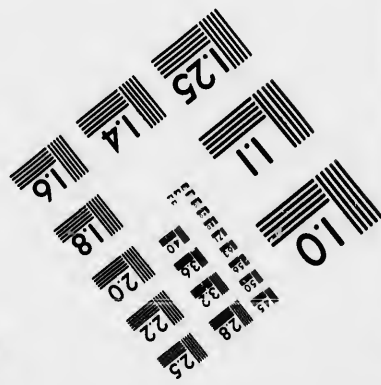
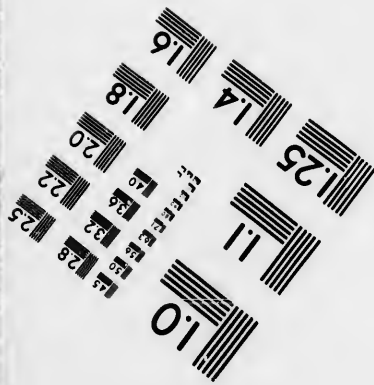
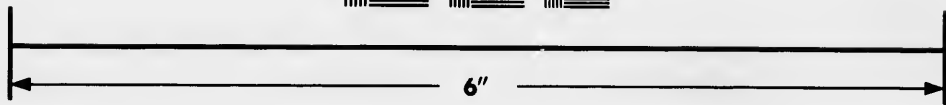
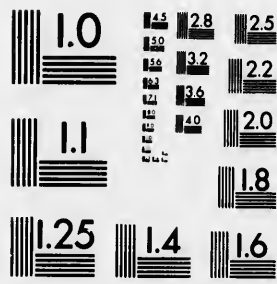


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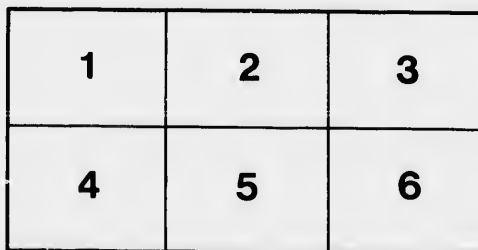
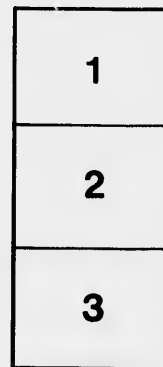
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A

CHARITY SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

Methodist Chapel,

HALIFAX, (NOVA-SCOTIA,)

ON THE EVENING OF

CHRISTMAS-DAY,

By JAMES PRIESTLEY.

Published by request, for the Benefit of the Poor.

I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

JESUS CHRIST.

A. H. HOLLAND, PRINTER.

1818.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IF any apology be judged necessary for troubling the public with this discourse, the following, I hope, will be deemed sufficient. The reasons that induce me to give it publicity, are, First—The solicitation of several friends, to whom I can scarcely deny any thing. Secondly,— An expectation that benefit will accrue to the poor, to whose relief the entire profits arising from the sale of it will be appropriated,—And, Thirdly, a hope that the spiritual welfare of some may be promoted.

If this pamphlet shall be found to contain nothing new, I beg permission to observe, that I consider this circumstance as its greatest excellency and recommendation. Novelty in religion, is to be regarded as dangerous. Every part of Christianity, like its great Author, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. In this sermon I make no pretensions to complete originality; on the contrary, much is borrowed: but in a plain discourse, which has no ornament except truth, and which allows of no place for discovery or invention, properly so called, I should consider it superfluous to trouble the printer, reader, or myself with marginal references, merely for the purpose of specifying the names of those authors from whom I have derived assistance. If the miseries of the indigent should be mitigated by this humble attempt, and if the spiritual interests of men should, in any degree, be advanced, my design will be answered, and my most sanguine expectations realized.

THE AUTHOR.

HALIFAX, DECEMBER, 1817.

Charity Sermon.

—♦—♦—♦—
PROVERBS XIX. 17.

He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord ; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

THE terms poverty and riches, like many others that occur in the Sacred Writings, are not absolute but relative : they are relative to the particular state and circumstances in which a person is placed ; so that what is riches to one will be poverty to another of a more elevated station ; on the contrary, what is poverty to one, will be riches to another in a meaner condition of life : and, indeed, in common language, when it is said that such a person is poor, or rich, we always mean that he is so, in relation to his station in the world. Even a superficial acquaintance with men and things, will convince us, that the same station, in this world cannot be the lot and condition of all. To suppose this would be to suppose an end of human society, which, according to present arrangements, cannot subsist without differences of characters and respective circumstances ; without superiority and inferiority among men.

