

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 08224504 8





527

461

A

# DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
IN THE CITY OF ALBANY;

BEFORE THE  
**Ladies' Society,**

FOR THE  
**RELIEF**  
OF  
DISTRESSED WOMEN AND CHILDREN,

MARCH 18th, 1804.



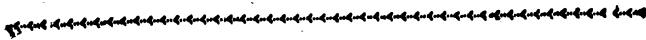
BY ELIPHALET NOTT, A. M.

PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH.



PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

ALBANY  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY



ALBANY:

PRINTED BY CHARLES R. AND GEORGE WEBSTER,  
At their Bookstore, corner of State and Pearl-streets.

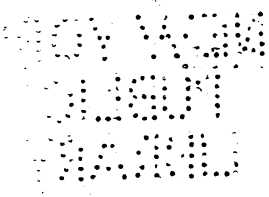
20. 5.

Paul

Nott

1. Roman - Chambers, U.S. A. J. Albany
2. Childer...

THE NEW YORK  
 PUBLIC LIBRARY  
 73845  
 ASTOR, LENOX AND  
 TILDEN FOUNDATIONS  
 1917



TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE LADIES' SOCIETY,  
INSTITUTED  
FOR THE RELIEF OF  
DISTRESSED WOMEN AND CHILDREN,

*The subsequent Discourse,*

PUBLISHED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THEIR BENEFIT  
AND AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THEIR CORDIAL FRIEND,

AND

OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

## TO THE PUBLIC.

**T**HE following **DISCOURSE**, as will readily be believed by all who read it, was written in great haste, under the pressure of numerous distressing cares, and in the midst of unavoidable interruptions. The causes which compelled a hasty draught, in the first instance, prevent a deliberate and corrected copy. The Author submits it therefore to the public, nearly in the state in which it was delivered; and his apology for so doing, is a belief that its avails will be a mite, at least, put into **BENEVOLENT HANDS**, to buy **BREAD FOR THE HUNGRY, AND RAIMENT FOR THE NAKED.**—The circumstances under which it was written will, the Author trusts, soften the edge of criticism; and the motives which induce him to consent to its publication, meet the approbation of humanity. Be this however as it may, should the funds of the **SOCIETY** be benefited by the sale of it,—should the arguments unfolded in it, awaken the public attention, and excite the public sympathy towards **AFFLICTED, UNFORTUNATE, AND PERISHING HUMANITY**—above all, should it excite, by the Divine blessing, to the practice of **CHRISTIAN CHARITY**, the Author will have received for his labor an abundant reward, and for any censures which it may occasion, sufficient indemnity.

---

## A DISCOURSE.

---

JOB, xxix. 11, 12.

WHEN THE EAR HEARD ME, THEN IT BLESSED ME; AND WHEN THE EYE SAW ME, IT GAVE WITNESS TO ME: BECAUSE I DELIVERED THE POOR THAT CRIED, THE FATHERLESS, AND HIM THAT HAD NONE TO HELP HIM.

**T**HUS spake the prince of Uz—whose history, no less singular than affecting, is filled with disaster, and unfolds to our view an instance of the most sad and sudden reverse of fortune.

On the morning of an eventful day, which proved fatal to every earthly hope, this venerable man arose in affluence and prosperity: his herds were grazing in their pastures; his oxen ploughing in the field, and his flocks whitened the hills. His sons and his daughters, united by a thousand endearments, and participating in the felicities of social life, gladdened a parent's heart, whilst they met to express their mutual love, and regale themselves at their eldest brother's house.

Flattering, unclouded prospect! But ah! how soon was it overspread with darkness! In an hour this seeming glory perished: and he who arose in the *morning*, in so much affluence, the greatest of all the men of the East—plundered of his property—bereaved of his children, sat down

at *night* in wretchedness, to bewail his untimely loss, and weep over the ruins of recollected greatness.

*Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Resigned as Job was to personal humiliation, he could not refrain from lamentation at the remembrance of his former charities—charities which it was now no longer possible for him to bestow. Casting an eye over the suffering poor, who had heretofore been fed from his table, and whose loins had been warmed with the fleece of his flock, and affected at their present pitiable condition, left without a friend to solace or a benefactor to relieve them, exclaimed, *O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. Then the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.*

The conduct of Job during the season of his prosperity furnishes a noble example of liberal and efficacious charity—a duty which we shall now attempt to unfold and enforce.

Charity is an exalted virtue, or rather it is the stock on which every other virtue germinates. Charity, strictly speaking, is benevolence, the love of God and man; and as such, compre-



hends the whole of practical religion. Its basis, in depraved creatures, is regeneration ; its object, happiness—public, universal happiness.—*Charity seeketh not her own.* Charity is not confined or regulated by degrees of affinity or consanguinity ; but, overleaping all these partial boundaries, encircles in her embrace the universe of GOD.

So far as charity respects the relief of human misery, it will cease with time ; but the temper which prompts to this, holy and immortal, like the GOD from whom it came, will survive the ruins of the universe, and unfold and display itself for ever. *Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away—but charity never faileth.*

As charity is more permanent, so it is more excellent than any other gift or grace. This is the one thing needful, for without it there can be no union to the SAVIOUR, and consequently no true religion. The faith which is saving *works by love.*

Says the Prophet, *O man ! what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD ?* Says the Apostle, *Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels ; though I give my body to be burned ; though I have all knowledge, and understand all mysteries ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains ; yet, if I have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.* Thus you see, that without charity, even faith itself is nugatory. I say faith itself, for that faith which is not efficient, *is dead, being alone.*

*If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith without works is dead.* Hence said the Apostle, *Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.* Living in a world filled with human misery, unless we commiserate that misery and endeavor to relieve it, pretensions to godliness are vain.

