

THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED
TO THEM.

Matt. XI. 5.

THE church was empty.—How lonely He must be, buried in the depths of His golden tabernacle, a solitary Captive in the flickering twilight of the sanctuary lamp !

Rich, yes, the church was very rich, with gildings and a profusion, though not an overloading of carvings, arches and capitals. But, that evening, what was all this wealth to the Divine Guest abandoned on the altar ? Riches do not pray,—nay, from these panels, carpets and elaborately carved pews which we instinctively felt were reserved for the rich—for Dives—something like a mocking voice seemed to rise saying to the humble Jesus of Galilee : “ Blessed are the rich.”

A sombre thought struck me : “ Why dost Thou remain here, my God, in the gloom of these vaults. Wherefore forget Thyself among the riches once cursed by Thee ? Saviour, hast Thou repented of the Crib ? Bethlehem was stern ; true, but the Christmas peals of of song were sweet compared to the icy silence and pompous indifference of this temple. Come away and console the mendicant in his hovel, the laborer in his hut ; come and visit those who cannot venture here through fear of this opulence.”

Some one was coming in—a poor man but not a beggar ; that was plain from his appearance. He knelt down at the back of the church—where the carpets stopped, leaving the flags bare—the spot for the poor. He looked at the altar, his lips moving in prayer gently, very gently, as if disclosing a secret. Then he leaned hand and elbow against a neighboring column. I approached him.

“ You are tired,” I said simply ; “ why don't you go into one of the pews ? ”

He saluted me with a look, seemed surprised, and then said in a low tone and with a half smile :

“ The pews ? Oh ! they're too grand for me.”

However, as I insisted, he rose but hesitated about speaking because we were in a church. I drew him aside