Some have thought and spoken as if all men were equal ; and they have represented all distinctions of rank and fortune, as an attack on the just rights of the poor. That all are born equal, is very far from being the truth. All are indeed born weak and helpless, and dependent, even for food, on the assistance of others ; but it is certain, that some children are born with much more strength of body than others, and some with much more strength of mind ; and it is equally certain, that some are born rich and others poor, according to the will of God, who alone determines, whether any one shall make his first appearance in a palace or in a cottage.

Thus men are born *unequal* ; and the necessary consequence is, that through life, some will be stronger, some will be wiser, and some will be richer than others. No man, who believes what he reads in his bible, can doubt that

this was the intention of Providence; for from the very first God gave power to the husband over his wife; to the father over his children.

It cannot, however, be concealed, that the arrangements of Providence, place some men in more comfortable situations than others; for poverty and nakedness, cold and hunger, are very great evils; and we might reasonably wonder, that some of the children of God should enjoy a much larger portion of the good things of this world than others, if our short life on earth were all that we had to consider, which is the mistake of thousands.

Men are too apt to consider this life as a state of enjoyment, and not a state of trial; and finding themselves less happy than some of their neighbours, they endeavour to make all equal, and in doing so they make all miserable. Let us, therefore, consider this world as the Holy Scriptures represent it.

I do not know that we are ever taught to view this world as a state of happiness, though many blessings are bestowed upon us in our passage through it. This life is called a journey, a warfare, a pilgrimage; we are told that here we have no abiding place, but that *through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven*. Our business here is to prepare for heaven; and whatever be the state in which we are most likely to obtain the favour of God, and work out our salvation, that is the state in which a wise man would wish to be placed. Our gracious God has been pleased to order, that different men shall be tried different ways; and therefore has appointed different ranks among mankind. Why one man was born a king, and another a beggar, is known to God alone; if they serve him faithfully in their different stations, both will be accepted by him; and though we are not all equal in *this life*, we certainly are so when we go out of it, except in what is the consequence of our own bad or good conduct while in this world. *We brought nothing into the world with us, and it is certain we can carry nothing out of it.*

We are often mistaken, in thinking that they who are born in high stations are the happiest, even in this world:—many sleepless nights are spent by those who govern kingdoms. Whether we are clothed in purple and fare sumptuously every day, or whether we lie at the gate full of sores;—whether we sleep in a bed of down; or, like our blessed Lord, have not where to lay our heads; still a few more

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days and nights, must put an end to these distinctions.—The rich and the poor must alike rest in their graves, the rich and the poor must alike arise to judgment, the rich and the poor must alike be sentenced to everlasting happiness or misery.

If we consider the good of the whole community, even so far as it relates to this world only, it is easy to prove, that different ranks in society, contribute much to the happiness of mankind. There must be some to make laws for the protection of all, or the strong would oppress the weak. There must be some to defend the rest, or the country would be a prey to every lawless invader, and none could eat the fruit of his own industry, nor sit in safety under his own vine and figtree. There must be some rich, or those who meet with misfortunes could hope for no relief. There must be some persons at the head of affairs, to act as fathers and friends of those under their care, to direct the execution of the laws, to restrain vice, and protect innocence. If all do their duty all contribute to the welfare of each; all have reason to love each other, and to unite in praising God.

But considering this world as a state of trial, then the only point to be considered is, in what situation is a man most likely to work out his own salvation, and attain the final favour of God; and considering it in this light, which is the only true one, I believe it will be found that the rich are not to be envied, and that, generally, those are happiest, whom Providence has placed in an humbler station.

We are taught to pray that God would not lead us into temptations, which the rich and prosperous must withstand, if they will do their duty: many are the evils to which *they* are exposed, from which poverty secures those who cannot mix in scenes of riot and unlawful pleasures. And will not any man, who knows the value of eternal happiness, consider this as a blessing? Will he not thank God, that he was taught in the school of poverty to set his affections on things above?

