and others in the like necessities.'"

In these arrangements, we observe, "widows" are confused with deaconesses; and the success of this revival of the office was doubtless greatly handi-

capped by this unfortunate circumstance, requiring, as it did; that the deaconesses should be at least sixty years old. It is interesting to note, even in this error, the care that the Congregationalists took humbly to follow the Scriptural form ; and therefore also it was that they made the office a local one, belonging like the deacons themselves, to the individual church. It was in this understanding of it also that Dr. McGill desired its renewal. "If the people of a particular church" he says, " would simply elect women as well as men to the office of deacon, making one board or two separate boards, at their pleasure, of course ordained with the same vows and responsible to the same authority, as now provided in our constitution, the order is restored." He suggested, no doubt, further that, " from this beginning, a development could be made of larger boards, in gradation ; corresponding to Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly, by way of representation; keeping records at every step of such gradation, and reporting their work done or projected to the Judicatories of each plane, composed of ministers and elders." But he would scarcely have claimed a direct Scriptural warrant for this " development," as he claimed it for the office of deaconess itself; nor indeed was it wholly congruous with his suggestion that the deaconesses might be incorporated into the already existing board of deacons, who are not organized thus into graded bodies. This development thus appears to be an excrescence on Dr. McGill's view of the form which the revival of the deaconess should take; the board of deacons find no difficulty in working upon the universal church through the proper officers of the church to which they belong, who represent them along with the whole church ; and no more should the corresponding board of deaconesses require a separate parallel organization, carrying up their influence to Presbytery, Synod or Assembly. It is evident that this extension was due to Dr. McGill's earnest desire to bring the women's organizations at present existing into some sort of vital connection with the church at large.

Probably more than one Presbyterian congregation in America has already acted more or less in the sense of Dr. McGill's suggestion. Dr. George P. Hays, on the floor of the Belfast Council, in 1884, announced himself as the happy pastor who possessed twenty-four deaconesses. In 1881 the Corinthian Avenue Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, under an impulse received from a visit from the younger Fliedner, placed the care of their poor and sick in the hands of five " deaconesses," reviving (so it is phrased) the work, but not the office. More recently, the Third Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles, California, empowered its three deacons to choose three women from the congregation to co-operate with them in their work, granting them seats and votes in the board's monthly meeting. These are probably only examples of what has been done in many congregations, although thus far without sanction from the higher courts of the church. Perhaps the nearest approach to the more formal and ecclesiastical revival of the office among us, in its proper Scriptural sense, has been made by the Southern Presbyterian Church, which sets forth in its *Book of Church Order*, adopted in 1879, that " where it shall appear needful, the Church Session may select and appoint godly women for the care of the

sick, of prisoners, of poor widows and orphans, and in general for the relief of distress." Here we have the essential features of the office.

Quite a different conception of the office underlies Pastor Fliedner's revival of it at Kaiserswerth, in 1836. He was himself thoroughly persuaded that in instituting his noble order, he was restoring to the church the office of Phebe ; and he strengthened himself in his self denying labors by the thought that he was thus bringing back a divinely instituted office. But it is no disparagement of the value of the institutions that have grown out of his work, or of the inestimable benefits which they, have conferred on the world, to remind ourselves that the name of " deaconess" is scarcely fairly applied to the sisters trained within their walls. This is becoming recognized by the German writers on the subject, as, for example, by Wichern, in the last edition of Herzog, who wishes us not to conceal from ourselves that the correctness of the name " deaconesses," as applied to them, may justly be doubted ; and thinks that the designation of " evangelical sisters" would be more suitable. The whole Kaiserswerth conception of the order, in a word, is based not on that of the deacons, as they existed in the New Testament church, but rather on those working sisterhoods of the mediaeval church which, at their best estate, Professor Charteris has admirably described in his able report on Woman's Work, offered to the recent Council at London. What has been accomplished by the Kaiserswerth revival of these orders, in a purer form and in a Protestant spirit, all the world knows. But even Kaiserswerth has no general ecclesiastical standing. All its work was instituted and has been prosecuted in a spontaneous way, by a voluntary association, and under an impulse arising from the devotion of a single pastor working within the limits of his own parish. The societies to which its example has given birth have mostly, like it, remained independent of ecclesiastical authority ; and only in the Church of England, where they have exhibited a tendency to give way before or to become assimilated to sisterhoods of a more conventual type, have they tended to seek or find ecclesiastical status and significance. The undesirableness of the drift which has there set in is evidenced by the ecclesiastical pretensions to which it has given birth. Although the whole movement in England owes its existence, directly or indirectly, to the impulse of Kaiserswerth, it has become fashionable for the English sisterhoods to despise their lowly mother. Such a passage as the following, from the last edition of Dr. Hook's *Church Dictionary*, attains the high-water mark of intolerant and intolerable arrogance : " The setting apart of women for the work of visiting and instructing the poor, for tending the sick, and generally for such benevolent ministrations as women are well adapted for, was revived on a considerable scale by German and French Protestants at Kaiserswerth in. 1836, at Strasburg and Mülhausen in 1842, and the time honored title of deaconess was assumed by them. . . . It has unfortunately resulted, from unauthorized assumption of the ancient and apostolical title by these women, upon whom no such office was canonically conferred, that their example was followed in England, and that the name is frequently claimed by many women who are often mere nurses, and are in no way con-

