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A SERMON

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ON BEHALF OF THE

POOR WHO ARE VISITED AND RELIEVED

BY

THE SOCIETY

OF

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL,

IN THE CITY OF DUBLIN,

PREACHED IN

THE CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER,

ON THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY, 1849,

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S E R M O N .

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“ And entering the house they found the Child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored him ; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”—*St. Matthew, chap. 2, vii.*  
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ON this passage, my brethren, the Church lingers with a devotional spirit. Every day during the Octave of Epiphany it is inserted in the sacred liturgy. At each solemn repetition of this passage during the recital of the Gospel at Mass, the priest and faithful kneel, renewing the memory of the first act of worship offered by the Gentile world to the Son of God, when He appeared on earth under the form of our humanity. What a variety of religious sentiments and associations the announcement of our text awakens in pious and contemplative minds ! Faith, as it ponders on every word, becoming more enlightened and fervent, rejoices amidst the unveiled splendours of “ the mystery which had been hidden from ages and generations, but hath now been manifested to the saints.”* Adoration, inspired by the spectacle of the eastern kings prostrate before our Lord in homage, pours out all the affections, and humbles all the powers of the soul, to hail the presence of Incarnate Deity shining forth amongst the children of men. And from the symbolic presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, a rich and varied light of mystical intelligence is reflected, illumining depths of spiritual thought, and mingling with aspirations of glowing devotion.

While souls, specially enlightened and touched by the spirit of God, penetrate into the hidden sense of this passage, and

on disclosing its treasures, inwardly delight to gaze on the truths; and strive to appreciate the graces, which are typified by the precious gifts that were extracted from the oriental casket; let us, my brethren, pursue a more humble track of scriptural interpretation, confining the range of our observations within the moral view of our text, such as the present occasion of charity suggests as most appropriate and most useful.

The incident of the Epiphany which should now especially attract and engage our attention—that which invests the mystery solemnized on this festival with a most striking character, as contrasting all that is most glorious in Heaven, with all that is most abject on Earth, or rather combining both within one clear and distinct point of view—is the Poverty, the extreme poverty, under all the privations and humiliations of which, the Son of God, on his entrance into this world, “being made in the likeness of man, and in habit found as a man,”* presented himself, to receive the homage and tribute of the eastern royal sages. That circumstance is for faith most marvellous, as shrouding “the brightness of the Father’s glory”† under a veil of obscure indigence; for piety, it is most affecting, as exhibiting our beloved Lord for worship under circumstances of most touching distress; and for our consideration and conduct, it is most instructive, as conveying a great moral truth with important practical duties. What truth, my brethren, is that, which it is my part to seize and develope, and which it will become yours to lay up in your hearts, and by your good works to render effective? That, from the day on which the miraculous star stopt in its course, to shine down on the miserable hovel in which Jesus was lying in lowly state, to be visited and adored by kings and wise men, as well as by the mechanic of Nazareth and the peasants of Bethlehem, desti-

* Philip. ii. 7.

† Heb. i. 3.

tute Poverty, considered as a social condition, acquired in addition to its original and imperscriptive rights of humanity, claims of a supernatural order to the respect, the compassion, and the succour, of all the more favoured classes of the community. To visit, to comfort, to serve the state of poverty; such are the offices of Christian charity—that queen of virtues, whose glory it is to minister to the spiritual and temporal wants of the poor, by offering to Christ in their persons, the frankincense of its homage, the gold of its munificence, and the myrrh of its self-sacrificing devotedness.

With the light of this single truth, the Christian character of Poverty, shining out before my mind as a guiding star from Heaven, which, while illuminating my path, will cheer my tremulous solicitude to bring comfort this day to the homes and bosoms of the poor dependants on the bounty of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, I enter on the advocacy of their claims, which most unexpectedly devolves on my humble ministry, in the regretted absence, on account of serious illness, of one of the most highly gifted and zealous Prelates of the Irish episcopacy, his Lordship the coadjutor Bishop of Derry.*

How the poor deserve to be considered and treated, is a question, my brethren, which, in the present state of Christian and civilised society, assumes a gravity of importance, and an anxiety of interest, public and private, quite unprecedented in any former age. It is a question, on the adjustment of which, the truths and charities of the Gospel rather ill agree with the wisdom of this world, already judged by our Saviour for its errors and its selfishness.

Political economy, whatever may be its sympathy with the suffering members of the social body, is generally regarded as jealously conservative of the material interests

* Alas! for the Irish Church and Nation, the Right Rev. Dr. Maginn has since departed this life. May he rest in peace.

and vested privileges of the higher orders of the people. Whether it predominates in state cabinets, or lectures in universities, or assumes a legal form, it is charged with doling out by strict rule and measurement, the scantiest possible relief and comfort to the destitute poor. From the habit of repressing by cold statistical calculations, every warm heart-gushing emotion of generous pity, it too often degenerates into that hard earthly wisdom, which becomes verily, to use a scriptural expression, "death"* to thousands of unprovided poor, who, when harshly rejected, shrink into dark and unvisited recesses to pine and perish unknown, unwept, and sometimes unburied. Nay more—unconsciously, perhaps, to its professors and patrons, but deserving the loudest and most solemn denunciation—this guiding science of modern society is every day branding as with a mark of public infamy, the forehead of every son of poverty, however irresponsible for his unhappy lot; and is visiting his personal liberty with vexatious restrictions, just as if it were a crime or a degradation to be born or to live like unto Him who, when on Earth, might be accounted a vagrant and a mendicant on the wide world's bounty, not having even in the hour of His nativity and adoration, a place that could be called His own, on which to lay his head.†

Arrayed against this system so favored in high places, modern Socialism is taking a threatening position. Already is it beginning to overcast with portentous shadows the entire face of society, especially carrying dismay into countries, where there are inveterate and deep seated grounds of popular discontent. It is sending from afar, its warnings of prophetic import to the rulers and proprietors of our own afflicted island. Its object is to level in the name of humanity, rising in outraged masses, every conventional distinction and offensive estrangement of rank and title,

* Rom. viii. 6.

† Matt. viii. 20.

to blot out, for ever more, from the language and bearing of civilized society, whatever has been hitherto humiliating in the name or attitude of a poor man.