*Pure religion and undefiled, before GOD and the FATHER, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep thyself unspotted from the world.* Not that even acts of charity are meritorious. The truly charitable man, after the utmost he has done or can do, disclaiming all merit, brings his honors and lays them at the feet of JESUS; and looking up, through the great sacrifice which he hath presented to the FATHER, cherishes on account of it, and it only, the holy raptures of immortal hope. But though acts of charity are not meritorious, they are inseparable from a life of piety. These evince the sincerity of our professions here, and these will attest the reality of our title to the rewards of grace hereafter.

*And I heard, says John, a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the LORD, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.* And whither do they follow them? To the throne of GOD. There every act of genuine benevolence which we have performed, shall appear and testify

in our behalf. With reference to which, and for the sake of him in whose *dear name* they have been performed, the *Dispenser of life and death*, in the view of an assembled universe, shall say to each, accordingly as he has distinguished himself in practical charity, *Well done; good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many; enter thou into the joy of thy LORD.* After which the measure of their felicity shall be full: for as there will remain in others no more miseries to relieve, so neither will there remain in themselves any to be relieved.

Such briefly is the charity of the gospel: The practice of which, particularly with respect to almsgiving, we come now to enforce.

The arguments on which we shall insist will be drawn from—The character of the DEITY—the precepts of his law—the promises and benedictions of his gospel—the example of his saints—and the sensible pleasure which accompanies or which may result from acts of Christian charity. And O! may HE who has the hearts of all men in his hand, soften ours by his grace, and induce us, after the example of the Patriarch—to *deliver the poor that crieth, the fatherless, and him that hath none to help him.*

#### THE CHARACTER OF THE DEITY.

In an imitation of the Supreme Being consists alike the glory and the happiness of man. Lend me your attention therefore while I endeavor to place before you, enrobed in mercy, HIM whose being fills the heavens, and whose benignity the heaven of heavens cannot contain.

B

Entering on this article, I pause.....I hesitate.....Not because I know not what to say, but because I know not where to begin or where to end, when attempting to display the CREATOR'S glories. On every side an immeasurable scene opens—and widens—and brightens in my sight. Heaven—earth—worlds, and systems, without number and without end, present themselves, each filled with the bounty and radiant with the splendors of the DEITY.

From all these, on which the inspired writers dwelt with transport, I shall select one only, and that a small one too, for your present meditation. I mean the footstool of GOD. And even here, and with reference to ourselves merely, the Divine mercies are without bounds and without end. They commenced and are commensurate with our existence—They have been and still are new every morning and repeated every moment of our lives.

For every thing precious in existence we are indebted unto GOD. From eternity he existed and was happy. Infinite in himself, he needed not our praises. His goodness however suffered him not to live alone. To display that goodness he filled the heavens not only with angels but peopled the earth also with men.

The organization of the human body, the constitution of the human mind, and the adaption of each to each, loudly proclaim the Divine benevolence.

All the senses are mediums alike of information and enjoyment ; and even our passions, notwithstanding their too frequently deceptive influence, have in the economy of life, their obvi-

ous use.—Fear warns us of danger—desire adds alacrity to pursuit—hope softens our cares and sweetens our labors. Emulation prompts to excel in virtue—shame forms a barrier to the heart against vice. Love binds us to society—sympathy interests us in the welfare of others, and by compelling us to take part in their miseries, compels us the more promptly to relieve them.

The formation of the body, no less than the constitution of the mind, proclaim the benevolence of Him who created both.

Could I here unfold the various parts of this fair fabric which DEITY hath reared up; could I lift the veil which conceals beneath it the most stupendous and kindly adjusted mechanism, and show you to yourselves—Could I do this, who among you, filled with gratitude as well as with astonishment, and looking up to your CREATOR, would not exclaim, I will praise thee, for I am wonderfully and fearfully, not only, but mercifully made!

From the nature of man, turn your attention to the place of his residence. Contemplate this world, fitted up principally for his use. Contemplate it however, not as it is now, curst by transgression and covered with ruins, but as it was when it came fresh and untarnished from the CREATOR's hand. When, beholding its rising grandeurs, the morning stars sang together, and the sons of GOD shouted for joy!

It was not a wilderness, but a paradise, that was furnished originally for the residence of man. There flowed the river of salvation—there grew the tree of life. Its keepers were angels, and its guardian and its visitor was GOD.

A garden, peerless in beauty, innocent in delights, and spontaneous in fruits, unfolded its charms and presented its bounties to the guiltless pair. To dress this garden was their employment, not their toil. No canker corroded the flower, no thorn infested the ground. The fruit-tree supplied them with food—the river with water, and their innocence was their covering.

Such was the primeval situation of man—Nor to man alone was the Divine benignity confined; The herds also, pleased with their condition, cropped the herbage their CREATOR had provided for them, and the sportive flocks bleated joyfully from a thousand hills. Beneath the same shade the lion and the lamb lay down together, and there also the tyger fed and rested with the kid. The songsters of the grove chanted on every side their melodious anthems to the morning; and swarms of happy insects played in the noon-day beams, and sipped the honey from the flowers. All was life—all was innocence—all was bliss! As yet evil, neither natural nor moral, had entered into the system. No stain marred the beauty, or cloud veiled the lustre of the world.

Thus, originally, on every part of nature, was inscribed the CREATOR's goodness. This is his glory, a glory which the heavens at first displayed, and which the firmament of heaven shewed forth.

