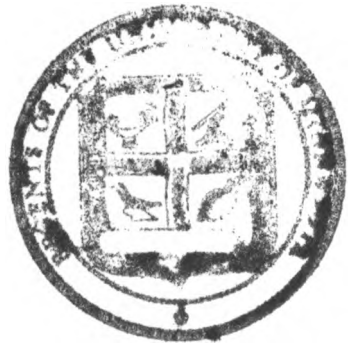

THE

VISITOR OF THE POOR;

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

THE BARON DE GERANDO,

BY

A LADY OF BOSTON.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION,

BY

JOSEPH TUCKERMAN.

BOSTON:
HILLIARD, GRAY, LITTLE, AND WILKINS.
1832.

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INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE been requested by the translator of this little book, to give her an Introduction, or Preface to it. I very readily accede to this wish of my friend; and I shall be glad, and grateful, if my recommendation of the work will exert any influence in attracting attention to it. I have no hope, indeed, of being useful in this cause, beyond a very small circle. But as I am known in the city in which I live, as a Minister of the Poor, and as I have been very favorably regarded here in other efforts I have made to lead public attention to the means of preventing and of remedying poverty and crime, I will trust that I may, without further apology, say to those who have read, and have kindly received my Reports, that the work which is here offered for public approbation is worthy of the interest and patronage which it solicits. Its author knew the poor, not merely as they are seen in the streets, nor merely as they are represented in books, or as they appear to the casual observer in Alms-Houses; but by personal, free, and long-continued intercourse with them in their habitations. He was therefore qualified to write of the poor, as others, who have little or no personal acquaintance with them, cannot. It will therefore be perceived, I think, that the details and the senti-

ments of Degerando are neither the fictions of a dreamer, nor the speculations of a theorist; that they bear upon their front the lines of a character, which truth only could have imparted to them. It is but a part of the original work which is here published. But this little book, I believe, contains all of the original which would be generally interesting to American readers. The translation, too, it may be observed, is very free; and this, it is confidently thought, will not be considered a fault. I am not willing to doubt whether the book will obtain a good sale, or whether it will be extensively read among us. The name of Degerando has been made familiar to many here by his treatise on Self-Education, and it has a high place in the respect and regard of our reading community. And, should this work be read, it can hardly fail to do something for the great object it proposes, — a more extended Christian union of the rich with the poor, with a view to a greater extension of human virtue and happiness.

The aim of this little volume is single and simple. But its object is one of the highest importance. Its design is to awaken, and give excitement to a sense of human relations, wherever sensibility on this great subject is sluggish and inactive; and wisely direct it, where it is either wasting its power in comparatively useless efforts, or is perhaps occasioning evil by the very means by which it intends, and hopes for good. For this end, it proposes to make the great classes of the rich and the poor, of the strong and the feeble, of the wise and the unwise, and of the virtuous and the vicious known to each other. It proposes to bring these classes together, not by con-

founding the distinctions between them, but by making the virtuous, and wise, and strong, and prospered feel, that by communicating of what they have received, and by acting as the instruments of God's goodness towards those from whom he has made them to differ, they are at once accomplishing the purposes for which he instituted the diversities which we see of human condition; and are most effectually promoting their own, by advancing the virtue and happiness of others. Its aim is to extend virtue, and through virtue to extend happiness, by the most simple and legitimate of all means, the exercise of virtue. It seeks the redemption of the victims of poverty and vice, by bringing those who have the means of redeeming them to a knowledge of the exposed and wretched condition of their fellow beings, and thus to the exertions which are demanded for their redemption. In this benevolent enterprise, it addresses the sympathies, not only of the rich, but of all who are not poor. It invites, and it solicits those into whose hands it may fall, and who have any means of alleviating human want and suffering, to be visitors of the poor. The physical and temporal relief of the poor is here sought, principally through an amelioration of their moral condition; and much is done to give distinctness to the proper objects of charitable efforts, and to the principles by which a wise charity should be directed, and regulated. Here are statements, the correctness of which, it is believed, will not be doubted, — for I am quite sure that they are not exaggerations of actual distress, or even of vice or virtue to be found among our own poor, — and which, if admitted to be true, can hardly

fail to call forth a very active sympathy with our similarly exposed, and suffering fellow beings. Here, too, are the reasonings of a mind which was as calm, as cautious, as discriminating and judicious, as it was zealous and philanthropic. And here are appeals, the most simple, and natural, and touching, which can be addressed to the human heart. I feel indeed no small degree of diffidence in uniting my name, and my voice, with those of this distinguished friend of humanity. But he would not forbid, and will not you allow me, reader, to join with him in the solicitation, if God have given you the means, not to wait for, but to seek, and if need be to make, opportunities of doing something to supply the pressing necessities of those, who cannot make this provision for themselves; something for the consolation of those distressed ones, who are often suffering without the solace of a human comforter; something for the succour of those tempted ones, whose greatest exposure is in a want of the means of living honestly, and of a friend to aid, to advise, to encourage, and to guide them; and something for those, who, having by want and discouragement been led into sin, have not yet lost all their dispositions to virtue, or all their convictions of duty; and who may therefore be brought back, and saved, by no means so effectually, as by the notice, and kind regard, and Christian offices, of the lovers of virtue. Let us extend our aid, as we may, to the poor, to the ignorant, to the fallen, and even to the debased, when that aid is most imperiously demanded, and they will believe in the reality of virtue, as no mere words would bring them to believe in it, when they have been made to feel its power,

by the very exercises of it, of which they have themselves been the objects. The truth is, — and it will be worse than in vain to overlook or disregard it, — that by nothing short of this sympathy with the poor and suffering, this care for them, and this kindness towards them, can we meet the claims of our religion upon us, as stewards of God, and believers in the gospel of his Son. And it is not less certain, that by nothing short of a recognition of our relation and duty to each other, as children of one Father, may we most effectually promote even the best immediate interests of society, as far as these interests are concerned either in the remedy, or the prevention, of poverty and crime.

But we must anticipate difficulties in this work, and objections to it. All, it may be said, have neither leisure for it, nor are qualified for its duties. If, then, the service should be extensively, and much more if it should generally be assumed, by those who have any thing to give to the poor, a far greater amount of want would be created, than would be relieved by it; and it might consequently minister even to the increase of depravity and crime. These are difficulties which demand serious consideration, for in part at least they have strong facts to support them. I will therefore begin with concessions, which will do something to prepare the way for the questions, 'Have you not, reader, sufficient leisure for this service? And, are you indeed not qualified, or might you not qualify yourself, for it?'

First, then, let us look at the plea, 'I have not leisure to be a visitor of the poor.' Is this true? I do not say that it is not; and I admit that the service has

no claim upon you, if you have no time which you can spare for it; for there can be no such thing as a conflict, or even an interference of duties. If it be your duty, in any hour of life, to be in one place, and engaged in one work, it cannot be your duty at the same time to be in another place, and at another work. This is a very important elementary principle, the establishment of which by every individual in his own mind would add immeasurably to the order, and virtue, and happiness of life. There may be, and often is, an interference, and even a strong conflict, of inclinations, and inducements, and immediate interests, which are sometimes most unhappily mistaken for a conflict of duties. But I grant to you, that if your time be actually filled by duties which forbid you to enter upon this service, you are not only right in declining it, but you would do wrong if you should engage in it. With this concession in view, may I ask your attention to the inquiries, 'How much of your time will be demanded, even for very considerable usefulness in this office?' And, 'have you not, in truth, any leisure which you might give to it?'

Again: It is freely admitted that you may not be qualified for this work, even if you shall have leisure for it. You may be too credulous, or too skeptical. You may not be sufficiently alive to a sense of the wants and sufferings of others, or you may have an excessive, or even a diseased sensibility, which you cannot control. You may be too impatient, irritable, and harsh in your judgments of others; or, too easy to be overcome by their appeals, even against your better judgment. But the most deficient in qualifications for this office are not always those, who,

when first called to it, feel most distrustful of their ability for its duties. Nay, it is not unfrequently the case, that they who are the most ready to engage in it, soon show themselves to be the least fitted for it. There is indeed wanted for this service, not only a heart to sympathize with the poor, the feeble, the sick, the widow and the orphan, the tempted and the vicious. To do important, and above all, to do permanent good to these classes of sufferers, we must distinctly understand in what this good consists, and what are the means by which it may most effectually be obtained. We must possess, and, if we have it not, we must acquire, a knowledge of the true condition, and character, of those for whom our offices of benevolence are required. We must therefore carry into the work a teachable mind, and a mind as discriminating and judicious, as it is kindly disposed; a mind quick to discern the indications both of good and evil, in the objects of its charity, and at once patient, fair, and firm. Nor is this all. We are instruments of the most important good to our suffering fellow creatures, when we aid them, as far as shall be possible, to obtain this good from resources within themselves; — by assisting them to understand the true causes of their sufferings, when these sufferings are the results of imprudence, or extravagance, or idleness, or intemperance, or of other moral causes which are within their own control; and by doing what we may to call forth, to direct, and to strengthen their capacities of self-support, of usefulness, and happiness. Are you not then, reader, or might you not, by a little practice, be qualified for this office? Do not hastily decide that

you are not. Even though you may once, or twice, or thrice have been deceived, and imposed upon, by those whom you would have relieved and blessed, be not discouraged. You may yourself have something, and even much, to be forgiven. Besides, experience in this, as in other circumstances of embarrassment and difficulty, will give you wisdom, if you are really desirous to obtain it. But if you have no disposition to be taught by what you may see, and hear, and do, in this intercourse, I do not advise you to be a visitor of the poor.

But a mere enumeration of the requisites for this office may discourage from it, rather than excite to it. Let us then take an example, which will at once throw light upon the question, of the time that will be required for a very benevolent and useful ministration in a family; and, by describing to a certain extent the service to be performed in it, will do something to assist any one in forming a judgment, whether he is qualified for this service. We will follow a visitor of the poor through his cares and interests for a single family. It is, indeed, a mere supposititious case, as respects the visitor, but real as respects the condition of the family. It is, too, as respects the family, an extreme case. What, then, are these cares? What are these exertions? How much time do they require? And, have not you the qualifications which are demanded for this service?

Here, then, are a father and mother, with six children between the ages of infancy and of sixteen years. The father is idle and intemperate, and has passed one term in the House of Correction. The

mother is a slattern, inefficient and passionate, and feels little concern for the moral well-being of her children. The eldest child is a son. He is an idler, and is on the verge of vagrancy and crime. The second child is a daughter, whose uncombed hair, and dirty skin, and filthy and tattered attire, are in keeping with an equally neglected mind and heart. She is rude, boisterous, and disobedient; now a beggar, and now a play-fellow of boys as ignorant, and as much without principle, as herself. Of the younger children, one is a truant, and has already begun to be a pilferer. Another is kept at home because he needs some article of clothing, or some book, without which he cannot go to school; and another is also from school, because his brothers are not there. Is it asked, what can be hoped for in respect to this family? What can be done in it? Or, where is the man who will attempt the hopeless task of its reformation, and salvation?

The charge of this family is undertaken by a visitor of the poor, who has himself a young family, and the charge of a business which ordinarily requires the attention of eight or nine hours a day. The little beggar, of whom I have spoken, goes to his house for food. He sees her, and inquires her name, and the residence of her parents; and on the same evening he visits this family. He is recognised by the beggar girl, who had informed her mother that a gentleman, at whose house she had been, had said that he would call and see her; and though he was not at the time expected, it is felt that he has a good reason to give for his appearance among them. The poor, disordered, and

dirty bed; the few chairs, either with broken backs, or with no backs; the table, with four or five unwashed plates upon it, and covered with the fragments of bread, and meat, and vegetables, the contents of the beggar's basket, which had apparently been emptied upon the board from the want of a dish to receive them; the lamp, from the want of a stand to support it, set into the neck of a bottle; the mother, in her person and her dress like the objects around her; now vociferating for silence among her lawless offspring, and now apologizing for the rudeness of one, and the impassioned cries of another; now complaining of her husband, from whom she obtains but little assistance, and now of her children, whom she thinks it impossible to govern; — here, it is acknowledged, is a scene, from which any other than a mind of more than ordinary benevolence would have turned away in utter discouragement, and completely self-justified in the determination to leave these unhappy beings to their recklessness, and their ruin. And would you, my kind reader, so have left them?

There is, however, a sympathy, a benevolence, which, even amidst all these difficulties would not have felt discouragement. We assume, too, that it was not for the satisfaction of an idle curiosity that this visitor had entered this family. He wished to learn the actual condition of those, of whom the little beggar was a representative, and whether something might not be done to recover this little girl from beggary and debasement; and having seen at least as much misery, and more vice than he had anticipated, he left them with his own heart still

more deeply interested than it had been in the inquiry, whether, from this wreck of humanity, one at least, the beggar girl, might not be rescued, and saved? Had his thought been extended to the inquiry, "How may I save this family?" he, also, might have been disheartened. But his purpose is more limited, better defined, and more obviously practicable. He carries home this purpose, and it engages much of his attention; but it checks him in no duty towards those who are about him there. He even finds time to relate what he has seen to his wife, and to engage her interest in the cause which now occupies his thoughts. For a few days, he often remembers this little beggar; and soon forms the resolution, if her parents will relinquish her to his disposal, that he will find a family in the country to whose care he may commit her; and thus place her in the way, if she shall be disposed to avail herself of it, of a life of industry, of moral security, and of usefulness. Having formed this purpose, his mind is relieved, and strengthened; and the first half hour which he can spare is appropriated to a second visit.

At the time of this second visit, the father of the family is at home. It required no sagacity to understand what were his habits, and character. I have said that he was intemperate; and the remark of his wife concerning him, that he did little or nothing for his family, was true. He is also irritable and passionate. The visitor soon intimates his wish to make some better provision for their eldest daughter. The father is offended at the interference, and imposes no restraint on the expression of

his resentment. But the purpose of the visitor had not been suddenly formed, and he is not disposed suddenly to relinquish it. It was the purpose of an act of most disinterested benevolence which had brought him there; of a benevolence, therefore, which will not soon be wearied, and will endure much, for the accomplishment of its objects. A pure benevolence, a spirit of Divine Love in the soul, when opposed by angry and unbridled passions, is, like oil, freely poured over the troubled ocean, when it is heaved into billows by a storm. Or, when it meets with silent sullenness, or unfeeling obduracy, it is like the rod with which Moses smote the rock, from which living waters gushed out to refresh, and give new life, to all who drank of them. The visitor meets the language of exasperated passion with the language of a deep and generous kindness. It was in vain to say to him, that "his friendship was not wanted;" that "his kind offices would be accepted when they should be asked for;" and, that "no man should take his child from him." He opposes calmness to the tumult which he had so innocently excited. He admits parental rights, and reasons of parental interests. He addresses himself to the deep affections of a parent's heart. And he has the reward, and happiness, of leaving the father soothed; convinced of the rectitude of his motives, and the kindness of his purpose; and, willing that he shall come again. He therefore goes again; and is a visitor in this family once, and sometimes twice in a week. He has sometimes visited them on Sunday. But he has not at any time passed more than half an hour, and sometimes not more than

fifteen or twenty minutes with them. The parents have been fruitful in expedients to thwart his generous design. But from time to time he plainly perceives that he has gained some new hold upon their confidence, their respect, and even upon their affections. How could it be otherwise? At little cost, he has provided some simple articles of clothing for the little girl in whose rescue he has felt so strong an interest. He has induced her to clean her skin, to comb her hair, and to give such assistance as she can to her mother. The room in which they live is brought into a better state of order, or rather into a state of less disorder, than was that in which he had at first found it. The little beggar girl has also been to his house two or three times a week for the broken food of the family, on the condition that she should go no where else for the purpose of begging. After an intercourse thus maintained for three months, all the obstacles which were in the way to his object have been overcome. This little girl is placed in a family in the country, where she will have an opportunity for some time to go to school; where she will be under a wise domestic discipline, and be made a blessing, instead of a curse, to those with whom in her future life she may be connected. Here, then, is his great compensation for his undiscouraged perseverance. He has, indeed, the gratification to know that he has done something for the general comfort and improvement of this family. But he has probably saved this little girl from a life of dissoluteness, and degradation, and misery, and premature death. It is not necessary, with equal minuteness of detail, to follow this visitor of the

poor through a year of his care for this family. Suffice it to say, that by continuing his visits sometimes once, and sometimes twice in a week, and now directing his interest and endeavours to one object, and now to another, he has made a sailor of the eldest boy, and has given him into the charge of a master, who will do what he may as well to form him to habits of virtue, as to make him a good seaman. He has persuaded the parents to let him send the truant and pilferer to the House of Reformation; and the two other boys, of an age to be at school, he has placed, and kept there. He has been permitted, also, to reason with the father of the evils of intemperance, and has persuaded him to read tracts, which he has given him, upon this subject. The result has not indeed been that this father is reclaimed from intemperance. But he sometimes abstains from ardent spirits for a week or two; and generally, when he uses them, drinks far less than he did before. And in consequence of drinking less, he is more disposed to work, and finds more work to do. He therefore makes a better provision for his family. His wife also has learned, that, by picking hair for an upholsterer, with the aid of her children, she may earn fifteen or eighteen cents a day. The children are happier, and more obedient. The room is cleaner, and their food is better. Here, indeed, is not a very high order of virtue. But is not the good which has been conferred on this family, quite worth what it has cost? Is it nothing, or rather, is it not very much, that there has not been in this family, as there otherwise would have been, a daily decline into deeper vice? I would ask you,

then, reader, if you have not as much leisure at your command, as was found by the visitor of this poor family? Or, is there any part of this service, which you are not qualified to perform? Do you not waste, — I will not ask if you do not misuse, — in every week, at least as much time, as is here asked for as high and excellent a charity, as can be exercised by man? Will you not, then, if you think that you can do no more, be the visitor, the friend, and if it may be, the saviour, of one family, or of one child, which, without a friend to interpose the offices of Christian kindness, will be exposed to the grossest vice, and the deepest wretchedness?

But there are hundreds of poor families, even in our small city, where few or none of the difficulties to which I have adverted are to be encountered. There are intemperate men, and intemperate women, who will oppose no direct resistance to your efforts to reclaim and save them. And, if you cannot reclaim them, unspeakably great are the blessings you may extend to their children. There are, too, poor families in which there is no intemperance. They may lack judgment, or physical strength, or both; and may not only, in consequence, be exposed to occasional and great want of the necessaries of life, but greatly unfitted for the discharge of parental duties. There are cases, also, of very virtuous wives and mothers, who have intemperate husbands, from whom they receive no aid in the moral charge of their families; and who need this, and would receive it, more gratefully than any other aid. There are aged men, and aged women, of great piety and worth, whose only earthly resource is in the charity

of others; and there are those, who, though not old, are equally infirm, and unable to provide for their own support. I know not, indeed, the intercourse which man may have with man, in which better lessons of wisdom are to be learned, than in free and affectionate communication with some of these families. Would you be taught "the art of Divine Contentment?" Or, would you be made more sensible of your blessings, and more grateful for them? Or, would you have a doubt resolved, whether religion and virtue are realities? Or would you be instructed how to use prosperity; or how to meet, to bear, and to improve under affliction? Go, and do the good which you may in one or more of these families. Be their friend, their adviser, their comforter; and relieve them, if so it must be, at the expense to yourself of some personal gratification. Nor can I fail to particularize the large class of widows, who often need assistance in the government of their children; in keeping them at school, and in providing places for them when they are at an age when they cannot go to school. I might, indeed, make a long specification of services, of great importance for those for whom they are to be performed, and which will require but little expense but of sympathy and time. Nor will a mind at once sympathizing and judicious be long ignorant of the most important services which are to be rendered to a poor family, nor of the means of doing them good. The first object, however, let it not be forgotten, is, to obtain their confidence, and, if possible, their affection. If you are qualified to be to them a teacher of the principles and duties of religion, hap-

py will it be both for them, and for yourself. But, if you are not, will it be a small good, if you can gradually bring cleanliness into a disordered and filthy family; if you can teach parents of the importance of a good parental example; if you can check the waywardness and disobedience of children, and encourage them to love one another, and to obey their parents; if you can keep children at school, who would otherwise have been idlers at home, and perhaps vagrants; if, by apprenticing a boy, you shall have rescued him from a prison; or, by placing a girl in a well ordered family, you shall have saved her from probable ruin? Again, then, I beseech you, before you shall decide that you are not qualified for any of these offices, fairly and faithfully to make trial of one, or more of them. If you shall be successful, you will need, and you will ask, no other encouragement. The reward, to him who gains it, is immense. It is better than silver or gold. It will make you wish to be immortal, if for no other reason, that you may be a minister of the goodness and mercy of God, as long as there shall be any among all his creatures, to whom the ministry of his mercy may be extended.

