

THE INSTITUTION OF MERCY (BOYS' BUILDING).

THE INSTITUTION OF MERCY.

(No. 33 Houston street.)

This Institution is situated at No. 33 Houston street, adjoining and controlled by the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy. The society was incorporated in 1848, under the general act of May 12th of that year, and the three-story brick building corner of Houston and Mulberry streets purchased at a cost of \$30,000. This is the Convent, or home of the Sisters of Mercy. The same year the edifice known as the Institution of Mercy, a plain four-story brick, forty feet by seventy-two, was begun, on lots adjoining the purchased building, and sufficiently completed to receive inmates in November, 1849. The Sisters of Mercy are a religious order of Roman Catholics, founded by Catharine McAuley, a lady of fortune of Dublin, in 1827, and the order was approved by Pope Gregory XVI. in 1835, and confirmed in 1841. The order has in view the visitation of the sick and prisoners, the instruction of poor girls, and the protection of virtuous women in distress. The first community in the United States was established in Pittsburg in 1843, but none entered New York until 1846, when Archbishop Hughes invited them to

come from Ireland and establish an institution. The Sisters are subject to the bishops, but have no general superior, each community being independent of the rest of the order. The Sisters are divided into two orders: choir sisters, who are employed about the ordinary objects of the order; and lay sisters, who attend to the domestic avocations of the convent, etc. Candidates for admission into the order undergo a "postulancy" of six months; they then receive the white veil and enter the novitiate, which lasts two years, being permitted at any time to return to the world before the vows are finally taken. The presiding mind in each community is the Mother Superior. Agnes O'Conner was the first in New York, and the present one is the fourth. The community at present numbers 49, 12 of whom are at the Industrial Home at Eighty-first street. The Sisters teach a select school of day scholars at the Convent, and another in Fifty-fourth street for their own support, so as not to be an expense to their Institution.

The Sisters are a corporate body, holding their own property, and elect annually their board of eight trustees from their own number. Archbishop Hughes ordered each Catholic pastor in New York to collect \$500 to assist them in founding their Institution in 1848, and a number of private donations were also received. The Roman Catholic churches in the city continued for several years to take collections for this cause, but this is no longer considered necessary. Virtuous girls of any age, out of employment, are received into the Institution, and remain a longer or shorter period, according to circumstances. Machine and hand sewing, embroidery, and laundry work, form the chief employment of the inmates. Many young females from other countries, just landing on our shores, with little or no means, have been picked up by this society and raised to industry and respectability, who would otherwise have soon sunken into pits of infamy. Since the opening of the Institution, over eleven thousand girls have been admitted, and the Sisters have found places of employment for about twenty thousand. This last number includes some from the House of Protection at West Farms, and many who have not been received into either institution. The earnings of the girls go toward the support of the Institution, deficiencies being provided for by private and public donations, and by fairs. The Institution has accommodations

for about seventy-five, though in times of great destitution one hundred and twenty have been crowded into it.

The Sisters do also a vast amount of outside visiting every year. Clad in their sable habit, they glide like shadows through the crowded streets, finding their way to abodes of sickness and poverty in garrets and cellars. They search the prisons and culprits for the scaffold, administer as far as means will permit to the wants of the destitute, and prepare for the sacraments ten times more children than the same number of priests. However much one may criticise their work, or pity their delusions, they are certainly abundant in self-sacrifices, untiring in toil, and rank among the best of their denomination. They are well informed, especially in matters of their own church, polite in their attentions to literary visitors, and if disrobed of the habit of the order, and dressed for the drawing-room, a few of them would be pronounced handsome.

For several years past the Sisters have been engaged in the erection of a building for an "Industrial School for the Destitute Children of Soldiers and Others." This was finally completed and occupied in the autumn of 1869. It stands on a block of ground contributed by the authorities, bounded by Madison and Fourth avenues, Eighty-first and Eighty-second streets. It is situated on high ground, is an imposing four-story-and-attic structure, in the Gothic order, with stone copings, and has accommodations for five hundred children. It has a front of one hundred and sixty feet, a depth of sixty, and a rear extension for the engine which heats the building, for wash-room, laundry, and other conveniences. It cost, with its furniture, \$180,000, \$105,000 of which were contributed by the State, always liberal to prodigality to the Institutions of Roman Catholics. It had at our visit to it, February 22d, 1870, 80 children. The children of soldiers are to be taken free, as are all others twelve years of age, some pay or clothing being required with those received at an earlier age.