Changed as things are by the apostacy, a God merciful and kind, is still seen in all his works. The sun, bright emblem of Divinity, disseminates his beams; the clouds shed upon the

fields his showers; the breezes waft his fragrance; the seasons display his faithfulness, and the very earth itself is enriched and covered with his bounty. *His paths drop fatness, they drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks, the vallies also are covered with corn: they shout for joy, they also sing.*

What a glorious display of all that is benevolent and kind, do the works of nature afford. Mercy shines conspicuously in every herb, and plant, and flower of the field.—These all, and more than these; earth—heaven—the universe itself, with all its joys and lovelinesses, is but one vast expression of his benignity who created it. Who, though enthroned on high, and encircled by the praises of the blessed, hath respect unto the lowly: Who numbers, creature, thy hairs, and supplies thy wants—Thy wants, did I say? The young lions roar, and God heareth them—Yea, the cry of the young ravens come up before his throne.

Would time permit, we might infinitely extend this article. We might rise above the earth and survey those orbs which decorate the heavens, and seen, though at an awful distance, by the eye of man, embellish the throne of God. We might do more than this: for, shall we suppose that the boundaries of God's creation are fixed by the narrow ken of mortals? Shall we suppose that beings inhabiting his footstool; beings who sprung up *yesterday* from the dust of their mother earth, and who *to-morrow* shall return again into her bosom, by the help even of ar-

tificial tubes and glasses, can extend their view over all that Eternal wisdom hath contrived or Almighty power created? Reason, and more than reason, revelation condemns this absurd idea. Would time permit us, we might therefore, in the spirit of the inspired writers, range the immensity of space, where world rises above world, and system above system, till filled with profound astonishment, and descending again to our humble habitation, rendered still more humble by a comparison with other parts of the creation, we could say with David, *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?* Yet over all this stupendous empire, GOD reigns! Through every part of it, he dispenses numberless and perpetual blessings! And though *thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand* beings of different capacities and wants, are scattered abroad before him, not one of them is overlooked, forgotten or neglected. *The eyes of all wait upon the Lord, and he giveth them their meat in due season.*

But the works of nature, rich in mercy and boundless in extent as they are, furnish a partial and imperfect view only of Divine benignity.

In the gospel alone this attribute is exhibited at full length—and in the most commanding attitude. Here DIVINITY is seen promoting happiness not only, but expiating guilt, and weeping over misery also. Here we behold the happy and immortal GOD, stooping from his throne, and interposing in behalf of man, guilt-



ty, ungrateful and ruined man—unfolding a plan for his recovery, and even snatching from destruction, in a sovereign manner, a great multitude which cannot be numbered; who, being renovated in their natures, and cleansed from their pollutions, are destined to repeople heaven, and fill those original mansions made vacant there, by the first rebellion.

You will say perhaps that these displays of Divine benignity, which astonish and absorb the mind, when made the objects of its contemplation, are too august and dazzling to be considered as models for human imitation.

If you say this, it is not because you have contemplated GOD in creation or redemption, too much; but too little. In the latter particularly, he has even accommodated himself to our weakness, that he might be to us in all things a pattern of righteousness.

Approach then and contemplate this perfect character: *GOD manifest in the flesh!*

Having disrobed himself of the splendors of the DEITY, and descended from the mansions of immortality; whither we behold him, the babe at Bethlehem, the man of sorrows at Gethsemine, or the suffering victim of the wrath of GOD on Calvary, his conduct alike enforces on us, a life of practical benevolence. Indeed, all his intervening toils, instructions and labors, bear a similar complexion, and speak a similar language. It is said concerning him, that *he went about doing good.*

The darkness and distress which then prevailed on every side, courted his presence and demanded, in different directions, a portion of

his time. Accordingly, when he had healed the sick, cast out devils, and preached the doctrine of his kingdom, in one city, he departed to another; where he repeated the same acts of benevolence, and published the same doctrines of life. And, though the principal cities afforded a larger theatre for his usefulness, and claimed a larger portion of his munificence, he did not overlook the little village, and condescended to honor and bless even the very cottage by his presence.

Sometimes we behold him in the capital, sometimes in its suburbs, and sometimes travelling through the country round about. He refused no hardships, he shrunk back from no fatigue which might promote the happiness or alleviate the miseries of the forlorn and wretched beings he came to save. His progress through life, was marked with expressions of mercy, and the very paths he trod, were thronged by hapless sufferers, asking instruction, or applying for healing from their maladies. In his retinue, you might behold, not the glittering courtier, not the fawning sycophant, but the blind, the deaf and the diseased, soliciting mercy or returning thanks for mercy received; Yes; there you might see the lame man leap as the hart, and hear the tongue of the dumb man sing!

As this illustrious Personage approached that dreadful catastrophe which terminated his ministry, the visible splendor of his benevolence increased.

On the last sad evening before he was offered up, more affected with the wants of his dis-

giples than with the miseries which awaited himself, he spent his time in fortifying their minds, and in supplicating his Father in their behalf. Just parting from them, and moved with the tenderest affection towards them, he says, *Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in GOD, believe also in me.* And having said this, looking to heaven, he adds, *And now holy Father, I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, keep through thine own name those which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are.*

Immediately after this he went forth to Gethsemane, and from thence to Calvary; where, fastened to a cross, contending with the terrors of avenging justice, and sinking under the agonies of dissolving nature, he remembers his friends not only, but casting an eye down on his malignant and relentless enemies also, pities them, and presenting in their behalf, before the throne of the Eternal, his blood, his wounds, and his cross, cries out, from the bottom of a heart overflowing with good-will, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!*.....And does this illustrious example furnish no motive to the practice of benevolence?