Unsanctified riches expose a man to pride, luxury, arrogance, a foolish elation of heart, and too great a fondness of the present world. Upon the whole riches are instruments of good or evil, according to the disposition of the possessor; or, in the words of Eucrates, they are as an edged tool, which a hundred may get for one that knows how to use it. Mankind, for the most part, have a brain too weak to bear a high scale of elevation. Dazzled at once with the rays of

surrounding lustre, they can no longer support the sight.— How are men affected by a name, a title, added to their dignity; an acre of land to their estate, an augmentation of equipage, a little information added to their knowledge, a wing to their mansion, or an inch to their stature? These things are more than enough to give them high notions of their own consequence.

It is indeed true that extreme distress brings temptations of another kind; and if we were at liberty to chuse for ourselves, every wise man would say with *Agur*, *give me neither poverty nor riches, but food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.* But *He*, who best knows what is fit for us, has not left us the choice. He has placed us in different situations, and has commanded us to do all the duties of that state to which he has been pleased to call us; while he offers to all, his grace and assistance in this life, and an eternal fruition of glory and happiness in the next. Let no one, therefore repine at the order of providence, but let each consider the duties of his own station, and endeavour to perform them. While, in all circumstances of this mortal life, we pray that God would

Save us alike from foolish pride,
Or impious discontent,
At ought his wisdom has deny'd,
Or ought his goodness lent.

Every station in life has certain duties, which are more particularly connected with that station.—The poor and the rich have their duties to perform. I shall call your attention, this evening, to *some* of the duties which belong to *each* station. I grant, the duties of the poor are nowhere mentioned in the words of the text, and yet, on an occasion like the present, it is incumbent on me to mention them; and not to do so, would, in my opinion, be a culpable omission.

It is the duty of the poor to consider, that whatever opinion men may form of the advantages attendant on riches, and however they may despise poverty, it appears, from the gospel, that these things are not so regarded by Him, who made both the rich and the poor. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.* Yes! The blessed Jesus, before whom men and angels bow, hid himself from those that would have made him a king. We are told that he was born in a

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stable, and laid in a manger, that he was supposed to be the son of a carpenter ;—that he was so poor, that it was necessary for him to work a miracle in order to pay the accustomed tribute :—he describes his own situation in these remarkable words : *Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.* Such was the situation, in which the Lord of heaven and earth, was pleased to appear among men ; and by doing so he has exalted the humble, and made his example particularly useful to the poor. He did not appear in the character of a rich man, of a conqueror, of a statesman, or of a monarch ; but the poor man sees his Saviour perform all the duties of his own situation in life, and may learn from him humility, patience, and resignation. To him then let us look as the pattern of every virtue, while we consider the duties which belong to an humble station in this world, and let us learn to reverence that station in which the Lord of glory did not disdain to appear.

It is the duty of the poor to be perfectly contented, and never to murmur at the dispensations of Providence. If you are perfectly convinced of this great truth, that all events of this life are directed by an all-wise and good God, who orders them in a way that is best for you, and will at last make all things work together for your good, if you love God ; then, instead of murmuring, you should be ready to follow the example of your Saviour, and say, *Not my will, but thine be done.* Our Saviour uttered these words, at a time when he was despised and rejected of men ;—when he was afflicted and tormented ;—when in his agony ;—when he felt such anguish as was never inflicted on any other ;—when his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground.

You ought further to consider the providence of God.—Suppose now a voice from heaven were to assure you—that a little was best for you—I can easily anticipate your answer—You would answer, I will try to acquiesce. And cannot God speak by actions as well as by words ? And does not his providence tell you all this ?—By the subversion of your schemes ; by the disappointment of your hopes ; by the situation and circumstances in which you are placed. This consideration repressed the ferment of unsanctified passions in *David—I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* This calmed Holy *Job*, though the *Chaldeans*, the *Sabeans*, and the elements of nature had de-

prived him of all; he looks beyond them to one whose agency hushed all his passions—*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Realize this principle. See the providence of God determining the bounds of your habitation; the age in which you were to live; the stations you were to fill; the comforts you were to enjoy, and the trials you were to endure. And if you have not much of this world's goods—ask whence is it? Is it because your heavenly Father is not able to give you more?—No. *The silver and the gold are his. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.* Is it because he has no inclination to indulge you?—No. *He takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants.* It is therefore to be resolved into the wisdom and kindness of his administration. His wisdom tells him how much you can bear, and his kindness will not suffer him to give you more.