But more formidable still is the twin monster of society that has been upheaved in the travails of its recent birth. Communism, looks on the accumulation of wealth, both national and private, as not unlike the colossal statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, representing successive tyrannies which must be broken up, before the whole earth can be filled with regenerated nations.* It is striving to gather from all quarters, far and near, the strength of the multitude to strike at the base of all property, as with the force of the mysterious rock rolled down from the mountain; and is darkly plotting to melt down and fuse together in the volcanic crucible of some terrible revolution, all the metals, pure and base, of which it is compounded, gold, silver, brass, iron and clay; and when all shall be recast into one consolidated fund of social wealth, this new popular philosophy promises, in its delirious vision of a new order of things, that there shall be no longer rich and poor, but that all diversities of class shall be merged into one contented community consisting of associated families, and that each shall be entitled to draw from the public joint-stock treasury, its rightful portion for all earthly wants and enjoyments.

When the political tempest is lulled, and the earthquake shock convulsing society to its foundations, and overturning ancient dynasties is no longer felt, the spirit of Christianity comes as the breathing of a gentle air from Heaven† on the broken heart, and almost desponding hopes of the world, so long torn assunder by conflicting opinions and changing systems. Oh! there is no philosophy to gladden the sight, to heal the wounds, and to direct the movements of society, like the religion of Jesus. Coming down amongst us from

* Dan. ii. 31.

† III. Kings, xix. 12.

its serene and unclouded course, above the strife of human pride, and passion, and interest, it announces "peace to men of good will"—it proclaims, as an established and inviolable ordinance of Providence, that "the poor you have always with you"*—it maintains, with the ruling powers, law and order, for the protection of the rich ; and with the aggrieved and complaining multitude, sympathy and justice for the poor ; it would spread around the seat of administrative justice an universal reign of charity—and thus, in this world of perpetual jealousy and contention between the different sections of the state, entailing indiscriminate woe upon all, it would realise that form of society next in perfection and happiness to the communion of saints, in which alone the true city of God is to be found, and thus would accomplish the promise of the Prophet—"Mercy and truth have met each other ; justice and peace have kissed ; truth is sprung out of the Earth ; and justice hath looked down from Heaven."†

In your conduct and sentiments towards the Poor, my brethren, our holy religion requires that you should be respectful, bountiful, and disinterested. By these characteristics, which should in a special manner adorn the brethren of St. Vincent de Paul, and which are symbolized by the Epiphany offerings of frankincense, gold, and myrrh, as I have already indicated, the Christian virtue of charity is distinguished from the ostentatious philanthropy of worldly-minded men.

In the first place, never deserve the reproach of the Apostle, "You have dishonored the poor man."‡ Why should you disrespect a condition of life, which your God and Saviour endowed with a special prerogative of spiritual rank and

* John, xii. 8. † Ps. lxxxiv. 11. ‡ St. James, ii. 6.

blessedness by the preference of his own adoption? "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich He became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich."* Accompany in spirit, my brethren, the pilgrim-kings from the east, in search of the place and state of life, in which it pleased Heaven, that the Redeemer and Enlightener of the human race should be born. Where will you find your Lord, that you may offer him the incense of your homage—amongst the rich or amongst the poor? Seek for the promised "Ruler of the Earth," and the "expectation of the nations" in Herod's viceregal court, amidst the oriental gorgeousness of which, the imperial glory of Cæsar's world-wide sovereignty was reflected over the unhappy province of Juda; and you will not find Him there. Seek for "the new-born King of the Jews" in the halls of the priest-princes of the temple, and in the houses of the rulers of the synagogue; and you will not find Him there. Seek for the heir and restorer of the throne of David, amongst the families of the most noble race of Juda then assembled by the Emperor's edict in Bethlehem; and you will not find His birth-place in any of those lordly mansions.

Follow no longer the suggestions of wordly prudence or prejudice, but obey the inspirations of celestial wisdom. Probably you will discover the Lord of Glory forsaken by the rich of the Earth in some obscure abode of poverty. Behold! the meteor-star appears again, and stops outside the suburbs of the town of Bethlehem. On the road side is observed the cleft of a rock, which opens as a portal to the gloomy cavern recess within. In the trampled mire before the threshold are deep foot-prints of animals, shewing that the place has been used as a stable, or shelter-shed for cattle—enter with the wise and pious kings. Our text has told us what they found and saw, "Entering they found the

* II. Cor. viii. 9.

Child with Mary his mother." Join them in worship, and while this the first Christian temple is odorous of sacred frankincense, and princes and philosophers are prostrate on the ground in adoration, look with eyes of enlightened faith on Poverty. Does it deserve any longer to be treated with the contemptuous spirit of carnal Jew, and proud Heathen, and heartless worldling? Does it not appear to rise up before you from the damp straw litter, and the broken manger-rack, and in its swathing clothes of rags, and amidst the wintry chill, and cheerless horrors of the cavern-stable, all spiritualized, honoured, hallowed from contact with the body of Christ?

From that hour of the Epiphany, religion claims not only humane consideration, but even sacred respect for the condition and the persons of the poor, who are for evermore to be regarded and cherished as our dearest brethren in Christ Jesus.

What a social revolution in the treatment of the poorer classes was produced amongst both Jews and Gentiles when Christianity brought forth Poverty from under the rock-roof where first was worshipped the Word made flesh; and exhibited it for the veneration as well as for the sympathy of the world, while bearing on its forehead the luminous impression of an almost sacramental character. A new virtue was instantly infused into the bosom of humanity. Fraternal charity appeared.

In our Saviour's time, this virtue seems to have been little known and still less practiced, even amongst the Jewish people. Our Lord recommending it to his disciples, promulgated it as a new precept—"A new commandment I give you that you love one another as I have loved you."* The national insensibility to the most harrowing cases of distress and suffering even amongst their own brethren, was depicted by our Lord in contrast with the compassionate and effective

charity of a schismatical race, in the pathetic and instructive story of the good Samaritan.

But a few years elapsed after that scene of inhumanity on the part of ministers of the temple, from whom such cruelty might be least expected, and behold what a change! "The multitude of believers," records the inspired historian describing the first Christian congregation in Jerusalem—"had but one heart and one soul, neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common unto them. Neither was there any one needy amongst them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold and laid it down before the feet of the Apostles, and distribution was made to every one according as he had need.*"

When the charity with which religion thus espoused the cause of the poorer classes, extended its mission and ministry from Jerusalem to Rome; from the seat of God's pure worship to the centre of the wide world's Paganism; the effect soon apparent in the improved consideration for the destitute and suffering poor, was no less marvellous than consoling. How the afflicted poor had been previously treated by the citizens of heathen Rome, we may well infer from the reproach which St. Paul cast upon them, representing them as a people "without affection and without mercy."† The estimation in which Poverty was held by the more religious portion of that great Pagan community, may be judged from their tenets and their worship. Execrating poverty as a heritage of evil entailed on certain families by inexorable destiny, or as a judgment fallen from above, on individuals for their follies and their crimes; loathing poverty as a condition equally accursed of Gods and men, the princes, pontiffs, philosophers and people of the heathen mistress of the Gentiles, cast its idol

* Acts, iv. 32.