Though it would not be the duty of all to travel from place to place, as JESUS did; and though it would be in the power of none to controul the diseases which he controuled, or to distribute the bounties which he distributed; yet ought not you, and all men, to be followers of him as dear children?

Each of you is able to do something to glorify God, to alleviate the miseries, and pro-

note the happiness of man. Let then, at all times, and on all occasions, your conversation be such as becometh godliness, and your example *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.*

Can any employment be so agreeable to a benevolent mind, or so congenial to the spirit of Christianity, as that of doing good? Go then, sympathize with the mourner; open the hand of charity to the needy, and recommend to Jesus, those who, weary and heavy laden, wander in the deserts of Hermon, and pour out their complaints upon the hill of Mizar.

Thus Job spent the season of his prosperity. *I was eyes, says he, to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not, I searched out. The stranger did not lodge in the streets, but I opened my door unto the traveller.*

To the Character of DEITY, add

#### THE PRECEPTS OF HIS LAW.

*If thy brother be waxen poor, (these hearer, are the words of him who created both thee and thy brother) If thy brother be waxen poor, then shalt thou relieve him, that he may live. Thou shalt not barden thine heart, nor shut thine hand against thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth. The poor shall never cease out of the land, therefore I COMMAND thee, saith the Lord Almighty.*

To the precepts of the law, add

THE PROMISES AND BENEDICTIONS OF THE  
GOSPEL.

*He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. He that hath a bountiful eye, blessed is he. If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light arise in obscurity. Whosoever shall give unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward. He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will HE pay him again. My GOD! what a powerful incentive to charity.*

JESUS CHRIST becomes the representative of the poor; takes upon himself their infirmities, and pledges his veracity to repay all who minister to their wants. It is not the poor therefore, but JESUS CHRIST, whom we deny when we withhold our charities.

Were JESUS CHRIST to descend from the realms of the blessed, accompanied by cherubim—seraphim—angels, mighty in strength and terrible in majesty—by thrones, by dominions, by principalities and powers, soliciting a moiety of our possessions, and at the same time pointing to the heavens and opening the treasures of immortality to our view—should he promise to repay there, with infinite increase, our kindness, who of us would shut his hand or harden his heart against his Saviour? No one: a universal emulation would prevail among us; even avarice would unlock its horded treasures, and oppression bring its illgotten gain, and lay it at the feet of JESUS.

But the Saviour chooses not this method.—Gifts, thus extorted, would be doubtful evidences

of our love. The splendor of such an appearance might corrupt the motives of friends, and dazzle even enemies into momentary liberality. That he may prove your charity and test the sincerity of your love, therefore, forlorn and wretched, emaciated with sickness, palsied with age, and covered with rags....he comes forth from cottages and cabins, in the person of the poor, and stretching forth his trembling hand to you, his disciples, asks alms. Christians! deny him if you can. You cannot deny him. But to those who can, I add, that the days of his humiliation, even in this sense, will not last for ever.

Presently, he, who now friendless and wretched, to the eye of our mercy, unfolds his miseries, will appear in a different form—appear, having laid aside the rags of beggary, and put on robes of royalty, in tremendous majesty, and send forth judgment unto victory.

Then the poor, in whose behalf he now asks charity, congregated before his throne, shall stand in judgment together with their benefactors. To whom, in the presence of God, of angels and of men, he shall say, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* And when the righteous shall ask, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and ministered unto thee? Pointing to the poor, who stand before him, he shall answer, *In as much as ye have*

*done it unto one of the least of these my disciples, ye have done it unto me.* Infinite condescension ! And can the callous heart of man be insensible to such a moving, persuasive and glorious motive ? ALMIGHTY GOD ! kindle in our bosoms genuine pity for the poor now, that on that august day, we may receive thine eternal benediction.

From the promises and benedictions of the gospel, turn your attention to

#### THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS.

The conduct of Job, memorable for his charities, has already been noticed. In addition to this, need I remind you of the widow of Zarepta ? who, having only a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruise, for herself and her son ; though in the midst of famine, divided, nobly divided, this, her last morsel, with the famished prophet. And need I also remind you how her liberality was rewarded ? For her barrel of meal did not waste, nor did her cruise of oil fail, till the LORD sent rain, and removed famine from the earth.

Need I remind you of the poor widow who cast two mites into the treasury ? singular magnanimity ! for it was all her living ! Or, of her who poured the box of ointment upon the feet of JESUS, and pouring it on them perfumed her own memory, and erected to her own praise, a monument more lasting than the pyramids of Egypt. For *these*, impaired by time, have crumbled down, and buried in their ruins the names and the achievements of those who founded them : But wherever the gospel is preached, or shall be preached, till the heavens be no

more, her act of kindness unto JESUS shall be published as a memorial of her.

Need I remind you of the conduct of Martha, who, again and again, received the Saviour into her house, and freely entertained him and all who accompanied him? Do you deem the conduct of Martha laudable, in opening her doors to the SON of David? Do you feel as though you would emulate her hospitality had you an opportunity? And why have you not? True, your LORD in person needs not your kindnesses.—The days of his humiliation and poverty are ended, and the heavens have received him into glory. But the poor remain on the earth. These, if they be pious, are his friends; and he respects a kindness done unto them as done unto himself.