There are those, indeed, who shrink from the thought of the condition of the children of want and suffering. The office of a visitor of the poor would seem to them to be the office of a self-torturer. They have hardly an association with poverty, but of squalidness, and ignorance, and debasement, and vice. And all these, it is admitted, are to be found in the abodes of many of the poor. But should even these fellow beings be left in unpitied, and unmitigated misery? Who has made thee, thou who turnest with

revolting and disgust from this spectacle, — who has made thee to differ from these thy fellow mortals, and fellow immortals? And, what hast thou, which thou hast not received? And why did God bestow on thee thine abundance, but that, while he would win thee to the holy exercises of gratitude and love by the multitude of his blessings, he would also honor thee as an instrument of his compassion and goodness to the sufferers, whom he has enabled thee to relieve and bless by his bounty? Away, then, with this morbid sensibility; this false delicacy; and despair not to find a remedy of the evil, even in that which appears to thee would be its greatest aggravation, — a friendly connexion, and a familiar intercourse, with some poor and distressed family. Let this family be selected for you by another, if you know not how to select it for yourself. Go to it, that you may learn how you may be useful to it. Go, and carry with you a garment for a half-clad child, which its parent could not have provided for it; and gain for yourself an interest in the heart of this child, and avail yourself of this interest to strengthen in its heart the principles of piety and virtue. Go, and do what you wisely may to relieve the most pressing wants of this parent, when she knows not where to look for relief. Go to her when she shall be upon the bed of disease, and alleviate the distresses of sickness by your sympathy, your counsels, and consolations; and by supplying her with a few of the comforts with which you would yourself be surrounded, if you were on the bed of sickness. Go, and open your heart to a sensibility, at once of the weakness, and wants, and difficulties, and struggles of this family; of God's

goodnees to yourself; and of the unutterable happiness of relieving distress, and of calling forth in the heart a sentiment of true gratitude to God; and you will find that poverty, which, it may be, seemed to you like Shakspeare's "toad, ugly and venomous," may yet "wear a precious jewel in its head." You will find that you may learn from the poor quite as much as you can teach them; and may receive, through them, as many, and as important benefits, as you can confer upon them.

But the difficulty of bringing about a freer intercourse between the educated and the uneducated, the rich and the poor, lies far deeper in the soul. It is, in truth, no other than a prevailing very defective sense of the true nature of human relations, and of the infinite value of the higher principles and capacities of our common nature. Nor is even this all. We do not estimate, and therefore do not feel aright, the worth of our common nature, and are not prepared to feel the strong interests which are connected with a Christian sense of our relation to the poor, the ignorant, the suffering, and even the notoriously vicious of our fellow creatures, principally, because we satisfy ourselves with so erroneous, so poor and unjust a sense of the true character of *our own nature*. Let me say too, that we are made unjust in our estimation of our own nature, alike by the proud and vain, and by the mean conceptions, which we form and indulge of it; and I know not which of these has exerted the greatest influence, in separating man from his fellow man. "A man," said Epictetus, "who is as sensible as he should be that we are all descended from God, and that he is the Father of

gods and men, would never think merely of himself." This is one of many sentiments of this great heathen moralist, which remind us of the remark of Montesquieu, that if Christianity had not been brought to the world, the dissolution of the sect of the Stoics would have been the greatest calamity which has ever been sustained by our race. But Christianity gives a prominence to this great sentiment, and it connects and surrounds it with associations, which diffuse over it a brighter light, and give to it an infinitely higher value, than it could have derived from the united wisdom of heathen antiquity. Christianity not only reveals to us the infinite One, the great Supreme, as the Father alike of all men; it not only instructs all whom it addresses, in looking over, and as far as we may, in looking into, and through the mighty universe, to say and to feel, "our Father made it all"; it not only says to each individual, and to all the race, "all ye are brethren," and requires each one to cherish towards others a brother's interest, and sympathy, and affection; but it requires us also, when we pray, to carry with us these sympathies and affections to the throne of infinite mercy and love; and there to strengthen, and hallow the feeling of our connexion with our fellow men, through our common relation to God, by addressing him as, not *my*, but "Our Father who art in heaven." Who, indeed, can feel that he is a child of God, — that he has an immortal nature, — that in his intellectual and moral powers, and in his capacity of eternal progress, he has also the capacity of an eternal advancement in likeness to God, and therefore in all which can for ever exalt his nature, and

secure and increase his happiness; who can feel all this, and at the same time the truth, which it is of equal importance that we should feel, that the most untaught, the poorest, and the most degraded of our race possesses the principles of a common nature with ourselves, and is equally with ourselves a child of God, and, as our Father's child, is *our brother;* who can thus comprehend his own soul, and thus feel his relation to his fellow man, and not feel his heart drawn out in sympathy with human weakness, and ignorance, and want, and wretchedness, and sin? — I cannot here pursue this great topic. But I could not pass it unregarded in this connexion. I commend it, however, to the very serious consideration of the reader; for I am persuaded that the cause of the truest and highest charity, and of the most enlarged humanity, is, and has been checked, misdirected, and frustrated by nothing more, than by the vain and worldly sentiments of worldly minds on the one hand, and by the equally unworthy, and still more depressing views of false religion on the other, respecting human nature, and human relations. Too often, indeed, is our nature brought before us in any other than an attractive aspect. Yet if we look upon it with the eye of a Christian, its original greatness will he made manifest, even in the traces of magnificence which will be visible in its very ruins. Let us understand and feel for what God designed it, at once in ourselves and in all who bear the form of man, and I know of no other sentiment, I know of no other means, by which the cause of human improvement and happiness, in all its departments, may be so essentially, and so extensively promoted.

Whether poverty or riches be the severest trial of human virtue, I will not attempt to decide. If, however, we consider the frequency and pathos with which our Lord and his apostles speak of the danger of an inordinate love of riches, and the multitude of precepts and warnings which we have in the New Testament, to secure us against this perversion, and debasement of our affections, it would seem as if there could be no doubt upon the question, if its determination shall rest only upon Christian representations of the condition, and duties, and hopes of men. At all events, if there is any truth in Christianity, great and solemn is the responsibility of those, to whom God has given abundance; and of those, especially, to whom he has committed great possessions. Riches may indeed be a great good, and well worth all the care and labor that are demanded to obtain them. But if, by their increase, the soul shall be impoverished, and corrupted; if, furnishing nutriment in their possessor to a miserable sordidness, or to the frivolity of vanity, or to the arrogance of pride, or to the low and loathsome appetites and passions of the sensualist, they shall be diverted from the ends for which they were given, and made the instruments of increased and increasing sin; then, better had it been for him who has so abused them to have been born, and to have lived and died, in the deepest poverty of the world. Great poverty, it will readily be admitted by all who know any thing of it, is not indeed a small trial. It is a cause even of a great amount of vice and of crime But sublimer examples of piety and virtue are not to be found on earth, than in some of the humblest of

the abodes of want and suffering. The Baron Degerando has given his testimony of the exalted moral excellence in the poor, of which he was himself a witness. And there is, I am persuaded, no exaggeration in this testimony, for it describes no greater exellence than I have myself witnessed among them. I could fill successive pages with greatly interesting details, illustrative of the most single-minded, and beautiful self-devotion, patience, fortitude and cheerfulness, arising out of an unreserved and unshaken love of God, and confidence in him; of the capacities of maternal love, and of the self-sacrifices which may be made under the influence of a truly filial piety. Yes, and I could cite examples of benevolence among the poor, which I have no doubt will at last receive from the lips of Jesus as high a commendation, as was that which he gave to the poor widow whom he saw casting her two mites into the treasury. — But it is of less importance to decide which is the severest trial of virtue, riches or poverty, than it is to know, and to fulfill the duties of the condition in which God has placed us. Let me then respectfully say, Look, reader, to your own condition. What is it? What duties does it impose upon you as a child of God, a disciple of Christ, and a brother of man? Remember the principle of the judgment which awaits us, *To whom much is given, of him will much be required.* And, forget not the words which Jesus will address to those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, ministered to the sick, and visited the prisoner; *Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these,* YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME.

One other view of this subject forces itself upon my attention, and I cannot disregard it. But I will speak very briefly of it.

Degerando has here brought the poor before us, as they were seen by him in one of the most crowded capitals in Europe, — in Paris. There, and in London, and in other of the oldest and largest cities of christendom, and of the world, are extremes both of affluence and of poverty, of which, comparatively, little is known in the cities of our country. There, too, both condition and character are modified by institutions very different from our own; and it requires not much reflection to perceive, that nothing would be more absurd, or more dangerous, than would be the inference, because these cities have stood and grown through so many centuries, and through convulsions and revolutions which might have been thought sufficient for their utter desolation, that, therefore, the cities of our country, with partial changes indeed, but with equal certainty, may increase in numbers, and wealth, and the power of controlling an ignorant, a vicious, and even a desperate population. There is, however, I fear, a practical delusion among us upon this subject, which it is high time should be seriously considered, and distinctly understood. Without much, and perhaps without any very careful reasoning respecting them, we have brought ourselves to believe that there is in our institutions a conservative power, quite sufficient for our security from the pauperism and crime of the old world. Or, if a doubt sometimes arises in the mind upon this question, the evils to be apprehended are felt to be very distant; and the

fact that other cities have survived, and do survive, and maintain their power and greatness under burdens, apparently heavy enough to crush even the strongest of them, emboldens the hope, that so also it may be with our own cities. But the error is palpable, and if disregarded, may be fatal. For how is it that the oldest cities in christendom, — to look no further, — have been advancing in wealth and power, under the increasing weight which has been pressing upon them of masses of ignorance, and want, and crime? How is it that order, and any thing like the security of person and property, are maintained in Paris and London, amidst an already frightful, and a continually increasing population of paupers and of criminals; and where tens of thousands are annually born, to be reared in the most abject and degraded condition of humanity, — in recklessness and crime? How is it that in these cities, where the capacities of tens of thousands are employed only in preparation for, or in the perpetration of crime; where there is not only little sympathy between the rich and the poor, but much contempt of the poor among the rich, and great exasperation, and equal hatred of the rich among the poor; how is it that there, where, if the poor, the ignorant, the despised, the oppressed, the mere creatures of their senses and their passions, driven as they often are by their lawless passions to every expedient for self subsistence, knew but the greatness of their combined power, and how to combine their power, they might spread universal misrule and ruin; how is it that they do not combine for the equalization of that property, by depredations upon which

they look for their principal means of living? How is it, in other words, that London and Paris are not prostrated by the paupers and criminals which they nourish in their bosom? In part, it is admitted, that these cities derive their security from the very circumstance of the ignorance of their poor and criminals of their own power. In part, too, they are indebted for it to the heterogeneous nature of the materials of which these classes are composed; for debasement and vice are happily composed of the most discordant elements. But tremendous, still, would be the exertions of this power, unwieldy as it is, and unskillfully as it would be applied, were it not crippled, and kept in subjection by a police, which could no more be tolerated under our institutions, than standing armies like those of England or France. If, then, we are ever to have an extent and character of poverty and crime in any of our cities, like those of London and Paris, one of two things is absolutely certain. I mean, in the first place, that our poor and our criminals are either to be restrained, and kept in subjection by as extensive, as complicated, and as powerful a police as is maintained in the large and corrupt cities of the old world, the very existence and maintenance of which supposes a government which does not depend upon the votes of the people, and therefore implies a previous change in our own constitutions of government; — or, secondly, our country is to be a great theatre of anarchy, insecurity, and misery. I appeal, indeed, to the judgment of any impartial mind, even supposing that the aristocracy of England, lay and spiritual, should willingly, and at once, relinquish

their rank, and all its supposed rights, and if the king, in the same spirit, should abdicate his throne, whether, with such a population as is now in England, it would be practicable to establish there a government like our own? Who doubts whether such a government would be trampled on, and destroyed, within a year after its first organization; if indeed it could even be organized? With such a population, then, how long might we hope to maintain our free institutions? And how are these institutions to be maintained, but through the education and virtue of the people, and the speedy adoption of the wisest measures that can be devised for the remedy, and prevention, of pauperism and of crime?

I have said enough, and perhaps more than I should have said, when I am detaining the reader from the very interesting and instructive work which is before him. I will only add, then, Go, little book, and fulfill the purpose of thy benevolent author. Go to the habitations, and seek thy way into the hearts, of all who will hold converse with thee. Go, and tell thy tales of human want, and pain, and sorrow; of the difficulties, and struggles, and triumphs of human virtue; and of the privilege and happiness of the visitor and friend of the poor. Go, and teach the principles of Divine Love to those who know them not, and strengthen and direct them in every heart in which thou shalt find them. Go, and help every one who will hear thee, to feel, that 'it is indeed more blessed to give, than to receive;' that he most truly lives for himself, who most faithfully, according to his means and opportunities, lives for

others; that he is the richest, who, bringing all his desires under the control of God's will, lives in the fullest possession, and the freest exercise, of the divine principle of Christian love; and that, to every immortal and accountable being, the supreme good consists in that of which death cannot deprive him; which he may carry with him into the eternal world, and enjoy there for ever. Go, and may God prosper thee!

JOSEPH TUCKERMAN.

Boston, April, 1832.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE translator of the Visitor of the Poor has omitted some parts of the original work, by the advice of the writer of the Introduction. The chapters omitted contain accounts of many of the establishments of Europe, for labor, for the sick, for the old, and for the very young. As these establishments could not be copied to advantage in this country, it was thought that an account of them would be a useless incumbrance to the general views, which are of universal application, and which we wished to put into a form that would ensure their wide diffusion in our country.

Those persons who are interested in the formation or care of large public establishments, can recur to the original work, and to many works which the author himself points out, in his chapter on the Studies of the Visitor of the Poor, an abstract of which we will here give.

He speaks, in the first place, with great praise of a collection of works by *Duquesnoy*, the title of which, however, he does not give. This collection, he says, contains an account of all the public establishments of England, Scotland, Ireland, Prussia, Germany, and Denmark, besides the works of Howard, Eden, Bentham, Macfarland, Burns, Good,

Crumps, and the Reports of various English societies, committees of the House of Commons, &c. Next to this rich collection, he speaks of *Man in Society*, published in Holland; *An Essay on the Annals of Charity and Christian Beneficence*, by Richard; the works of M. de Chamonsel; some essays by Lambin de Saint Félix; the works of M. de Liancourt, M. Girard de Mesley, and Dupont de Nemours. To this he adds *London Piety*, by Baron de Voght; and the works of Frederic Page, and George Ensor, upon the poor and the poor laws.

To those who are interested in hospitals he recommends a *Memoir on Hospitals*, by Tenor; *Observations upon Hospitals*, by Cabannis; and the reports on hospitals by Camus and M. de Pastoret.

If the public should express a strong wish to see Degerando's account of the institutions of his own country, and his remarks on the spirit pervading the French and English charities, perhaps they may be given at some future time, as a second part of the Visitor of the Poor; together with his remarks upon the characteristic differences of the English and French associations for charity, which form the concluding part of his chapter on the Spirit of Association.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

VISITOR OF THE POOR.

CHAPTER I.

AIM AND CHARACTER OF CHARITY.

In the inequalities of human condition, the frivolous see only the work of a blind chance, which scatters its favors, and dispenses its sufferings, without any discrimination. There are men also, even calling themselves philosophers, who, from these inequalities, deduce the inference, that there is no Providence. But there are more heart-cheering views of our own condition, and that of our fellow-beings; and, if we are wise, we may see, even in the greatest inequalities of society, the precious means of disciplining and of elevating the moral character.

In reference to the subject of the present work, society may be divided into three classes. The first class consists of those who have the superfluities of life. In the second class, resources are nearly balanced by those necessities which stim-

ulate to labor. The third class includes those, whose pressing wants cannot be entirely satisfied by their own industry. This class is connected with the first, by a principle of more elevated morality than is involved in labor; for is it not apparent from this classification, that the two moving principles of social action are designed to be, labor and humanity?

By the efforts which it calls forth, labor increases the physical strength, the activity of the mind, and the energy of the character. It is to labor we owe the progress which has been made in the arts and sciences, the extension of knowledge, and the union of men in commercial relations. Inspiring the sentiment of independence, it tends to preserve personal dignity; and, by rescuing men from idleness, it saves them from vice. But if this were the only principle at work in society, social life would be but a contest of selfishness; a calculation of material interests. Besides, by attaining its end, labor annihilates its own cause; and where the necessity of it is no longer felt, a wretchedness follows, which has no resources of its own.

But the holy principle of humanity, the sublime sentiment, which brings together the affluent

and the wretched, has also a part to act, and objects to attain. With an instinctive confidence in this, the miserable being who has no resources of his own, throws himself upon his fellow creature, not to make an exchange on the principle of the merchant, but to implore and receive a gratuity; and it is precisely because he *receives*, because the benefit was purely voluntary, that the sentiment of gratitude is awakened in his heart, — a sentiment which is not only sweet and pure in itself, but confers a sense of dignity on him who feels it. In this intercourse of brotherhood, the rich man also is elevated. The lethargic sleep, which might have ended in the death of the heart, is broken by compassion; and he finds in his wealth a treasure, which has a character of immortality in it. The sublime pleasure of generosity stimulates its own farther exercise, and at last shuns even gratitude itself, that it may be more entirely pure. Thus life is revealed in its true colors; the brilliant and deceitful veil, which prosperity threw over it, falls of itself; the rich man learns by means of sympathy, that it is the human lot to suffer, and infers truly, that, as there must be a balance of human conditions, as to their external evils, notwithstanding the apparent ine-

quality, there are other evils than poverty, which he may feel and the poor may relieve.

Thus in the physical world, the heavens and the earth exchange the treasures of moisture. This principle of mutual succour, by which the rich and the poor meet each other and embrace, as fellow citizens of the same distant country, is also none other than that, which calls age to the protection of childhood; which binds the stronger sex, who need the softening influence of tenderness, to the weaker, who need to be protected; which leads the valiant and the vigorous to defend their firesides and their homes. It is the principle of giving and receiving: the life and happiness of the moral world. In no condition can we be entirely deprived of the benefit of this general principle of social action; but it is in the extreme cases of affluence and wretchedness, that it is most strikingly manifested.

Had the affluent and indigent been allowed to have existed without any mutual relations, there would have been, indeed, a principle of eternal separation implanted in the very constitution of society. But Providence has bestowed the gentle influence of compassion, to establish between these classes of men a sublime union. It is true, this

sentiment has a voluntary and free character. It should be so, in order to be a moral sentiment, and it is thus Providence is made manifest. Unless refusal were possible, giving could not be a virtue; and this freedom is of course sometimes abused, and the hard-hearted are found among the generous. Out of apparent chaos, is alike raised the harmony of society, and of the soul. Misfortune serves as a great and difficult education, in which compassionate virtue is the guiding light, explaining all the mysteries. Riches also, are a great responsibility; but under the guidance of virtue, they also become the sources of merit. Is this a vain theory, a mystical speculation? Ask the sufferers in the late revolutions of Europe. Who, amongst us, has not known suffering and poverty? And who has not found an asylum, perhaps support, among strangers? Have we not been succoured by the poor; have we not received hospitality in cottages; have we not seen the hearts of those, whom our frivolous vanity had disdained, as belonging to the inferior conditions, melt in our behalf? Woe to him who did not comprehend these lessons which misfortune gave! who did not discover the sacred tie which generosity forms with misfortune! How often have we expe-

rienced the celestial consolation of mere sympathy! how often too have we been called to weep over the unfortunate great; — to relieve, to save, or to suffer with, some of the great family of man. In this great and terrible school, have we not become better? If we have not, we have turned aside, in the most guilty thoughtlessness, or repelled by the most extraordinary hardness, the mightiest of the lessons of Providence.

Rousseau has sketched the picture of nations, deprived of our arts, and exempted from our luxuries. But the relations of travellers do not bear him out. Take, however, the most favorable of these pictures, and grant it to be in a degree correct. Social harmony, in such a state of society, rests not upon the highest principle. If there is less suffering, there is also less assistance; conditions are uniform, but there are no inspirations of sympathy, like those called forth by the extreme conditions of our society. Precisely because their civilization is less developed, their sensibility is less lively and refined. But this state, be its desirableness what it may, is always and necessarily a temporary one. Social economy must go on; and then uniformity will disappear, equality will be broken up. But at the same time knowl-

edge increases, and moral sentiment takes a higher flight. It is true the abysses of misery are opened, but Charity appears, to sound them. Let the doubter, who is speculating coldly on these evils of social life, allow his heart to be touched, let him go and console and sustain the sufferers, let his eyes meet the consoled and relieved, and Providence will be justified. He will learn that there is nothing wanting, but that man should coöperate in the accomplishment of designs, which the believing are allowed progressively to understand, though the Infinite Mind alone could originate them.