† Rom. i. 31

divinity outside the walls of their city, within the broad circuit of which, every vice and abomination of the Earth had its altar, priests and victims. Poverty was stript of its rights of religious citizenship within the shadows of the seven hills, and having been flung out as an outlawed deity, was doomed to pine away beyond the gates, in its desolate shrine, without votive offerings or pilgrim worshippers.

Did poverty continue to be so despised and persecuted by the religion of the good Jesus? Ah! no. While yet excavating within the catacombs for the foundation of the future Christian Rome, the Religion of the Gospel which had already proclaimed from the summit of a mountain, that poverty was the first amongst the beatitudes meriting Heaven—recalled that poverty from its exile, and sheltered it under the shadow of the consecrated Altar, and ministered to all its necessities temporal and spiritual, and shared with it all the offerings of the faithful, save the portion set aside for the expenses of worship, and in the hour of pestilence or famine, when all other resources were exhausted, melted down the jewelled chalices of gold and silver, and sold the precious metals and gems for the support of the needy; whilst to visit, console, instruct and relieve every family and child of want, and ignorance, and sickness, and sorrow, the Church of Christ, in its earliest period, appointed Deacons and Deaconesses, models of devotedness in the service of the poor, well worthy of the study and imitation of the Sisters of Charity, and the Brothers of Saint Vincent of Paul.

Would you, my brethren, know something more particular of these heroes and heroines of mercy to the poor in the primitive days of the Christian Church? Take the case of one Deacon, the glorious St. Lawrence. The persecution was raging under Valerian. The heathen governor of Rome, instigated by the demon of sacrilegious plunder which in the present day possesses the confederated spoliators of Catholic Church property, accosted this young

man, the Deacon Lawrence. "I am informed that your priests offer in gold, that the sacred blood is received in silver cups, and that in your nocturnal sacrifices you have wax tapers in golden candlesticks, I should like to behold such splendid appendages of your religious worship." "You shall not be disappointed," promptly replied the Deacon—"it is true that we have riches in our sanctuaries such as the mighty Emperor might covet. Give me three days to take inventory, and to arrange every thing in order, and then your curiosity shall be gratified." In the mean time Lawrence visited all the haunts of human misery, to which he was accustomed to carry privately the periodical bounty of the Church, and summoning all his poor pensioners to meet together on the third day, he drew them out in a line, and grouped them in classes—widows, orphans, lepers, blind, lame, decrepid—and as the sun looked down from a cloudless sky on this heterogeneous array of human want and suffering, "What," asked the astonished Prefect of the City, "might all this varied mass of shocking wretchedness mean?" "Governor," said the intrepid christian young man, "you required that I should show you the riches of our Church—here you see them all gathered into one spot—the destitute, the helpless, the forsaken, the infirm; all the creatures of God despised in this world, are the most precious treasures of which the spouse of Christ doth boast—these are the refulgent gems of her earthly diadem and of her everlasting crown!"

Honor then, my dearest brethren, the poor, as your predecessors in the faith honored them for Christ's sake; ever remembering, as they did, in obedience to the Apostle's warning, that "God hath chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him."* In your intercourse with benevo-

* St. James, ii. 5.

lent persons of other religious persuasions in works of charity, surpass them, if you can, in the fervour of your more zealous co-operation, and in more marked and observable respect for the condition and persons of the poor. You owe Christians dissentient from your faith, the unmistakable evidence of your conscientious and earnest adhesion to a church, which has been always venerated as the mother of the poor; to a religion which cannot live without good works. Thus it was in the early ages, when Christianity was forced by imperial edicts to veil the splendour of her worship within the subterranean vaults of Rome, that while the precious and fragrant ointment was poured out at the feet of Christ's poor by charity, often humbled in a penitential spirit to redeem past sins; the sweet odour of that divine virtue, not only filled the entire house of God, mingling daily with the incense cloud of sacrifice and prayer, but also, as we are assured by history, it shed its influence through every walk of Pagan society high and low, and Heathens then exclaimed with admiration—"Behold! how the Christians love one another;" and having been thus attracted by the alms-deeds of the faithful, many predestinated Infidels were converted to that faith which could inspire in all its followers such sublime and practical philanthropy.

If you feel, beloved brethren, as good Christians should, this sympathy for your poor brethren in Christ Jesus, which for His sake, must be exalted into a feeling of religious respect, you will almost instinctively reduce the sentiment to the practice of charity. You will join with the frankincense of your devout homage to Christ in their persons, the golden tribute of liberal alms-deeds. This is the second condition which religion requires for the perfection and merit of your charity. And oh! how gloriously was this munificence of mercy to the poor, illustrated by the Church of Christ, after her emancipation from the persecuting spirit and

penal laws of the Pagan Emperors and people. Religion, then imitating another Epiphany offering of the truly wise and royal worshippers in the stable of Bethlehem, poured out gold, in profusion to endow the poverty of the Earth. Then it was, that the charity of the Spouse of the Redeemer was displayed in all its magnificence. No longer satisfied with occasional visits to the poor in their wretched habitations, and lamenting the privations and deaths of thousands who sunk slowly into the grave without the world's knowledge in the silence and obscurity of their infirmities and wants, the ingenious charity of the Christian Church classified suffering humanity, and adopting distinct families of sufferers under the shadow of the Cross, raised and supported vast institutions of mercy for their respective relief and protection. You are too well instructed, my brethren, in the history of the monuments which your religion erected in various ages to the cause of humanity, to require to be informed, that it was not Pagan Emperors, nor philosophical philanthropists, nor wealthy populations, in the classic days of Roman greatness; but that it was the priesthood and the people of Christian Rome, who first founded and maintained Infirmaries for the sick, Hospitals for strangers, Orphanages for the fatherless, Asylums for virgins and widows, Alms-houses for the aged and infirm. Yes: all these and similar establishments of mercy, which have ever since been imitated and multiplied under such a variety of forms, were original creations of the charitable spirit of the Catholic Church of antiquity.