To mention no more instances from the scriptures, examples to our purpose are not wanting in the histories of primitive times. In the better days of Christianity, a noble emulation prevailed both among individuals and churches in their attention to the poor and to the sick. To minister to the latter, more than six hundred persons were employed by the Christians of Alexandria at one time, as appears from a law in the Theodosian code. When the plague ravaged Egypt, says Eusebius, "Many of our brethren neglecting their own healths have brought upon themselves the misfortunes and maladies of others. Who after having held in their arms the dying saints, after having closed their eyes, washed and adorned them, and carried them on their shoulders to their graves, have been glad themselves to receive the same kind offices from others imitating their zeal and their charity."



Was the kindness of primitive Christians to their sick great? Their bounty to the poor was no less so. "Among how many widows and orphans," says Chrysostom, "does this church distribute charity. The number on the catalogue is three thousand, not to mention extraordinary assistances given to people sick in hospitals, strangers, leprous persons, servants of the church, and many other persons, whose necessities oblige them to ask and who every day receive both food and raiment."

Nor were these expenses, enormous as they were, incurred with reluctance. On the contrary they exulted in their charities. Witness the conduct of the venerable man, representing the whole church at Rome, who, when Decius imperiously demanded of them their treasures, collecting the poor, the maimed, the blind and the sick, who received daily the means of subsistence from that church, and pointing to this group of wretched sufferers said, "These are our riches, these our revenue and treasure." Witness the conduct....but I forbear to add. Time would fail me to do justice to this article; and the instances already mentioned are enough and more than enough, to convince us that we are far behind the primitive saints in practical charity.

*Lastly—consider the sensible pleasure which accompanies, or which may result from ACTS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.*

Virtue carries with it its own reward: and the felicities which accompany a holy, operative love, are known to all who cherish it. A secret joy diffuses itself through that bosom which expands with sympathetic charity; which sighs for the relief of human misery. Never

does man feel a nobler elevation, or experience a more sublime or refined pleasure, than when wiping the falling tear from the cheek of sorrow, binding up the broken hearted, and bearing with godlike arm the cup of consolation to the sons of woe.

But if there be so much pleasure in acts of charity now, what pleasure shall they not occasion to you, O believers! when, entering the world of spirits, and opening your eyes upon the family of the blessed, you shall see in that family some clothed in *white robes and having palms in their hands*, to whom you had once ministered upon a bed of sorrow? Will you then grudge your love to them, when you shall see how JESUS loved them?

Recognizing your departing spirits, remembering your former kindnesses, and bending from the thrones on which grace hath placed them, they shall descend to meet you; they shall become your convoys back to glory: When approaching the throne of your Redeemer, they shall say, in your behalf, these are the righteous, who softened our sorrows on the earth—who closed our dying eyes; and then, receiving to their embrace, our hapless offspring, in their own bosoms nurtured them for thee. This will be indeed, Christians, a moment of religious extacy! A moment, did I say? An eternity---which, like the duration of GOD, will never pass away!—I might here add, that as charity prepares for the departing spirit the most refined and lasting joy, so it secures to the mouldering body the most enviable honors.

How sweetly must they sleep whose memories are embalmed in the widow's bosom, and whose graves are bedewed by the orphan's tears. *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* Happy the man whose funeral honors consist in the sighs and tears of the poor whom he has relieved, the vicious whom he has reclaimed, and the disconsolate whom he has comforted with the promises of Jesus.—Let these be the monuments of my fame—Let these, standing by mine urn, and pointing to mine ashes, tell the passing traveler, There lies the man, who, when I was hungry, fed me; when I was naked clothed me; and when I wandered from virtue, pointed my erring feet in the homeward way.

But I must give no further scope unto my feelings. The subject expands—and expands itself before me. I pause therefore...not because other motives to charity are wanting, but because I am confident, that if these are not effectual, none which I can urge will be so.

Do you ask, why we have even so far pressed this duty? Why?—on account of its importance. What might not be done, were mankind disposed to co-operate for the relief of human misery? Were half the pains taken...were half the treasures expended in feeding the hungry, in clothing the naked, and in relieving the distressed, which are now expended in raising armies and equipping fleets for the increase of misery, the extension of wretchedness, and the destruction of man; how different would the face of things appear? The reason why society is so cold and lifeless, not to say so sanguinary and malignant, is that

D

so few possess the charity of the gospel---and those few in so feeble and imperfect a degree. Selfishness is the bane of human happiness. And shall Christians---Christians, who worship that G<sup>OD</sup> who gave his Son ; that J<sup>ESUS</sup> who gave himself, while they were yet enemies, to die for them, be chargeable with this sordid vice ? My brethren, let the liberality of this evening free you from this scandal, and wipe away from this assembly so shameful a reproach.

That there are in this city a great number of suffering and friendless poor, who have been during this inclement winter, and who still are supported by charity, is known to you all. I recall my words---Surrounded with plenty and living in affluence and splendor, many of you do not know this. It is however a fact---and a fact which your physicians and ministers, conversant by their profession with places of affliction, will unanimously attest.

Would you accompany me, I could conduct you within this city and its suburbs, to scenes of poverty and wretchedness, the sight of which only would chill your blood.---Yes, I could show you in kitchens, cold and damp, or in half covered cottages, into which the snow descends, and through which howls the wintry blast, large families, destitute of fuel; destitute of food ; and almost destitute of clothes and covering.---There too, I could show you a father, a mother, or a child, languishing and dying, with a thousand circumstances to aggravate, and scarcely one, Great God ! unless it be thy sovereignty, to mitigate their sorrows !

