

CHRISTIAN THRIFT.

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“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living Lord, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; *laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*”—1 Tim. vi. 17-19.

Among the various counsels and directions given by Paul to Timothy, for his guidance in the pastorate of the church at Ephesus,—comprising rules for his own conduct, and regulations respecting the worship, government and discipline of the church, the qualification of its ministers, and the character and duties of its members,—this special charge for the instruction of the wealthier portion of the Christian community occupies a deservedly conspicuous place. For, while it is an admonition confined in its terms to the one class of persons whom it addresses—“the rich in this world,”—who, in the Apostle’s time, and almost ever since, have been the minority in most Christian congregations,—it yet refers to dangers and duties, and to ruling principles which have a far wider than a class-application, which have a relation to, and affect man as man, whatever his circumstances may be, whatever his relative position or rank in the social scale.

It is not the “rich in this world” alone who are prone to be “high-minded,” and to trust in uncertain riches; the poor man may be as proud in spirit, as haughty and over-hearing in his own sphere, and as big with self-importance as his wealthy neighbor. The poor man may trust in, and value riches as highly as the millionaire. Neither riches nor poverty in themselves, however they may affect and modify the manners, create and determine character in any man. Self-knowledge, self-discipline, the cultivation of good and kindly feeling, with the fear and love of God, will give moral worth and beauty to rich and poor alike. The want of these qualities will leave man, at heart, a selfish ingrate; self-seeking, self-indulgent; regardless alike of the interest of his brother, and of the glory of his God; to be luxurious, proud and disdainful;

or to be servile, grovelling, and envious; just as external circumstances call into action, and furnish scope for the display of the one or the other family of vices.

The common features of humanity in their better and worse lineaments are the property of all, though the relative prominence given to these common features, differs in each individual in sympathy with all the differences in lot, in culture, and in temperament which distinguish one person from another all the world over.

We have all our weaknesses, our faults, our errors. We are all sinful; and foolish and hurtful lusts and passions are harboured or hidden in every human heart. Oppressive poverty, with its attendant privations and sorrows, leads to one kind of temptation, and snares, and evokes a corresponding kind of mistaken and evil surmise and purpose from the heart of the care-worn and toil-worn poor. And, on the other hand, abundant wealth and great possessions, with the gratifications they permit, and the distinction and the flattery which they bring, lead to another kind of temptation and snares, and call into action other evil passions; while they furnish a field for the root of all evil to grow up, in that humbler circumstances do not admit of.

So there is great need to “charge the rich that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God. * * That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; *laying up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*” And there is very much need to charge other than the rich in like terms, as we have seen; so that there lies in this text a faithful admoni-