

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### ST. MARY'S SCHOOL.

THOMAS C. BETHUNE.

This school had its origin in the earnest desire of the Right Reverend William W. Niles, bishop of the Episcopal diocese of New Hampshire, to establish a church school for girls in this state. The success of St. Paul's school for boys was not without its influence in leading him to undertake the founding of a similar institution of learning and culture for girls. He had in mind a school where moral training would be blended with intellectual instruction, and the refining influence of its home life would make gentlewomen of the girls committed to its care. Its full conception was the moulding of character along with the development of mental gifts.

The academies of New England in their day occupied a unique position in educational life, which the superseding public high school did not entirely fill. The old academies were to a large extent denominational schools, and religious training was one of their features. Then as they brought boys and girls together whose home environments were different, they developed under competent management a culture in all equal to the best of their home surroundings. The passing of these academies in the multiplication of the public high schools left an opening for the private school. To supply such a school, which in its curriculum should prepare girls for the active duties of life, or fit them for entrance to a college career, and at the same time throw around them the influence of a refined home, was the central thought of Bishop Niles in founding St. Mary's School for Girls.

It was a large undertaking, and required much patient perseverance to enlist for it the necessary financial support. The school was incorporated in July, 1885, with William W. Niles, Henry A. Coit, Daniel C. Roberts, Henry E. Hovey, Ai B. Thompson, and John Farwell as incorporators, who became trustees upon organization. Since then, through death and resignations, Josiah Minot, Edgar H. Woodman, George S. Frost, Stephen N. Bourne, Josiah Carpenter, Frank W. Rollins, Henry W. Stevens, Edson J. Hill, F. W. Estabrook, and John G. Robinson have been added to the list of trustees. The first meeting of the incorporators was held at the house of the bishop September 24, 1885, and a board of trustees elected, with

Bishop Niles as president, George P. Cleaves, clerk, and Edgar H. Woodman, treasurer.

The first question to be considered was the location of the school. Concord was finally selected, largely because it was the home of the bishop, easy of access, and possessed of advantages of climate and social surroundings. At the capital the school could be under the bishop's personal supervision during its early life, when a directing force is so essential to an enterprise of this kind.

Then came the question of a suitable site. Various properties were suggested and advocated, but the trustees finally purchased the estate of the late Asa Fowler, for which the sum of fifteen thousand five hundred dollars was paid, to which large contributions were made by citizens of Concord. This estate is located on South Main street, at the corner of Fayette. It has a frontage of two hundred feet on three streets. It had an additional advantage of buildings suitable, with alterations, for school purposes. The original buildings were enlarged and transformed, while a considerable sum was spent in improvements. The buildings contain a large, handsome hall, study room, recitation rooms, library,



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gymnasium, and sleeping rooms. Several years ago the trustees were obliged to lease a building on adjacent property to be used as an annex for the accommodation of pupils.

Formerly a handsome residence, the main school building has an interesting history. It was built in 1835 by Hall Burgin, who occupied it until his death in 1844. It came into the possession of the town of Concord through a loan from the "surplus revenue" fund which was divided among the towns of the state in 1837. In 1847 it was sold to Caleb Pratt for four thousand five hundred dollars, and shortly after passed to the ownership of Joseph A. Gilmore. It was his residence when governor of the state. He continued to occupy it until his death in 1867. It was later purchased by Judge Fowler, who remodeled it and occupied it until his death.

To the south and west of the buildings is a considerable area laid out for pleasure grounds, where the girls enjoy lawn tennis, handball, croquet, and other popular out-door sports.

While answering the purposes of a school during its first years, it

soon became apparent that more buildings were needed, and for this purpose a building fund was started, to which generous gifts have been made, the largest being that of Mrs. W. W. Boardman of New Haven, Conn., of five thousand one hundred dollars. In addition to these gifts to its building fund, other contributions have been made. Among these were one of ten thousand dollars by Mrs. Hamilton Tilton of Tilton, in memory of her daughter, Evellyn Tilton, and one of ten thousand dollars by Mrs. Jane N. Eames to found scholarships. The gifts of Mrs. Tilton would have been larger but for her death, her plan being to contribute five thousand dollars a year until the school was put upon a sustaining basis.

The school opened in the fall of 1886 with eight boarding and fifteen day pupils. Its growth has been commensurate with its accommodations, and the scope of its usefulness has been much enlarged since its beginning. It has graduated twenty-six upon whom have been conferred diplomas, and thirty-seven who have received certificates for two or more years' work. St. Mary's is the only school of the Episcopal church for girls in Northern New England, and its certificates of graduation are accepted for admission to Smith college.

Fortunate was the school in its first principal, Miss Elizabeth M. Montague-Gainforth, a woman of exceptional qualifications for the position. From its starting until her death in 1901 she fashioned its life after her own quiet and gentle spirit, and endeared herself to both the student body and the community. Associated with her as teachers at the opening were Miss Mary C. Baker, who subsequently married, and Miss Mabel Hill, now instructor in history at the State Normal school at Lowell, Mass., who has attained distinction both as a teacher and writer of history. Later, as the school grew in numbers, there came Miss Caroline E. Coit, Miss Carrie Cate, and Miss Isabel M. Parks, all of whom were identified with its progressive work. Miss Parks became vice-principal in 1898, and succeeded Miss Gainforth as principal in 1900, a position she still successfully fills.

The following is a roster of the teachers:

Elizabeth M. M. Gainforth, principal, 1886-1900; warden, 1900-'01.			
Isabel M. Parks, <sup>1</sup> vice-principal, 1898-1900; principal, 1900.			
Mary C. Baker,	1886-'93.	Mary Niles,	1892-'95.
Mabel Hill,	1886-'97.	Mabel Russell, <sup>1</sup>	1899.
Caroline E. Coit,	1887-1900.	Bertha Niles, <sup>1</sup>	1900.
Carrie Cate,	1894-'97.	Emile M. Pingault, <sup>1</sup>	1886.
Isabel M. Parks, <sup>1</sup>	1893-'94 and 1898.	Herman Strachaner,	1886-'95.
Mabel A. Frothingham,	1897-'98.	Marian Lathrope, <sup>1</sup>	1895.
Ethel W. Devin, <sup>1</sup>	1897.	A. W. Spanhoofd,	1886-'93.
Alice C. Humphrey,	1895.	Elizabeth F. Bennett, <sup>1</sup>	1901.
Elizabeth Averill,	1895-1901.	Ethel R. Robinson, <sup>1</sup>	1902.

<sup>1</sup> Present corps of teachers.