And should not the Monastic Institutions, which subsequently arose in the Western Church, and which on looking back through the middle ages to more primitive periods, shine forth as the most time-honored, and piously venerated beacons of all that was enlightened and good, be noticed by us in this wide survey of Religious Charity, as singularly illustrating the essential and indissoluble union between

piety and benevolence, between faith and good works in their highest attainable perfection. It cannot be denied that every Monastery, encompassed with its clustering out-buildings, was no less a City of Refuge reared in the midst of society, for the poor and afflicted of the Earth, than it was a flourishing seat of learning, and a cultivated nursery of holiness. Its porch was open, day and night, to admit the wayfarer, lodge the stranger, and shelter the houseless. Its daily bread was shared with the hungry who thronged the gates. Its granary was the store house of the indigent in times of public distress; its cloister-school was open to the child of the humble peasant, equally as to the heir of the proud baron; its inviolability was a sanctuary to the unjustly oppressed vassal; for the broken-hearted, a stream of consolation never ceased to flow from the fount of living waters within its sacred enclosure; and the wilderness or morass, amidst the sterility and horrors of which, its foundations had been laid of old, changed in time into waving fields of plenty, and gardens of contemplative delight, and streaked with patches of medicinal botany for the poor neighbours, sent forth a voice to every waste and barren land to bring forth fruit in like manner; and the grounds reclaimed by the sweat and skill of devout and penitential toil, became the industrial model-farms of the surrounding country.

Woe was the day for the poor of those kingdoms, when lust of riches enthroned in power, plundered the religious houses, and exiled the religious orders; woe was the day when the Monastery, from the threshold of which, the hungry had never been sent away empty, was perverted into an aristocratic mansion, from which the mendicant poor were soon spurned; and woe was the day when the Abbey lands were changed into lordly manors and desmesnes, for thenceforward the inexhaustible well-spring of charity, once so sacred and pure, was forced into channels of pomp and luxury to slake the insatiable and sinful thirsts of vain and voluptuous

worldlings! It was an evil day for religion, and for charity; but it brought in due season a retributive judgment on the rich of the land. A necessity soon arose for the enactment of poor laws to quell the mutinous spirit of the famishing peasantry, who, in the spoliation of the Convents, saw when it was too late, that they had suffered themselves to be robbed of their own patrimonial share and their children's birth right, in the common goods of the House of God.

While we, as Catholics, maintain that the legal provision for the poor is nothing more than the compulsory instalment of a public debt contracted by society, as being an accomplice at least by connivance in the sacrilegious appropriation to private avarice of the treasures of the sanctuary, which, in the language of Holy Writ, "were sums deposited, and provisions stored up for the subsistence of the widows and the fatherless;* we do not, therefore, consider ourselves, by paying each his portion of the common burthen, exempted from the duties imposed by the eternal law of Fraternal Charity.

So unbounded in its sympathies is this divine virtue, that it is only by the limitation of its resources it is checked in the ever moving sphere of its works of spiritual and temporal mercy. Were it sufficiently endowed with the wealth of this world, it would relieve every want—it would heal every wound of stript and bleeding humanity. There are cases of distress, there are abysses of misery, which no agency of poor-law relief can approach, but which Christian Charity alone may visit in the person of a son or daughter of St. Vincent de Paul. This is the virtue which called into existence the Society of Religious Guardians and visiters of the poor, whose appeal on behalf of their clients I address to you to day.

Brethren of St. Vincent de Paul! receive into your warm and devout young hearts, the genuine spirit of Catholic

* II. Mach. iii. 10.

Charity as it descends from the bosom of God. Remember that it is the character of Christian Charity to give bountifully; while the character of political economy, on the contrary, is to distil sparingly from the wealth of the rich ones of the world, as from their hearts blood, drop by drop, into the exhausted veins of poverty, macerated, decrepid, infirm, and famine stricken. Your mission is different—you are sent by the Church of Christ to be the merciful patrons and stewards of the poor; others are commissioned to compromise, at the least possible expense to the affluent, with the common rights of humanity and justice. The rule of Christian Charity, which should be the canon of your brotherhood, is “to give good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.* Your best economy is to cultivate a deep-rooted faith in the promised seasonable bountifulness of Providence, “for you are not like them who have no hope,”† “He that ministereth seed to the sower, will both give you bread to eat, and will multiply your seed, and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice.”‡ And what, for a sincerely believing and thoroughly earnest Christian, as every Vincentian Brother must be presumed to be, is a more secure and profitable investment for any superfluous wealth which he himself may possess, or which may be entrusted to the discretion of his good sense and feeling, than to lend to the Lord, by depositing in the bosom of the poor? “For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.§ “He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly, and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap of blessings.”||

One only ingredient more is wanted, my brethren, to complete the oblation of Christian Charity to the poor, as symbolized by the gifts of the Eastern Kings. But this last ele-

* Luke, vi. 38.

† I. Thess. iv. 12

‡ II. Cor. ix. 10,

§ II. Cor. ix. 10.

ment is the most essential to the spiritual excellence and everlasting merit of this divine virtue. It is the spirit of self-sacrifice—an absolute renouncement of all personal pride, ambition, and interest in the service of the poor. Its appropriate mystical type is the myrrh that was mingled in the offerings of Epiphany with gold and frankincense. A bitter shrub is myrrh, and anciently it was used in the embalming of the dead on account of its preserving qualities, which saved the body from the entire corruption of the tomb. Similar in its efficacy is the Charity so prevalent in the Catholic Church of all ages. In the religious orders, it may be found in all its virtue and effects. Oh! how fragrant and incorruptible is the heart of humanity, when, for the sake of God and mankind, it is spontaneously dead to the gain, and pleasure, and vanities of this world; and what is still more rare and admirable, mortified within itself to every sentiment of self-love and flattering complacency! What a beautiful odour has been shed for centuries throughout the entire of Christendom! What an imperishable element of benefits for society at large, and for the whole human race has been preserved in the bosom of conventual life. Not only individuals, but communities of men and women, have been found devoting themselves by an irrevocable vow to Heaven, that is, by a solemn voluntary act of self immolation, both to the worship of God day and night, in cell and choir and cloister; and also to every work of spiritual and corporal mercy, useful or needful to their neighbour. Other bodies—such confraternities for instance of mixed piety and benevolence, as that which on this occasion is an humble suppliant for your bounty, on behalf of the poor of Dublin—are associated and bound together under the sanction and with the blessing of the Church, by an union of members, not made sacred and indissoluble by engagements plighted solemnly before the altar. But for these also, the spirit of pure disinterestedness and devotion in the cause of suffering humanity, though in a

much lesser degree of self-denial, is necessary to crown their charitable zeal with merit for themselves, and edification for the public.