nected officially with the order of the Catholic Church. In 1861, after being in abeyance for one thousand years, the ancient order was at last revived in the person of Catherine Elizabeth Ferard, invested duly with the office of deaconess by Bishop Tait, of London." As this seems to be "a question about words and names and their own law," the Church of England may be left to look to it ; but it is perfectly clear to the historical eye that the "first" English deaconess of 1861 has no better right to the name, merely because of her ordination by Bishop Tait, than her despised sisters have. Nevertheless England has her Mildmay as well as her "Convents," and Mildmay has proved itself to have force to pass on the succession to others; for the true model of the recent revival of deaconesses in the Church of Scotland is to be found in Mildmay and Kaiserswerth rather than in Cencreae.

The movement which, under Dr. Charteris's able advocacy, has resulted in the establishment of an order of "deaconesses" in the Church of Scotland, includes much more, however, than a mere ecclesiastical habilitation of Mildmay or Kaiserswerth ; it contemplates nothing less than the organization of the whole of woman's work in the church under one elaborate scheme. It was set fairly on foot by the General Assembly of 1885, when the Committee on Christian Life and Work, of which Dr. Charteris is Convener, was directed to inquire into the subject of woman's work in the church and to bring up a definite report and suggestions to the next Assembly. Accordingly a scheme, was reported in 1886 which, although it involved "a startling innovation" was yet received almost without discussion, and has, after further consideration by the Assemblies of 1887 and 1888, been made a part of the organized work of the church. By this scheme woman's work is fully organized in three grades. At the bottom stands the *Women's Guild*, which is the outer court, as it were, of the order, and which is meant to include in itself all members of Bible classes, of young women's congregational associations, of mission working-parties, of Dorcas societies, as well as all tract distributors, Sabbath-school teachers, members of the church choir and the like, in each parish. Next above this stands the *Women-Workers' Guild*, into which none are admitted who have not attained a specified age and who have not worked at least two years with the approval of the Kirk Session which enrolls them. Still above this stand the *Deaconesses*, for admission among whom it is required that the applicant undertakes to "make Christian work in connection with the Church the chief object of her life so long as she shall occupy the position of Deaconess." "It is provided," writes Dr. Charteris, the principal author of this scheme, "that along with the application for the admission of any person to the office of a Deaconess there shall be submitted a certificate from a Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with that duty, stating that the candidate is qualified in respect of education, and that she has had seven years' experience in Christian work, or two years' training in the Deaconesses' Institution and Training Home." It is further provided that "before granting the application the Kirk Session shall intimate to the Presbytery their intention of doing so, unless objection be offered by the Presbytery at its first meeting thereafter." Effect