There is a morality, however, in the first state of society, though a constrained and limited morality. In the alliance of equals, the balance of interests rests upon the guarantee of rights. But the alliance between the strong and the weak expresses a more perfect, because a more disinterested morality. The first kind of morality is dignified and proud, and satisfies, perhaps, the present state of man; the second kind is sublime and tender, and reveals the future. To give is to love; to receive is to learn to love; with the delicate it is already to love, and to love much.

The plans of Providence are thus manifest. Over this second alliance of man with man, the noblest of the virtues is called to preside, and poverty is put under the guardianship and patronage of riches. Mankind becomes a great family, where the weak belong to the strong, as children to parents, with this difference only, that it is by a free and voluntary adoption, in the calmness of the mind.

Poverty is to riches, what childhood is to mature life. Let the rich man know this dignity with which he is invested, and regard it rightly. It is not a vague indefinite patronage, that he is called upon to exercise. Children are not given confusedly, and without distinction, to men. Every child has its own father. And the rich must exercise a personal, immediate, individual patronage. It is not their munificence only, which is demanded, but a personal care, which, though free and voluntary, is real and active. Do we not realize what is meant? Let us go to yonder public square, and look upon the scaffold erected there, and the wretch who mounts it. — That man is our brother, and might have been good. He was poor. Perhaps our indolent alms chanced to fall upon him, but no one watched over his mind and

morals, or excited him to the labor whose preservative principle he was not wise enough to understand. He conceived of an easier means to enrich himself than labor affords. The very money we threw at him, corrupted him. Perhaps he bought a dagger with it. He was already vicious, and with one step he became criminal. He attacked the life of him whom he robbed. He might have struck at his benefactor, for he did not know him. Ah! had he not an indigence of soul and reason, more fatal than hunger?

It is not alms alone, which the miserable solicit, but guidance, consolation, support. The blind and paralytic are in vain loaded with money. They must have a more immediate human aid. And most of the indigent are blind, — blind and paralytic in a more important than the physical sense. That charity is the least worthy of the name, which gives only gold.

Charity, then, and not *alms-giving*, is the aim of the designs of Providence, the vocation of the rich man, and the great element necessary to the harmony of the moral world. Alms-giving is only one of the instruments of charity; it is not the only one, or the most important; it even contradicts, and sometimes destroys the effects of charity itself.

But charity is entirely an individual thing. A largess given in a general way, thrown out to escape importunity, subscribed and published, to nourish pride by the ostentation of false virtue, has nothing to do with charity, with the tie that unites brother to brother. When alms-giving is but a shield from personal pain, and selfish terror, at the sight of misfortune, I had almost said it is an insult to the miserable. Charity alone does good. Her solicitude is enlightened and prospective, as well as tender and affectionate. She examines before she acts; she takes a wide survey, and extends her regards over the future. She goes back to causes; she embraces all circumstances; she adds to her gifts, care, consolation, counsel, and even parental reprimand. This is the wonderful inspiration, which reveals and furnishes to men, who are not in the most prosperous conditions, the means of associating themselves in works of benevolence; of accepting the noblest, the most difficult, the most useful offices towards their unfortunate fellow-men; for it teaches not only to do good, but also, what is not less important, the manner of doing good.

Civil laws, which are only a positive expression of the moral laws, in their necessary and rigorous

applications, have required, that guardianship should be appointed and secured to minority. Now indigence is a minority. In going back to the moral law itself, and contemplating it in its principle, and embracing it in all its extent, we ask, Who shall appoint the guardian of this minority? and the answer is — Charity.

The essence of a good administration of public charity, then, is the art of creating a voluntary, immediate, and individual guardianship of the prosperous over the unfortunate; the exercise of this guardianship being the most efficacious spring in the application of private charity. This principle is eminently fruitful. Its applications, in pointing out the means of recognising and discerning true indigence, of relieving it, and of rendering alms useful to the *giver*, as well as receiver, will develope of themselves. It is the design of the ensuing work, to sum up faithfully the instructions which experience has furnished, as to the manner in which this guardianship may be instituted. They are the observations and testimony of persons, who have devoted their lives to the exercise of charity. The subject will be interesting to all, who know that power comes from God to man, on the condition of his being

a faithful minister of Providence on earth; and that, consequently, every thing is bound together by mutual ties and dependencies. Let us pity those, who only see the administration of charity in dollars and cents. Its spirit inhabits a higher sphere. Its strength and aim, those only can understand, and experience, and turn into action, whose profound meditations upon the destinies of humanity have been lighted at the lamp of morality and religion.

CHAPTER II.

CHARACTERISTICS OF REAL INDIGENCE.

It is important to know the characteristics of real indigence; for errors on this point are frequent, and very injurious, being the cause of feelings of hesitation in some who are called upon for assistance, and furnishing pretexts for indifference to others. The general excuse of those who do not wish to give, is, that they fear they shall give injudiciously, — an excuse often but too well founded. And thus the unfortunate, whose complaints are drawn from them by the very excess of suffering, and who already feel the additional misery of exposing themselves to refusals, are liable to be met with vague suspicions and hesitation, and find they have still greater enemies than poverty to encounter, — injustice and contempt. But it is indiscriminate almsgiving, which causes this difficulty, by creating a new and factitious indigence. The individuals who are its objects, becoming idle, and losing the opportunities of employment, feel a real poverty,

when the assistance ceases. They have learned to count upon external aid, and not upon their own resources. Thus a premium is offered to idleness, and society loses the labor of which it is in need. But the receivers of these fatal gifts are still more deeply injured than society itself. Labor would have preserved their health, taught them foresight, led them to salutary reflections, and inspired self-respect, by securing the esteem of others. It is mistaken kindness which turns them away from fulfilling their vocation on earth, by a useful and honorable life. Degraded by idleness, debased by falsehood, and guilty of real robbery (for they use up the aid that should be given to real sufferers), they will perhaps soon consume what they get so easily, in licentiousness. Thus we have in reality taken from them the source of future subsistence, and deprived them of their only wealth; for we have taken from them their morals.

"But how shall I discriminate?" says the alms-giver. "Does not pretended indigence present itself under the same aspect as real? Is not the former even more pressing in its demands?"

Undoubtedly; and importunity itself is sometimes a sign, which should put you on your guard. But why do you not go near to the person that implores you; and why do you not seek out those who do not implore you? It is in their dwelling-places that you must investigate which is the reality, and which is the phantom; and it is an investigation that requires attentive study. It is not enough that you are open-handed; you must open your eyes too. It is your own fault if you are deceived.

But to come to details. In the first place, consider the age and sex; examine the state of health and strength.

"It is a child, an old man; they will not deceive me."

But cannot their own family maintain them? or may not the gray hairs of the one, and the innocence of the other, be used as instruments by shameless speculators? Beware how you become an accomplice in a conspiracy against the most holy ties of nature!

"It is a mother, surrounded by young children."

But do they belong to her? Has she not borrowed, or perhaps stolen them from their own mother?

"It is an invalid."

But is the infirmity real? You exclaim, "What shall we believe then?" and perhaps you deceive yourself into the idea that you are not responsible for your ignorance.

On the other hand; here is a house near your own. Do you know its inhabitants? It looks poor. Let us enter it. We will ascend the stairs to the garret. What a spectacle! — Your presence excites astonishment, perhaps a blush. They seemed to be desirous of concealing what you behold. There is a widow extended on the bed of death, and little children about to become orphans. There is a little straw. Every thing else, — furniture, linen, clothing, have been sold; and where is food, where medicine, where consolation? Whom can you accuse for your ignorance of this poor neighbour?

To distinguish the characteristics of real poverty, we must go back to its causes.

There are three causes of real indigence. Inability to labor, insufficient produce of labor, and absolute want of employment.

1. Inability to labor is either temporary or lasting. It is temporary with the sick and the wounded; lasting with the old and incurable. It is also

either absolute or partial. It is absolute with the bed-ridden, the paralytic, and the maimed; and partial with all others, even the blind.

To judge concerning the ability to labor, you must see for yourself. You must go to the bedside of the sufferers, and not once only, but on different days, and at different hours. Even this is not enough. You must question the neighbours, you must bring a physician. The misery which is without resources, is precisely, for that very reason, the misery which cannot have produced itself.

Perhaps you have sent the remedy necessary for the sick, and go now to administer it with your own hands. But when you enter, you seek it in vain. It has disappeared, and you find in its stead preparations for a repast. This was well acted! what will be the confusion of the pretended sufferers! and what your indignation!

Indignation! the fault was your own. Had you known how to observe, there were a thousand looks and gestures, any one of which would have betrayed their secret. It was your duty to learn how long these people had been in the house, where they lived before, why they quitted the former house, what reputation they left there,

when and how the patient had been attacked by disease; a thousand things should have been known, nearly their whole lives. As these inquiries should not have been made from a spirit of inquisitorial curiosity, but from benevolent solicitude; so the details should not be obtained by humiliating questioning, but in confidence. It is the tenderness of gratitude which draws these bitter memorials of misfortune from the modest poor.

2. The produce of labor is insufficient, in the first place, with the aged and infirm, who can follow some occupation, but whose full strength has been impaired; especially in women who have lived isolated, and who, never having exercised any variety of talents, are reduced to the most simple mechanical labor. Their feebleness, their frequent infirmities, and the organization of society, which leaves them only a subaltern and unproductive employment, even in their own line, exposes them to the danger of scarcely procuring the supplies for their necessary wants.

The same difficulty occurs when there are young children in a family. In the laboring classes of society, the price of daily labor is naturally regulated by the sum necessary for the support of

the generality, and it is found insufficient for cases of exception. The most industrious and frugal workman finds himself embarrassed as soon as he begins to have a family to clothe and feed. Besides, the mother has so much less time to devote herself to productive occupations. This is only partial indigence, it is true, but it is both respectable and interesting. If in this case, the mother is a widow, or has been abandoned by her husband, and is the only support of her family, we should especially feel, that something is due to her on account of her sex, which has, besides, in itself, a particular claim to protection. The last case also brings up another consideration, which will excite our solicitude. Misery may lead a woman to a still greater misfortune than poverty. It may expose her to seduction; and what consequences may ensue from a single moment of abandonment, caused by the pressure of necessity!

Oh ye mothers! who, in the midst of abundance, think yourselves benevolent and pious, because you give alms at the door of a church, why did you not assist in time that young orphan girl, who was still innocent? You might, perhaps, have saved your own son from corruption, by arresting, on the brink of the abyss, her who will one day lead him into vice.

And fly to that other wretched woman, whose virtue is struggling with famine. But here you must redouble your care, lest she share your bounty with the vile seducer himself.

Ascertain if this mother, surrounded by children, is worthy of the name; lest by assisting her, you give a bad example to those who are yet innocent. Learn how she has lived, in order better to assure yourself how she lives now.

Here is a family consisting of seven or eight children, who live by manual labor. But what is their trade? there are more or less productive ones. How do the husband and wife live together? What is the age of the children? Is there no one of them who can begin to assist their parents? Have the parents turned the assistance they have already received, to the advantage of the family? Study the internal habits of the family. If the parents do not tell you the truth, the children will betray it unconsciously. From their condition and language, you can judge what are the lessons and examples they are accustomed to receive.

3. A scarcity of work is sometimes brought about, by the revolution of politics, or the sudden invention of machinery. But each particular case of

poverty, which is referred to this cause, must be investigated carefully. A workman may, from caprice, change his labor for a kind to which he is not so competent. You must go to his employer, and ascertain the fact. And you must not implicitly confide in his employer's testimony, for he may have faults, or be without judgment. You must go to his previous employers also, and trace out his history. Other questions also arise; is the trade, or kind of labor, a flourishing or a languishing one? Is it overflowing with the numbers who follow it? Is it suited to his talents? All these things are to be considered, before you can either assist or reprove the inactive laborer. Having ascertained all these circumstances, you will know how to act.

But supposing you ascertain the fact that the cause of his indigence lies in the sufferer's own fault, still this indigence may be real now. Care must then be taken not to ward off the salutary consequences which teach him an important lesson; and yet he must not be left in hopeless suffering. No written rules can be given for such delicate cases, but we will not dismiss this difficult subject without giving some guiding remarks. Let us, then, remember that charity provides for the

future: she not only relieves the present evil, but endeavours to prevent the recurrence of it, and in order to do this, she inquires into the causes of this indigence, real in its results, but to be remedied only by destroying its causes In these causes, are included improvidence, idleness, and debauchery.

Of these three, improvidence is the most excusable; for it is sometimes found connected with honesty, even with industry and activity. Sometimes it is the consequence of a too confident and ill-regulated activity. But this last most excusable improvidence has its peculiar signs. You must examine the dwelling, see how the furniture is arranged, look at the linen, and, obtaining their confidence, learn how they combine their scanty means, and see if they know how to chocse, to spare, to save. They will tell you all their imprudences, under the reviving hope of being assisted; and thus you will have opportunity to offer them the counsels which will give permanent value to what you bestow upon them.

Improvidence is also the consequence of idleness. But here *the idleness* is the first cause, a disease not of the mind, but the soul. This is not a want of reflection, but a defect of will. It

is a deep evil, perhaps the hardest of all to cure. You may make a criminal or a vicious person repent; but how can you raise the stupefied from their torpor? It is like attempting to resuscitate the dead. However, there are different kinds of idleness. Has the indolence in this particular case a physical character? — or is it the effect of discouragement? or of a sort of idiocy? or the consequence of lax morals? — You must watch the manner, and step, and dress. — Physical indolence will be quiet and hold out its hand, almost unconscious of its own character. Discouragement will manifest itself in a sombre and melancholy sadness; it will be silent and reserved. Idiocy will be inefficient in the midst of the greatest want, and indifferent when relieved from suffering. Moral idleness will betray itself in debasing servility. — You must not trust in discriminating these kinds of indolence, to present observations; but go back to the childhood and youth of the individual, and endeavour to ascertain his moral history.

Another evil is loose living. Do not think that in inviting you to penetrate this dreadful mystery, I wish to turn aside your succouring bounty. Oh no! Divine Providence does not despair of vice,

and we should not despair of it. We must look on vice as another misfortune, but as having also its remedies, and needing a still more earnest solicitude on our part. What happiness and glory would it be to us to relieve and restore to virtue the victim of vice! But of all kinds of evil this is the most difficult to investigate. This vice is almost always concealed. It is often enveloped in a veil of hypocrisy! We must observe carefully if there is no affectation in what is said about honesty and religious observances. We must watch for those inadvertences which the most cunning cannot avoid. We must mark whether our sudden appearance to them agitates them, and what impression our words make; we must surprise them in those actions which they thought would be concealed from us; we must find out their connexions in life, and the kind of characters they have most frequent intercourse with.

And suppose we find that there is vice. Let us go still farther, and learn whether it is the cause or the effect of the poverty which accompanies it; for poverty is often a fatal counsellor, confounding the ideas, throwing a cloud over the reason, and putting despair into the heart. Iron must be tempered, to be hardened; but sometimes it splits and breaks in the process.

Such are some of the distinctions and characteristics which belong to the poor. Hardly any of them are absolute or universal. There is only one test for discovering the truth. See if the poor who are capable of any portion of labor, accept it with pleasure and execute it with zeal, when it is presented to them. Do they themselves second and aid your exertions to the utmost of their moral and physical resources? Do they limit themselves to accepting only what is necessary to make up the deficiency of their wants? If so, you have reason to presume, that the indigence is real. If, on the contrary, they neglect the labor that is presented to them; if they relax when they are supported, then there is reason to doubt.

There is a second indication to which we can recur with advantage. Does the poor man insist upon obtaining assistance in money, or does he willingly accept it in useful articles? In the last case, what kind of articles does he accept most willingly? You will sometimes see those, who, if you should believe all they say, were ready to die of hunger, receive with a bad grace, and even disdain, a cheap soup; and sometimes go and sell it.

But there are no indications of this kind, which can supersede the necessity of investigation. To go, to see, to converse; above all, to continue these observations with method, and a kind of persevering connexion, — this is the first and essential condition.

In the case of an indigent family, we should apply to the proprietor or the principal inhabitant of the house, to find out if the rent is regularly paid, and if the family is peaceable and regular in its habits. But it is essential to know, also, how long they have lived in the house; the poor are apt to change their abode very often. If the family has been in a house but a short time, the word of the proprietor is no guarantee; it will be necessary then, to go still farther back, and inquire at the former place of residence. The neighbours should be consulted also. But their testimony should be received cautiously. Too often, jealousy and animosity lead malicious neighbours to accuse the unfortunate lightly; often, on the other hand, pity and natural complaisance dispose them to disguise vices and exaggerate wants. How can any one be willing to act as informer against an unfortunate family; or to discourage those who appear ready to relieve them?

A practised observer may read much in the features and countenance of the person he desires to know. Generally, this expression is strongly marked and sincere in the lower classes of society, where the passions are stronger, and there is less attention to *manner*. But here we must be very cautious: the common propensity to judge characters by the contenance, exposes to much and serious injustice. Sometimes prolonged misfortune, and physical suffering, produce expressions of countenance which may be misinterpreted; while, on the other hand, the habit of hypocrisy sometimes gives an air of sweetness and resignation, which deceives us.

A blush at receiving a favor is a surer indication than tears; tears are more easy to feign. The signs of delicacy and of a remaining sense of character are also a good augury. But assurance is a bad symptom; he who demands and receives, without a shade of embarrassment, is at least familiarized to humiliation; and we have reason to fear that his moral sentiments are enfeebled, and his soul has lost the energy necessary for struggling against adversity, and for opposing to it the resources derived from within.

Perhaps these precautions may seem harsh to the delicate and feeling mind: and it will be said, "What! shall we aggravate, by our suspicions, that misfortune, already so worthy of pity, merely because it is obliged to abase itself so far as to solicit assistance? Shall we dare to doubt the tears we see flowing; to resist the suppliant voice that implores us?"—Well then,—try a very simple experiment. Ask the suppliant for his precise address, and tell him you will go and see him. Perhaps he will disappear without answering you. Perhaps he gives you an address, but you go and inquire, and he is unknown at the place indicated. This is what happens every day.

N. B. If any one wishes to see facts which will prove how the pretended indigent may be multiplied, by a blind facility of giving; let him compare the number of families who are admitted now to the public charity in Paris with the number who were admitted before the royal ordinance of the 2nd of July, 1816; which instituted the new system (secours à domicile), including a visitation of the poor, by ladies and commissaries. In the first instance, there were 52,524 families including 102,806 individuals. But the new system of charity, requiring that the cause of the poverty should be sought out and determined and expressed in the bulletin of admission, has reduced the

number to 27,762 families, including 54,371 individuals, — although the population of the city has increased *one quarter* during the time between the years 1816 and 1822.

CHAPTER III.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE POOR.

A GOOD system in the dispensation of charity supposes three conditions. First, that the assistance be proportioned, in its quantity, to the extent of the wants; secondly, that it be appropriate in its kind, to the nature of these wants; thirdly, that, in its continuation, it be measured by the duration of these same wants, and graduated upon their fluctuation.

These three conditions suppose in their turn, first, that the situation of the poor has been exactly proved; secondly, that the extent of the poverty is known; and, thirdly, that the nature of the wants and their fluctuations have been ascertained.

The great secret of charity is the art of proportioning it to the necessities of poverty. After having ascertained the reality of the indigence, it is necessary to determine with care its measure and its limits. Without this, we give at hazard, and perhaps assist those, who are not in need, while we withhold aid from the suffering. The same

care and the same research will be necessary in this new examination; and this is the second function of the visitor of the poor.

1. In the first place, pretended poverty is much more rare, than people are led to think; and it is decreasing every day. A natural taste for activity, a certain frankness in our manners, the pride and self-love which belong to all classes of people, serve as preservatives against this shameful deception. But nothing is so common as to exaggerate poverty. And we must not be astonished at this; for he, who suffers, easily exggerates his own misery to himself, and he exaggerates it to others to excite pity. When the pressure of poverty has once triumphed over the natural repugnance men feel, to the asking and receiving of favors, they do not blush to ask for more than is exactly necessary.

Yet, to give to the poor more than they really need, is nearly the same thing as to give to those who are not in need; the injury is of the same kind, although in a less degree.

This will perhaps appear harsh, and yet it is a remark drawn from the deepest interest in misfortune. Doubtless it is painful to seek out the limits of suffering, and scrupulously to measure

out our bounty. But does not the physician deny the desires of his patient? Does he not impose privations upon him? To do good for one's own gratification, is to be only half benevolent. Nothing is more just, than, that we should be happy in giving; but this pleasure is not the end for which we give, and should not serve as a rule and measure to our gifts. It is only one of the rewards of giving.

Let the visitor of the poor then endeavour to form a precise and clear idea of the situation of the poor. To this end, let him take an example of a supposed case of absolute indigence, making a distinction between the situation of the completely isolated individual, and that of a family more or less numerous.