Let then, my young and respected friends listen to my words. Formed as they are into a benevolent religious brotherhood, after the spirit and form of the Monastic Associations, with the difference, that the one dwells in the cloister, the other in the world; the one is bound by vows, the other is not; let them sometimes contemplate in the history of the religious orders, the best ancient models of self-devoted heroism in the cause of fraternal charity, that they may catch up a portion of the spirit of these men of joint holiness and good works, just as they who aspire to perfection in the beautiful arts study attentively, if not enthusiastically, the old masters in painting, architecture, and sculpture.

In what societies of philanthropy, philosophical, political, religious, or social, did there ever reign as an ascendant, all-pervading principle, such a pure spirit of charity as in the various Monastic bodies of the Catholic Church—so divine in its source, so unearthly in its motives, so irreproachable in its conduct, so sublime in its courage, so uniform in its services, so patient in its labours, so successful and so enduring in its results? Where and when, did any form of human misery appear, to the speedy and effective succour of which, some one or more of these religious communities did not consecrate their sympathies, exertions and resources?

When Christians torn from their homes by Corsairs, or taken in war, bore galling chains in the infidel lands of Africa or Syria, and pined away in the Moslem dungeons of Moorish Spain; did not the order of "Friars of our Lady of Mercy," spring into existence for "the redemption of captives?" When pilgrims and travellers journeying from Western Europe to the plains of salubrious and classic Italy, or bending onwards towards the city of the Apostles and of the arts, were wont to perish amidst the torrents and snows of Alpine solitudes; did not

the Monks of St. Bernard, instinct with sublime humanity, build cells for themselves amongst mountains of everlasting ice—and did not these self-martyred heroes of unrivalled humanity, hover day and night from dangerous dizzy steeps, as guardian angels over the wayfarer's perilous paths to guide, to save, and to shelter? And,—what a boast for the age in which we live!—it was reserved for the barbarism and fanaticism of the regenerators of civilization and Christianity in the nineteenth century, to persecute, and plunder, and outlaw, a community of true philanthropists, which the tempests of Heaven, and the wars of the Earth, had spared and respected, for so many ages!

When poor patients congregated in hospitals were but ill attended in their pains and sorrows, and but little helped and consoled in their hour of agony; did not the Institute of St. Camillus de Lellis, called in Italy, "The pious Servants of the Sick;" and also "the Order of Charity," founded in Spain by St. John of God, begin to live in community within the vast Infirmaries of Catholic countries instead of Monasteries—did they not recite the beads or the divine office while ministering at the beds of the sick, and keep their sacred vigils by the flickering lamp which hung over the couch of the dying, and, in moments of necessary relaxation, make the convalescent wards their silent ambulatories, and when offering the adorable mysteries of the altar, did they not stand as the High Priest of old, while the pestilence was raging, with the sacred incense smoking between the dead and the living.*

When the new world was discovered, and ambition and avarice, and lust and cruelty, rushed each to its ready prey on the opposite shores of the Atlantic, did not "the Charity of Christ press forward" with the ardour and courage of apostolic zeal, to contend on the distant battle-field with all the

* Numb. xvi. 48.

worst passions of our depraved nature, marshalled together in terrible array against the rights of justice and humanity, which were outraged in the oppression of the free-born children of the American soil. Who then stood foremost, as the boldest and most uncompromising assertors of the natural rights of the native races, against the cruel and rapacious foreigners? Were they not the Friars' Preachers, with De las Casas at their head, the illustrious apostle and champion of humanity, to whom the admiring world accorded with one voice the glorious title of "the Protector of the Indians?"

When the slave-labourers in the deep mines of Mexico and Peru, were not permitted by their task masters to see the light of the sun, or to receive on their souls the illumination of the Gospel; a holy and charitable rivalry arose amongst the members of the different religious orders, to bury themselves alive with their enslaved and benighted fellow men. Who were the most distinguished and successful civilizers and legislators of the wandering tribes, following their trail as they roamed the forest wilderness without religion, or law, or industry, and mingling with them as friends on their hunting grounds, and breathing words of peace in their war encampments, and persevering in their love of brotherhood for the savage strangers, until they tamed their fierce nature with kindness, and built them cities in the deserts? Were they not the maligned and persecuted sons of St. Ignatius of Loyola, under whose enlightened Charity, Paraguay, the republic of the Christian Indians, arose almost to realise what the Society of Eden might have been, had man continued to obey the laws of his Creator?

Like Alexander's ambition, but oh! with what a different spirit inspired, Catholic Charity sighed for more new worlds to conquer; and as it had crossed before, the waves of the Atlantic, so at a later period, it winged its way across the waters of the Pacific. From the eastern shores of Asia you can trace its path of "shining and burning light" in the

irresistible and untiring progress of the zeal of its missionaries ; various orders of the Church contending with emulous fervour in the race, some penetrating into the heart of China, others traversing the steppes of Tartary, many dispersing themselves through the Islands of the eastern Archipelago—all as apostles watering with their sweat and tears, and not a few as martyrs, fertilizing with their life-blood, the seeds of the Faith, which they had scattered over those vast regions of the east, that to this day hail and venerate as their chief apostle and patron, the glorified Saint under whose invocation this beautiful temple is dedicated.*

But after gathering from the revolutions of time and the circuit of the globe, illustrations of the irrepressible and manifold Charity of the Catholic Church, we must return nearer to our own age and country, to find the man, around whose forehead Charity kindled its halo of most varied and refulgent lustre ; the man, on whose head, modern society whatever may be its creed or politics, admits that mercy shed its most splendid and abundant gifts for the benefit of mankind ; the man, whom we all revere as the great Apostle, Patriarch and Legislator of humanity. Need I announce the name of our Patron Saint. Vincent de Paul ? What a number of benevolent associations claim him as their founder or protector !

