

Public Relief.

THE BUFFALO "GUARD OF HONOR."

THE proper administration of public and private charity concerns not only the Church, but the philanthropic men and women of our larger cities. In the history of Christianity there never has been so much done for the amelioration of suffering as now, and the weak, the sick, and the indigent are cared for in the best ways that experience and good judgment can suggest. With every possible care, however, there is a class which by misrepresentation draws a subsistence from charitable people and receives its entire support through the agency of clever untruth. There is rarely a day passes that the impositions of women who belong to this class are not made plain to some clergyman or lay-worker among the poor, and many an avenue of charity is closed after some such experience. With the most earnest effort it is impossible to control this condition of things, and relief societies gratefully receive any suggestions which may assist in overcoming the evil. The institution of charity organizations has controlled public begging in a large degree, but the impostor still finds means to feed upon the community. The statistics furnished by almshouses, prisons, and penitentiaries show also that a large number of men throughout the country have no visible means of support, and from either drink or dissipation become dangerous paupers. These various classes are grouped under one head and called "tramps," which is a synonym for lazy, degraded, though often clever, men. The peculiarities of these men are that they have lost all moral sense, and evince a keenness of mind in carrying out their plans which would, if directed in another channel, provide them with a competent livelihood. It is to the condition and circumstances of these "tramps" that the Church and charitable institutions need to direct their best attention. They become the accessories of men who would destroy the law and order of every country, and especially of our own. How to reach these men, how to inspire in them a shame of their calling and direct them into a better life, is a serious problem. If, therefore, any experience justifies the belief that a reform can be instituted, let it be incorporated in the practical workings of every charitable effort.

There exists in the city of Buffalo an institution known as the "Guard of Honor Christian Institute," composed entirely of workingmen. This organization owns a building the use of which is to provide accommodation for those who need lodging at night other than that offered by the station-house. Applicants for this charity are received between the hours of seven and ten o'clock in the evening, but they are not required to show any card of recommendation or to pay any money. They are taken into the building at the discretion of the superintendent, who is himself a workingman and occupied during the day. Each applicant is obliged to take a bath, and before retiring to take off his clothes and put on a night-shirt. When these men are in bed the superintendent visits every room and sees that this rule is strictly enforced. At six o'clock in the morning these "lodgers" are called and assembled in the sitting-room of the institution. They are then each furnished with a card which reads as follows:

EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

GUARD OF HONOR CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE.

THE bearer, M—, has applied to the Guard of Honor for work. He says he understands — and has had experience. Should you employ him, please use the inclosed postal to inform us of the fact, so that the society can keep a record of his faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Should you *not* be able to employ him, please sign the name of the firm on the blue card as a guarantee that he is making serious effort to procure work. The society knows nothing of the character or capabilities of the bearer, except that he appears quiet and sober, and seems anxious to secure employment.

(Signed,)

Committee.

In addition, the men are given a second card, bearing this printed certificate at the top:

This is to certify that the bearer has applied to us for employment.

Equipped with these the men are turned out of the building, and the institution is closed until seven o'clock in the evening. Many of the men who go out in the morning return at night and deliver up to the superintendent the cards given them. He examines what is known as the "blue card," to see how many names are signed upon it as a guarantee of the faithful efforts of the man to find work. If these cards do not contain a sufficient number of signatures, the man is told that unless he makes better effort on the coming day he will not be received into the institution at night. At nine o'clock in the evening a service of prayer is held, conducted by a workingman, a member of the organization, and each member shares in this duty. It is during this hour that probably the strongest influence for good is exercised upon these wayfarers. They are appealed to by men who understand precisely their present conditions, and who from experience comprehend the various causes which have led to their present condition. The cynic believes that all spark of honor dies within the breast of a man when he accepts charity and allows himself, through weakness of one kind or another, to become a pauper. This is a mistake. An appeal from a wealthy, prosperous man to a vagabond has very little effect, but the direct questions of one laborer to another are usually answered truthfully. Herein lies an enormous power, and the writer, after many years of experience, has seen its wonderful effects. A gratifying percentage of those who come under the influence of this body of workingmen are inspired to change their entire course of life and become self-supporting citizens. The plan has been in operation long enough to have it thoroughly tested, and it can be recommended upon a basis that has brought forth the best result.