Among these poor and pitiable families, I could show you some, who once were affluent and honorable. But adversity pursued and overtook them. Loss succeeded to loss---misfortune followed misfortune, till from the abundance of princely life they are reduced to beggary.

You will say that these poor are provided for by law. But do you know what that provision is? How inadequate, how difficult to be obtained, and how often interrupted in its course?

The poor-masters, perhaps, do all they can. Their means are comparatively small, and their influence necessarily circumscribed. And can any man in his senses suppose that a family, where the parent or parents are sick, and thus cut off from every mean of supplying their own wants---I say, can any man in his senses suppose, that a family thus situated, and having no other resource, can possibly subsist upon the scanty pittance customarily allowed to the poor? My God! it would not even buy fuel to warm and a taper to light the cabin where they languish; and where, without your charity, they must die!—How then do they subsist?—How?—they converse with sorrow, with sighs, and with tears---they suffer from hunger, from nakedness, from cold; under these complicated miseries they fall sick. By sickness their miseries are encreased, and after lingering a few days they die, unless a charitable neighbor pities and interposes.

Notwithstanding the legal provision for the poor on which you rely, I have myself seen even females, and not those wretched outcasts

from society on whose miseries humanity itself will scarcely deign to look—but the mother of a little family, forsaken, friendless, emaciated with sickness, lying upon a bed of straw, and even expiring without a hand to minister to her last wants, or even to close her dying eyes!

Sickness and death bring sorrow, unutterable sorrow, where they enter. Yes; my heart still bleeding (*a*) with the wounds which a righteous God hath lately inflicted on it, attests this melancholy truth. But if these sorrows are so poignant when endured in the midst of plenty, and surrounded by affectionate and sympathizing friends, vieing with each other in alleviating the sufferer's pains, and solacing the mourner's woe, Great God! what excess of bitterness must they not drink from the cup of thy chastisements, who languish and expire, or who see their friends languish and expire on a bed of want, and soliciting, by expressive sighs and groans, relief from an unpitiful world, in vain!

Imagine such a situation, and you may form some idea of the misery for the relief of which we plead. I say imagine such a situation: and such a situation is not imaginary, it has existed; it exists now, and it will exist hereafter, unless measures more effectual are adopted to succor and relieve our poor.

Think not that this is fancy. Whoever of you think so, follow me and I will conduct you to the place where all that I have said, or shall say, exists in real life. Yes, I will conduct you to

---

(*a*) Mrs. NORT, the consort of the Author, departed this life on Saturday morning, and was interred on Sabbath evening, one week preceding the delivery of this discourse.

the dismal habitation, and you shall ask the daughter of sorrow, who dwells there, why her bosom throbs with sighs, and why her eyes are suffused with tears? And she will tell you, that her name is *widow*, that her only son languishes unprovided for, and that her hapless daughters have no bread.

Once she was cheerful: once she had a partner, to whom she imparted her sorrows and with whom she reciprocated her joys. But her *lover and her friend have been put far from her, and her acquaintance into utter darkness*. Again her domestic circle is invaded. The son of her hopes is closing his eyes in death: in addition to this, poverty, pinching poverty, oppresses her, and the cries of her famished orphans—cries which a helpless mother cannot relieve, pierce her heart—“Therefore is her countenance sad, and therefore are her eyes red with weeping.”

Bereaved, recently, of the dear companion of my youth, surrounded by lisping infancy, (*b*) which needs and will long need a mother's fostering care, still affected by those mournful scenes which these sad (*c*) emblems revive before me, I can with peculiar sensibility plead the widow's and the orphan's cause. And can you whose generous hearts spontaneously overflow with sympathy to him who now addresses you, be insensible to the wants, and sighs, and sorrows of those in whose behalf he pleads? No; you cannot. I feel a confidence that *you will* contribute, cheerfully and liberally, to relieve them.

(*b*) Mrs. NOTT left behind her four little Children, the oldest six years, and the youngest only three months old.

(*c*) Alluding to the mournful drapery hung around the pew of the Author, by the Ladies, in testimony of their respect for his deceased partner.

785815

Think not that liberal contributions will favor idleness or lead to beggary. We ask not alms for profuse or general distribution. We solicit a little only of that abundance which God has given you. And for what? To procure a staff for the old man—a bit of bread for the widow, and a nurse to tend the infant, to soften the pillow and to close the eyes of the forsaken and dying mother! These are the purposes for which we solicit your charity and to which, we pledge ourselves, it will be sacredly applied; I retract what I have said—you need not this pledge, for the partners of your bosoms will dispense it.

The members of this society, which is to be the depository of your bounty, spread as they are over every part of the city, have the poor immediately under their eye. In addition to this, their managers traverse its different wards, explore in person the habitations of the sick and the poor, and take the actual dimensions of their misery.

Thus situated, they can discriminate: they do discriminate. And though some few instances of unavoidable imposition may have occurred, I presume, generally, and I speak from what I have seen, that the relief they have bestowed has been timely and apportioned with discretion.

If we withhold our support from this association, to what one shall we give it? Could any have been founded on better principles, or directed to nobler ends? Sympathizing humanity, always amiable, appears still more so when invested with the charms of female loveliness. Invested with these charms, it is displayed in this society; and a more lovely or commanding OBJECT never presented itself before you. For what object could have been more lovely or commanding, in a city where



party reigns, and where the bands of social intercourse in one sex, are by political controversy almost sundered, than an extensive assemblage of disinterested females—an assemblage of mothers and daughters : of individuals of different habits and sentiments, both political and religious, uniting and harmoniously co-operating like a band of sisters, for the relief of human misery. Whose influence has been like the influence of the morning.—At whose approach the horrors of poverty vanish, and the countenance brightens which was overspread with sorrow. Whose kindness, the reviving sick acknowledge with gratitude, and on whose heads orphan infancy, delivered from wretchedness, and made happy by their bounty, heaps its blessings.