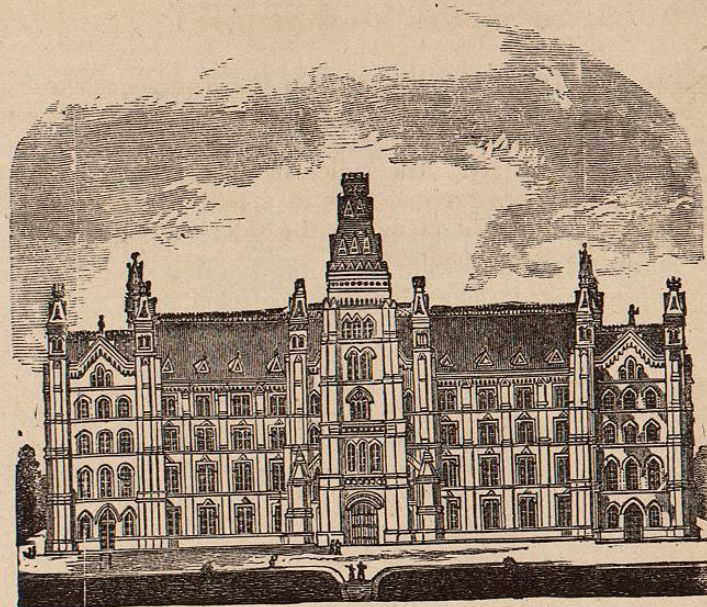
ORPHAN ASYLUM OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

(Thirty-ninth street, near Seventh avenue.)



THE society by which this Institution has been established began its work in the year 1859, in a hired house in West Twenty-sixth street, where it continued until January, 1870. The building was capable of accommodating sixty girls and thirty boys, and was always well filled. A band of Catholic females (fourteen at present), known as the Sisters of the Holy Cross, whose Mother House is in the north of France, have had charge of the Asylum from the first, instructing the children, and performing all the labor of the household. Several years since, the managers purchased several valuable lots of ground, situated on Thirty-ninth street, near Seventh avenue, at a cost of \$38,000. In 1868 the first half of the Asylum was begun, and sufficiently completed to become tenantable early in January, 1870. The portion erected is sixty feet square, leaving space for an addition of the same size, which will doubtless be added at no distant day. The building is a French Gothic, constructed of pressed brick, with Ohio free-stone trimmings, is five stories above the basement, including two attic Mansard stories. The kitchen, laundry, and children's dining-room are in the basement. The first floor contains reception-room, parlor, dining-room for the sisters, and the large sewing-room where the girls are taught needle-work. The upper stories are appropriately divided between school-rooms, dormitories, and storerooms. The building, which is a model of neatness and taste, has thus far cost \$74,000, and when completed will be an architectural ornament to that portion of the city. The cut represents the building as it will appear when fully completed. The children represent, in their nationality, Italy, Germany, Poland, England, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, France, and America. They are taken from any country, of any religion, and at any age not below four years, and are retained, the boys until they are eleven or twelve, and the girls until they are sixteen. The English text-books employed in the public schools are used, to which are added a course of study in French, the Catholic catechism, etc. The girls are all taught trades, and fitted for self-maintenance when

they leave the Institution. The Asylum has at present nearly two hundred children, and when completed will afford space for about four hundred. A donation of \$15,000 was last year received from the city. The ladies in charge, though not fluent in English, are prepossessing in appearance, polite to visitors, and deserving of credit for the order and vigor with which their affairs are conducted.



ROMAN CATHOLIC PROTECTORY (BOYS' BUILDING).

SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF DESTITUTE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHILDREN.

(*West Farms.*)

The plan for organizing this Society, and founding this Institution, originated with the late Levi Silliman Ives, D.D., LL.D., formerly bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of North Carolina, but who joined the Roman Catholics while on a visit to Rome, in 1852. The act of incorporation passed the Legislature April 14, 1863, making it the duty of the courts that "whenever the parent, guardian, or next of kin of any Catholic child about to be finally committed shall request the magistrate to commit the child to the Catholic Institution, the magistrate shall grant the request."

