

and folded him in his mantle. His father, resolved to carry matters to extremities, took up the clothes and purse and went away." He never spoke to his son again except as he met him on the street and cursed him.

Francis was now free to follow his vocation. Twenty-five years of age, absolutely surrendered to God, filled with the joy of a triumphant faith, standing just over the threshold of the thirteenth century, his keen vision perceived the sickness and need of his generation as clearly as the backward glancing historian perceives it to-day. It was dying of avarice, pride, selfishness and ignorance of God. The disease was desperate and demanded an heroic remedy. To use the world as not abusing it appeared to him an inadequate corrective. Nothing would suffice to effect a cure but absolute renunciation of the world. There rang in his ears Christ's precept to the Twelve, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat."

That this command was of temporary duration and intended for local application he probably did not know. Had he known, he might still have replied that the circumstances of his time rendered it obligatory again. What is important here, however, is that he set himself to literally fulfil it. He gave himself up with passionate devotion to be the spouse of Poverty, and in that capacity to preach the love of God to men. Money he absolutely refused to touch. He selected as his garb the dark grey tunic, which was the common dress of the poor peasants of the Apennines. Bare-footed and girded with cord, he earned his bread by com-

mon toil or, more frequently, begged it from door to door. Naturally dainty, the repulsive scraps he received in alms were at first nauseating to him. Nor was the coarse robe in which he shivered any more comforting to his sensitive spirit. Every item of his poor man's programme cost him pangs of self-crucifixion, for Francis was of that aesthetic temper which is "touched to fine issues." But the awful birth-throes by which he entered into spiritual life were not in vain. He chose the higher life with painful deliberation, but he followed it with unflinching fortitude, and every step he took proved to be the way to influence over the heart of his generation.

Whoever knows the human soul knows that there is a splendid capacity in it for self-sacrifice. Dissect it and you find engraven on its inmost shrine an image of the cross. Capable of diabolical selfishness, men are also capable when divinely roused of a divine self-emptying. Wherever the cross is lifted up it finds affinities in men by which to draw them to itself. We are not surprised therefore, as we look across the seven intervening centuries and focus our gaze on the splendid devotion of St. Francis, to see men and women yielding to his influence and teaching as to an Apostle of Christ. First the poor man grows into an order of poor men. Then an elect sister separates herself from society and gathers about her an order of poor ladies. Beyond that a third order rises of men and women who are in the world yet not of it, which spreads with such astonishing rapidity that the Bishops of Italy write a collective letter to the Emperor complaining that "everybody was a Tertiary."

Toronto.