Before closing, the writer wishes strongly to deprecate the custom of providing a comfortable "lounging-place" for men who will not work unless they are compelled to by hunger or cold. If a laboring man can work eight hours a day, the man who is in need of employment and really desires it should spend the same number of hours in looking for work. This he will not do when charitable institutions and Christian associations keep open house. The fear so often expressed, that if these places are not open the man will seek the congenial society of the saloon, is not well founded. The saloon-keepers will not have men hanging about their places of business who have no money to spend,

and these vagrants perfectly understand this. They are, therefore, absolutely compelled to seek work, and every effort made in this direction assists them to throw off the lethargy of laziness. There should not be one so-called "loafing-place" in our cities, and especially should the Church and Christian institutions understand that the severe rule which compels a man to discipline himself is the wisest in the end. The Guard of Honor has often been censured for turning the men out in the morning at seven o'clock, whatever the weather. Being an association of workmen, it is the intention to make these "lodgers" live by the same rules which control the members, and the plan works satisfactorily. The society provides no food except broken crackers, which prevent the lodger from going to bed hungry. The contemplation of a meal which consists of cold water and crackers is not sufficient inducement to a man to neglect to work, but it does prevent the hopelessness that accompanies hunger. A man coming drunk to the building is usually taken in for one night, but he is told in the morning that if he presents himself again in the same condition he will be refused entrance. The knowledge that he will have a clean bed, free of charge, if he refrains from drink, acts as a great restraint, and in many instances it has proved a means of overcoming the habit. Upon Sunday the building is open all day, for a man cannot seek employment then, and at evening a meal, consisting of coffee, bread and butter, and cold beans, is served free of charge—proving to the inmate that in enforcing strict rules the principles of Christianity are not forgotten.

Charlotte Mulligan.

The First Female College.

IN the October CENTURY, under the caption, "A New Collège for Women," occur these lines: "There have been three distinctly marked stages in the higher education of women in America: co-education pure and simple, first tested at Oberlin, in 1833; then separate colleges for women, in which line Vassar, in 1865, made the first departure,"¹ etc.

The charter for Oberlin was, according to a letter from the clerk of the Oberlin Faculty, dated March 13, 1889, issued in 1834: according to the same authority, the first diploma to a woman graduated there was dated 1838; but I have been unable to obtain anywhere the name of any woman who graduated at Oberlin in 1838, or even in 1839. If no error has been made in this matter,—and I do not intimate that there has,—the holder of the Oberlin diploma is entitled to the honor of the first diploma ever issued to a woman, and her name should be recovered and preserved to complete the record of one of the most interesting facts in the progress of civilization.

But the history of the first female college is less obscured, and is easy of access. After an agitation of the higher-education-for-women idea, extending through fifteen years, the Georgia legislature in 1836 chartered the Georgia Female College, and it was built at Macon at a first cost of \$80,000.

¹ The Wesleyan Female College of Ohio, incorporated in 1846, the Mary Sharp College, of Winchester, Tenn., founded in 1848, and Elmira College, Elmira, New York, which graduated its first class in 1859, all long antedate Vassar.

The State charter conferred full collegiate powers upon the institution. The first faculty was made up of eleven professors and teachers, and while the course does not compare with that of the same institution of this day, it was equal to that afforded by most contemporary colleges for men. Nor is the standard of the educational course then of moment now. The point of deepest interest is the enlightened thought that, finding public expression through legislative action and individual subscription, placed woman upon equal footing with man. This privilege was at once taken advantage of. Upon the opening of the college, January 9, 1839, ninety young ladies came forward and were enrolled. Eleven of these had been advanced in seminaries to a point that permitted of their entry with the senior class, and in the latter part of the same year they graduated. Their names were Misses C. E. Brewer, Sarah V. Clopton, Elizabeth Flournoy, Ann E. Hardeman, Martha F. Heard, Julia M. Heard, Sarah M. Holt, Matilda J. Moore, Harriet M. Ross, Mary L. Ross, and Margaret A. Speer. These are family names honorably connected with social and public life in Georgia for upward of a century.

When this class of eleven girls was drawn up in line to receive their diplomas, the advantage of alphabetical position brought Miss Brewer the first. Into her hands, therefore, went, it is confidently believed, the first diploma issued by a college exclusively for women—the first fruits of that growth which to-day is productive of so much for the womanhood of the world. This lady, with several of her class, is still living. In the summer of 1887 a semi-centennial celebration was held in the chapel of the college, and there were gathered much of the wealth, beauty, intellect, and culture of the South. Upon this occasion the "Miss Brewer" of nearly fifty years previous, now a gray-haired matron, Mrs. C. E. Benson of Macon, advanced in front of the trustees, bearing in her hand the very document she had received from their predecessors. With a graceful little speech, she returned to them the diploma for preservation among the sacred relics of the college, and to-day it hangs upon the walls, an object of deep interest to all visitors.

Not as pertaining necessarily to the topic, but yet of value and interest, I beg to add a few lines to this sketch. The Georgia Female College, coming into control of the Methodists, became, without interruption to its course or existence, the Wesleyan Female College. Indeed, the doors of the institution have never been closed but thrice in its history—two weeks during the passing of Sherman, two days during the occupation of Macon by General Wilson, and six weeks because of small-pox in 1873.

Through the generosity of George I. Seney, the noted Brooklyn philanthropist, the Wesleyan College was remodeled a few years since at a cost of \$105,000.

During the existence of the college it has sent forth 1990 graduates—girls who have gone into the life of the South. The majority of these girls, naturally, belonged to Georgia, and to their gentle and intelligent ministry is due perhaps, more than to any other cause, the proud title so justly won by Georgia—"The Empire State of the South."

Harry Stillwell Edwards.