A state of absolute indigence, in an individual, supposes him deprived, by infirmity, of the means of performing any labor, having no resources whatever, and totally abandoned by every one. Let us estimate in money what is necessary to furnish to this unfortunate person his daily nourishment, the rent of his dwelling-place, whatever it may be; the preservation and renewal of his clothes, his bed, a little fuel in winter, and necessary medicines. This sum will not be precisely the same

for a man, a woman, and a very young orphan. This point being established, it remains for us to deduct the resources of various kinds, which may remain to this unfortunate individual. An old man, although decrepit, may still execute some work, or be employed in taking care of something. A blind man has strength, which he may use in various ways. Those infirmities, which leave the use of some of the limbs, still admit of some occupations. He may have a relation, a friend, or a protector, who can render him some assistance. These deductions being made, we shall have nearly an exact knowledge of his wants. Now we must be sure, that the little work he can do, is offered him; for in this case alone must the wages of such labor be deducted from the supposed sum. Otherwise, the want of labor must be added, though as a transient element, to the sad list that makes up the sum total of his necessities.

After having determined the condition of a single individual, we shall proceed in the same manner in regard to a family, applying a similar measurement to each of the members that compose it. Only we should not forget, that a whole family spends less, when united, than if each member was supported separately. The rent and fuel are

nearly the same for several, as for two, or even for one.

We are accustomed to regard children under twelve years of age, as entirely a burden to their parents. Yet, in fact, those under twelve years of age can render many small services, and often begin to earn a few cents. When over twelve years of age, they should be apprenticed to some regular business. The instruction by which children learn to read and write, to understand religion and morality, and to learn how to labor, should be placed in the rank of the most essential wants of a family. Any lucrative occupation, which may be an obstacle to this, would not be a gain, but a loss.

2. The extent of the poverty being determined, shall we give in money the sum which corresponds to it? God forbid! Who will answer for it, that the poor would not employ it in some other way, than that for which it was destined, or even make it the instrument of evil? Who will answer for it, that they would not consume in one day what was destined for a whole week? that even in employing this money for real necessities, they would not make the worst choice, and the most injudicious purchases? Perhaps, if they had been capable of

taking all necessary precautions, they would not now be poor. It is very easy to derange the economy of a life, limited to what is barely necessary. There are those, who, to make one good dinner, will sometimes deprive themselves of the means of clothing and fuel for the winter. Do we not ourselves often sacrifice the future for the enjoyment of the present moment? And can the poor be expected to be wiser than ourselves, — they, who think so little of the future? Besides, to give articles of daily use, is a perceptible testimony of our active and tender solicitude. The poor are then grateful for our gifts, and will be touched by our personal care. They are more grateful for the latter than for our gifts, for they see in it a sort of paternal affection. If the supposed poor man be really poor, the sight of our money would make him blush. But he will like to say, "This is the bed I received from his bounty;" and he will recollect it every night, when he prays to Him who clothes the lily of the field. Moreover, to provide for all this, we must become the confidants of the poor family; for confidence between us is as good for him as for ourselves. Confiding in us, he will naturally be led to tell us every thing, and to show us every thing. He will thus enable us

to avoid questions, which might have an air of suspicion, and would be equally painful to both. We shall be enabled to see if he has known how to preserve the little he possessed; if he has used every thing properly. This is not a suspicious inquisition; it is the privilege of sincere friendship. In short, we shall know how to discern and recognise the kind, the quality, the value, and the duration of the articles, which the poor man consumes, and which are the best for his use. We shall then make up his little budget upon a positive basis, and have a certain degree of judgment about his real necessities, and thus learn better how to observe other poor people, to understand what they need, and guard ourselves from those chance estimations, which would expose us to give too much, or to refuse what is indispensable. Thus a second calculation will be made, designating each necessary article, the quantity and the kind; and giving a general idea of the rent, the bed, the linen, the dress, shoes and stockings, &c. In winter we must add fuel. This is necessary for all. Then if he is sick, he will require medicines, dressings for wounds, and suitable food. If in health he will need nourishment, regulated according to his age, sex, modes of life and labor.

But, as we have said before, perhaps what the poor man wants is labor, or a sufficient quantity of labor. This is a new subject of observation. What profession has he followed? Why does it not afford him more resources? Would it not be possible to restore them to him? What would be the means of restoring them? If this is not practible, what other occupation is there, of which he would be found capable? And how can it be procured for him? In either case, what profits may be expected from it? Can he work away from home, or only at his own lodgings?

3. Thus our two first tables are drawn up; and the real state of the poor is well known. But it is only for the moment. Now, every thing changes. The sick man is reëstablished in health, and the healthy man falls sick. The portion of labor, from which the poor man hitherto drew a little profit, fails him. A child comes into existence and has wants. Then, again, the child grows up, and is able to assist his parents. The family increases still further, or it loses one of its members. A rigorous season comes on, and disconcerts all calculations. Now, if we continue blindly the same mode and degree of assistance, what will happen? When external aid ceases

to be necessary, and yet is continued, it indisposes its objects to avail themselves of their own resources. It excites them to abuse our facility of kindness, and shuts up the path, through which they should have been led to activity and independence. When, on the other hand, the aid is insufficient, and no longer bears any proportion to actual wants, we are, in truth, though unconsciously, cruel, and even deceive the confidence which we had authorized them to feel in us. In either case, we fail of the true end.

To continue thus to note the history of the little revolutions in the existence of the poor, constancy and perseverance are doubtless necessary. And perhaps this is what is most difficult in the duties imposed upon the visitor of the poor, and what is most rarely accomplished. Yet it is the necessary condition of making charity useful. The frequent family changes among the poor have serious inconveniences. Hardly do you make acquaintance with a family before it escapes you. You had wished in your foresight to make preparations for the future, but you are not able to see the effect of what you do. This family may meet with another benefactor; but he may not be able to enter into your plans.

Has the visitor of the poor at last terminated his long and painful examination? But he has not exhausted the sources of inquiry. He has yet observed only the outside. It remains for him to penetrate the most intimate secrets. What then must he do? Listen. Seated at the bedside of a sick man, I sought to give him support and encouragement in his sufferings. A deep sigh, which escaped him, gave me new doubts and anxieties. I questioned, and urged him. He was silent. I spoke to him in the language of affection. He was melted. I pressed his hand, and his tears flowed. Ah! his health was indeed impaired; but it was grief, which had destroyed it. For a long time he had shut up in silence the pains, which oppressed his heart. A failure had carried away the fruits of his economy. A friend had deceived his confidence. He found himself encumbered with the debts of others. He had sold every thing to save his honor, and fulfil his engagements; — sold every thing, even to the implements of the trade at which he worked day and night to maintain his family. He had concealed from his beloved family these terrible secrets; and while his children played around him, he shuddered at the idea of seeing them die of hunger. He had

deprived himself of every thing, and feeding only upon tears, in order to give to these unfortunate little ones the last morsel of bread which remained to him, at last he sunk under the weight of sadness. "Alas!" said I, "why did you not tell me sooner? I will restore this trade to you! you are not alone and abandoned upon earth; all hearts are not closed to you; you have found a false friend, you shall now find faithful ones;" a ray of joy pierced the cloud, and he was restored to life.

Another unfortunate one, whom I wish to relieve, seems to fear, and to fly from me. In the midst of his pressing misfortunes, he seems to tremble at the prospect of an unknown evil. What is the matter? He wishes to expatriate himself. Why? Perhaps he is persecuted by a powerful man, or exposed to the hatred or vengeance of an enemy. Perhaps a lawsuit, which he cannot follow out, completes his ruin, when the just triumph of his rights would give him an honorable competency. I discover his danger. He paints to me all the strength his oppressors have to injure him; all the violence of the animosity, of which he is the victim. "If your cause is so just," I tell him, "I will embrace it, and will find you support. Far from being

terrified by obstacles, I shall only be the more proud and happy to defend you." He returns to a feeling of security and is saved. — Another announces in his manners and his language, a careful education; but he has never spoken of his family. I have touched upon the subject, and found that it was a painful one to him. But by my researches I find out, that a near relation, a nephew, a brother, perhaps, are in easy circumstances, and have treated him with contempt since the days of his misfortune; blushing for the ties which unite them to him, when the only shame which ought to have covered their brow, was for such indifference! What did I say? That paralytic old man, that infirm woman, has a son or a daughter, who has a lucrative business, is dressed with elegance, enjoys various pleasures, yet thus neglects the positive duties, which the most sacred rights of nature impose. Is it possible? Alas, it is but too true! We see too many examples of unfortunate people, whom the cruel indifference and selfishness of their families thus abandon to public charity. I go to these unnatural relations, and succeed, perhaps, in moving them. They repent, and repair their faults towards those, whom their abandonment rendered

more unhappy than any privations. And, if I fail in this, if their hearts are inflexible, I have another resource, the fear of authority; and the tribunal of justice, if it cannot restore affection, can, at least, bring forth the assistance which is due.

Let the generous beware of thinking that they have fulfilled the honorable career of charity, when they have made an inventory of the external necessities and resources which are to be supplied; or when they have provided an asylum, furnished a garment, or given nourishment. There is a necessity still more touching, and more difficult. Penetrate the secret of that afflicted heart. By giving inward peace, you will do more than by appeasing hunger. By restoring moral energy, you will give the courage to perform useful labor, and better to support privation and suffering. By enlightening the reason, and reëstablishing order in a mind which distress had disturbed, you will prepare it for the cares of order and economy. Your consolations and counsels will be of more worth, perhaps, than all your gifts. Are not the miseries of the soul real miseries? And should charity be indifferent to them? Perhaps these revelations will be doubly painful to you! Per-

haps the unfortunate one has been the victim of his own faults! Then you are called upon to cure him of his vices, which are ruining him, or, at least, to attempt their cure. For this work new light will be necessary to you.

These things are all which it is necessary to discover, and to note down. Perhaps, you must also be silent as to the result of your discoveries; and your discretion will be another portion of your beneficence.

But, does poverty always freely expose itself? and is not the poverty, which seeks concealment, much the most respectable? Doubtless. A feeling of inquietude takes possession of me, for near me dwells a whole family, shut up in a narrow nook. I do not see them go in and out, their existence is hardly suspected. I meet one of the children of this family; he is sobbing. Some broken words alarm me. I caress him, but he repulses and leaves me. I find my way to his parents, and I learn all. The vicisitudes of time have deprived the father of some subaltern post he occupied, and he has in vain sought to make himself useful. He is too old to be apprenticed to a trade, and he has exhausted all he possessed. In the hope of recovering his place, he has taken upon

credit, wherewith to maintain his family. The creditor comes, and they show him their empty house. He is irritated. O, why did I not know sooner? Yesterday I had an opportunity to procure an occupation for this honest man. Again, here is a woman absolutely alone in the world. Her dress is decent, but her existence is mysterious. There is dignity in her mien, and sadness upon her brow. How is she employed? and where does she come from? I inquire, and I find that she is a widow. Her husband followed, with uprightness and diligence, a humble employment, upon the profits of which they both lived. He had a prospect of advancement, but death came before he could obtain it, and he left her pennyless. The unfortunate woman is absorbed in grief for her loss, and hardly knows that she will not have the means of surviving him. Anonymous aid must relieve her misery, while it spares her delicacy.

In the tables, we were about to draw up, we omitted then an essential distinction; that of the indigent who beg, and the indigent who seek concealment. We omitted a circumstance, which ought to add still more to our interest and respect, that sense of character, which noble minds preserve under the weight of misfortune.

In the dispensation of relief to the poor, we had also almost forgotten a kind of charity, peculiar to certain situations; such as recommendations to kindness, and personal influence with others.

This leads us to the last order of considerations, which will be particularly important to the visitor of the poor.

To appreciate truly the circumstances of an unfortunate family, it is not sufficient to examine their present necessities. It is well also to ascertain their previous condition. Privations are much more felt by those who have fallen from easy circumstances, and certain conveniences become almost necessaries of life by the long habit of enjoying them. All this increases, and becomes more imperious, in old age. More than all, the mental suffering, which is joined to physical suffering, is in proportion to the difference between the former and subsequent condition.

I have found among the names of the indigent, inscribed upon the list of my charity office, widows of officers, of notaries, and of merchants; daughters of old magistrates, of advocates, and of literary men; artists and retired officers, who have been inmates of the hospitals. For what class is not open to the blows of adversity? The educa-

tion which these persons have received, and the situation which they have occupied in society, render them naturally more susceptible, and demand also of the visitor more discretion and consideration. In such circumstances it will be necessary to modify the choice and extent of the offered assistance. Sometimes, it will be necessary to abandon the wise and useful rule, which in general proscribes any other assistance, than the bestowment of articles of comfort; and it will become necessary to show to sufferers from such reverses, a just confidence, by leaving to them the free use of the money, we induce them to accept. We cannot repeat it too often, that in this matter, as in many others, there are no absolute rules. All is relative. General formulas may serve as land-marks, but they are not rules to which we can blindly refer all particular cases. The more nearly the visitor of the poor approaches those to whom he is sent, the more will he be struck with this difference. Objects are only confounded to the eyes of those, who see afar off, and therefore only see very imperfectly.

CHAPTER IV.

VIRTUES OF THE POOR.

THE spectacle of human miseries contemplated closely, and considered with an attentive and reflecting eye, is one of the most painful sources of moral instruction, which can be opened to us on earth. But still higher instructions spring from it, when we see virtue triumph in the midst of these same miseries. Then alone we learn to know all the sublimity of its heroism, all the extent of its power.

What are the virtues of those who live in ease, and in the bosom of select society, endowed with all the benefits of education, surrounded by a respect and a consideration which we learn to regard as necessary elements of our existence in the world? Do they really deserve the name of virtues? Where is the merit of them? What are the efforts they require? Shall we dare to boast of our common honesty? Can any one be astonished that we do not fall into the low and degrading actions, which would make us despised?

Shall we call ourselves benevolent, when the gifts we bestow do not cost us a single privation? Shall we believe ourselves good, because we are amiable, while every one around us is eager to serve and please us? And yet it is this shadow of virtue, which is encouraged by applauses and rewarded by eulogies, and promotes our success and advancement in the world. Let us rather remember those unknown virtues, which the mantle of poverty and obscurity hides; and blush at the esteem we receive.

With the poor and miserable every thing becomes an opportunity of a virtue that is really and with difficulty acquired. Overwhelmed at once by reverses of fortune, and the disdain of the rich; exiled, as it were, from society, and the banquet of life; banished as if to a desert, even in the midst of cities, by the abandonment in which he is left, the poor man sees every thing conspire against him. Every thing seems hostile, and the most legitimate affections of nature become a source of suffering to his heart. Yet spleen and bitterness do not take possession of him. He is not irritated by events. He does not accuse men. He does not murmur against Providence. On the contrary, he submits. He

accepts the terrible lot, which is assigned him here below, and is resigned to it. His is a resignation wonderful in its peaceful silence, and of which we perhaps should not be capable, if we were thrown into the same condition! It is a resignation which supposes a courage more difficult, and more rare, than brilliant valor. It is a courage constant and equable, renewing every day and every instant under new wants and privations, on which no hope gleams in the future, and in which the most dreadful extremities are to be feared. There is not perhaps on earth a virtue more necessary, more painful to practise, and at the same time more glorious, even in its obscurity, than patience. And it is in the asylum of the poor, that models of this virtue may be studied. It is often to this sanctuary that we must go, to contemplate it in all its sublimity. I confess, that it is sweet to me to find this opportunity to satisfy an urgent desire of my heart, to acquit, I might almost say, a sort of debt, by being able to render homage to those touching virtues, of which the world has no suspicion. I would it were possible for me to show them living, to those who read this recital; and that they might partake the profound emotion they inspire in myself.

I have seen a wellborn young lady, whom the reverses of her family had plunged into indigence, after having been reduced for subsistence to the labor of her hands, attacked by a cancer. She suffered acute pains. Every thing failed her. She had not even linen, with which to dress her wounds. She had not even a bed to repose upon in her agony. She saw her malady increase from day to day, and she felt that her strength was declining. She had no other prospect of relief, than the tomb open to receive her. But not a complaint escaped her lips. Her countenance was serene and gentle, and her calmness was not impaired a single moment, till the hour of her release.*

I have seen also a mother of six children extended night and day upon a little straw in a garret, with a fatal ulcer, which was destroying her, and not able to give bread to those poor little beings, who were weeping around her. In her own husband too, who ought to have been her consolation and support, she had an additional subject of cutting sorrow; and she was thus sup-

* This sufferer was Mademoiselle Blais, who died March 10, 1825.

porting, at the same time, the sufferings of body and soul. But she supported them with an unalterable sweetness, pardoning even the unworthy husband who aggravated her woes instead of relieving them; and who abused the succours destined for her, and consumed them himself in drunkenness. I have seen aged, infirm, and forsaken widows, occupying a nook so low and narrow, that one could scarce enter it, and having no other light than what came from the stair-case, and there waiting the immense favor of entering into a hospital; (for such is the great and supreme ambition; such the object of the wishes of a great number.) And, alas, how many desire it in vain, and cannot obtain it! I have seen miseries which pass all belief, and physical tortures, united with the most pressing wants and the most painful privations; and all these endured by martyrs of patience, without aid, hope, or witness, submitting to the divine will. Where are crowns worthy of such triumphs? What tenderness mingles with our respect, when we think, that the beings called to display such courage, are feeble women, and old men already exhausted by long trials.

The too common effect of suffering and privation is to cool the heart, and incline it to selfish-

ness. We too often see sad examples of this among persons, who have received a careful education. How highly then should we regard, in the indigent, the affections which they preserve, when, instead of being soured by adversity, instead of being absorbed by the feeling of their own wants, they still know how to live for others, and in others! How powerful and beautiful must be this faculty of loving, which can survive such distress! In some families of the indigent, you will see the most touching examples of conjugal love, and of all the domestic affections; you will see mothers refusing themselves every thing, in order to support their children, and widows who cannot be consoled for the loss of their husbands. Lately we have been witnesses of a touching struggle between an aged mother and her daughter, herself the mother of a numerous family. The mother had asked to be received into a hospital, and insisted upon obtaining this favor, in order not to be a burden, in her last days, with the infirmities she foresaw for herself, to a family already very much straitened. The daughter warmly solicited a refusal for her mother, desiring to take care of her herself, when this care should become necessary; and only counting as pleasures, the sacri-

fices which she imposed upon herself, to fulfil this pious duty.

An old soldier, made infirm by his wounds, with his wife and numerous children, had been taken home by a simple workman, the brother-in-law of the wife, who shared with them the fruits of his labor. This estimable man was killed. A few crowns only remained to these poor people; and they consecrated them to the procuring of a distinct grave, to receive the mortal remains of their benefactor, over which they often go to pray in memory of him.*

Who would think it? In the midst of poverty, a poor man still finds means to give, and takes pleasure in giving. He gives, — what? He gives his time; that time, which we often make him waste unnecessarily. He gives his time and cares to other unfortunate beings, and sacrifices to them a portion of the labor, from which he expects

* This workman, hardly twenty-five years old, and whose life, though short, was so admirable, was killed in Paris by a drunken soldier with a sabre, having gone into the midst of a scuffle to draw one of his friends out of it. His name was Monjoidin, born at the village of St Cyr. His brother-in-law is named Leprince, and now lives at Paris.

all his subsistence. Sometimes he even shares the charity he has received. One lends his arm to a cripple, another watches by the bed of a sick man. I know a woman, who, at the age of eighty, no longer able to walk, spins with a trembling hand; and having no other resource, gives hospitality in the little closet she occupies, to another poor person, who has neither abode nor asylum.* I know another, who received into his own bed, a friend afflicted with a terrible ulcer, and continued the exercise of self-devotion during the whole course of a long malady, till the day her companion descended into the tomb. I know the mother of a family, who succeeds in being, as it were, a sister of charity to other unfortunate women, lodged in the same house, because she preserves

* Madame Lenoir, rue Guisarde.— We could name many others, and even without quitting this little street. We ask permission to quote names sometimes; for we are not composing a fictitious story. We relate real facts, of which we might give numerous examples. We particularize them, in order that they may be verified. We do not fear being thought indiscreet; for these good people will never read the book where their names are written. Is there not some use in drawing virtues like these from the profound obscurity in which they are buried?

her health and strength, and the others are sick. She watches with them, lifts them, takes care of them, does errands for them, and in asking for her companions, forgets to ask for herself.

What a value have gifts and sacrifices in circumstances like these? Celestial charity! With what lustre does she appear, when she creates a power of being useful, amidst absolute want, belying the maxim, that *we do not give when we have not!* — How well did He know the secrets of virtue, who ranked the widow's mite above the largesses of the rich?