First amongst his children is the Sister of Charity. For ages before his time, female devotion had been crowding the cloisters from which there was permitted no egress, and but little intercourse with the outward world. Vincent de Paul well knew the height of woman's courage, and the depth of woman's tenderness, and after sounding every abyss of social want and spiritual destitution in the thoroughfares of life, he considered what female pity towards the poor, sick and impenitent might achieve, if inspired, guided, and sustained by religion. He called into existence the Sister of Charity, and

* St. Francis Xavier.

sent her forth amidst the dangers, miseries, and sinfulness of the world, without any other religious veil or habit to invest the inviolability of her person, than the consecrated devotedness of her zeal in the service of her afflicted fellow creatures. Onward she went from that day to this, without soiling her feet with a stain of Earth, without drooping her winged spirit on the mission of love, without a breath of the world's slander dimming for an instant of suspicion, or sectarian malignity, with its foul calumnies, blemishing for a season the snow white lustre of her vestal innocence. There is no dungeon cell so dark or deep, into which with firm step, and from a sense of duty in obedience, she will not descend. There is no criminal gang in prison yard at home, or transport ship on the high seas, or convict colony abroad, amidst which she may not command silence and homage, by no other power than the charm of her holiness; by no other remonstrance or threat than the pensive sorrow for their guilt and misfortunes, which by times may be observed to pass as a shadow over her brow of light and purity. There is no revolution, however sanguinary and irreligious, in which the demon passions that invoked the political tempest, will not bow down with reverential awe before the heroism of her faith and gentleness in the midst of danger, and entrust with confidence and gratitude the wounded and the dying to the divinity of her compassionate spirit. There is no moral guilt with which she may not converse without contamination, until her feet clasped in the penitent's embrace are wetted with tears of thankfulness and compunction. Between Heaven and Earth her days and vigils are spent; above, communing intimately with "God who is Charity," and here below, never appearing amongst us, but as a being sped from a higher sphere, to alight amidst a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, and to give motion to the fount of healing, by which every infirmity is made whole.*

* St. John, v. 2.

Hath the Sister of Charity left no brother of congenial spirit with her own amidst the poor of the Earth? Yes: and he too is a son of St. Vincent de Paul! He hath joined that Society of young men of virtue and influence in the world, who devote themselves, in holy and charitable companionship, to every good work in which the interests of the poor are concerned. Though but of yesterday, there is scarce a Christian land in which a branch of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is not at present flourishing. The date of its origin does not go further back than the year 1833. Like the commencement of every work of God, intended purely for promoting the spiritual and temporal benefit of mankind, its source was not noisy nor imposing, and though springing from the hidden depths of a mysterious Providence, might appear the result of accident. The idea of such an association arose out of a conversation held in Paris by eight respectable young men, as to the means by which, without much interference with their ordinary pursuits in life, they might be enabled to contribute towards the advancement of such combined works of religion and charity, as were then considered most needful and suitable to the actual and progressive state of society in France.

“How sweetly God disposeth all things by His wisdom, and reacheth mightily from end to end.”* In former ages, religious orders professing some monastic rule, invariably arose to apply a prompt and proper remedy to the disorders which at various periods arose in the Church and in the world. But in those latter days, the infidel spirit which rules or mingles in every movement which agitates society, systematically is working for the speedy extinction, and by the iniquity of law or violence, is opposing the revival of such sacred incorporations and institutions. Against lay associations formed on a similar model, imbued with the same spirit of love

* Wisdom, viii. 1.

and devotedness for fellow creatures in distress, and moving in every path of enlightenment and mercy, under the tutelary patronage of the most popular Saint of modern times, St. Vincent de Paul, there is not, happily for the Christian poor, as yet excited, the fierce and vigilant jealousy of that Hell-dragon, the sentinel of the heathenish civilization, with which a turbulent and blasphemous philosophy would strive in those times to overspread the Earth.

It was at a memorable epoch in the annals of suffering humanity, that Providence introduced the Society of St. Vincent de Paul into our own country. In the year 1845, when famine and pestilence were hovering around our shores, an affiliation from the Parent Society in Paris, was formed in the City of Dublin, mainly through the exertions and influence of a man, alas ! no longer amongst us, but whose name is in benediction. How piously that name is embalmed—how fondly it is cherished in the memory of the Society of which he was no less the beloved, than the honored President. With what regret and enthusiastic admiration of his character, have I not heard the members speak of the late lamented Redmond Peter O'Carroll ; how he guided their inexperience in the new path opened for their charitable zeal, by the light of his counsel, and the encouragement of his example ; how he won their hearts by the amiability of his intercourse ; how he commanded their voluntary respect by the artless dignity of his appearance and manners ; how he captivated their esteem and confidence by the truthfulness of his character and conduct, always so bland and uniform ; how he surpassed them all by patience in toil, and calmness in difficulties, and heroism of sacrifice in all that concerned the poor ; how he edified by his sweet piety and the charm of an almost constitutional humility, and the odour of the many virtues which that humility would fain conceal. May his soul rest in the peace of the just, and may many like him arise amongst us !

There is not perhaps, in the Christian world, a capital city which, more than Dublin, requires the services and sacrifices of such a Society as that of St. Vincent de Paul. It is the heart which throbs in sympathy, with every pulsation of suffering, that vibrates through the wasted and languishing frame of the poorest and most oppressed country on the face of the Earth. Besides its local destitution, periodically aggravated as at the present moment, by general want or suspension of employment for the mechanical and labouring classes; it is the great recipient of all the miseries flowing from the most afflicted parts, even the very extremities of Ireland. Your liberties, your lanes, your streets and your alleys, are reeking depositories of want, of sickness, of helplessness and of despondency. Men and women and children are tired of living, and invoke death as a release from unmitigated and hopeless misery.

Popular destitution is growing into a monster evil, for which as yet there appears no measure of legal relief sufficiently comprehensive and remedial, or preventive. Charity must needs come, and profusely too, to the aid of public taxation. And where is Charity more ready and prodigal in all deeds of beneficence than in this city. Your Charity—I say it not to flatter you, but to encourage the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which is to be henceforward one of your chief almoners—is proverbial, and spoken with praise in all the Churches. Its inexhaustible vitality and munificence contrast strikingly with the decline of your commercial prosperity and civic grandeur. Your Charity builds its houses of refuge amidst the ruins of places once busy with the active industry of native manufactures—it converts your noblemens' palaces into hospitals for the sick poor—it devotes your citizen villas into penitential retreats—it liberally endows every humane and educational institution requiring public succour, from “the very deep poverty of the people which

hath abounded unto the riches of their simplicity.* May I not truly say of you what St. Paul testified, when addressing a primitive congregation of Christians on behalf of the poor of Christ. "I bear witness to the good disposition of your Charity, for not only according to your power, but beyond your power you have a forward mind to communicate to the wants of the brethren.†