The poor should be reminded, that, though a state of poverty, in many respects, is distressing, yet, it is generally a safer state than that of opulency. Honey does not more powerfully attract bees, than riches generate temptations. Our Saviour, aware of this, gives us seasonable and salutary admonitions on this subject, in the New Testament.—*They that will be rich fall into temptations and a snare, and into many hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven?* And do you wish to make the way to heaven more difficult than it is, by desiring what God has denied you? And,

Beside, it is your duty to consider the necessities of nature. These are few, simple, and easily supplied. For we should distinguish between real and artificial wants. Civilization has made the latter more numerous than the former. It is to be feared that many are inspired with false maxims of living, and deem a thousand things indispensable, which their welfare does not require. The trial is frequently made; there are many who pass through life destitute of those things which are supposed to be requisite to our well-being: but do they not live as long, as happy, and as healthy as the heirs of abundance? Yea, do they not generally live longer, and healthier, and happier? Especially as they are free from those maladies which arise from indulgence, variety, repletion, ease, and the want of labour. Hence you will find that the rich, if wise, live as much as possible like the poor, confining themselves to the simplicity of na-

ture, and doing many things *voluntarily* which the lower classes are constrained to do from *necessity*.

That Being who well understands the human heart, and the nature of substantial enjoyment, positively declares, that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth. And in reference to happiness a man only has what he can use. If he possess a thousand pounds which he cannot use, it matters not as to the benefit he derives from it, whether it be in his coffer, or in the bowels of the earth. What is more than serviceable is superfluous and needless, and such a man is only rich in fancy.

When we see men dissatisfied, and all anxiety and exertion to amass an abundance of this *world's goods*, we are ready to imagine, that they contain a superlative excellency, and that happiness absolutely depends upon them. But real felicity is an *internal* thing. The happiness of man depends more upon the state of his own mind than upon any external circumstance; nay, more than upon all external things put together. Inordinate passions are the great disturbers of life; and, therefore, unless we possess a good conscience—a conscience purified from dead works, discontent will blast every enjoyment, and the highest prosperity will prove only disguised misery. A good man has a source of pleasure, independent of external events, and which shall survive the dissolution of the globe. If therefore, on the one hand, you meet with worldly prosperity, be not too much elated; it is but the sunshine of a day—the evening shades are beginning to spread, and will hide all glories from your view. On the other hand, if you are afflicted, remember, that time is short, and, therefore, your trouble cannot be of long continuance. This is not all—God will mix pleasures with your miseries. Man needs, at least, a degree of present gratification, and religion provides for it.—The master the good man serves, does not require him to live only in expectation; he has much in possession, though he has more in hope. There the clusters grow, but hither some of them are sent.

The hill of Zion yields

A thousand sacred sweets;

Before we reach the heavenly fields,

Or walk the golden streets.

It is incumbent on the poor to ask whether, by their own folly, they have brought any of their present personal wretchedness upon themselves. To suppose this is a supposition, which, in many cases, is illustrated by *facts*. It is as notorious as it is lamentable, that many die by the hand

of civil justice ; and acknowledge at the place of execution, that the commencement of their career, was a disregard to instruction and reproof. How many of those who die, what is called a *natural* death, might now have been living, had not their bones been filled with the sins of their youth ? How many, yet living, whose bodies are emaciated figures, exhibiting the appearance of decay and old age, might have been sound in constitution, and healthy, and strong, had they listened to that wisdom *which hath length of days in her right hand, as well as in her left riches and honour ?*

How many reduced and worn down by hard labour and scanty living, to which they had been unaccustomed ; who are pining away in want, or dragging on a miserable existence in prison ; might have been enjoying liberty and ease, had they followed that *godliness, which hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come ?*

The poor ought to be industrious—From the beginning God commanded man to labour. *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,* was the sentence passed on every son of Adam. Every man is commanded to employ the talents God has given him, and none is allowed to be idle.—And, indeed, the idle man in every view is both *foolish* and *criminal*. He lives not to God, the world, nor himself. Existence is a sacred trust ; but he who misemploys and squanders it away, thus becomes treacherous to its Author. Those powers which should be employed in the service of God, and the promotion of his glory, lie dormant. While all creation is full of life and activity, and nothing stands still in the universe, the indolent remain unemployed, forgetting that mankind are connected by various relations and mutual dependencies, and that the order of the world cannot be maintained without perpetual circulation of active duties. Such a man lives *not to himself* ; for though he imagines he leaves to others the drudgery of life and betakes himself to enjoyment and ease, yet, in fact, he has no true pleasure. While he is a blank in society, he is no less a torment to himself ; for he who knows not what it is to labour, knows not what it is to enjoy. Sloth shuts the door to all improvement ;—it equally enfeebles the bodily and mental powers ;—it undermines every virtue of the soul ;—it is like the slowly flowing putrid stream, which stagnates in the marsh—breeds venomous animals and poisonous plants, and infects with pestilential vapours the whole country round it. Every man should, therefore, say with his Saviour, *I must do the work of God*. But the poor are particular-