The poor are sometimes accused of being ungrateful. Let us look at this accusation. Have we ourselves no share in the guilt of this ingratitude, when, for the gifts which might touch the heart, we have substituted alms which humble the spirit; or, when, in the assistance we have granted, the poor man saw a concession torn from us by importunity, rather than the spontaneous impulse of true sympathy? It is heart alone which merits a return of heart. True generosity is an emanation of love; and the gratitude it excites, receives its noblest character, by becoming also the reward of love. If the poor man sees that you have been moved and affected by his condition, if his soul has entered

into communion with yours, he will know how to repay you with his affections a hundred fold, for the little which you have done for him! What favors could ever purchase that look of the unfortunate, which beams with new life at the presence of his benefactor; those eyes which are fixed on him full of tenderness, confidence, and respect; those prayers sent to heaven for his safety, when he is in danger?

A poor woman, the mother of a family, whose husband had been killed at the opera, had the misfortune lately to be made a cripple for the rest of her days. A carriage passed over her body. As she was going out of the hospital, with the assistance of her crutches, some one spoke to her of her fatal accident. She only answered by celebrating the goodness of a family which had come to her assistance when the accident took place, and had promised her the relief and assistance of which she might stand in need; and the benedictions, with which she loaded this family, shed over the features of this unfortunate woman a sort of gentle and serene joy. She seemed actually to be made happy by her gratitude! How I should have desired that the family, which was the object of

this sentiment, had been present to hear the touching expression of it.*

We require that the poor man should be moved by a deep sentiment of gratitude, when he receives the bounty which we extend to him, perhaps with coldness and disdain. But we do not take account of that uncontaminated honesty to which he remains faithful in the midst of the wants which press upon him. Should we not give him credit when, a witness of the abundance in which we live, and the luxury which surrounds us, he gives envy no access to his heart. At least, let us be able to acknowledge how honorable is that scrupulous delicacy, of which he often affords us the example! We frequently observe a certain reserve in his demands, from the fear of being indiscreet, or of diminishing the part reserved for his companions in misfortune. Among the convalescent that leave the hospital of Paris, who, by the very way in which they live there, show plainly, that their situation is not destitute, half will not ask to participate in the Montyon Legacy, and many refuse this assistance even when it is offered them. A laboring woman seventy-two years of age, having

* This family was that of Dr. R., physician of l'Hotel Dieu in Paris.

been sick all winter, had exhausted her last resources, and had placed at the Mont de Piété, all her effects, even to her bed. She did not reveal the secret of her distress till just before the end of two quarters' rent, when she acknowledged, that she could not discharge it by her labor. Let us render homage to this sense of character, which maintains itself in the bosom of so much humiliation, and which knows how to preserve the sentiment of the common dignity of our nature; and let us be grateful to it for reminding us of the respect due to it, and the especial respect due to misfortune, when we were about to forget it!

Do not let any one mistake the object of the considerations which occupy us here. We do not pretend to maintain, that virtue is more frequent among the poor than among the rich. We limit ourselves to the assertion, that virtue is at least much more frequent among the former, than is generally suspected at the usual distance from the theatre of observation. We intend above all to make it felt, that virtue, in the lower conditions of life, is much more real, and therefore more meritorious, and more worthy of admiration. For in the first place, as we have just seen, its practice is much more difficult; and again, circumstances

seem to lend to beings placed in this situation less strength for the struggle, of which virtue is the prize. In most cases they have received but a very defective education; they have participated less than ourselves in the exercises calculated to develope the moral sentiments, and in the knowledge, which instructs us in our duties, and reveals to us the advantages attached to the accomplishment of these duties. In the solitude to which they are condemned, they are hardly supported by examples, encouraged by exhortations, guided by counsels, or animated by the sweets of friendship. They have not that resource, which comes in so many ways to charm and temper our griefs, namely, the power of turning away the mind from their circumstances. Nothing diverts them from the sorrows which prey upon them. Every thing around them has a gloomy and sombre tint, and is in sorrowful harmony with their situation. Their very abode often resembles a dungeon. They are not, like us, assisted by the power of opinion, and constrained by the presence of spectators to preserve an honorable appearance. They must draw from themselves alone the strength which they need. Having nothing to expect from without, they have only their own consciences for witnesses.

Yet let us not exaggerate. Some of the circumstances we have enumerated, have their advantages. It is the very habit of suffering privations, a habit which has tempered their souls, which has accustomed them to command themselves. Besides, they belong generally to the class which supposes assiduous and painful labor. Now labor is in itself a very salutary preparation for the practice of virtue, disposing man to order, perseverance, and temperance. It is a sort of moral gymnastics, accustoming the creature to walk with docility in the way marked out by the Creator, and to look upon himself as the instrument of the will of Heaven. But these advantages of the unfortunate do not take from their title to esteem; and although they serve to explain to us how these beings can rise to actions almost heroic, they do not diminish their value in the eyes of the sage. It is true that misfortune is a great school, and as instructive as it is severe. But all do not profit by its instructions; and to know how to receive and apply them, is the highest of human attainments.

Misfortune, supported with dignity and resignation, imparts also the highest instruction to him who is the witness of it. It tells him more than

looks can do, and leaves deeper impressions. Thus the poor whom our frivolity had perhaps disdained, become our instructers. They cover us with salutary confusion, by teaching us how far we are from being as good as we supposed ourselves to be. This is one of the most precious rewards reserved for us, if we have the courage to visit assiduously the dwellings of the poor ; and in this single lesson, we shall receive a hundred fold for the benefits of which we have been the instrument. We shall return to our homes better men. We shall have acquired new light, and new strength. For would not such examples excite lively emulation, and make the practice of virtue seem more easy to us? Would not the evils of which we complain become lighter? Often a simple and ingenuous word which escapes from some patient martyr will become to us the text of deep meditation. We shall learn, in presence of these modest virtues, to free ourselves from that vanity and pride, which too often corrupt our best actions. We shall learn two very important and difficult things, to the study of which we are but too reluctantly brought; we shall learn *how to suffer* and *how to die.*

CHAPTER V.

VICES AND MORAL AMELIORATION OF THE POOR.

We have spoken of the virtues of the poor. But we must not conceal the fact, that they are exposed to the contagion of vice; and that there are vices with which they are particularly threatened. We must study these moral maladies, that we may learn how to prevent, or, at least, how to remedy them. For such is one of the duties, and perhaps the most important duty, confided to the visitor of the poor.

As virtue is much more necessary to the poor, to render their condition supportable, and preserve to them the means of drawing on the resources which may yet remain to them; so vice aggravates in every way their painful situation, and ends by rendering it desperate.

Beside the misfortunes caused by events and the chances of human life, there are many which are the unfortunate consequence of misconduct; and the same cause which has produced them will increase their extent and perpetuate their du-

ration. In such instances, to remedy the maladies of the soul, is to remedy in part the consequent misery. When a poor man foolishly dissipates the few resources which remain to him, loses his time, and ruins his health; he digs for himself the abyss in which he is to be swallowed up. Any outward relief we bring to such an individual is superfluous; he would perhaps abuse it. To relieve him efficiently it is necessary to reform him. What is the use of clothing him, if we cannot keep him from despoiling himself? In vain we open to him the path of safety, if we do not enable him to direct himself in it.

While the destruction of moral character multiplies and prolongs physical evils, it also renders the suffering from them more lively and cruel; and is not man so much the more unfortunate, the more he feels his poverty? Without inward consolation, he is irritated against Providence, exasperated towards his fellow men, and becomes troublesome to himself. Losing confidence in his own dignity, he loses the courage which made his distress tolerable. His blind agitation fixes more deeply the arrow with which he was wounded. His heart shuts itself to hope, and all peaceful and gentle sentiments. He condemns himself to

real punishment; for he is forced to acknowledge that he deserves what he suffers; and this terrible truth, whose weight is not alleviated by repentance, overwhelms him entirely. He is guilty towards himself, and his just punishment is his crime.

But what do I hear? Some one stops me, and says; "The man does not deserve to be assisted, whose misfortunes are the fruit of vice, and who perseveres in his ignominy; he only suffers what he has deserved, and has wilfully brought upon himself; let us reserve our bounty for those who are worthy of it." Who is this inflexible, inexorable, ferocious moralist, from whose mouth issues this terrible sentence? If the victim of vice is the author of his own misfortunes, can I not do him a still more signal benefit, if I succeed in delivering him from the errors which have ruined him? Shall I renounce the ministry which is confided to me, because it may become still more useful? shall I only have compassion for external miseries? Shall I be indifferent to those of the soul? The more horror we have of vice, and the more esteem we have for virtue, the more zeal we shall employ in extending the conquest of virtue over vice. What do you tell me? Shall I have done

a less laudable action, because society, counting one unhappy individual less, will at the same time count one honest man more?

He who devotes himself to the touching office of relieving the poor, will comprehend that Providence has called him to a still nobler duty. By affording him favorable opportunities to shed upon a fertile soil the salutary influences of morality, it has confided to him a sort of apostleship. In the world, many circumstances are opposed to direct instruction, which, besides, would usually destroy its own end. But here it is otherwise; the unfortunate being to whom charity has led us, is perhaps friendless; perhaps no voice has made him understand the gentle and salutary words which morality makes use of as medicines for inward evils; our presence alone, if we bring him encouragement and assistance, will dispose him to be affected by us, and to conceive, and to feel that there is for human beings an order of things superior to material life; the interest we show for him will give authority to the counsels inspired by our tender solicitude for his fate. The heart is prepared to comprehend God and virtue, when it opens to consolation and hope. Let not the visitor of the poor be then merely a distributer of

alms! let him become a guide and true friend to the poor! let him elevate in his own eyes the being cast off by the world and humbled by the frivolous disdain of hard hearts! let him reveal to him all the dignity and value of the advantages which are hidden under the sad circumstances of poverty!

The advantages of adversity are great in the eyes of religion and morality. Jesus Christ teaches us that the poor and forsaken are the favorites of God, a sublime revelation which alone would have been sufficient to make the Gospel blessed by all the earth! Philosophy and morality make us recognise in all the ills of life, trials which exercise and prepare us to become better, — a harsh but salutary education, which has for its end our reformation, our self-government, the destruction of selfishness in its first beginnings, and our preparation for sympathy with our brethren. Penetrated with these views, we shall approach the poor man with a sentiment of respect; our regard will make him comprehend what he is perhaps ignorant of, his true situation in the world, the rank which he occupies, and the prospects that await him. Oh! *if he only knew the gift of God! blessed are the poor, blessed*

are they that mourn! The admirable mystery contained in these words it is difficult for the unfortunate being to understand, who is still a captive in the narrow circle of sensual life; but it begins to reveal itself in the presence of charity. In the benevolence with which he sees himself approached by a good man, he perceives a ray of that supreme goodness which seeks out, calls, and adopts him.

If, as is too often the case, we find it impossible to diminish his troubles, at least we will assist him in rendering them useful; and if he knew how to contemplate them under this aspect, they would already be less bitter. To learn to bear suffering is more than to be relieved. But the sufferer is hardly disposed to receive such instruction except from the mouth of him who relieves him; he more easily believes him whose benevolence he experiences. If he hears harsh maxims upon the utility of grief, pronounced by those who do not console him, he is too apt to think that resignation is preached to him only to avoid the necessity of giving him assistance, and that we wish to accustom him to his sad fate because we can give him no hope of relief. Those can converse with him upon the designs of Providence, who are the

sensible organs of Providence to him; and may assist him in discovering the treasures which are offered him, and in seizing that crown which is reserved for him! What is there more terrible to him who mourns, than to mourn in vain? What is there more beautiful than to find in the most harsh and mysterious sufferings, a means of perfection and a matter of triumph? The former is the misfortune which the visitor of the poor may turn aside, the latter is a benefit which he may add to all others.

But in the designs of Providence, adversity is not only a trial destined to render us better, by the exercise of patience; it is also a correction destined to punish our faults, and to reform our vices, and in this double relation it is equally a great and salutary means of moral education.

Suffering and privation tend to make man enter into himself and suggest to him grave and serious reflections. If he obeys this useful inspiration, if he examines himself with severity, if he lets the voice of repentance rise from the bottom of his heart, he will accept this just chastisement of his faults; he will shake off the chains in which vice held him captive; he will feel that, having allowed the moral dignity of our nature to be degraded

in his person, through a want of self-government, he can only restore himself by resuming self-government; he will comprehend that adversity is precisely the spur to excite him to attempt this great internal revolution, that the constraint which is imposed upon him from without, by imperious necessity, teaches him to exercise over himself and over his inclinations, that voluntary constraint in which consists the reform demanded by virtue.

Let not a blind and ill understood bounty, on the part of those who relieve indigence, cause those great lessons sent by Providence to be misunderstood, or their fruits to be lost! Let us rather enter ourselves into this thought, but with the reserve and indulgence imposed upon us by a sense of our own imperfection and the charity which we owe to our brethren. Let us indirectly second the harsh instruction which the poor man is to receive; let us second it in proportion as it is necessary to him, and as his distress is more particularly the consequence of his faults.

Unfortunately, if there are vices which engender poverty, there are also vices which poverty engenders; distinct in their causes, they are confounded in their effects; the eye of the visitor of the poor ought to discriminate them; he ought

also to unravel the painful and reciprocal reaction which they exercise over each other.

Intemperance and idleness are the two vices which most generally engender misery. The former produces it in two different ways; by impairing the health and by dissipating the resources; it has also the serious consequence of enfeebling the reason and degrading the character. Unfortunately, in the poorer conditions of society, men condemned to painful labors and deprived of the pleasures of intellect, and all those enjoyments procured by the intercourse of society, often become too greedy of sensual pleasures; they seek in them a relief from *ennui*, and take pleasure in the deadening effect they produce, while their want of foresight conceals from them the fatal consequences which must spring from them. Let us pity them; they feel the need of emotions, and seek it in excesses. Shut out from the intellectual, they plunge into the animal life. How should this sad experience make us feel the value of public education, properly directed! and how should it condemn the cruel and absurd maxims of the proud sophists who would devote these large classes of society to brutality and ignorance!

Idleness often arises partly from temperament; but it always supposes previous habits of negligence, and especially neglected education. It is in youth, and even in childhood, that the taste for labor must be contracted. Then, in satisfying the desire of activity which is natural to us, the habit of labor may be acquired, and it becomes in its turn a second education. But, if, from infancy, the physical and moral faculties have been idle, if the effeminate pleasures of indolence have exercised their fatal charm, if the first years of life have passed without the springs of the soul being kept in exercise by assiduous and regular application, labor will inspire only repugnance and disgust; we shall soon have less aptitude for it, and apathy will bring in its train negligence, want of foresight, and disorder.

Intemperance often produces indolence, by the general relaxation it occasions in the character; idleness often opens the access to licentiousness, and seductions multiply to him who is given up to it. Besides these two vices have this in common, that they enfeeble the energy of the will, and the authority which man ought to exercise over his own actions.

The poverty to which these vices rapidly conduct, is their natural punishment; and it would thus seem that it ought to correct them; repressing inperance by privations, and waking from lethargy by the spur of want. However, the efficaciousness of the remedy is far from being infallible; the malady resists it, when it is inveterate. There are no vices more difficult to cure than those whose character it is to destroy moral energy, and to degrade the dignity of our nature by delivering us up to the slavery of the senses.

There is a degree of degradation so great, that misery itself, though it takes away the means of satisfying intemperance, still increases the fatal avidity which leads to this kind of excess. The corrupt and degenerate being, not only will not be drawn from the mire, but losing every remnant of a sense of character will not even blush any more; he will seek, in the fatal intoxication of the debauch, to lose the sense of his own miseries, and turn his thoughts from the future which awaits him. He will snatch from his wife and children the bread which was destined for them; he will sell or pledge the little which remains to them; he will consume to-day the resources which were to provide for them to-morrow, and will thus end by becoming unnatural.

Poverty brings discouragement upon weak minds; abandoned by fortune, they also abandon themselves. They despair of the future; they neither count upon the course of events, nor the assistance of others, nor upon their own strength. Their ideas are confounded, their will is stupefied. The dejection, which is painted in their features, announces the inward sinking of their faculties. They no longer know how to act; they are no longer capable of vigorous resolutions; they neglect the smallest cares, even those of order and neatness in their clothes, in their families, in the education of their children; and the neglect increases. To the idleness of inefficiency succeeds the idleness of despair; the poor being only retains the power to implore the pity of others; he is ready to accept his shame, to embrace the condition of a beggar, although still capable of labor, which you offer him as a resource, but from which he turns away.

It is certainly a difficult undertaking to snatch the poor man from a yoke so shameful, when he is, as it were, stupefied. But we are never permitted to despair of the cure of moral maladies. There is not one absolutely incurable. In many points of view, the visitor of the poor seems more

particularly called upon to coöperate in the cure; for it may depend in part on the wise distribution of charity.

The greatest service which can be rendered to the poor, by those who are interested in their fate, is certainly to employ every means to revive their courage and energy. We do not hesitate to affirm that such service will be more useful than the most abundant alms-giving. It will restore to them the activity of mind and body necessary for using the resources which remain, and even for creating new ones. By weakening their sense of their misery it will make them less unhappy. By reëstablishing them in their own eyes, by giving them some confidence in themselves, it will preserve them from a thousand faults which would aggravate their situation. But to obtain a moral restoration so difficult, we cannot arm ourselves with too much constancy; we shall ourselves need much courage; it will sometimes be necessary to unite severe firmness with an inexhaustible benevolence.

It would be contrary to humanity to show ourselves so inexorable towards the indigent, who are a prey to intemperance and idleness, as to refuse them all kinds of assistance; and it would indeed defeat the end we ought to propose to our-

selves. But it is allowable, it is just, it is useful, to give charity upon conditions; and to proportion it, in a degree, to the merits of those who receive it; to require that he, to whom we lend support, should also endeavour to assist himself, or at least not destroy the good we wish to do him. Without becoming barbarous, the visitor of the poor may show himself severe. He will become more indulgent in proportion as he sees some attempt at reform; he will encourage and reward efforts. He will also apply himself to so managing assistance, that the indigent may abuse it as little as possible. He will not give them money, but necessary articles; which he will furnish from day to day. He will hold them in suspense, not pledging himself for the morrow. He will constantly watch over the conduct of the sick; a look from him will serve for warning, reprimand, or encouragement. The poor man, who feels himself thus watched, will fear to lose his protection, and will not perhaps be insensible to the hope of deserving it.

Many of the poor resemble children, in ignorance, want of foresight, and levity. Like children, they sometimes need to feel correction and reward, provided these are applied with entire justice. There is nothing better calculated to oblige the

slave of bad habits to return to himself, by salutary reflection. This regimen, prudently applied, will lead the poor man to discover in the misery of his condition the consequence and punishment of his faults, and to accept it and profit by it. The best of lessons to a man, are those which come to him from his own mind.

In order to begin to make such degraded beings understand useful truths, we are unfortunately reduced to the necessity of speaking to them the language of their own interest, and often that of their lowest interest. Now this language is naturally found in the mouth of him who really, with a sincere solicitude, watches over their interests; and this circumstance sometimes gives credit to his words. He is clothed with a sort of perceptible and incontestable authority, that which results from the dependence upon him of the poor man who invokes his support.

The mere presence of a good man, when he approaches him who has fallen into the abysses of corruption, exercises over the miserable being an insensible but salutary influence. It is like a ray of new light which penetrates into the darkest obscurity; it is an emanation of a pure atmosphere which is introduced into an infectious abode.

Indeed, can virtue present itself under a form more fit to make it recognised and respected by those who had lost the memory of it, than when it appears preceded by beneficence, surrounded by hope, and giving us examples for our instruction? Where is the man depraved enough, not to feel some emotion at contemplating its image under such an aspect? He will begin by blessing it; will he not finish by understanding and desiring to follow it? Unfortunate man! wake from this sleep of death, in which thy soul is buried; raise thy brow, contemplate that good man who advances towards thee! Dost thou not feel, in spite of the immense distance which is between you, that he is still thy brother? Does not this noble consanguinity show thee, in the very bosom of misery, the dignity of that common nature in which thou participatest, although thou hast so little understood it? Dost thou not see that there is for the human creature another existence than vegetative and brutal life? Dost thou not feel that what renders thy misery humiliating, is that thou addest degradation of character to the want of earthly goods; but that it would become respectable, if thou didst worthily support this trial? Ah! do not resist the secret voice which makes

itself heard within, and which solicits thee to escape from the shipwreck. Return to the sense of thy duty, and serene days may yet shine upon thee.

It is especially with regard to intemperance and debauchery, that corporal privation and sufferings may have a salutary effect. It is rare that such vices have been reformed without the assistance of such chastisement; which has, moreover, the advantage of breaking up the habits. But we cannot expect reform from the mere efficacy of privations and sufferings, if there is not, in addition to them, some moral influence, which may explain and make them fruitful, and which, while the senses suffer correction, may rekindle, in the bottom of the soul, the flame of conscience. Idleness also demands harsh and rough treatment; it must feel the law of necessity; it is useful for a sudden and piercing spur to arouse it suddenly from its stupor. The calculations of interest may be united to a sense of duty; but, whatever pretended sages say, this interest alone, however evident and however urgent it may be, is not sufficient to restore inward life to a being thus paralyzed; morality is necessary to combine a new interest with material interest, and the governing sense of duty

must be developed, to induce him to take care of himself.

