

THE PRINCIPLES OF DIOCESAN ORGANIZATION.

Written by Mrs. Twing, for a Conference of Associates of the Girls' Friendly Society, held in Baltimore, May 10th, 1887.

I HAVE been asked to say something in this brief paper in regard to the principles of diocesan organization, and then to apply those principles to the organization of the Girls' Friendly Society.

The first point to be noticed, it seems to me, is that all diocesan organizations have in common the feature of recognizing the Bishop of the Diocese as at their head, whether he is chairman, or president, or president *ex-officio*, or because the society is formed by him, or with his approval, or under his sanction, or, as in the case of diocesan organizations, composed of parochial branches, with his consent and that of the several rectors.

The second point to be noticed is that diocesan organizations are of two kinds, one for work within the diocese, the other for work without the diocese, just as parish societies are either for parochial or extra-parochial work. City and diocesan missionary societies and societies for the relief of aged and infirm clergy belonging to the diocese, may be mentioned as examples of the one class, while diocesan schools and colleges, societies and committees for the promotion of Christian knowledge, whether by home study or the publication of books and other literature, and general missionary societies, like diocesan branches of the Woman's Auxiliary to the Board of Missions, belong to the other class.

A Bishop comes into more direct relation with a society organized exclusively for work within the limits of his own diocese, but a society formed wholly or in part for extra-diocesan work touches a wider range of Church life, though with less power and direct authority.

What may be called the inter communion of diocesan work seems to be a well recognized and accepted fact. Pupils are recommended to certain diocesan schools by Bishops of other dioceses, missionary assistance is sought by one Bishop from societies belonging to another diocese, while, as perhaps the best illustration, the clergy of the Church are rarely trained for their work in the theological seminaries of dioceses where the greater part of their ministry is exercised.

The general and catholic character of the Church is thus maintained by common ecclesiastical consent and co-operation, and the danger of too great and exclusive a devotion to the parochial or diocesan home of the individual Christian is largely avoided.

The Girls' Friendly Society is curiously allied to each of the two kinds of work for which diocesan organization is needed. It has its home aspect and its foreign aspect, its local and its general side.

Every Bishop may reasonably be expected to take an interest in it because of its aim and purpose in relation to the young communicants of the diocese, while any Bishop who is filled with the missionary spirit will welcome it as an agency for reaching those who are still without the fold, and a means of education and training for many who may soon be called to carry the teaching they have received to other parts of the country, or even to other lands.

The Girls' Friendly Society has thus a double advantage when it pleads for diocesan organization, and, if its officers value its present welfare and future growth, they may well give time and thought to this subject, almost in excess of any other.

It is a dry and uninteresting topic for a conference, but the Associates will remember that they come together to counsel with one another and to plan the campaign. The work done by a Central Council, or at an Annual Meeting, must be largely that of the consideration of fundamental ideas, the application of which must be made afterward by each Branch separately. In that light, the discussion of diocesan organization is like the presentation of an architect's plans, far from picturesque and attractive, but more necessary to the builder and his workmen than the artist's drawing which first captivates the general public.

For this reason, and to make the present paper practical, I would ask whether it might not be well to request the consent of all the Bishops to the formation of diocesan organizations, without waiting for what might seem a sufficient number of parochial Branches.

If each Bishop of a diocese, where a diocesan organization has not yet been formed, should appoint a diocesan president and secretary, the parochial Branches of the diocese would, without doubt, be largely increased in the course of a year, while the strength gained by the Society as a whole, by the addition of new diocesan organizations, would be far greater than could be possible by an increase of Members or Associates, or by fresh parish interest.

The simplicity and freedom of method of the Girls' Friendly Society is one of its strongest points, and can always be presented as a most telling argument for organization. The three Central Rules once accepted, every parochial Branch and every diocesan organization cannot fail to appreciate the liberty which permits any and every variety of detail in management, and the more this liberty is respected, the more acceptable and popular the Society will be.

To this end, the meetings of the diocesan councils may wisely take the form, as far as may be, of conferences, not passing resolutions binding upon the several Branches, but, at the most, offering recommendations to be followed or not, as may be convenient and practicable. Excepting in arrangements for annual gatherings of the Members, where some agreement is required for the practice of music, or the order of service, "variety in unity" will probably be found always the best ideal.

Better even than conferences will be an occasional Retreat or Quiet Day for the Associates, or a special celebration of the Holy Communion, with an instruction bearing definitely upon their own responsibility toward the Members, and the manner in which such responsibility may best be met. If such an annual service could be held in every diocese, and especially if it could be conducted by the Bishop, a blessing would surely rest upon the several diocesan organizations, and upon the Society as a whole, that could hardly be so well secured in any other way.