

the souls of them who now see with infinite regret how their sharp refusal kept the Son of God from being born a Man in their own home. They did not know. They did not recognize under the simple request for charity, golden opportunity and unspeakable blessing.

Suppose some dweller in the little hamlet on that winter night knew who those two travelers were and met them thus :

"I cannot receive you. My house is in no condition to receive the great Guest who accompanies you."

"We have come to thy door," let us imagine Joseph replying, "guided by Him who is with us. He knows that thou triest thy best and that thou wilt not willingly offer Him mockery or insult. Therefore in love is this grace offered thee."

"No, no, no ; it is too great. I do my best, it may be. But I seem never to get anywhere. In spite of all I can do, my floors are not swept clean, the furniture is coated with dust, my table is poor, my rooms are narrow and stifling ; nothing here is fit for the great Presence. I should need a palace to entertain worthily Him whom you bring with you."

"But," rejoins Joseph, "even a palace of the Cæsars is not worthy of His Presence. If He were looking for worthiness He would not be down here out of His Heaven. So long as you do not bar Him out in hate, your poverty and failures are only so many additional reasons why He would abide with you. He longs to aid you and console you and encourage you."

But the householder faltered.

"I am afraid. I do not feel equal to the obligation which the reception of such a Guest would impose upon me. I should be forgetful and distracted and neglectful and forever running abroad ; do what I will, I shall be scatter-brained and heedless. To treat Him in such wise would be worse than not to receive Him."