The moral malady of discouragement demands particular care and regard; it even demands delicate and attentive management. In this case it is only to the soul that it is necessary to bring assistance. Let us first of all avoid humbling it, or increasing its despair, by the excessive severity of our censures. Let us first dissipate the thick and gloomy cloud of sadness which envelopes the unfortunate man, who is overwhelmed by adversity; let even the objects, which meet his eye, be as much as possible adapted to restore to him some serenity, and to produce pleasant impressions. Let us compassionate his weakness without indulging it. Let us listen to him with patience when he is irritated, and abandons himself to depicting and even exaggerating his trials. By learning to confide in another, he will be preparing to have some confidence in himself. It will be necessary at first to lend him external support in order to begin to raise him up a little. Then we must by degrees restore to him the consciousness of his own strength, by making him try it. We will show him by our indulgence, that he can recover his self-esteem. If we suc-

ceed in reëstablishing him in his own eyes, we shall have restored to him his will; we shall have taught him that he can still struggle and conquer. Goodness of heart has wonderful secrets by which to penetrate hearts. It has magic powers to resuscitate the principles of life; it is the messenger of hope.

In our conversations with these poor people, the most efficacious means of penetrating them with useful truths, and suggesting to them good resolutions, consists in citing them examples, provided these examples are taken from situations entirely analogous to that in which they are found. Thus you may begin by first exciting their attention, and this first step not being the least difficult, they become interested in your story; they comprehend you; they conceive the possibility of accomplishing what you advise them. Imitation exercises peculiar influence over the unenlightened. Be careful not to forget, in your recital, any of the circumstances calculated to produce a distinct image; the place, the day, the name, the countenance, even the abode of the persons. If you can call a third person to confirm this recital, if you can show the individuals, you will interest still more. But do not rest contented

with a single example; do not seem to demand any thing extraordinary; the idea of heroes sometimes frightens the weak.

Unfortunately, we often meet, in this very limited class, individuals, whom the want of education and gross habits have reduced to the narrowest circle of ideas; or whose intellectual faculties have been enfeebled by misery. Apathy of character is then the consequence of a lethargy of the reason; nothing is more afflicting than such a spectacle. What patience will not be necessary to restore to such beings a little vital warmth? But the office of visitor of the poor is an office of patience.

The vicious poor may be divided into two great classes, those who have passed the threshold of shame, and those who have not. There is little to be hoped from the first; but even if our efforts are to be fruitless, we will not hesitate to make a trial, to persevere. Perhaps we shall prevent farther corruption; at least they will be restrained by our watchful care. As to the second, intercourse with a good man is one of the most powerful preservatives against the danger of degradation. For the time, there is a powerful motive to make generous resolutions. Nothing

is desperate; and great rewards are held out to zeal.

There is a third class, and it comprehends the greatest number; it is that of the poor who float between vice and virtue; whose thoughts are exclusively absorbed by the necessities of life, who vegetate without rendering themselves guilty, but without acquiring any merit; —in short, those who are not in moral life. This moral life is the revelation which we are charged to carry to them; it is a light to be shed, an education to be undertaken. But here we shall only have to struggle against inattention and ignorance. In this being, who lives, moves, and suffers, is hidden another superior being, who sleeps; a being capable of the highest sentiment, and of immortal thoughts. It is the latter we must awaken and put in possession of his faculties.

Let us not lose sight of the unfortunate being, the care of whom we have taken up, especially when he finds himself in any crisis which renders his condition still more painful; or when his character is preparing him for extreme resolutions. Let us watch over him when he is threatened by the storms of despair. Perhaps in the cruel agonies he feels, he has thought of destroying himself!

The friend appears, discovers upon his brow something wandering and ferocious. He cannot succeed at first in making himself heard. He is repulsed, yet he is not discouraged; he seizes upon some circumstances calculated to act upon the mind of the unfortunate one; a funeral, for example, passes under their eyes. "Thou seest this bier; it contains the remains of a young, rich, and beautiful woman; a cruel malady attacked her; she suffered horrible torments; her palace resounded with her cries; she expired. Behind her bier, behold her desolate husband; he says to himself, as thou dost, but more justly, that he cannot survive his misfortune. Ah! undeceive thyself; thou art not the only unhappy one on this earth. The sharp and rending arrows of suffering penetrate on all sides, even to him whose apparent felicity thou enviest."

Perhaps the visitor of the poor will not have to go far to seek the example of great misfortunes; who is there that has not his own misfortunes to relate? "Unfortunate man! thou turnest thine eyes upon thy children! Knowest thou what it costs me to contemplate them? Well, listen! I also had children! one after another they have been taken from me; one after another they

have expired in my arms. Of what importance to me, is this fortune which remains to me? All the hope, all the consolation of my old age is taken from me; there is no more happiness for me on earth, I sigh for the tomb. — Ah! cast a look upon these sweet creatures, for whom there is still a future, and cease to accuse Heaven. Take courage, and thou art assisted! take courage, and thou wilt revive; and, in thy mediocrity, thou wilt be more happy than I can be."

And certainly in order to fulfill this noble mission, we must not remain strangers to the practice of excellence. How can we teach virtue if we are not penetrated by its lessons? Thus the career of charity we have embraced is a new advantage to us; it will bind us to our duties by new ties; we also shall become better for it, without perceiving it; we cannot give counsels to others, without coming back upon ourselves, and we shall feel besides that the best counsels are examples. Sometimes a man of the world, in fulfilling the functions of visitor of the poor, will attempt to speak thus. "Thou thinkest it impossible to triumph over thyself, and to become again a good man! Well! listen to me; I have been young, I was long carried away by my passions; they

were perhaps different from thine, but still were violent. They had enslaved me ; I committed many faults ; but at last I reflected and heard the voice of truth and duty ; I hesitated, wished, and had hard struggles ; but I freed myself, and now I rejoice : Courage ! courage ! it depends upon thyself to wake to virtue and to become better than I am.

CHAPTER VI.

MEANS OF OBTAINING THE CONFIDENCE OF THE POOR.

To promote the moral improvement of the poor, or even to do any thing effectual for the relief of their physical wants, we must obtain their confidence: but in this there are some difficulties.

The poor will sometimes seek to deceive you. The sense of want disposes to falsehood; the weak are apt to seek assistance from cunning. Such can hardly avoid concealing their own faults, and exaggerating their wants, in the presence of those who seem able to relieve them. If you are not able to verify the facts they allege, the more they will flatter themselves that they can deceive you. And having real need of your pity, they think the false pictures they present to you are only an allowable oratorical artifice, to fix your attention and interest your feelings.

There are, on the contrary, others whom timidity induces to hide from us their true situation; for what cause produces timidity more frequently than

misfortune? They have not the courage to raise the veil which envelopes so many miseries; the sight of our luxury and abundance imposes upon them; they blush for their miseries; they fear to try our patience; they fear that their voice will be troublesome to us in the midst of our enjoyments. Sometimes a respectable sense of character inspires them with this reserve; they do not wish to expose themselves to our disdain. Sometimes an exaggerated though commendable delicacy, leads them to disguise their wants, as long as they can hope to provide for them without external aid.

In general the differences of condition and fortune, raise between men a wall of separation, that prevents intimate communication. Confidence, like friendship, supposes a certain equality; it supposes some return, or at least a possibility of return. To confide in another it is necessary to be certain of being understood; it is necessary then to speak the same language, to be subject to the same impressions, to be placed in the same points of view. But what is there in common between a poor man, who has received little education, who has passed his life in the toils of labor, who lives amidst privations of every kind, and the prosperous man of the world, who is

weary of pleasures, whose least desires are anticipated? Hardly does the former recognise in the latter a being that belongs to the same nature. Perhaps unconsciously, a secret germ of envy is developed in the heart of this unfortunate being at the sight of one who is loaded with the gifts of fortune, and if it does not lead him to bitterness, at least it prevents him from opening his heart freely. What sympathy can he hope from a being who never has felt any sufferings like his? What attention can he hope will be given to details, which, although to himself of the utmost importance, to such an auditor are absolutely without interest? He is put under constaint by the superiority which chance alone has granted to another man, and by the kind of authority which this circumstance lends to that man over his destiny; by the dependence in which he finds himself; and by the idea of the examination, of which he is about to become the object. He scarcely supposes it possible that the favorite of fortune is exempt from pride and vanity; and nothing is more repelling than a suspicion of this nature. Even if he recognises the virtues of him who comes to his assistance, he perhaps feels constraint from the idea of those very virtues, and from foreseeing

the efforts which will be made to produce his reformation.

Such then are the barriers between the visitor of the poor and the poor man, although it is so necessary that they should understand each other.

It is not in one day that we can triumph over all these obstacles, nor is it by one class of means that we shall surmount difficulties of a nature so different.

The liar may be known by his affirmative tone, his affected assurance, and the abundance of his words; by the precaution he takes to avoid all verification of the facts he alleges, by his eagerness to come to visit us, by the pretexts he employs to spare us the trouble of unexpected visits which we would make him. Let us be suspicious of every demand whose object is announced as so urgent that it does not leave time for reflection and examination. Let us be suspicious of every recital too well arranged not to have been prepared beforehand and learnt in some degree by heart. Let us compare all the circumstances. Let us be at the very heels of him who wishes to take us by surprise; if necessary, let us make him fall, in his turn, into some snare, in which his falsehood may be brought to light, in order that he

may be covered with a salutary confusion. It is painful to say it; but daily experience forces us to acknowledge, that, too often, the poor affect great exactness in their religious observances, to make the benevolent more favorable to them. It is by penetrating into their internal history, by studying their domestic relations, and their conduct as neighbours, and by examining the use they make of their time, that we unmask their hypocrisy. Whatever may be the just importance we attach to religious duties, let us not make their observance so much a condition of our favor, that the poor man who accosts us, shall think himself obliged to begin by an apology for his neglect of them; let us not give him reason to suppose that the performance of such duties can excuse the neglect of any others.

A too easy kindness may become an encouragement to falsehood. It is then necessary to know how to restrain our own impulses, and sometimes not to show ourselves too quickly affected, although it is painful to guard ourselves against our own hearts. To unmask falsehood, we may feign for an instant to be duped; but to correct it, it is necessary to convince a liar, that far from finding any advantage in deceiving, there is nothing to

be hoped, but from scrupulous veracity. When the inclination to deceive among the poor announces a depth of baseness, let us preserve a calm and measured dignity; let us impress them, if possible, with a respect which may repress the abuse they make of speech; let them see us attentive, careful to verify facts, and always just in our conduct towards them. Equity calls forth truth; indeed they are sisters.

But let us beware of arming ourselves with these precautions in regard to those who do not deserve our suspicions. When we meet with those interesting poor who dare not reveal all the secrets of their misfortunes, let us not be in haste to wrest from them their confidence by indiscreet curiosity; let us fear to wound them; let us respect the modesty in which they envelope their misery; let them see that we honor in them both misfortune and the dignity with which they support it. Let us not violate the asylum in which they have taken refuge; let them open it to us themselves; let us question them but little; let us wait till they are ready to speak to us. Oh! who could pardon himself for having humbled or offended a sufferer by an injurious doubt? On the contrary let us raise him in his own eyes by our regard and by the

testimony of our esteem! We must be able, on proper occasions, to believe him upon his word; and to avoid that, which, under the form of charity, would express suspicion.

We cannot prescribe to ourselves too particularly, to observe respect in our manners and language towards those poor whose moral character is not degraded. This regard is due in the first place, to the dignity of human nature, which their misery cannot change; and it is due, also, to their patience and courage. By raising them in their own eyes their courage will be sustained; the bitterness of their sorrows calmed; they will be drawn near to us; and receive a certain and delicate proof of our benevolence; for benevolence is counted upon only when it is felt to be united with esteem. It is doubtless impossible to destroy entirely, in the minds of the poor, the impressions produced by the difference of situation in which Providence has respectively placed them and us. But we can weaken these impressions, by not dwelling too much upon the circumstances of this contrast. We should not call them to be witnesses of our luxury and pleasures. In this point of view, as in many others, there will be a great advantage in going to their houses rather than in

receiving them at ours; taking care at the same time that access to our houses shall never be denied them. Allowing them to approach us with facility every time they have need of us, prevents the most painful kind of humiliation, that which arises from the apprehension of meeting a rebuff. But the visit we make to the poor man, in his own dwelling, fills up this artificial gulf much better. There, it is with his situation alone that we are both occupied; there he finds us much better disposed to listen to him; there he sees in the conversation we hold with him, not mere condescension on our part, but the testimony of sincere interest. Let nothing in our manners or expressions betray repugnance and disgust on our part, at the sight of the rags of misery. Let nothing announce either the affectation of fastidious charity, making a merit of this effort, or the researches of suspicious investigation, or the secret springs of a vanity which thinks it stoops by such intercourse! Every thing, in this visit, must preserve on our part the most natural character and the simplest forms. How much will these good people be affected! With what marks of attention will our arrival be welcomed! How radiant with joy will they be at having

us with them as their guest, even while exclaiming against the fatigue we have felt, and the sad reception they are reduced to the necessity of giving us in their miserable abode.

Whatever may be the difference of ranks, let us, as much as is in our power, feel ourselves and make them feel the ties of religious and moral brotherhood. If the poor man sees us sincerely convinced of these sacred relations, which unite all the members of the human family, he will be more sensible of them himself, and better able to find the means of entering into communion with us. *We must really love him;* this is the whole secret. Misfortune has a truly wonderful instinct in discerning and recognising the affection which is addressed to it. Let him never be able to fear troubling us by his complaints! Let us listen to him, not only with patience, but with favorable attention; it is one of the traits by which benevolence best manifests itself. Let us not require too much of him; let us not refuse to enter into the smallest details; paternal solicitude neglects nothing. We must know how to pardon excusable faults, in the midst of so many unfavorable circumstances. Who would dare to open his heart without reserve, to tell and confess every thing, if he were

not sure of the indulgence of the listener? Let us put ourselves in the place of the poor man, let us speak his language, let us imagine that we have his habits, let us show ourselves seriously occupied with all his interests; especially let us associate ourselves with the interests of his heart! A caress bestowed upon the children will open the heart of the mother; perhaps then she will be drawn into telling you a portion of the griefs which sadden her; she will relate to you different circumstances of her life; she will show you the details of her little family; she will consult you upon her fears and her projects; she will find herself relieved at the same time that she is enlightened; she will not fear you so much again. Rejoice at having obtained this gentle victory over her! Do not endeavour to know every thing immediately, but do not let this happy disposition cool; return soon, resume naturally the course of these conversations. They have already produced their fruits, for you have been better enabled to give useful assistance; hereafter she will be at ease with you. Oh! what a moment is that, in which a heart overwhelmed with so many sorrows, can at last open itself with freedom to a heart which listens to it and compassionates it!

What consolation to the sufferer! What reward to him who relieves! It is as if a new power had appeared upon earth, to protect humanity against the attacks of grief.

Even if the poor man is not overwhelmed with a sense of the difference of situations, but preserves his self-respect, — yet he will perhaps inevitably retain an impression of it. But this may have a useful effect, giving us a certain authority which we shall sometimes need, to lend more credit to our counsels. It is necessary to the good order of society that the poorer classes should learn to behold the more prosperous conditions without a feeling of bitterness, and to respect the distance which Providence has established between the different ranks in society; this is absolutely necessary to the repose of those who belong to the least favored conditions. When he is disposed therefore to witness without bitterness the ease in which we live, and to feel only the sentiment inspired by a pure good will, let him approach us more nearly. From the same motives we should be careful that our condescension for the poor do not degenerate into familiarity, by which we should lose a portion of the power we exercise over them for their advantage. They

will receive more advantage from us when recognising our superiority; if we should descend to their level, they would, perhaps, abuse our condescension. The poor on many accounts are like children; they have want of foresight, and are ignorant; they easily allow themselves to be carried away; they need to be supported, restrained, directed; they need more than a benefactor, they need an instructer, whose character may never be mistaken by them.

Let us beware, however, of lavishing exhortation upon them; and let us not abandon ourselves too much to our zeal. A few words spoken at the right moment, in a natural manner, will take root if they are met by a favorable disposition of mind. But long speeches and sermons would most frequently oppose our end. He who is hungry and thirsty, listens with little patience to treatises upon morality. Let us act first, and then reason. Besides, in the poorer conditions of society, minds are more struck, in general, by simple and concise expressions, and are even incapable of fixing their attention for a long time. Above all, we must avoid exposing the sublime instructions of morality to being received with disgust and lassitude. Let us measure the extent of our counsels by the ca-

pacities of those who are to receive them; let us avoid the pedantic forms which would chill and repel them; let us make plain the truths we wish to inculcate, without allowing them to lose any thing of the dignity which is to conciliate their respect. Let the poor man always see in our severest opinions, a testimony of the affection we bear him.

It is an art then to regulate our relations with the poor. If we suppose, that with that class of individuals we can give ourselves up to the impressions of the moment, we are as much deceived as if we should think it possible to act in respect to them by uniform and general rules. Rules vary according to the education of the poor with whom we have intercourse, and as their habits are more or less gross. They also vary according to the age and sex. Old age united to misery, deserves singular regard; infirmity gives special titles to indulgence.

A certain experience of this kind of intercourse can alone teach the manner of so conducting it in all the different circumstances as to obtain either the confidence of the poor, or at least the moral authority which would be useful to them. But the habit of communication with the poor may in its turn lead to some false ways of seeing and

acting; there are some poor so shameless and degraded, that the disgust and loathing they inspire, extend to all who have the same external appearance. If we have often been deceived, we may also become suspicious to excess. Sometimes we cannot defend ourselves from the sad impressions inspired by the sight of ingratitude. Sometimes we are discouraged, by the failure of our repeated efforts to snatch a poor man from the indulgence of his fatal passions, and we too easily despair of cure. We are too easily encouraged about some things; we follow routine too much in others; we pronounce too promptly from our own inferences; we think ourselves able to judge by a glance; we cease to scrutinize with the same care, confiding too much in the experience we have acquired.

One of the dangers which we must chiefly avoid in our intercourse with the poor, is the facility of allowing ourselves to be deceived by favorable or unfavorable prejudices. Those who devote themselves to the honorable office of relieving poverty, too often conceive certain predilections, and equally blind aversions. The tone, the air, the manners of the poor, may excite these capricious dispositions, of which we

do not render to ourselves an account, and which we should unwillingly confess to ourselves. These preferences result often in real injustice; they often reward the cunning and the intriguing. Besides, the poor man who is suffering under external disadvantages, is only the more to be pitied. When these preferences are perceived and felt by the poor, they produce the most fatal impressions; they embolden the cunning; they repulse those who wish to make themselves known; they sometimes excite sad animosities among the indigent; they take away from the gifts of charity, the character which was to make them recognised as such, and blessed in their source.

The visitor of the poor must expect to reap a constant mixture of pain and pleasure. He will often perceive sad mistakes; he will find the poor man, whom he wished to relieve, conspire against his generous designs, convert remedies into poisons, disconcert the wisest foresight, and sometimes return benefits with ill will. He will be afflicted to find souls so degraded, that nothing can snatch them from ignominy; so insensible and unnatural, that no affection can move them. We must resign ourselves to these hard experiences, that our zeal may not be cooled. But

what is the recompense? To see nature revive in spring and deck itself with flowers, is a spectacle less sweet, than to see human beings awake to virtue. Is such a power granted to man? can such a resurrection be our work?

CHAPTER VII.

EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR.

THE more we study the causes of indigence, the more we perceive that want of education is the chief cause of poverty, as well as of crime. One of the greatest services we can render the poor, then, is to preserve their children from so fatal an influence. A good education will enable these children to support and console their parents. Does it not belong to our mission also to extend our solicitude to the whole family, and to aid the parents in fulfilling one of their first duties?

In penetrating into these unfortunate families, we are sometimes confounded as well as pained, to see the cruel indifference of children to their parents. Unfortunate old man! I have found you alone, and abandoned upon the bed of pain, where disease retained you. — Have you not a son or daughter? Where are they? Your tears answer. But if you had procured them a suitable education, should you have been deserted thus? What did you do for them in their childhood?

A good physical education, in the poorer classes would have the immense advantage of preventing many diseases, and giving more force and aptitude for labor; but this is a subject hardly thought of, and the bringing up of children in all those things which do not come under the law of necessity, is abandoned to chance. This necessity, which subjects children to privations and fatigue, tends to strengthen them in some respects; but negligence, bad management, and an excess of privation and fatigue, tend on the other hand to enfeeble their constitutions.

