

mind as penitents on their way to some sort of devotion; and very sorry I was they could not be aghast at their own consciences without wearing so frightful an appearance.

It happened within a week that a house under repair, on the Lung Arno, fell down with the exception of the front wall, on the workmen, who had incautiously disturbed the foundation. I was on the opposite side of the river, ignorant of what had occasioned the noise and the dense cloud of dust, till the wind slowly wafted it away, and the mischief was clear before me. Four were buried in the ruins, and a fifth clung to the wall, with his feet upon the window-sill at the second story, whither he had leapt from the room at the moment of the crash. As soon as the panic would allow any one to act, a long ladder lying before the house, was raised, and the poor fellow slowly moved from his situation. As he reached the ground in safety, a loud bell in the city tolled once, then stopped, and tolled again, and I heard the crowd about me say, "Hark! there is the bell of the Misericordia! they will soon be here!" Those in the neighbourhood brought ladders of various sizes, and spades and pickaxes, to be in readiness. Presently across the bridge came those black penitents, as I had imagined them, hastening almost at a run, and bearing a litter on their shoulders. The crowd made way for them, and they climbed into the ruins at the back part of the house, with the spades and pickaxes. From the moment they came, not a word was spoken; all was hushed, even the sorrowful cries of relations, waited for the event. In a short time the brothers brought out one of the sufferers insensible and grievously bruised; they placed him in a litter, and bore him to the hospital. By that time a party of soldiers arrived, who kept the crowd back from the front wall, lest that also should fall; while the brothers regardless of the danger, still worked on, and indefatigable. I saw three of the buried workmen brought from the ruins and carried to the hospital; the fourth was killed, and they bore away his body on a bier.

After having witnessed his dauntless and persevering conduct on the part of the Brotherhood of Mercy. I was continually making inquiries about them. I was told it was a very ancient institution, first established in Florence; that the others were very numerous in all the Tuscan cities, and that their duty was to be always ready to succor any person in distress. "Are [they priests?]" "No, only a certain number of priests are permitted to join them." "Then is it not a religious establishment?" "Not at all; and their charity is so general, that they would render the same assistance to you, a foreigner and heretic, as to one of their Catholic citizens. They never inquire into creeds, it is enough that a fellow being stands in need of their exertions."

The next time their bell tolled I hurried from my lodging to attend them on their errand. They walked very fast, and not a word was spoken. At a sign from the chief, the litter from time to time was changed to different shoulders. I followed them to the further end of the city, on the south side of the Arno, and they stopped before a little chapel

where a poor woman lay on the steps with her leg broken. The litter, a covered one, was placed on the ground by her side; then, without a word, but with the utmost attention and gentleness, they placed her within it, and immediately it was raised again upon their shoulders. One of the brothers asked her some questions in a whisper, and she replied that she felt no pain, but was very faint; upon which the covering of the litter was pulled higher up, and as they bore her to the hospital, they stopped two or three times at the turnings of the streets, in order to dispose the covering so as to afford her as much air as possible, and at the same time to shelter her from the sun. Such quiet and unaffected benevolence, a tender regard for the ease and comfort of this poor woman, showed the brothers to me in another light, and I was rejoiced to see that their kindness was equal to their heroism.—They no longer appeared to me so uncouth; as I continued to walk near them, it struck me there was a very benignant expression in a pair of eyes seen through their sackcloth masks. I also observed, below their habits, that two of them wore black silk stockings. This rather surprised me; but I learnt that all ranks of persons are enrolled in the Misericordia—tradesmen, gentlemen, nobles, and the grand Duke himself.

Not to detain the reader by particularizing a variety of circumstances, under which both in Pisa and Florence, I have watched the prompt attendance of the brothers, I proceed to give you a short historical account of the institution. This has been done, and in the highest terms of praise, by the late Professor Pictet, in the "Bibliothèque Universelle" for 1822: and it appears he was the first traveller who considered them worthy of such notice.—Upon reference to several Italian works, and especially to that of Placido Landini, I am sorry to observe many inaccuracies in the professor's account. I shall therefore follow those writers who have derived their information directly from the archives of the establishment; adding to them what I have learnt through the kindness of several gentlemen, "Capi di Guardia" to the company.

Those who contend we excel our forefathers in humanity and charity will be surprised to hear that the Compagnia della Misericordia, the most conspicuous, even in the present day, for those virtues, has existed for nearly six hundred years within the walls of Florence. It was established in 1240; and its origin was extremely curious. At that period of the Republic, when the citizens were acquiring immense profits from the manufactures of woollen cloth, the country porters were numerous and usually took their stand round the church of the Baptistry near the Cathedral. In fact, for the most part, they live there; and during the intervals of work, they ate their meals and drank their wine or played at various games, either on the Piazzas, or in these sheds erected for their accommodation. One among them, Piero di Luca Borsi an old devout man, was highly scandalized at the cursing and swearing of his companions. Therefore, as their elder, he proposed that he who should hereafter take God's or the Virgin's name in vain, should be

mulcted to the amount of a *craiza*, (three farthings) and that the said *craiza* should be dropped through a small hole in a certain box, so that an end might be put to such vain and sinful conversation. To this the porters agreed, and the difficulty of conquering a bad habit caused the box to be well nigh filled. Piero then reminded them that, for the benefit of their souls, the contents of the box ought to be employed in acts of charity, and made the following proposal: "Let us," said he, "purchase with part of this money six litters, to serve for the six divisions of the city, and let us in turns attend with them. Thus we shall be in readiness to carry to their houses, or to the hospital, all those who may be taken with sudden illness, or who fall from a scaffolding, or otherwise be grievously injured in our streets, and stand in need of their fellow-creatures' assistance; and we will also carry to the churches the bodies of such as may fall down dead, or be slain, or be drowned; and let us agree that for each several journey of this sort, the porters shall receive a *guilo*, (six pence,) from the box." This not only met with approbation, but each individual took an oath to observe it. Their labors began, and they pursued them with so much diligence and charity, (says their chronicler,) that every man in the city greatly applauded these porters, sometimes offering them three *guili* as a present, for a single journey; but this the old man, Piero, would not allow, bidding them perform their duty cheerfully, and without bribes, and to wait for their farther reward in eternity.

Such was the commencement of the Misericordia, a society that has never relaxed in its zeal, through so many centuries, and under all the changes of government. Whatever enemy entered Florence, these brothers and their property were always respected. The French, their last invaders, did more,—they intrusted them with a set of keys to the city gates, that they might not be impeded in their labours; and Napoleon was preparing to establish a similar institution in Paris, when his own downfall put an end to the scheme.

ORIGINAL.

THE PAPAL SUPREMACY.

—The Catholic left unattempted what he full well knows to be unanswerable: that is, an article on papal supremacy, which the *Christian Sentinel* of August 5, tells us, appeared in his paper of April 8, but which we have never seen. In the absence therefore of this incomparable article, containing at last the grand desideratum of protestantism, its *ne plus ultra* argument against the pope's authority; we shall still continue to argue the point, as *adhuc sub judice*; and not without the hope too of proving it invincibly on the very grounds on which the *Sentinel* thinks he stands secure, namely: *the sure warrant of scripture, and the history of the primitive church.*

But first we would ask him; does he really mean to say that the Church, the Saviour's visible kingdom here on earth, should have no visible head