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CATHOLIC HOSPITALS AND CATHOLIC DOCTORS, HERE IS YOUR CHANCE!

By SISTER ALICE MARTHA

In response to the appeal of our Holy Father, the Passionist Fathers sent one of their priests to open a mission for the colored "somewhere" in Alabama. Ensley was decided on because it seemed to be in the heart of the negro section. There, too, is "Tuxedo Junction" which has been made more or less famous in song, but the social activities therein referred to, were not always unquestionable.

An old store building, about to fall down, was "patched" and made to serve as rectory and chapel upstairs, while the first floor was partitioned with beaverboard into classrooms. One Trinitarian Sister was loaned from their Cenacle in Birmingham, to help with the social work and organize a kindergarten, while three Felician Sisters from Chicago came to teach in the school.

The need of a clinic was met when through the cooperation of St. Vincent's Hospital in Birmingham, a Coronet Sister with two Residents and two student nurses came to the school where twice a week the "kindergarten" was transformed into a clinic. The need of a hospital became greater and greater, and the Fathers appealed to Mother Ann Sebastian of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky, to come to their aid. It was finally agreed to ac-

cept the invitations of the Fathers, and with the gracious approval of Most Reverend T. J. Toolen, Bishop of Mobile, steps were taken to make our first foundation in Alabama.

Accordingly on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, 1941, three Sisters of Charity of Nazareth arrived in Ensley, to work among the poor, sick and afflicted negroes of that section of the "deep South." While waiting until such time as a hospital building could be started, the work of the Sisters was to take over the clinic and care for the sick in their homes. Hospitalization for them is almost an impossibility, because of lack of beds. It is true, a fine new hospital has been built within the last two years in Birmingham, but these people could never afford to pay for such care. We came here hoping to build a modest but complete hospital, exclusively for the colored, where worthy colored girls could receive training in an accredited School of Nursing, and where young colored men, graduates of Class A medical schools, could receive internships which would be recognized.

But while waiting for sufficient funds to build, the war has come, and as you know, building is out of the question "for the duration."

In the face of the desperate need that confronted us, we saw

our plans for relieving that need, fade away before the horrors of war! Then we decided to do the next best thing: to try to renovate three old negro houses and connect them to form a unit to be known as a temporary Holy Family Hospital, which would consist of twelve beds for patients, operating room, clinic and Sisters' quarters.

At present we are living in a duplex which was formerly occupied by negroes, and the rain pours in from above, while the wind comes in through the cracks in the floor. Last week we had a real flood, but, thank God! the weather wasn't so cold. The water was up to our second step. Our house, like most houses here, is built high off the ground, but those which were not, were really flooded out. Water came half way up their walls in some places. Living conditions among these people is pitiable—overcrowded in miserable shacks, some have beds, others sleep on sacks or anything else they can find to put between themselves and the floor. Many of them are suffering from malnutrition, and the prevalence of tuberculosis is not surprising.

In spite of these conditions, we find the negroes, on the whole, docile and appreciative. They are eager to hear about God and are

much impressed by the beauties and splendor of the liturgical services. Just the Sunday before Christmas fifty-five were confirmed, and many are under instruction. Among the latter is a "Witness of Jehovah," who is just as enthusiastic about distributing the Catholic literature she receives in the clinic, as she formerly was in disseminating the propaganda of her sect.

Our work is to reach their souls through their broken bodies, and to bring the knowledge of God to many of them who had scarcely heard of Him. Those who assist us in any way, help us to realize this ideal.

We have been fortunate enough to secure beds and an operating table, and have bought some other equipment. Any kind of hospital apparatus which is "out of date" in some of the modern hospitals, might be valuable to us in our work. Sample medicines will also be welcome.

God will surely bless any effort you make to help care for His poor colored people who are so neglected because they are black.

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF
 NAZARETH,
 Holy Family Hospital,
 1918 19th Street,
 Ensley, Alabama.