The management of this Institution is committed to a board of about twenty-five laymen of the Roman Catholic church, the Mayor, Recorder, and Comptroller of New York being annually added as members *ex officio*. The Society began its labors soon after its organization, in a hired house in the upper part of the city, receiving at first only boys; but after a

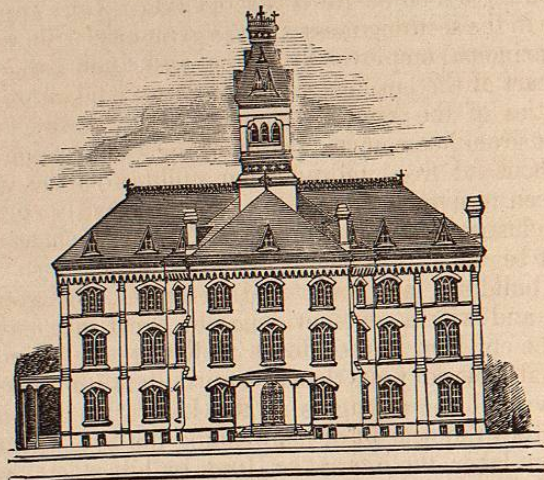
few months a girls' department was added. Their first plan was to apprentice the children after a very short detention at the Protectory, but their Third Annual Report pronounces the apprenticeship system, as then practised, a "great evil," and for two reasons: 1. Because the children were not prepared by previous discipline and education to ensure contentment, obedience, and fidelity. 2. That the avarice of the persons to whom they were apprenticed caused most of them to be overworked, their education neglected, and the necessary supplies of food and clothing withheld. *Three-fourths* of those apprenticed up to that time, it was stated, had "become perfectly worthless." The crowded condition of their buildings, and the manifest necessity of retaining the children until sober and industrious habits had been formed, induced the managers to purchase a farm of one hundred and fourteen acres (since increased to one hundred and forty acres), at West Farms, three miles above Harlem bridge. On the first of May, 1866, their lease having expired at Yorkville, the family of four hundred boys was transferred to West Farms, and quartered in farm-houses, and such other buildings as could be secured, until a wing of the present building could be completed. This wing was greatly crowded for two years previous to the completion of the main building, seven hundred or eight hundred boys, with their overseers and instructors, having constantly occupied it, it furnishing all their apartments, besides appropriating space for workshops, offices, etc. The main structure is now completed. The original wing is two hundred and fifteen feet long, forty feet wide, and four stories high, while the front and main edifice, which forms a transept or colossal cross, presents a handsome façade of two hundred and thirty feet, is fifty feet wide, and five stories high, with attic. It is a truly imposing structure, surmounted by a lofty tower, is built of brick, with marble trimmings, in the French Gothic style of architecture, and cost \$350,000. They are now able to increase the family of boys to about twelve hundred, and afford them much better accommodations than ever before.

The boys are wholly committed to the control and education of the Christian Brothers, belonging to the society originally organized in France by Jean Baptiste De La Salle, in 1681. They are a society of laymen organized for the gratuitous education of the poor, giving themselves wholly to the church as teachers, laboring, wherever appointed, with a salary