has already been given to this somewhat complicated scheme. A Deaconesses' Institution has been established in George Square, Edinburgh, of which Miss Alice Maud Maxwell became the first superintendent last May, after six months' study of like institutions in England. And more recently the first three deaconesses of the Church of Scotland have been solemnly inducted into their office. A very interesting account of this final step in the full inauguration of the scheme is given by Rev. William Robertson, M.A., in the February number of *The Guild : Life and Work*. "In each case the admission was appointed by the Kirk Session after the necessary certificates from the Assembly's Committee on Christian Life and Work had been received, and due intimation made to the Presbytery. The questions appointed by the General Assembly were put to them—'Do you desire to be set apart as a Deaconess, and as such to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in the Church which is his body? Do you promise, as a Deaconess of the Church of Scotland, to work in connection with that Church, subject to its Courts, and in particular to the Kirk Session of the parish in which you work? Do you engage in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, faithfully and prayerfully to perform the duties of this office?'" Mr. Robertson further remarks that in some respects these are not only the first, but also representative deaconesses, and that not only because "each represents an old Scottish family, whose members have been distinguished for Christian and philanthropic labors," but also "because each represents a different type of Deaconess work." "Lady Grisell Baillie will continue, as before, her gentle ministries among the people of her own parish—ever gladly at the call of the Church's need there; Miss Davidson's Mission is to be at the service of every minister who desires help in organizing or carrying on work among the women of his parish, forming branches of the Women's Guild, or addressing meetings of women in connection with evangelistic work; while Miss Maxwell, in the Training Home—with its classes, lectures, and missionary activities—is rearing a band of trained workers, through whose life and labors the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ will be furthered both in our own land and in the Mission field." Obviously there is much here which cannot find its example at Kaiserswerth; but how far the scheme as a whole is modified from the institutions of the Kaiserswerth type, Professor Charteris teaches us by the closing words of his report to the London Council:

"Though new," he says, "this scheme is not revolutionary or novel. It is new in this respect, that, so far as your Committee know, there has been but one attempt"—the reference is to the Scotch scheme outlined above—"and that since last Council, by a church of the Reformation, to make the organization of woman's work a branch of the general organization of the Church, under the control of her several judicatories. It will be observed that in the scheme which we suggest, the Courts of the Church are specialty called to sanction the respective grades. This, or something like this, seems necessary if the organization is to be complete. The Church of England has deaconesses in several dioceses, and is striving after a more general organization. But these detached efforts are not yet part of a general system. The great English institutions—such as Mildmay, Kilburn, and the rest—are for the most part the outcome of the faith of one brave spirit, and of his or her associates, who are not responsible to any Church,

and for whose work the Church is not responsible, though a clergyman, or a minister, or a bishop may heartily sympathize. The German Churches have no free corporate organizations ; and Kaiserswerth and the like are institutions representing only those who combine to maintain them."

It is practically this scheme, already in operation in the Church of Scotland, which the London Council of the Presbyterian Reformed Churches commends to its constituents. The formal inauguration of the movement in the Alliance antedates its emergence in the Scotch Assembly. In a paper on " Lay Help in Church Work," read at the Belfast Council in 1884, Dr. J. Monro Gibson asked : " Ought not the office of the Deaconess to be revived without any further separation from the duties of ordinary life than in the case of the elder, but with the right and privilege and duty of attending to that large portion of the ordinary district visitation which neither minister nor elder can well overtake ?" His suggestion was emphasized by Dr. Charteris, and this led to a motion being offered by Dr. George P. Hays that " a Committee on the subject of woman's work in the Church, and the Scriptural references thereto, be now appointed," with Dr. Charteris as chairman, " with instructions to prepare a Report for the next meeting of the Council." It was in fulfilment of this duty thus put upon him that Dr. Charteris prepared the valuable report which was offered at the London Council last summer. Dr. Gibson's language apparently points to a board of congregational deaconesses; but it was inevitable that Dr. Charteris should recommend rather the elaborate guild system which he had already been instrumental in inaugurating in the Church of Scotland. As in receiving the report the Council not only approved it, but " commended the details of the scheme stated in the report to the consideration of the Churches represented in the Alliance," the question which is thus brought before the Presbyterian churches is not so much the revival of the apostolic office of deaconess, as the organization of the whole work of women in the Church under ecclesiastical authority and direction, together with the churchly institution and control of training schools for Christian workers.

In making this last remark we have no further intent than to keep distinct things unconfused. It is a fact that the meaning of the term " deaconess" is differently conceived in America and in Scotland. On this side of the sea we think at once of a congregational office parallel with the board of deacons ; on that the sisterhoods of Kaiserswerth more or less govern the conception. It is a fact further that " deaconesses" is distinctly a misnomer for the sisters of the Kaiserswerth type ; and that what little Scriptural warrant there is for " deaconesses" of any sort utterly fails when the attempt is made to apply it to them. If we are to confine all our ecclesiastical activities to forms which were already in existence in the Apostles' time, we may, indeed, find warrant for a congregational body of deaconesses ; but we must have done at once with such deaconesses as have been instituted by the Church of Scotland, and recommended to the Presbyterian Churches by the London Council. Few would be willing, however, to assume so extreme a position. God has beyond question asserted his right to organize his own house as seems to him well, in order that it may