With what motives this association has been formed, God knows ; and he also knows, that if with proper ones, the members will not lose their reward.

Be this as it may, I rejoice at the rise and progress of an institution apparently so benevolent, so honorable to this city, and so conducive to the happiness of those who need our charity and our sympathy.—Yes, I rejoice, that when visiting friendless and bereaved families, when yearning with pity over their miseries, I can point them to a SOCIETY which spreads its arms to receive them, and from which they will receive prompt, if not adequate relief—I say *prompt*, for, by some strange embarrassment in the public funds allotted to the poor, too often the pittance intended to be bestowed, is delayed—and delayed—and delayed—till the sufferer dies, and needs not charity, unless it be to procure a shroud to wrap him in.

But the design of this Society is not merely the relief of misery, in the forms which have been already mentioned. They have in view particularly, the education of the rising generation. Numbers, during the past year, who would otherwise have been utterly neglected, have, through their munificence, been kept at school, where every attention has been paid both to their manners and their morals.

These are only the beginnings of their labors of love. They contemplate, and they ask your aid, to enable them, together with other objects, to erect a building, where poor and orphan female children, whose age and whose wants ought to recommend them to our sympathy, may be collected, instructed and nurtured for usefulness and piety, under their immediate care.

Some of you will say, perhaps, The wants of the poor are numerous and perpetual. Be it so: And is not this a reason why your charity should be liberal and perpetual also? Because there are many poor, will you leave them to languish and die? Because their wants are numerous and claim much, do you resolve to bestow little? Is this the resolution of the household of faith! Are these the feelings of hearts, softened by grace, and full of the hopes of immortality!

Ah! my brethren, complain not of the number of the poor, or of their wants. Know you not who it was that said, *The poor ye shall always have with you.* JESUS, Master, I thank thee for this promise, that in the persons of the poor I may testify my respect for thee!

The poor we have said, particularly the pious poor, are the family of *JESUS*. And this know, if he demands your charity for their support it is not because he needs it. The treasures of the universe are his own and at his disposal. He can supply their wants in a thousand ways. Let him but speak, *And the earth shall bring forth salvation, the mountains drop down new wine, and the hills flow with milk!*—I repeat it therefore, though he demands your charities, he needs them not—Why then does he demand them? Because he loves you. He knows it is better to give than to receive. He furnishes you therefore with treasures—then commands you to dispense those treasures among the miserable objects whom he places around you. And he does this that he may furnish you with an opportunity, practically, of resembling *HIM*, who in the dispensation of boundless riches, *is good and does good, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.*

The opportunity, however, of acting thus nobly with respect to the relief of misery, is very short. Can you want evidence of this? The changes daily taking place around you furnish it. One who a few days since dispensed these charities is now no more. (*d*) The cold earth lies upon her bosom! The darkness of the grave hides from her eye the miseries of the poor, and its silence shuts from her ear the widow's and the orphan's sigh! In behalf of these her last services were performed. Her

---

(*d*) Mrs. NOTT had been a Manager of the *Society for the relief of distressed Women and Children* from the time of its being constituted; in which capacity she rendered to the distressed her feeble services during her last illness, and resigned her trust by death.

E

stewardship is now ended. She has gone to God, to render to him an account of it; and her bereaved children need, and are receiving from others in kindly reversion, the sympathy she bestowed.

Hearer—father—mother of a family, God only knows how soon this may be your lot! Mutable is the world! Misfortune may soon dissipate the riches you possess, death may suddenly cut off the life which you enjoy, and your children, left dependent orphans, may be fed from the charity which you now bestow.

And is this our situation? And can we, knowing it to be so, still be slothful? Presently, will thine hand, palsied by death, be incapable of bestowing alms—thine eye closed in darkness, of pitying misery—and will thy bosom soon, unfeeling as the clods that cover it, cease to palpitate at the tale of woe; and canst thou now shut up the bowels of thy mercy, or contribute with parsimonious exactness only, to the relief of those suffering objects which surround thee?—Hark!—From the heavens a voice cryeth, *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, because there is no work nor device in the grave whither thou goest.* It is the voice of JESUS, who adds, hearer, for thine encouragement, *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.* Blessed is that servant whom, when his LORD cometh, he shall find so doing....

Go then, ye collectors of the bounty of the evening, and receive our charities. Go and let us see who will give unto the poor—Pardon my mistake. I mean, who will lend unto the LORD, and in what abundance they will lend.

And I pledge myself—Again, what am I saying? GOD pledges himself, however much you may bestow, in faith, that he will repay you again *good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over*, even everlasting consolation will he repay into your bosoms. Almighty GOD! give us grace on this occasion to act worthy of the children of such a parent, and to thy name shall be the glory in CHRIST. *AMEN.*

## Appendix,

BY A FRIEND.

**M**R. SALLY NOTT, the amiable consort of the Rev. ELIPHALET NOTT, and daughter of the Rev. JOEL BENEDICT, of Plainfield, in Connecticut, was born at Lisbon, in said state, on the 29th of August, 1774 ; and died, after a lingering and doubtful illness, at Ballstown Springs, on the 9th, and was interred at Albany, on the 10th of March, 1804, aged twenty-nine years and six months.

Mrs. NOTT was rather small of stature—her complexion was fair, her countenance expressive, and enlivened by an eye uncommonly brilliant, penetrating, and significant.