Therefore, it is, my brethren, considering both the overwhelming necessities of the poor population of this city, and the unrivalled charities of its more affluent inhabitants, that I address you with as much confidence in your bounty, as with earnestness of zeal on behalf of my clients and your dependants. On the merits of the Conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in this city, I need say little. They are your fellow citizens, well known, respected, and esteemed. You know from the Annual Report just published, a portion of the good that has been done during the past year, through the zeal of the members. How many families have been saved from destruction by the seasonable visits of the benevolent Vincentians! how many artizans and labourers have been supported when sick or deprived of work, until enabled to procure employment! how many decent persons reduced to poverty and ashamed to beg, have been saved from the humiliation of seeking work-house relief! how many orphans have been adopted! how many youths of both sexes have been rescued from crime and infamy, to which the desperation of hunger and want was hastening them! how many impenitent sinners have been brought back to the path of moral duty and religious observance! The charity of our brotherhood is not sectarian nor proselytizing; not the Pharisee's, but the good Samaritan's, embracing all in distress—it is intended not to supersede, but to supply somewhat the un-

* II. Cor. viii. 2.

† Ibid.

avoidable deficiencies of public relief—not to encourage idleness and pension dependence, too proud to work, but to promote habits of industry, to foster self-reliance, and to patronize and assist the efforts of self-exertion.

Never, and no where, did a country require more than ours at the present time, the introduction and encouragement of religious Associations of Charity, such as the Sodality of St. Vincent de Paul. Private benevolence, by placing its funds under the management and trustworthiness of a Society, which systematically combines and judiciously dispenses its resources, though it may not presume to redress fully all the miseries of the people; may, nevertheless, hope to go far in mitigating the accumulation and pressure of distress, which even the public bounty of the State, with its exorbitant taxation for the poor, cannot wholly relieve. Every aid should be afforded to lighten the public burthens, and to save the lives of the people.

Since the days of captive or provincial Juda, was ever a country so steeped in poverty and anguish, as this Island of ancient faith? Has not the scene within and around Bethlehem, the extermination of the innocents, which overshadowed with its mournful commemoration, the joyful solemnities of Christmas-tide, been recently re-enacted in our poor motherland, with circumstances of wider desolation and more thrilling horrors? How many thousands have perished before our eyes during two successive years of famine and pestilence! Is not Ireland this moment the Rachel of Christian nations! Is not “a voice of lamentation and great mourning” still echoing from all our glens, and rocks, and mountains, as the wail of a mother “bewailing her children, and refusing comfort because they are not?*” When that shriek of national distress was most irrepressible and wildest, did it call forth the wisdom of mercy, the promptitude of justice which might

* St. Matt. ii. 18.

be expected from high places? While the lives of a guiltless generation were being sacrificed, was not the heart of Herod somewhere amongst us? It was Heaven's visitation, it may be said. True; but were the powers of this world all anxious and provident, as the leaders of God's people in the wilderness were, when they stood up to arrest the plague, taking their post between the dead and the dying?

When next year, we shall see renewed amongst us the policy of Augustus Cæsar, who, for purposes of state, proclaimed a general enrolment of his subjects in Judea, and other tributary provinces in the empire—when the census of our population shall be taken, who will number the countless, who will register the nameless dead, that in the last census were returned young and vigorous amongst the living? In the vision of the Prophet, two ministering angels were sent forth from before the face of the Lord—one “with a writer's inkhorn at his loins,” to mark with the sign of the cross those who were destined to live—the other to separate the death-doomed, and “utterly to destroy old and young, maidens, children and women; to defile the house and fill the courts with the slain.”* If it be thought important to collect materials of statistical knowledge of the country's increase, why not also of the country's decline in population? Let, then, the registrar follow the path of the angel of death, as well as he traces the progress of the spirit of life, and then we shall know, why our country, like another Rachel, will not be comforted. Let him visit the rural church yards spread around the ruins of our old Abbies, and scrape up the light surface covering of Earth, that he may reckon the coffinless and unshrouded skeletons. Let him, by a quicker process of calculation, count the larger green heaps, ranged outside the crumbling walls of our crowded cemeteries, where whole families, not having a single survivor to weep,

* Ezech. ix.

are laid together in the same narrow bed, "where they no longer hear the voice of the oppressor, for there the wicked cease from troubling, and the wearied are at rest."* Let him, with his "measuring line," take the depth, and breadth, and length of the pits of indiscriminate mortality, into which the famine-plagued victims, unclaimed by friends or relations, were hourly huddled. And has not flight from local oppression and inevitable ruin, thinned our people, as much even as death from pestilence and hunger—men, women and children, flying from a loved but wretched home, across the wild waste of waters, as if the voice of the angel which Joseph heard in sleep, were spoken again to every father of a helpless and doomed family, "Arise and take the child and his mother and fly."† Who will tell the names of all the ships, which during the last two years sailed from our emigration ports, freighted with cargoes of living death? Who will record for posterity, how the storm-beaten lazarettoes of the deep, disgorged on the far-distant shores of the Atlantic, myriads of God's best creatures, to stagger, and crawl, and die, unknown and unwept, in the swamps and the forests, in the streets and the hospitals, of the long desired land of their hopes and of their prayers? And, should there not be mention made in the census, of the dying classes that are left in the land, permitted to drag out a miserable existence; and, on the map of the survey, let wide districts utterly depopulated, be described in lines of mourning, and let there be black spots to denote the wrecked farm-houses, and the levelled cabins on the road side, and the broken-down fences, and the uprooted gardens of the people's food; from all of which, though dear and priceless to the old tenants, as was his vineyard "the inheritance of his fathers" to Naboth, they were flung out by the remorseless and cruel Achabs and Jezabels of our days, by force of "authority"

* Job. iii. 17.