best serve its purpose as the pillar and ground of the truth ; and in pursuance of this purpose he has shed down gifts upon it, appointed its officers and prescribed their qualifications. But he has not forbidden us to bring the principles of government which are involved in and shine transparently through the institutions which he has ordained, to a further application in broader arrangements to suit the ever-widening sphere which the church is continually occupying in fulfilment of its commission to disciple all nations. That an example of a Kaiserswerth Deaconess-house may not be found in the New Testament need not be fatal to its claims to ecclesiastical recognition or establishment, any more than the like failure of an example of an associated Presbytery is fatal to the ecclesiastical erection of Presbyterial government—provided only that the one as well as the other can be shown to be a further application of principles involved in the institutions appointed by God for the church. Account, for it as we may, it is true that the organization of the church by the Apostles while authoritative and, as far as it goes, constituting, *jure divino*, the indispensable form which the organization of every church should take, was yet developed only so far as the conditions of the time called for, and does not carry us by express precept or example beyond the individual congregation. All that concerns the associated activities of the churches—held together in that day by the universal authority of the Apostles—is to be defended only on the ground of “ legitimate development ”—that is, of the further application of the divinely embodied principles of church organization.

We need not doubt, then, that the church has a distinct right to organize the work of woman after either of the fashions toward which the minds of Presbyterians turn when they speak of “ deaconesses.” Bare right, however, does not vindicate wisdom. And it is to be hoped that there will be careful consideration of all the implications and, we may add, complications of the proposed action before the churches commit themselves irrevocably. Meanwhile, there is rapidly arising, in the natural course of affairs, a strong incitement toward in some way reducing to churchly character and to some sufficient form of ecclesiastical oversight, the whole sphere of woman’s work. Woman’s work does not wait to be organized. Women have already organized their own work in the church ; and with a zeal and success which shame the prevailing apathy of Christian men, women have worked out for themselves a whole series of institutions which, while the church sleeps, may perchance grow fatally to overshadow its official and authorized agencies. To shut our eyes to the dangers inherent in these gigantic voluntary associations would be as silly as it might prove to be suicidal. Nor is it an adequate annulment of these dangers to plead that the loving loyalty of our women to our church system, has shown itself to be as great as their loving zeal for God’s work. This is true, and deserves highest praise. But we must bear in mind the important principle pointed out by one of the brothers Hare—that the essential character of no theory or institution is adequately expressed in its inaugurates, since they make the institution, while it is the institution that makes the next generation of its administrators. The essential principle of every organization comes out

sooner or later in its working; and independent and voluntary agencies show sooner or later that they have both independence and will of their own. There lie within the bosom of the great beneficent organizations of woman's work, as they are at present developing without adequate points of union with the official church machinery, many hidden dangers to the church's whole structure and efficiency, some of which can scarcely fail to shake the church of the next age, unless some way be now discovered by which the whole system may be not merely recognized, but, in a Scriptural manner, incorporated into the body of the church's own activities, subjected to its lawful courts, and organized in accordance with its essential structure, so that it may become a harmoniously working part of the one organic whole. The simple revival of the congregational deaconess seems scarcely able to meet all the necessities of the case. And hence Dr. McGill, working on that conception of what a deaconess should be, no less than Dr. Charteris, working on the other, provided for a broader scheme. The real question is, How may woman's work be organized so as to make it part of the church work and not extra-ecclesiastical? It cannot seem strange that men's eyes turn for the answer toward the grandly successful sister-houses of Kaiserswerth and similar societies. Dr. Charteris's scheme is certainly drawn with adequate care, on the one hand, not to transgress the limits placed by God himself in his word upon the proper functions of woman in a Christian society, and, on the other, to secure that measure of ecclesiastical control to which it is necessary that every church institution should be subjected in order that it may work harmoniously toward the one common end. We do not go so far as to recommend its adoption by our churches. We raise the query, rather, whether something less complicated might not be discoverable. Whether, for instance, we could not have congregational deaconesses at the bottom and the Kaiserswerth sisters at the top. But Dr. Charteris's scheme is not un-Presbyterian, and its adoption as it stands would be better than acquiescence in a *laissez-faire* policy, with all the dangers it involves. The practical wisdom of the church is face to face with a real problem, to settle which, with loyalty to God's word, to his church, and to all the interests that are involved, will test its quality. Meanwhile, we counsel patience and prudence, and look on with much interest and many doubts.

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*Princeton.*