The children of the poor breathe, from their cradles, the most unwholesome air, in the wretched habitations which serve as a refuge to their parent; they suffer almost all the time from want of cleanliness, from cold and dampness, and are exposed to a thousand accidents. If the mother wishes to remain with them, she must give up the labor which calls her from home; if she leaves them in the care of a neighbour or alone, they may burn themselves. As soon as they begin to run, they perhaps wander about the streets. The first education begins much sooner than is commonly supposed. Before children are of an age to go to school, they receive daily impressions, and

contract numerous habits, which influence their dispositions and characters. The objects which meet their eyes, the words they hear, the examples they witness, even their simple plays, are a sort of education; we are sometimes astonished to see how the germs of vice can be developed so early. On the other hand, a taste for order, attention, application, obedience, the sentiments of respect and gratitude, may take root from the earliest years.

These considerations have suggested to benevolent persons, the design of collecting the children of the poor, under seven years of age, in asylums; where they could be confided to trustworthy persons, breathe a salubrious air, receive the necessary care, be kept neat, be trained to useful exercises, and gradually be initiated into those petty labors which are a preparation for the instruction they are afterwards to receive.

The negligence of parents is not only prolonged till the time when children are old enough to go to school, but after that time they often oppose a systematic and serious resistance to all efforts that are made in their behalf; they will even refuse to accept the favor of gratuitous instruction.

In every thing else, privations are realized; and bring a sense of want, desire, and demand. It is precisely the contrary with regard to instruction; the more it is wanted, the less it is sought. This is why savage nations remain stationary. On the contrary, the more instruction there is, the more it is thirsted for. If the poor man is ignorant, and this is the condition of the greater number, he will not only scarcely have the idea of preparing his child to know more than himself, but he will often show repugnance to allowing his child this advantage. The eloquent dissertations of certain fine minds against popular education, oppose fewer obstacles, than the obstinacy of an ignorant father, jealous of having a son who may surpass him.*

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* I have known, I think, more than a thousand poor families; and in not a few of these families I have found a great insensibility to the importance of availing themselves of the means which they have for the education of their children. But I have never known a poor and ignorant parent withhold his child from our schools, or express unwillingness that he should go to them, from "a jealousy that the child would thus be raised above him." Some of the poor children who are seen in our streets, were brought to the city by their parents at an age at which they were

It belongs to the visitor of the poor to dissipate so blind a prejudice, and to enlighten the fathers of families upon their interests and their

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too old for the primary, and could not read well enough for admission into the grammar schools. Some are truants. Some have been taken from school, that they might earn what they could for the families to which they belong; and, having lost the employment obtained for them, have fallen into vagrancy. And some are children of inefficient, and others of reckless parents, who think not of the education of their children, and who leave them exposed to every contaminating influence, only because they are themselves too ignorant, or too obdurate, to perceive the value of the good which they so lightly estimate. If any visitor of the poor shall be led, by the appeals which are here made to him, to the benevolent enterprise of saving one or more of the poor children among us, who are now on the brink of ruin, I think that he will find them to belong to one or another of the above named classes; and that the difficulty with which he will have to contend, in his intercourse with the parents, will not be "a jealousy," in any one, "that his son may surpass him;" but, either a most painful lack of parental sensibility; or, a strong claim of interest in the immediate labors of which children are capable; or, inability in the parent to control the child; or, the disqualification of the child for admission into our schools. My apology for this statement respecting the exposed and vicious children in our city, is, that a

duties. It will not be the work of a day; for it is difficult to persuade those who do not wish to be convinced. The visitor must not be weary; he must seize every opportunity to place before the eyes of the ignorant father familiar examples which may make him comprehend how useful it would be to his children, to know how to read, write, and cipher. "Why has your neighbour's son been sought for by the best workmen, and found a situation so advantageous for his apprenticeship? Is it not by the assistance of the honorable certificate he received on leaving school? How has such a young man, whom you know, arrived so quickly to the station of foreman? Is it not because education had given him more capacity, and because he could keep accounts? If he had had no idea of linear drawing and calculation, could he have been employed in so productive a manner by the architect, or the contractor, who have become attached to him? Could that man,

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greatly increased interest has recently been excited in the cause of their salvation; and a just perception of the causes of the condition in which we find them is important in view of the measures which are to be taken for their rescue. J. T.

whose profession is at this moment paralyzed by general circumstances, have so promptly created another resource, if he had not been benefited by his education?" One day a whole troop of little wretches was condemned by the court of assize. A visitor of the poor was on the jury. "Do you wish to know," said he to a blinded father, "do you wish to know the history of these young criminals? They had been brought up precisely as you bring up your son; they had wallowed in ignorance. Come with me into the prisons; among twenty condemned youths, you will find nineteen who do not know how to write or read. Behold the future you are preparing for your child, the reward you are preparing for yourself." At last this visitor succeeds in bringing back the father to more just reflections.

He leads this poor man to observe, that with a little instruction he would not himself have remained in so subaltern and dependent a situation in the work-shop, that he would more easily find another kind of work when his ordinary labor fails him; that he would not have so easily been deceived on such an occasion, that he would have guarded himself from such or such bad habit, that he would have been more faithful to

his duties, that he would not have spent his money in play, or his health at the grog-shop, etc. "Avoid then for your child the same dangers; procure for him the resources whose loss you deplore for yourself. You desire that he may be your support in your old age! but do you not feel that the more you do for him, the more he will feel the necessity of acquitting the debt? Do you not see that in becoming capable of instructing himself, he will better learn his duties towards you? the good he will receive, will be diffused over his whole family."

It is not every thing to have persuaded the parents; sometimes the children show themselves rebellious; the children are untractable, wild, and uncontrollable; the parents are effeminate, indolent, and dissipated. What can be done? how can they be forced to go to school? they will escape on the way; shall they be carried in chains? who will take the pains to carry them there? Our visitor is not disconcerted. One day he takes the children by the hand, and does not disdain to lead them himself; he introduces them into a clean and well arranged hall; there they find other happy children who seem to divert themselves as they work; they wish to be in the

play, and are ashamed not to know how to do it so well. Our visitor lets them see that they also might be happy; then gives them hope, and at last ends by procuring them this favor. The little scholars are carried on by the example of their comrades; they insensibly acquire a taste for labor; emulation takes possession of them. This supposes, it is true, that a good school has been found, directed by a capable master; but it is one of the cares of the friend of the poor to choose the best school, if there is a choice to make. He will not stop there; he will recommend the new pupil to his master's care, and will promise to come sometimes to take note of the progress he shall have made.

We may find in another poor family more solid and sound ideas; but the parents still have their objections. "The children are already old enough to render some little services, and will soon be able to enter upon apprenticeship; the necessities of the family must be thought of, and the succour that has been received must not be abused. What is the use of sending them to school? they will not have time to profit by it. By leaving them there many years, the embarrassment would be prolonged." Yet if their friend finds the means of

procuring a kind of instruction, whose simplicity reconciles every thing, if he only asks two or three years for the child to learn to read, write, cipher, and even to become acquainted with linear drawing, and understand weights and measures, besides learning the catechism perfectly, will not all the objections be done away with? But can any establishment be found which will fulfill these conditions? It does not belong to me to say; but I suppose this friend, who wishes the good of his *protégés*, will examine without prejudice, will seek, observe; and I depend upon his wisdom. In all cases, this is the moment to reward the parents for their deference to our counsels. If they deprive themselves of their children, it is just to indemnify them for the sacrifice, by adding a little to the charity and assistance they already receive. As for the rest, they will soon perceive that they have not made a bad calculation.

The child is admitted to his lessons. Should we depend entirely upon the fathers and mothers for his improvement? Generally, in giving assistance (and by this we do not merely mean alms) which is destined for children, if it is necessary not only to avoid breaking the ties of

family, but on the contrary, to strengthen them; if, consequently, we must avoid, as much as possible, usurping the rights of fathers and mothers, and leaving them strangers to the good which is done to their children, yet constant experience teaches us that we must not blindly give up to the parents; their want of foresight, alas! even their selfishness, is to be feared. How many do we see who intercept what is given them for these little creatures? The thing is painful to be told, but it is unfortunately true. Such is the fatal effect of excessive misery; sometimes it brutalizes and renders them insensible, and shuts their hearts to the first affections. Nothing equals the indifference of certain poor people to the moral government of their children, and if, as is only too common, their poverty has been the consequence of bad conduct, if this bad conduct is not yet entirely corrected by misery; will not the unfortunate child, exposed to such examples, and in such society, lose the good fruits of the instructions of his master? Without usurping, then, the rights of fathers and mothers, we will supply their want of vigilance; we will often go to visit the poor little pupils at school; when they return to the paternal roof, we will go too; we will ask them,

in the presence of their parents, what they have learnt, and what has been their conduct; we will give them some little encouragement, some rewards perhaps, but the choice of rewards and punishments is very important in childhood. It requires much discernment, and what can we expect from rude and ignorant parents in this respect? They will punish their children with brutality, in caprice and ill humor. We will gently interpose to overcome this evil influence. Let us make these little beings hear the language of reason, by putting it within their reach; let the language we hold to them be indirectly addressed to the parents. When they witness the improvement of their children and the interest they inspire, will they not be tempted to imitate them? will not the sentiments of nature begin to revive? How often have we seen virtuous children, who have become such by good education, exercising over those from whom they received life, this salutary influence; and thus reversing the order of good examples, producing a reform which had been vainly attempted by the most eloquent preaching?

Poor children! When you return home after having tasted some hours of innocent happiness

among your comrades, and in the activity of occupation; when you return bearing a testimony of the satisfaction of your masters, if you see the friend and protector of your family coming, with what joy you will run to show him the certificate which declares your progress, or the scale of your lessons. He smiles upon you, and this smile is your reward. You like to relate to him all you do, and he listens to you with benevolence. He will continue to be your support and guide; he will interest himself to find and choose a situation for you; his children will continue the work he has begun; he is Providence made visible to you, and his beneficent influence will embrace the whole course of your life.

What is to be done for this young man, and this young woman, who have already passed the age at which they can be sent to shcool, and whose education has been entirely neglected? "It is too late; they must work; and we cannot subject them to the mortification of putting them upon the benches with little children." However, if they knew how to read, write, and cipher, what new resources would be opened to them to assist their aged parents and themselves! There is for these an unexpected resource. Their friend finds a

school for adults, which is kept during the winter evenings; or a sunday school, where they refresh themselves after the labor of the week by an occupation of a new kind, and one which has to them all the attraction of novelty. They make profitable use of the moments which might perhaps have been dissipated in idleness or badly employed; good moral habits are thus preserved, while they acquire useful knowledge; even good manners are gained, and acquaintance is made with estimable companions. Blessings never come single.*

* We have known poor workmen, after having passed some months in a school for adults, promoted to the rank of overseer with a double salary, because they were able to draw up the register of the work. There is hardly any profession in which the workman who knows how to read, write, and cipher, does not advance more rapidly for it. In all the mechanical arts, the elements of drawing will also be of peculiar advantage to him. Indeed the instruction he acquires by reading, gives him, by developing his intellect, more capacity to comprehend, conduct, and execute all the operations of industry. There are many schools of this kind in Paris for men, and one for women, which produce the most satisfactory results. They were first suggested by a report from M. le duc Mathieu de Montmorency, sent to the Society for elementary instruction.

But where are these schools for adults and these sunday schools? If there is not one within reach, the visitor of the poor, who has daily felt the want of one, may suggest the idea of it and unite with other good people to establish one.

The cares which the friend of the poor bestows upon the poor family do not stop here; there are two other kinds of service in which he may take a still more direct part, and which are not less essential.

The first concerns apprenticeship. Here, as in so many other things, poverty opposes obstacles to the remedies which would come in aid of it. That skill in labor which is to procure a future subsistence for children, and become perhaps a resource for the whole family, is only to be acquired by money. The trades which are learnt at the least expense, are also the least lucrative. There are many things to be taken into consideration also in the choice of a trade. Let us consult, first of all, the physical and intellectual capacity of the youth. It is hardly credible how much dispositions vary in this respect, and how much this variety influences the success which each individual obtains in his profession.

Often he who is unfit for one career, might succeed perfectly in another; one is skilful, another is strong; one is fit for sedentary labors, another for motion and external activity. Let us consult the inclinations also, for people do better what they like to do, and thus do more. There are trades more or less healthy, and their dangers are more or less felt, according to the temperament of those who follow them. It is doubtless necessary to examine what trades are the most productive; but it is important to examine, at the same time, whether these trades are not subject to vicissitudes, and if in some circumstances they are not suddenly stopped. Besides, there are occupations which may expose to dangers of another sort, and which are pernicious to good morals. This consideration applies particularly to occupations for girls. It is only after taking all these views, that the choice should be made. But will the father and mother of a family give the subject all the attention it deserves? Will they, besides, be capable of comparing and judging well? Will not the occasion decide for them? This is a kind of counsel which it belongs to the visitor of the poor to give, and which will at least be received without suspicion. But, after the

first choice, that of the trade, there remains a second to be made, that of the master, and this last is not less delicate or less essential; for upon this depends the skill of the apprentice and the morality of his character? Place him only where he will receive good examples. Information concerning the comrades with whom he will be connected should also be sought. Here again the poor will find themselves embarrassed. They have not sufficiently extensive intercourse, and enough sagacity, to direct themselves in this determination. The visitor will have ideas upon the subject by which the poor can profit; he will besides have an opportunity of procuring information, and he has a thousand ways of getting at the facts. Good masters are naturally very difficult in the choice of apprentices; the visitor of the poor will interpose to obtain for his young *protégé* the favor of being received into an honest family, by a skilful master, and will obtain for him a favorable reception. Perhaps he will place the apprentice with a workman who labors habitually for himself, and in this way he will still be able to have his eyes upon the apprentice. The contract of the apprenticeship is to be drawn up. Here the father, ignorant or nar-

row-minded, may cause difficulties; or neccessity may constrain him to accept too hard conditions. We must come to his assistance, and enlighten him concerning the inconveniences which may one day spring up from engagements that are ill arranged. Sometimes we must procure him the means of furnishing some portion of the expense required for the subsistence, maintenance, and instruction of the apprentice; and thus render accessible occupations which might have been shut out from him; at other times, we shall abridge the duration of gratuitous labor due to his master as an indemnity, when his instruction is ended. For there are two ways of stipulating a contract of apprenticeship; sometimes the apprentice receives, gratuitously from his master, instruction, lodging, nourishment, &c. but on the condition of afterwards giving some years of his labor without wages; sometimes the master is to receive an annual sum, or a sum proportioned to the expense incurred for the apprentice, and then the duration of the time is abridged, during which he is to receive no wages. Six or seven years is the longest term which is stipulated for in the former case, before the apprentice begins to earn something; two hundred franks

a year is the ordinary salary in the other case. There are several essential provisions, which the vigilant friend will have inserted in the contract; the master must engage to treat the child well, to make him do his duty, to let him sleep alone, not to teach him any other trade than the one agreed upon, not to employ him in other occupations which would divert him from it; the privilege of habitual watchfulness should be allowed to the parents, and even to their friendly visitor, and consequently the power of seeing the child whenever they desire it; a provision must be made for the contract to be annulled in certain circumstances; the parents should be authorized to withdraw their child, not only if the conditions are not fulfilled, but if the health of the child should be impaired, if he should not succeed as well as has been expected in the trade chosen for him, if his morals are exposed to any danger, if the character of the master is not suitable to the particular case; and the conditions on which this dissolution should take place, should be agreed upon beforehand.

Here we ought to point out to the solicitude of the visitor of the poor a serious danger.

The developement of industry in certain countries has produced a great demand even for very young children who are employed in manual labor that requires neither much vigor, nor much intelligence; but the avarice of certain manufacturers abuses the strength of these little creatures; they are exhausted by fatigue; they neither leave them time for school, nor for rest; hardly enough to eat a hasty morsel, or to take hurried sleep. These little creatures languish with exhaustion; and their health suffers as much as their characters and education. Yet the pressing wants of some parents, the cupidity of others, and the want of foresight in many, deliver up these young creatures to this fatal regimen. This abuse has been carried so far in England, that an express law was required for its suppression; a bill was passed a year ago to regulate the maximum of the task which should be imposed upon children in manufactories. In France, though some workshops have presented so sad a spectacle, we hope the legislative authority will not be necessary to restrain it, and that the power of manners and the authority of public opinion will be sufficient to arrest the evil in its birth. However, the friend who watches over the family of the poor, will watch over the child who is

employed in a manufactory, that he may not be exposed to become the victim of excessive fatigue.

The capacity and skill of a child must not be measured by the money he earns. In certain places a child can earn from two to three francs a day by picking up bones for the fabrication of animal carbon; but what will he have learnt? It is often the most false speculation, as to the real interest of a family, to be too hasty in obtaining profit from the labor of these little creatures; in that, as in many other things, it is sacrificing the future to the present.

What regret should we feel, if this education we give to the children of the poor should one day prove a fatal present to them; if on visiting their abodes we should find bad books in their hands! It may at least happen that the education will be useless to them; to know how to read is but to possess an instrument. We have not yet finished our work then, and now comes the greatest service we are called upon to render; a service which will crown all the others, and which the indigent parent is least capable of performing. We must procure for these children profitable and suitable reading. They have very little time to read, it is true; this

is one reason more why they should read nothing but what is good, and that the aliment which is offered them should be substantial and solid. Moral and religious reading will occupy the first place; but we advise that this serious reading be sometimes tempered by interesting and agreeable treatises, rendered familiar and easy to be understood, that they may become a recreation at the same time that they are a means of improvement. We may also add to these some little elementary books in which those readers, who belong to the laboring classes, may find some descriptions of creation, some simple and easy information concerning the phenomena of nature, and the history of their country; some counsels which may guide them in the direction of their little affairs, in the precautions demanded by health, in the succours and remedies for the most common accidents. Such works, though they ought to be the most common, are not abundant. The poor hardly know of their existence, and cannot select them; if such works are indeed too rare, it is partly because means are wanting to diffuse them among the poorer classes. The visitor of the poor must be as it were a channel through which useful communications are formed between the enlightened

classes and those which are not so; he will assist in imparting to them the kind and degree of knowledge their situation claims. By his means therefore the education of the poor man's child, though necessarily limited, may become productive of good effects, which will last through his life. He will thus not only have assisted those who are now indigent, but he will have arrested in their source causes which might multiply their number.

How do we know that among those who enjoy the benefits of this education there may not be one, who, endowed with remarkable qualities, may, from having the opportunity to develope and cultivate them, and to embrace the career for which they fit him, make for himself a path to unexpected success, and rise to an honorable station in society. There are examples of this, and there might be more if every one could follow, in the choice of an occupation, his natural disposition, and receive all the assistance which may render him capable of performing it well. But these extraordinary phenomena are not necessary to reward the generous friend of the indigent family; it is sufficient that each member of these families fulfills well, in the humble sphere which is assigned to him, the part to which Prov-

idence calls him, and comports himself as an honest and a useful man. This is what the true interest of the family and the general order of society demands; the end is attained.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEGGING.

When I see a beggar, a sentiment of compassion seizes me. But a painful doubt arises in my heart. Is the image that meets my sight a reality, or an artifice? * The question is a serious one.

There is not a moral contrast in the world more marked, than that which exists between the pretended poor who beg from calculation, and the truly indigent who are reduced to begging. The first class deserves our indignation; the second has a right to our benevolence and even to our respect.

One class is the refuse of society. Idleness, debauchery, falsehood, cunning, effrontery, and all the vices are personified in it. Nothing but courage is wanting, perhaps, to make those who

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* The number of beggars in Europe is computed at 17 millions. The population is 178 millions; we suppose that this proportion is 3 to 100 in Denmark, 14 to 100 in Holland, 16 to 100 in England.

compose it become great criminals. Human nature suffers in them the deepest degradation. Perhaps the children you see with the beggar are not his own! Perhaps he has stolen them, and lets them languish in hunger, that the sight of them may melt your heart! The malady of beggary is almost incurable; for when debasement has become a habit, and even a pleasure, it is difficult to rise from it. But there are real sufferers, sinking under the weight of misfortune, who, having exhausted all resources, are abandoned, without relations, friends, or protectors, and have been constrained by despair to have recourse to public pity. Judicious aid may save these. If they contract the habit of begging, they will fall into vices and disorders to which they have hitherto not yielded. What is to be done in this uncertainty? The beggar is absolutely unknown to me. In giving him anything, I run the risk of rewarding and encouraging turpitude. In refusing him, I run the risk of being barbarous towards one of my brethren, who has every title to my affection. This is what each one of us feels and says to himself, every time he meets a beggar, without being able to find a solution of the difficulty. It is one of the serious

evils of beggary, that it causes such cruel embarrassment to honest people ; for whatever they may do, they are, in spite of themselves, exposed to do harm, and to go directly against their own intentions. Taking advantage of this uncertainty, those who are out of work, those who lead a bad life, and the entirely idle, come and deceive the benevolence of the generous. By this uncertainty, those who are worthy of moving our compassion, are threatened with our disdain, and our most unjust prejudices. Public pity is also led astray, or becomes cooled. And the selfish find a specious pretext for justifying their refusal. Industry loses its arms, misfortune its resources. The crafty alone profit by it.