ly obliged to be industrious, lest distress should tempt them to dishonesty. This appears to me to be a point of great importance, and deserves to be considered with attention. When a man by idleness or vice, has reduced himself to such indigence, that he cannot procure the necessaries of life, he is sometimes tempted to perpetrate actions, on which, at other times, he would have trembled to think. For this reason it is very important that young persons should always be taught some means of procuring an honest maintenance. Some persons, for reasons best known to themselves, are ashamed to have it known, that in their younger days, with their own hands they had to earn their bread before they partook of it; especially if now they be elevated to places of distinction in the world. For a man to be born wealthy and honourable confers no merit, nor does it imply any; but for a man to become honourable by his own good conduct, and the blessing of God upon his endeavours, is certainly meritorious.

The poor man, who having done his utmost, to gain an honest livelihood, may cast his care on God, and place his helpless wife and children under the protection of him, who has said, *Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive; and let thy widow trust in me.* And as to himself, the same Being has declared, *To your old age I am he; and to hoar hairs will I carry; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry you and will deliver you.* Such a man though he be surrounded by children, looking up to him for bread when he has none to give them, and ready to sink under the last day's labour, and unequal to the next, may look up with confidence to the hour when all tears shall be wiped from his eyes: influenced by this hope, he bears with patience the burden laid upon him by a *mysterious Providence*, which he adores, and still looks forward with exultation to the revealed promises of his Creator, when he shall be greater than the greatest, and happier than the happiest of mankind.

When the poor and pious man dies, he has neither houses, nor lands, gold nor silver, to leave his children; but he leaves them an inheritance superior to these:—he leaves them a good example:—he leaves them with habits of industry:—he has made them the subjects of many fervent addresses to the Father of mercies. The children of such a parent should not fail to remember, that it is much more honourable to have it said, that their father was a man of prayer, than that he was a man of wealth. The poor man's child that goes into the world, and has innocence to protect

him;—industry to support him; and the blessing of God to attend him, will always do well. It is much better for a man to leave his children the subjects of many prayers, than to leave them in possession of riches, extensive influence, and pompous titles.

But as there are duties incumbent on the *poor*, so there are duties peculiar to the rich, and those in easy circumstances. Among the most important of all relative duties is that mentioned in the words of the text—**TO HAVE PITY ON THE POOR.**

I will not detain you this evening, till I inquire whether the law of nature enjoin this duty, or to what extent it enforces it: but I will exhibit to you a few plain arguments in its favour, derived from indisputable sources.

Paul, when writing to Timothy, says *Charge them that are rich in this world—that they do good and that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come.* And St. James observes, *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and be ye filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?*

Some are probably saying, that what they possess is their own, and therefore at their own disposal. But can any one be so ignorant as not to know, that he is not the *proprietor*, but only a *steward* of what he possesses.

Look around you, and say, do you behold any thing made for its own use only? Look up to the magnificent, regular order of the heavens, to the uniform arrangement and motions of the stars and planets. The sun rises, sets, and returns to his place, and there rising again, makes his round to the south, till at a fixed and certain point he turns back towards the north, without ever deviating from his track, without ever shortening or protracting his annual course, without ever refusing his usual light to the earth. The moon, though changeable in her aspect, never fails in her attendance on him. Nor, of all the shining hosts of heaven, is a single star ever seen to break the order, or wander from the station assigned him by providence. What is all this but to spread light and comfort more widely in their course? Behold again, the alternate vicissitudes of day and night; the charming, regular, and continual succession of the seasons, that enrich and diversify the year. Behold the multiplicity of flowers, plants, and trees, that adorn the earth, producing not only ne-

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cessaries but delicacies for man. Warmed by the genial rays of the sun, the earth renews its annual crops for your nourishment. The mountains rise above the valleys and receive the dews of heaven in great abundance, in order to collect and disperse them on the inferior plains. The ocean receives the tributary rivers from every country, to return them again in refreshing vapours, and recruit the fountains that support its greatness.