Her genius was sprightly—her mind enriched by reading, and her taste refined by a happy education. In her conversation she was unassuming—in her manners, artless and unaffected.

In youth she was vivacious, and possessed a talent for satire ; but a talent completely concealed beneath the veil of discretion, in maturer years.

She was naturally open hearted ; seldom disguised either her feelings or her sentiments ; but on the contrary, discovered both with a candor, which, though it sometimes made her enemies, always endeared her to her friends.

Her domestic virtues were exemplary. Industry and economy were conspicuous in the care of a rising family, which care had been for years, previous to her death, committed, by her confiding partner, exclusively to herself. Filial respect marked her conduct to her parents—fraternal affection to her brethren and sisters, and conjugal love and maternal tenderness, happily blended in her character, were displayed in a life devoted to the interests of her husband and her offspring.

As a neighbor, she was peaceable and obliging—as a friend, candid, sincere and affectionate beyond measure. Her heart knew no guile; and her bosom, hallowed sanctuary, preserved inviolable its sacred trusts.

As a sufferer under long and repeated sicknesses, her firmness, fortitude, and patience have seldom been equalled. She submitted to the Divine rod with cheerful resignation, and was never once heard, under its chastising stroke, to utter a murmuring word. As a member of the church, and as a Christian, her conduct was such as *becometh godliness*, and her example adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour.

For more than a year before her death her friends had observed that she became less social and more contemplative. This probably resulted from a prevailing persuasion that she was to die in early life—a persuasion founded on the obvious impairs which her constitution had already suffered. At a very early period after her last illness she forewarned her friends of her approaching dissolution. Hopeful symptoms, however, beguiled almost every one but herself; among the most hopeful of which, was her wonted cheerfulness which accompanied her to the end. Notwithstanding this cheerfulness she almost daily declared to those around her that she should die; often caused the third part of the 39th Psalm, as paraphrased by Watts, to be read in her hearing, and often solicited her partner to mingle his prayers with hers before the throne of mercy, that she might be resigned and prepared for what she was fully persuaded would be the event. While thus imperceptibly wasting away, all her conversation was expressive of resignation, nor did she intimate, even to her friends, any solicitude respecting life.

With respect to her actual preparation for death, she always spoke with diffidence. The temper, however, which she manifested, the resignation which she discovered, and above all, the uniform and exclusive dependence which she appeared to place on JESUS, the sinner's and the sufferer's friend, furnished more hopeful evidence of the reality of her piety, than the most confident assertions or even the most ardent hopes could otherwise have furnished.

On the Saturday, of the week preceding her death, and at a time when the family were assembled, she observed as she had frequently done, that she must soon leave them. Being asked whether, if that should be the case, she were afraid to die?—She replied,—“No, I am not afraid to die.—I have not indeed that full assurance I could wish.—I am sensible, that I am a miserable sinner—I have no merit of my own to plead before God.—My only hope is built up on the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST.—I cast myself at his feet—I rely upon his mercy. Will he disappoint me? Will he let me perish? .....

After this, her decline was visible. On Tuesday preceding her death, she set out for Ballstown Springs, and reached them on Wednesday. She wished to be removed to them as the last expedient, though, as she repeatedly declared, she had no confidence in their efficacy. She endured the journey to the astonishment of all who were acquainted with her condition, and the operation of the waters, of which she drank sparingly, at first appeared favorable,

Before she left Albany, a partial delirium was observable—this increased, and on Friday evening, issued in an almost total loss of reason. In this situation she continued till about two o'clock on Saturday morning, when, nature being exhausted, she expired without a struggle and without a groan. On the same day, her remains were removed to Albany, and the day after were interred in the Presbyterian burying ground.—Melancholy sat upon the countenance of the concourse who attended this solemnity, and every mark of both public and private respect was paid unto her ashes.—Much loved shade!—farewell—Thou art absent, but not forgotten—the widow records thy kindness—the mourner thy sympathy, and the poor remember thy labors of love—A thousand friends, also, in their bosoms embalm thy memory, who, mingling their sorrows with the sorrows of thy family, and shedding tears of affection upon the cold sods which cover thee, sadly feel thine absence, and mourn thine untimely loss!—



BY THE PRINTER.

**T**HE organization of the Society for Distressed Women and Children, took place on the 10th of March, 1803. From this date to the 6th of Dec. of the same year, as appears by the report of the managers, fifty-five women, and seventy-nine children were relieved, and twenty-one children also schooled. Since which time, and previous to the 28th of March, 1804, twenty-one women and forty-one children have been added to the list of sufferers, who have received assistance, and been brought thus far comfortably through the severities of a long winter, as well as those numerous trials incident to poverty, and want of employment. Making in the whole, seventy-six women, and one hundred and twenty children relieved, and twenty-one children schooled.

Among all these, there is not one instance, where relief has been given to idle vagrants coming from abroad in pursuit of charity. But though no instance of this kind has occurred, there have been many in which the real poor of the city have been assisted and removed to their friends, or to the country; who, had it not been for such assistance, must have become or continued a public charge.

This simple and unadorned statement of facts is sufficient to prove the utility of this institution, to the cheerful giver, and to convince all how unfounded the opinion is, that it has allured beggars from other places, who are here living on the public charity. The subscribers therefore, amidst the blessings of Providence, will doubtless continue to support the institution while others, prompted by their example, may perhaps be induced to obey the injunction of their great Master,—*Go and do likewise.*

*T H E E N D .*



R.D. MAY 25 1917

