

## AN AMERICAN "PERSIS THE BELOVED."

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In the interesting list of friends and disciples at Rome, to whom the Apostle Paul sends Christian salutations in the last chapter of his Epistle to the Church in that city, occurs the name of one not mentioned elsewhere, yet highly distinguished here. It is "Persis the beloved, which labored much in the Lord," (R.V.)—a woman of such a character as to win affection in a remarkable degree, and at the same time an efficient worker in the Lord's vineyard. She who combined these features went to her reward ages ago, but her name remains imperishable on the sacred record, an example and a stimulus to all succeeding generations. Nor has it been without fruit. Again and again have been seen, in the various branches of the Church, goodly women, of whom all that knew them would be willing to use the terms which the Apostle applied to Persis. It is one of these to whom the present paper is devoted. And it is prepared with the more zeal and interest because the chiefest form of her service is one that has been very greatly and very widely misrepresented.

A striking instance of this misrepresentation is found in one of the well-known novels of the late Charles Dickens. That popular writer was a firm believer in the Christian religion, as appears from statements made in his last will and testament, and in his letters to his sons. But he had a singular method of showing it. In all his early fictions, wherever a minister of the Gospel is introduced, he turns out to be a self-seeking hypocrite, whose life constantly belies his professions. And not until almost the last of his books does it appear that the author had ever met a clergyman who lived as he preached, and was sincere and self-denying. In the tale entitled "Bleak House," we are introduced to the famous Mrs. Jellaby, who figures as one of the first philanthropists of the age, and at the same time is conspicuous for the neglect of every domestic duty. She is deeply interested in an African settlement called Borrioboola-Gha, and to this devotes all her time and strength, holding meetings, instituting branch aid societies, maintaining an extensive correspondence and issuing circulars by the thousand, while her own household is entirely overlooked and her husband and children are made wretched. The good woman does not see this, being entirely carried away by her sympathies with the human race. Nor does it occur to her that she is at all to blame, since she is not at all indolent, but indeed so overwhelmed with public business that she does not know which way to turn. The whole sketch is very lifelike and amusing; nor can any one deny the deft hand of him who drew it. But the question arises, How much of truth does it contain? Is it drawn from life? Does Mrs. Jellaby represent a class of real personages? No one wishes to assume the responsibility of a universal negative; but I must say that I have never met, in actual