† St. Matt. ii. 13.

and lawless law, to leave room for pleasure gardens and spacious parks.* A day of retributive doom seems impending, of which God alone knows the issues. Already mansions that once were proud and stately, are being turned into auxiliary work-houses and infirmaries; and the prophetic dream of the King of Egypt, is receiving a fulfilment in a land proverbially teeming with abundance, but not for the use of the children and labourers of the soil—for in this our day, we are beginning to see how “the cattle that were ill-flavoured and lean-fleshed, are devouring the fat kine that were fed on rich pastures, “whose bodies were very beautiful and well-conditioned.”†

Is it not true, therefore, that our country, and now more than ever, in the transitive period of her destinies, through which we are certainly passing, requires for her solace, care, and regeneration, instead of “hearts of stone” by which the poor have been too long ground and crushed, a new class of men such as Christian Charity alone can raise up, “with hearts of flesh”—a class towards the formation of which, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, if extended into the chief cities, towns, and rural districts of Ireland, may largely contribute. From this sacred spot, I invoke the young men of Ireland, the sons of the gentry, such as we have amongst us, agricultural, commercial, professional and literary; I call upon them as Christians, as patriots, and as philanthropists, to enrol their names as active or honorary members in the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Let the metropolis continue to give an example worthy of universal imitation. Already affiliations have spread from this city to Cork, Waterford, Clonmel, Limerick, Kilrush, Wexford, Navan, New Ross, Carrick-on-Suir, while the Society embraces in Dublin alone, several distinct Conferences.

And let us, my brethren, zealously fraternise with the

* III. Kings, xxi. 2, 3, 7.

† Gen. xli. 18.

Sodalities of St. Vincent de Paul by our sympathies, prayers, contributions, and influence. Truly you are shewing on this occasion your disposition to do so. Summoned by the voice of Charity to hear the first public appeal made on behalf of the Society in the city of Dublin, you have assembled promptly, and, I am sure, many of you at much personal inconvenience on this Saturday afternoon—every Sunday being pre-engaged for some other call on your inexhaustible benevolence. Whenever “the Charity of Christ urgeth;”* hearts like yours, readily yield to the cry of distress, which Religion sends forth from her sanctuary on behalf of her beloved poor. After the usual hour of worship, you have crowded again into this temple, to celebrate the Epiphany with another and a different kind of adoration. You have come in the spirit of the eastern princes, to visit the Son of God in His own house, where He dwells on this occasion enshrined in the persons of the poor, as in living tabernacles. Your homage is now to be directed to the state of poverty, which Christ your Lord by his own adoption, preferred and honoured above every other condition of Society. Your piety in all its devout tenderness is to be shewn, by your sympathizing commiseration for the privations and trials of your poorer brethren in Christ Jesus, who are the suffering members of His mystical body on Earth. Your Epiphany offerings are to be alms-deeds, not stintingly measured, nor grudgingly given, but profusely and cheerfully presented before this holy place, from which, many a poor artizan, reminding you of St. Joseph—many a holy mother, homeless and helpless like our Blessed Lady—many a destitute child, a little one dear for the sake of the infant Jesus, now appeals to you, through the feeble utterance of the voice of an humble priest, a stranger. “Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath

* II. Cor. v. 14.

touched me.”* You, that through the bounty of Heaven are rich, open your treasures, as the wealthy worshippers from the east, unlocked their sealed coffers, to pour out the tribute of Gold in the presence of their new-born King and Redeemer. Hide in the bosoms of the poor, abundant alms this day, which in the approaching hour of your souls’ distress and straits, when all other property shall have been wrenched from your grasp by the strong hand of death, will most assuredly be restored to you, fructified with immense interest, to purchase the last remission of the punishment due for sin, to buy the title to an imperishable crown of glory. Mothers, sisters and friends of the brethren of St. Vincent de Paul, you are in the presence of your adorable Lord and His Blessed Mother. They are now awaiting the presentation of your gifts to the widows and fatherless little ones of the neighbourhoods, in the splendid and comfortable mansions of which, you reside, while their dwelling places are in noisome narrow lanes; inmates of cold unfurnished rooms, dreary garrets, damp cavern cellars. Oh! in charity to them, reserve a few grains of the precious frankincense with which the vain of your sex are constantly filling golden censers to worship the idol of “this world, which as a fashion passeth away.†” Do not forget that many of them are often perishing for want of food, while you are compounding rare and costly spices of the east into dainties, to stimulate the palled appetites of rich and voluptuous guests, who are invited to extravagant entertainments at your houses, while the poor souls which shall be wafted from this world of sorrow by angels into Abraham’s bosom, often seek in vain at your doors for the crumbs that fall from your luxurious tables. And, oh! remember, how many interesting creatures of your own sex, modestly shrink from the light of day, and shiver from the winter’s cold for want of night covering—every article being pledged for food—while your

* Job. xix. 21

† I. Cor. vii. 31

wardrobes exhibit all the capricious varieties of expensive taste, and exhale the perfume of "Spikenard of great price." Is it meet that things should be so? Make restitution to the poor—let a Ladies' Clothing Society be at once formed amongst you in aid of the St. Vincent of Paul brotherhood, and place at the head of your Association some "woman," like Dorcas, "full of good works and alms-deeds,"* that may represent you all when you die. What a blessed hope will await your charity, when you shall be presented for admission at the gates of Heaven! The poor widows shall then send up on your behalf their grateful prayers to him who has been entrusted with the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, as the women of Joppe shewed Peter when on Earth, "the coats and garments which Dorcas made them," and he said to her, "Tabitha, Dorcas, arise, and he called the saints and the widows, and he presented her to them alive."†

And you, beloved, esteemed, and respected friends and brothers, accept a parting word from one, who feels grateful to Providence for being chosen to watch with a parent's love and anxiety over the birth of your Society in his own city, and to close in death the eyes of members who died there during the famine-fever, martyrs of Charity. Excuse the defects of my feeble advocacy for your poor numerous clients. Cheerfully at a short notice, did I respond to your invitation, risking the responsibility of being a substitute for the illustrious preacher, whose pleading would be worthy of the cause which, in my hands, must rest chiefly on its own merits. With the truly wise men of the east, steadily, and with an eye of faith, follow the bright and cheering guidance of Heaven to the abodes of poverty. Let the odour of your sacrifices and good works continue to ascend as a cloud of devout incense before the Mercy Seat on high. Let not the spirit of worldly pride or interest—like the deceitful policy and

* Acts, ix. 36.

† Acts, ix. 39.

promise of Herod to the strange kings, pretending to be anxious to adore the new-born infant, whom he was plotting to destroy—employ the popularity of your young Society, for your spiritual detriment; but “let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father alone, who is in Heaven.”* Yet a little while, and you shall receive your reward—Jesus shall appear in glory and not in rags—the hovels which you so often now visit, shall be reflected on the clouds as glittering palaces—your poor pensioners, now despised as “a parable of reproach” by the world, shall have their place amongst the saints,† and Christ himself in their name, and in His own, shall thank and reward you, and He shall say to you—“I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; come, therefore, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”‡

* Matt. v. 16.

† Wisdom, v. 3.

‡ Matt. xxv. 34.