Carry your views, in the same manner, through the tribes of vegetable and animal life, and you will find the same order and connexion. Ask the beasts, and they will instruct thee; ask the birds, and they will teach thee; speak to the earth, and it will answer thee. In a word, all creatures contribute to the general happiness, and obey the will of the Almighty, while the sordid miser alone counteracts it.

Above all, attend to the steps of the blessed Jesus:—consider his descent on earth;—his cloathing himself in our flesh;—his fasting in the wilderness;—his preaching;—his miracles;—his watchings;—his meekness under injuries;—his sufferings on the cross. Whether you take the whole of his portraiture, or only a single feature, you still behold a subject for admiration, and are lost in gratitude, love, and praise. And are you not to imitate his illustrious example? If you believe it to be your duty to do so, with what appetite can you daily sit down to your abundance, and behold famine in the abodes of your neighbours? In vain will be your prayers, in vain too your attention to the externals of religion, if you treat with indifference the miseries of the poor.

Allow me to recommend to you, who are in easy circumstances, to look forward to the severities of the weather, which may probably be realized before the termination of the present winter. Severities, which, in some degree, will penetrate into the glowing apartments of your comfortable abodes, and make warm luxury itself to shudder. How must these severities pour in, with all their desolation, on the defenceless heads of the poor, in their garrets which are deluged with rain, invaded by snow, and their cellars dropping with unwholesome damps? How must these shoot their bolts of ice through the very bones of the poor, scarcely defended by a spark of fire? Powerful indeed must the language of that man be whose description can equal the picture itself. If instead of residing in your comfortable dwellings, you were to witness these scenes, the only danger then would be an excess of liberality beyond your circumstances; you then would feel a spirit of holy emulation, which should be first to give, and which should give most largely.

The charity of which I am speaking, consists not in speculative ideas of general benevolence, floating in the head, and leaving the heart untouched and cold; neither is it confined to that indolent good nature, which makes us rest satisfied with being free from inveterate malice, to our fellow creatures, without prompting us to

be of service to any. True charity is an active principle. It is not properly a single virtue ; but a disposition residing in the heart as a fountain ; whence all the virtues of benignity, candour, forbearance, generosity, compassion, and liberality flow, as so many native streams.

This charity is universal benevolence. It does not confine itself to particular sects or societies, but endeavours, as far as its influence extends, to promote general happiness. There can be no greater proof of an illiberal mind, than to hate others because they are of different colour, speak a different language, or do not join with us in the same creed. A fellow creature in distress, of whatever nation, of whatever colour, or of whatever religion he may be has a claim to your humanity : the contrary betrays a want of charity, the leading feature of Christ's sacred Gospel.

Let it be your ambition this evening, to exercise this virtue : God's blessing shall be upon the works of your hands and ye shall prosper. Then s' all ye be no strangers to the luxury which holy Job felt when he said, *When the ear heard me, it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me ; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him ; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ; and I caused the widows heart to sing for joy.*

It ought to be a sufficient obligation on us, to perform the duty of charity, to know that it is enjoined by Divine authority ; but it is still more satisfactory and agreeable, to be informed of the particular motives of it ; which when duly entertained in the heart, render the exercise of it, in all particulars, a most delightful employment. With respect to the chief of these motives, ample information is given us. The apostle says, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* The love of God to us, therefore, ought to be the foundation of that benevolence, which it is incumbent on us to extend towards our fellow creatures.

In thus manifesting our love towards our brethren, by relieving the oppressed, supporting the destitute, and comforting the afflicted, how ennobling is the reflection, that we are not only complying with the positive injunctions of our Creator, but imitating him *whose tender mercies are over all his works.*

Do not diminish your charity on account of what you have done in former times ; do not complain of our importunity ; do not say that the miseries of the poor have no end ; do not say, that the poor are never thankful when you relieve them : this is unfounded in fact, and if it were not, I know you too well to suppose, that the thanks of the poor induce you to give. You, my hearers, are inspired with nobler motives. And for liberality to the poor, many of you have no superiors in NOVA-SCOTIA. Do not say, that we are for ever begging for the poor, as some have kindly said : this surely is not spoken to our disgrace, but to our honour. Let, then, your former charities be considered as motives to your future char-

ities. Become models to yourselves ; follow your own example. Yea, and, if possible this evening, let your liberality exceed that which you have manifested upon any former occasion.