just sufficient to meet their expenses. When they take the vows of the order they renounce all plans of business, and all thoughts of entering the priesthood. In 1844 some of the fraternity emigrated to Canada, and in 1847 found their way into the United States. Brother Teliow, the Rector (superintendent), an educated Prussian, a gentleman of modest bearing, but of wise and decided administrative ability, has had control of the House since its opening. He is assisted by twenty-two of the brothers, who eat and sleep in the rooms with the boys, superintend their toil and studies, attend them at worship, and in their recreations. The brothers are usually mild and generous in their treatment, seldom inflicting corporal punishment, but more wisely appealing to their honor and interests. Neither the grounds nor the buildings have any formidable enclosures, and the boys are often sent to the village, and sometimes to New York, entrusted with horses and other responsible matters. True, some forget to return, but the policy of trusting them is believed to do immensely more good than evil, and when one absconds a hundred are ready to volunteer as detectives, to compel his return. They carry on the manufacture of ladies', misses', and children's shoes on quite a large scale, the boys mastering every branch of the business, though this has not yet been made as remunerative as at the House of Refuge. Particular attention is paid to agricultural and horticultural pursuits, and some are employed in the manufacture of hoop-skirts, others in tailoring, baking, and printing. They manufacture their own gas, do all their kitchen and laundry work, so that celibacy here is a practical thing, from superior to minion. The boys make the shoes for the girls' department, but ask and receive no favors in return. Their ages vary from five to seventeen years, a large portion of them being quite young and mostly of Irish parentage. Nearly one-half are unable to read when committed, but, several hours per day being always devoted to study, many attain to respectable scholarship, and a few enter upon the study of the classics. Music is also taught. There are no definite rules governing the period of detention. Most of them are returned to their parents, and many return the second time to the Institution. Parents who have neglected children to their ruin, rarely exhibit much improvement on a second trial.

About one hundred and fifty yards from the premises just described stands the girls' building, two hundred and sixty-

nine feet long, varying in width from forty-five to seventy feet. It is built in the Romanesque style, with high basement and three stories of brick, and two attic stories of wood and slate. Its foundation stone was laid July 4th, 1868, and was sufficiently completed to receive its inmates November 1, 1869. It is admirably adapted to its use, and cost over



ROMAN CATHOLIC PROTECTORY (GIRLS' BUILDING).

\$200,000, though it is but about half the size of the original design. The cut represents the building as it is, whereas the one in the City Manual presents the one in prospect. The basement contains the kitchen, dining-room, laundry, furnace-room for heating the building, etc. The cooking is done with steam. The first floor contains reception rooms, offices, work-rooms, etc.; the second is divided into a series of school-rooms, with folding partitions, so arranged that the whole can be thrown into a vast hall for religious exercises, with seating for two thousand persons. The third floor is the dormitory, with three hundred and fifty beds, a row of cells being constructed at each end of the room for the accommodation of the Sisters. The fourth floor is divided into several dormitories arranged for hospital purposes, with baths and closets, and is supplied with hot and cold water. The fifth is for storage. The management of the girls' department is committed to the Sisters of Charity of Mount Saint Vincent Convent, twelve of whom, when we visited the Insti-

tution, had charge of its family of two hundred and fifty girls, and taught all branches of study and toil, except a few intricacies of skirt-making and handicraft. The girls, like the boys, are nearly all received from the courts, as vagrants or criminals, are ignorant and spoiled children, and make large demands on the patience of their teachers. Their new building has accommodations for six hundred inmates, which will doubtless soon be filled without making any appreciable change in the seething masses of the great city. Skirt-making is the principal employment of the girls, each being taught every part of the business, and each in turn takes her part in the duties of the kitchen, laundry, and chamber. During the first seven years of its operations the society received over three thousand five hundred truant children, many of whom have been recovered from a life of crime, and now bid fair to be industrious and good citizens. Its work, however, has but just begun.

The buildings are large and beautiful, but everything around and within gives evidence of great economy. But while the children at the House of Refuge are supported at an annual expense of less than seventy dollars *per capita* above their own toil, the managers of this Institution declared that during 1867 the net cost of maintaining the boys, exclusive of their own labor, the interest on land, buildings, etc., was one hundred and thirteen dollars per head, and ninety-six dollars for the girls. The entire expenditures of the Society, up to January, 1868, amounted to \$469,034.02, of which \$164,807.49 had been given by State and city grants, the remaining \$304,226.53 having been provided by private donations, the labor of the children, and by public fairs, one of which, in 1867, yielded a profit of over \$100,000. We have been unable to obtain the last published report of the Society.

The principal motive in founding the Institution was to save the children of Catholics from the influence of Protestantism, which prevailed in most other institutions. It, however, makes no attempt to proselyte, and has refused to receive some children who had Protestant parents or guardians. The farm cost \$60,000, and is now valued at \$150,000. A dairy of forty cows is kept, and most of the vegetables consumed are grown on the premises.