

“Nay, not so !” and the Blessed Virgin Mary, we can fancy, joined in the protest of Joseph. “ He who seeks thy hospitality sees thy good intention ; as for performance, no one knows better thy weaknesses and is readier to make large allowance. He will not make thy generous reception of Him a trap wherewith to catch thee unawares. He comes not to spy or to hurt, but to help. Thy Guest will help thee to be a kindly host.”

In vain. So Christ had to be born in a stable. The poorest home in Bethlehem were better.

Not thus Elizabeth received Him, with her exultant “ Whence is this to me ?” Not thus did the two sisters meet Him at their door when Martha had the felicity of busying herself about Him and Mary sat in rapturous contemplation at His feet. Zaccheus, perched in the branches of the sycamore, and doubtless the last person in the multitude to expect such distinction, saw our Blessed Saviour look towards him and heard Him say : “ Make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house.” And Zaccheus repulsed not nor denied the self-invited Guest.

For self-invited guests, when they are kings and we are lowly, should never be unwelcome. Their notice is a graceful act of kindness which it would be rude to rebuff, even out of timidity or nervousness. Christ must needs be a self-invited Guest. We should, none of us, ever dream of asking Him to visit us had He not first taught us that He wishes it so ; and how could He express His desire more plainly or more forcibly than in offering Himself to us in Holy Communion as our soul's nourishment ? To-day, perhaps, more than at any time since first He stepped down to this lowest of all levels in order to be close to us, does He clamor at our doors. His Church feels through all its length and breadth the rising note of appeal and yearning in His voice, the growing insistence of His sweet importuning as He knocks at the closed lattice of our heart. To all who labor and find it hard to serve Him He comes each day, where formerly He came haply only each week or each