The scriptures consider works of benevolence to the poor, as done to the Judge of heaven and earth ; and are more copious and explicit upon this duty, than upon almost any other. The description which Christ has left us of the proceedings of the last day, establishes the obligation of bounty beyond controversy :—*When the Son of Man shall come in the clouds of heaven, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was hungry and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.---And inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* So true is it, that **HE THAT HATH PITY UPON THE POOR, LENDETH TO THE LORD.**

But how does it appear, *that what he giveth, the LORD WILL PAY HIM AGAIN ?* Or, in other words, have you any reason to believe, that what you give, from proper motives, to the needy, shall meet a blessed reward ? You have substantial reasons for such a belief. *For Whosoever shall give to drink a cup of cold water, unto one of these little ones, shall in no wise lose his reward.*

The charitable man has his reward in this life. And in the day of adversity shall be comforted by the approbation of his own conscience. It was partly this that rendered Job invincible in all his calamity. He had not made gold his hope, nor did he say to riches, *you are my confidence.* His unbounded wealth, he hoarded not like the miser, who neither shares it with others, nor enjoys it himself ; nor like the infamous profligats, squandered it on his passions and lusts ; but with a liberality, resembling that of God who gave it, scattered it in acts of benevolence, on all within the circle of his influence.

Appealing to his Maker, in the midst of adversity, he exclaims, in words nearly like the following :—viz.

I wept heretofore with him that was in affliction, and my soul had compassion on the poor. For what shall I do when God shall rise to judge ; and when he shall examine, what shall I answer him ? Did not he that made me make him also ?—If I have denied to the poor what they desired, and have made the eyes of the widow to wait ; if I have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof : if I have despised him

that was perishing for want of cloathing, and the poor man that had no covering: if his sides have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep: if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, even when I saw my superior in the gates, let my shoulder fall from its joints, and let my arm with its bones be broken.

The deed of charity shall survive the dissolution of the world — *it never faileth*. Whereas all the changes, variations, and progressions of nature, daily authenticate its mutability. Which of all the multifarious objects around us is not temporary and perishing? The heavens and the earth have their stated times and revolutions: the planetary worlds above, as well as our petty habitations beneath, perpetually shift their shapes and stations. What thing in life; what theory in science! what specimen of art or industry, is not in a state of constant vicissitude? The palaces of the great, no less than the cottages of the poor, daily moulder into dust: the proudest cities that ever gave dignity and effect to tyranny, have been successively depopulated and have disappeared, without leaving behind them a single vestige to tell the anxious traveller where they once were. Why rages the ocean from shore to shore, and threatens the boundaries of its ancient habitations? Why do the perturbed bowels of the earth so perpetually growl, and produce the most violent volcanoes and convulsions, but that the declension has already reached her vitals? Yet, a little while and the very mountains and hills, durable as they now appear, shall be uprooted, the channels of the deep exhausted, and the earth shook to her centre. A period hastens with the velocity of lightening, that shall efface the splendour of the firmament, and extinguish the glory of the sun. Then *the heavens shall pass away also with a noise*, and this petty, insignificant globe of ours, after wheeling a few rounds more, shall start from its orbit, and expire among expiring worlds. Thus perishable is nature, in all her parts and productions: but when all these have disappeared, liberality to the poor shall be remembered; and it shall be rewarded with a recompense exceeding the utmost bounds of calculation. Yes,

Come hither calculation with thy pen and I will shew thee, though usury be thy guide, that charity gives an interest that would beggar prodigality, and tire itself in the happiness of hoarding. Cheerfully lend, this evening, a mite to the poor, and give a loose to appetite for the return of your loan. Will a hundred fold appease you? With this, perhaps, you are dissatisfied. Take thousands, then, and thousands superadded, and if still you are dissatisfied, let numeration be exhausted in the greediness of your wish. Let the years of Methuselah be yours, and counting your whole business: charity is still offering, and makes her premium bear the character of immensity at last, and to secure you the possession she stamps on it her seal of life. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be not weary in well doing; for in due time you shall reap if you faint not.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, be honour and glory for ever and ever.

FINIS.