Yet shall we hazard nothing to relieve ourselves from this perplexity? Instead of giving alms to this beggar, instead of refusing him, let us ask his name and address. — "What, shall I put this question to all the beggars I meet in my way? Am I going to draw up their statistics? For the employment of a penny, which is the object of my hesitation, shall I lose hours in researches for information?" Perhaps you will not lose them ; try it once ; perhaps you will obtain precious light ; perhaps you will be called upon to render

a great service. But I agree that my advice is difficult to act upon habitually; I only wish to show the fundamental truth which is to preside over this difficult matter; it is this, that a good system for visiting the poor at home, is the sure means, and the only sure means, of preventing the uncertainty which we have just expressed, and all the evil consequences it brings.

Suppose then that I have taken the name and address of the beggar. If he has given me a faithful direction, I shall soon be enlightened. If he has directed me wrong, it is an almost certain proof that he is unworthy. If the police should point out to me any of the taverns where this sort of people meet, perhaps I should find there the pretended sick man, (who had appeared to me emaciated with suffering,) in very good health, participating in some carousal with his fellows. This indeed is what happens every day. The trade of begging is often very lucrative in Paris, as I am assured by persons who are well informed. It is worth from nine to ten franks per day.

Some magistrates, in order to deliver the public from uncertainty, have thought of reserving the permission to beg to certain poor people, well known by them as such, and bearing a dis-

tinctive sign. But this measure, while preventing one evil, would preserve many others; it also would leave room for injustice; for alms, blindly distributed, cannot be in proportion to the real wants.

There are sometimes beggars of high pretensions, beggars who might be called good company; who present themselves in houses with a decent appearance, with the air and manner of respectable condition. These have experienced great disasters; they need proportionate assistance; they know you, but you do not know them. During the few last years, these greatly multiplied in Paris, taking advantage of circumstances. Some were emigrants, who returned in the train of our princes, and had sacrificed every thing for the good cause. Others had been in office under the former government, and had lost their places. They were furnished with a multitude of papers; there was no end to their history. In reality they were most frequently sharpers. How could one politely get rid of a person, who introduced himself thus into one's closet? How express to him injurious doubts? Yet you cannot refuse him a donation without accusing him of lying to you. Take his address then. It will be refused per-

haps under various pretexts. Then be sure that he is deceiving you, and become severe. Perhaps in giving you his address, he will represent to you that he cannot wait for your assistance an hour, an instant ; that he is fasting, that the thing is urgent. Then be so much the more upon your guard. Hasten, if necessary, an hour afterwards, to the place assigned; it is a hundred to one that the person is unknown there. It may be otherwise; but we often see that your question alone has disconcerted the suppliant, and made him take flight.

The most deplorable effects of beggary would disappear, if we could succeed in making with certainty, among those who ask, the distinction and separation between those who tell the truth and those who deceive. But visiting the poor at their houses is the essential means of the only practicable system for the repression of beggary.

There is perhaps no subject relative to public administration which has given birth to so many writings and projects, as the extinction and repression of beggary. Men of superior merit have treated this question thoroughly, and yet, in the different countries of Europe, this branch of administration is still very defective. Far from us

be the wish to reproduce here, and to discuss, what has been said upon the subject; I shall confine myself to two reflections which are closely allied to the considerations contained in this work. The first is, that in vain shall we attempt to repress beggary, if we do not, first of all, provide suitable institutions where the poor may find work, if they are yet able to work, or aid, if unable; and secondly, that the repression of beggary will become very easy, if this double object can be successfully provided for. In short, we can neither prevent nor extinguish beggary, unless, by the active and regular investigation of the situation of the poor, we go back to the causes of beggary, and determine exactly, by these means, the real wants which it is the object to satisfy.

Yet for the most part it has been thought desirable to begin just where we ought to end. Rarely, have the regulations made against beggary been preceded, as they ought to have been, by a good regimen of visiting and succouring the poor in their own homes. Nothing shows more clearly the truths laid down here, than the experience derived from the attempts already made upon this subject.

There were formerly in France many almshouses; there were also at the same time many

beggars. In these houses, vagabonds, or those who were deemed such, were shut up at discretion. But seizures could only be made with precaution and secrecy; the beggars were protected by public pity; and how could it be otherwise? Public pity cannot make discriminations; it believes in the reality of the miseries of which it sees the outward signs. The people every where take an interest in beggars, and embrace their cause against the measures of government, because they are especially struck by appearances.

Under the imperial government a vast plan was put in execution. At a great expense, an alms-house was erected in every department; nothing was wanting in them; extensive edifices, local arrangements, annual donations, and internal regulations. But it had been forgotten to make the previous discrimination in order to provide for the wants of real indigence. And the alms-houses suffered from the same uncertainty which strikes the spectator at sight of the beggar, and which we described a moment ago. No one knew whether they were houses of charity or houses of correction. They were at first both at once. But, as a house of correction, why shut up in it the poor man who could have been more suitably

assisted in the bosom of his family? As houses of charity, they offered a much too easy existence to vagabonds. The provision in some of these houses was so agreeable and so abundant, that admission to them was solicited as a favor; in other words they became a premium to idleness. It was perceived, however, on trial, that the people who were to be relieved, and those who were to be corrected, were united together under the same mode of treatment; that hence, either the former were unjustly condemned, or the latter unjustly rewarded. Two and sometimes three separate departments were thus formed in every alms-house, without any intercommunication, to be regulated and governed in a totally different manner. Thus was confessed the error committed in the beginning. But few years passed, before the general councils of the departments, tired with the enormous expense, and struck by seeing that these establishments did not fulfill their destination, suppressed them. They committed a second fault in doing this. It would have been better to find out why these alms-houses did not fulfill their end? They would have perceived that the fault was not in the alms-houses themselves; that the cause was in the imperfection of the

general system of humane establishments. They would thus have been led to do great good, by preserving what existed, and by rendering it useful. Some departments, however, have had the spirit to maintain the alms-houses, which they had founded with so much expense. May they truly comprehend the means of drawing the greatest advantage from them!

What is, in fact, intended to be realized in an alms-house? Is it a work-house for the steady, laborious poor, who really are in want of work? Then conceive it in that spirit; and above all, let it offer only an absolutely indispensable resource; let it be opened only to those who cannot be relieved by private industry; let it not interfere with the progress of this industry. Is it wished, on the contrary, to make a house of correction for the idle? Then let it be wholly directed by a severe intention of reform; and let only those be carried to it to whom this discipline is necessary. Is it a sort of refuge for the old and infirm? Examine then whether the hospitals are not sufficient, or if it would not be better to succour these unfortunate persons in their families; and if you then think you ought to persist, agree with yourselves and the public to found a supplementary hospital.

But in either case, as a preliminary condition, establish a good organization of means for studying the situation of the poor; and for effecting, by the aid of an enlightened examination, the necessary distinction between the different classes. At Paris, where the administration of *Secours à domicile*,* has received such a perfect organization, there is hardly an indigent person to be met with among those admitted to the charity offices, who dares to beg, and we see no beggars present themselves at the charity offices to be inscribed and assisted. Beggars compose a separate class, and draw too much profit from the trade they exercise not to disdain the feeble assistance which would be granted them at the charity offices, and especially not to avoid subjecting themselves to the investigations which would be the condition of their receiving it.

There was formed in London, in 1818, an association worthy of the greatest praise. It

* This institution of charity is the one in which the author seems most interested personally. We have omitted, however, in this translation all account of the particular institutions of France for charity. The difference of the political institutions, in that country and in this, would not allow them to be models for us. *Translator.*

causes certain cards to be distributed to the beggars in the streets, by which these beggars can present themselves at different houses. There they are immediately furnished with nourishment; their demands are registered; a personal inquiry into their true situation is then prosecuted. If they are found to be only unfortunate, every thing is done to relieve them; in the contrary case they are sent to prison; for the society has its constables, which it employs to this effect.

Half measures for repressing beggary have the most deplorable effects. Sometimes an effeminate and timid administration, after having taken measures to repress beggary, confines itself to seizing, from time to time, the beggars it surprises in the public road, and the next day leaves in peace those who replace them. What results from this? They only prevent competition in following the trade; — the trade hence becomes more lucrative, and consequently more attractive. The severity which is used towards some, the indulgence granted to others, forms a contrast which shocks the public, and the whole administration is accused of negligence and injustice.

CHAPTER IX.

WISE DISTRIBUTION OF CHARITY.

When we have truly ascertained the condition of a poor man, his disposition, character, and the nature and extent of his wants; we must next determine what is the kind of charity and assistance he needs.

There are certain fundamental rules, which cannot be too familiar to the mind of a visitor of the poor; and it is much to be regretted, that through a disregard of them, either from negligence, or inexperience, or want of reflection, or a blind zeal, evil is done instead of good, by those very individuals who have the most benevolent interest in the poor.

It is best as far as possible,

First. To give the necessary articles, instead of their value in money.

Secondly. To give what is immediately necessary.

Thirdly. To give what is the least susceptible of abuse.

Fourthly. Not to give stores for the future, but small quantities, in proportion to the consumption.

Fifthly. To give assistance both in quantity and in quality inferior to what might be procured by labor; so that the poor may be in a less favorable condition, even when assisted, than if they had supplied their own wants. And

Sixthly. To give assistance at the right moment; and not to prolong it beyond the duration of the necessity which calls for it; but to extend, restrict, and modify it with that necessity.

Serious errors have been committed in theoretical speculations upon the art of distributing charity, because the authors of these speculations had no opportunities of studying for themselves the condition of the poor.

It has been supposed that excess of population, want of labor, or deficiency of provisions are the general and common causes of poverty. Doubtless, when circumstances, in any country, paralyze one or more branches of industry which employed many hands, there is formed a class of poor people, composed of all those who can no longer be employed in this kind of business, and who have not yet been able to succeed in finding

occupation in any other manner. Also when a famine afflicts a country, the rise of the prices of food exposes the laborer, whose wages are not increased, to the horrors of want. But these are transient crises, extraordinary cases, and the poverty which results from them is as transient as its cause.

But because famine and the cessation of labor engender new classes of poor, it must not be concluded that such poverty as is produced in the ordinary state of our society, is the consequence of these two causes. This is derived, on the contrary, from a concentration of constant, habitual, and ordinary causes, the action of which is inevitable, even in communities where labor is in the greatest demand, and where subsistence is most abundant.

In those countries of Europe where the means of subsistence are most abundant, and where the people live cheapest, in the south of Italy for instance, there is the greatest number of poor people. On the contrary, in those where, as in Sweden, the means of subsistence are most rare and most dear, there is the smallest number of poor. It even sometimes happens that the extreme abundance of provisions may increase the num-

ber of poor; for the proprietor and farmer, from not being able to sell their harvests, find themselves obliged to reduce their prices so much, as to diminish the demand for labor.

It was by committing this fundamental error that Malthus, in his "Treatise upon Population," in many respects so new and so profound, but sometimes so paradoxical, has, in his criticisms upon the course pursued in modern societies for the relief of the poor, been carried away by the very rigor of his logical deductions, to consequences which, revolting to the feelings of humanity, might have warned him, by that fact alone, to suspect that he had made some capital mistake, in the principles from which he set out.

Those extraordinary calamities which sometimes fall on a country, and instantaneously deprive a great number of workmen of their accustomed means of labor, or occasion a scarcity of the means of subsistence, or raise the price of food, thus exposing the poorest class to the horrors of famine, demand extraordinary remedies, through the coöperation of the public administration.

But great care should be taken in the choice of these remedies, or the evil may be aggravated. It is only those branches of industry which have

for their object some article of fashion or luxury which can be suddenly suspended, unless it be a branch which has relation to some article whose exportation is interrupted by a war or some other circumstance. It is not easy for a branch of labor to be paralyzed which provides the necessary articles of common consumption. Now when there is a great number of unoccupied workmen, the small price which they obtain for their labor, suggests some new kind of employment which would not otherwise have been thought of. Thus new branches of industry are developed, to take the place of those that are paralyzed.

As to articles of food, it is now well known that there is hardly ever any real famine. Hardly do the greatest famines suppose a deficiency equal to the quantity of food necessary to feed the country during ten days in the year; and it is sufficient that each family should diminish its daily consumption by one thirty-sixth of the usual quantity, and the equilibrium is restored. Now surely, nothing is more easy than this, and without sensibly diminishing strength or even enjoyment. This reduction might be effected merely by avoiding the loss which results from waste. But, supposing that each individual should every day

diminish, by one thirty-sixth, the quantity of food he ordinarily consumes; this reduction would not be perceived. Far from its being prejudicial to strength and health, it would be useful to both, even if it were four or five times more considerable; for it is acknowledged that we eat much more than is really necessary, and that greater frugality would be in all classes a salutary regimen. Besides, a famine scarcely ever affects but one kind of provisions; it is generally bread, and the total quantity of subsistence is not diminished in proportion. Persons in low circumstances reduce their consumption of rarer and dearer food, and content themselves with a coarser kind. The raising of the prices of provisions also naturally leads each one to effect this insensible reduction, and to take more careful measures to be economical. In short, the production of other kinds of provisions is excited by the greater demand. There certainly remain many more kinds of food even in great famines, than would be necessary to support all the population, if by a good distribution it were possible to give to each one his just portion. The privations which actually overwhelm the multitude, proceed from the alarms which paralyze circulation, and leave

the markets empty; and from that excess of precaution, which raises the price of provisions unreasonably, and puts them out of the reach of the less fortunate classes. Thus is spread that false notion, too lightly conceived, presented, and propagated, concerning a supposed deficiency of food; which has frequently threatened and tormented our modern societies, and which idea has been of itself one of the chief causes of poverty.

But let us return to the ordinary causes of poverty.

The first is old age, and this goes on increasing from day to day. Next are incurable infirmities; the loss of one or more limbs, and blindness. Among the incurable infirmities may sometimes be placed mental alienation; and always, imbecility. But a part of these causes, however extensive and inevitable may be the action of them, still permit some labor; limited it is true, and only to be executed at home, but demanding neither much strength, nor perfectly sound organs.

Among temporary causes of poverty, sickness and wounds may be placed in the first rank. If the poor person is alone, the necessities resulting from such a situation are absolute. They

are greater when this misfortune befalls the head of a family; they are felt more if one or more of his limbs are affected.

Lying-in women enter into this first class.

There are certain infirmities, which, without being precisely sickness, injure the capacity for labor; as delicate lungs, feeble sight, &c.

To the second rank of temporary causes may be added the condition of childhood among orphans.

Then comes widowhood, especially when a widow is burdened with many small children. The labor of a woman is scarcely sufficient for her own wants.

A husband and wife, with a certain number of little children, may become suddenly unable to maintain their whole family, if their occupation is not lucrative.

In these two last cases, labor provides for a part of the wants; assistance is necessary to supply the deficiency.

The last cause of poverty is that cessation of labor, which proceeds from the workman finding no occupation.

It is evidently necessary to vary the kind of assistance which such different conditions claim.

The first of all cares should consist in inducing the poor to accomplish the portion of labor they are capable of; and to this end it is important never to give them assistance equal to that which labor might have procured for them. The principal object is to give the poor facilities for labor, and we cannot excite them to industry too much. For the preservation of their moral dignity, they should be led to employ their activity, and exert their energy to the utmost. It is however often necessary to give assistance also. A poor old woman, who is too infirm to work, may sell at a stand on a corner of the street. A place and the permission of the police must be obtained for her, and the necessary articles must be furnished to begin with. The poor may be hired to work for each other; the garments that are given to one poor family may be made in another, and thus benefit both.

The degree of confidence, which the poor deserve, by their wisdom and economy, ought to influence much the choice of assistance which is bestowed upon them, in those cases where a choice can be made.

In general, bread is of all things absolutely necessary, and what the poor man procures to

himself first of all, with the resources which remain to him, and yet it is that which should first of all be procured for him. The reason of this is, that it is that which he can least abuse which he furnishes for himself day by day, in proportion to his necessity. By the side of bread, and almost as necessary, may be placed the economical soups, in cities where they are made, and at the seasons in which they are distributed. Yet this second kind of aliments meets in practice with some inconveniences, which do not exist in respect to the first. The poor sometimes sell their soups instead of using them. If they wish to carry the soup home to share it with their families, it is necessary to have it warmed over again. All stomachs do not accommodate themselves to these soups, at least as they are generally prepared; we frequently see poor people refuse them. It would be very useful to distribute potatoes and soup of bones, though that is hardly customary. For the poor, whatever their distress, cannot live upon bread alone, and it will be rendering them a double service to procure for them, at the most economical price, food which may be joined to it. They will then employ the resources which remain

to them to procure other necessary articles. In the mean time they will at least have lived; the most pressing wants will have been provided for; hunger cannot be adjourned.

Malthus has committed a second fundamental error in supposing that the bread and other food which is publicly or privately distributed to the poor, by increasing the total consumption in the country, will raise the price of provisions, and thus increase their scarcity. He did not look upon things as they are. By giving food to the poor, we enable them to provide for their other wants themselves; and economy may be exercised in making nourishing food from many things which are often neglected and wasted. Thus soup may be made of bones, &c. Is it necessary to become barbarous to the poor in order to preserve society from danger? Is it necessary that the poor should die of hunger, that the rest of society may live? Even if the poor are nourished, the markets will not be stripped, and there will still be bread enough for every body.

The health of the poor should also be attended to. After food, come linen and clothing. Poor people should have given them but two shirts; if they receive more, they may sell or pawn them.

Wooden shoes should also be given, because they are proof against dampness. It is better to lend the necessary furniture, than to give it to the poor, for you may find in a few weeks, that all you have given is pawned to provide for some present urgent want. Coal and wood should only be given in small quantities, because otherwise they will be wasted.

It sounds harsh, and it is difficult to say it, but it is nevertheless true, that we must show ourselves very economical towards the poor, by granting the most mean and miserable articles to their solicitations. Otherwise we do them more harm than good; for as soon as they have surmounted the first shame of begging, their entreaties will know no bounds, especially if they perceive that their solicitations make you yield. We should like to put them in circumstances of comfort, but it would not be understanding their interests rightly. It is useful to them to feel privation, for it is the spur which is to excite them to industry, and to the employment of all the resources that remain to them. Besides, experience has taught us, that people more easily abuse what is given to them, than what they procure by the sweat of their brow. In short,

desires multiply with the facility of obtaining their gratification.

There are, however, exceptions to these austere rules. There are some poor so estimable that we do not find it necessary to arm ourselves against them with these manifold precautions, because there is no fear that they will abuse what they receive. There are some so respectable that we should do well to procure them ease of circumstances, if that were possible. But it is not *such* poor that torment us with indiscreet solicitations. The characters of the poor however are not always so marked. Between those who deserve entire confidence, and those who deserve none, there is an infinity of shades. Thus the choice of succour will not be modified merely by the nature of the wants; it will also be modified by the disposition of the poor, and their habits of life, according as they are more or less regular, provident, careful, economical, and wise. This study of character can only belong to those who are in frequent intercourse with the poor, who can obtain, or take by surprise, the secret of their virtues or vices.

The use the poor make of our bounty will be the surest guide in the choice of what we shall

bestow again. We must observe whether the kind of assistance we have given them, is the kind they require, and whether they make the use of it which we intended. For this inspection, it is necessary, that the same poor should remain for some length of time under the inspection of the same visitor. In the course of this habitual inspection, he will be able to remark if the condition of the poor under his care has become aggravated, improved, or modified in any way; and will avoid continuing assistance when it has ceased to be indispensable. And he will also be able to bring opportune aid in cases of emergency, which might otherwise be followed by a long series of evils. For instance, he may prevent a family from pawning their few goods, if he knows all the circumstances and vicissitudes of their history.

But how can these precautions be taken, and these rules observed, if the hand that gives, and the eye that studies, are not constantly associated together? A gift should come to the poor accompanied by counsels, exhortations, sometimes by reprimands; and who can address them in such language excepting one who has obtained their confidence and knows them well?

After the visitor of the poor has studied the situation of the poor, and found out their wants, he must endeavour to discover the most economical means of assisting them. He must teach them economy, the spirit of order and foresight, and how to preserve their self-respect and dignity. This will be to them a real treasure.

He must therefore have the condescension and patience to enter into the minutest details respecting their condition. Are they married, or single? What is the number of children, their sex, their age? Here we find ourselves again in the presence of the partisans of Malthus, and this time we can without doubt give ourselves up to lament with them the imprudent and premature marriages of the indigent class. We do not believe however, that establishments of charity promote them. The fatiguing life they lead, and the few enjoyments which are granted to them, make them seek more strongly the pleasures of conjugal union. The occasion presents itself, and they yield so much the more easily to a natural inclination, as their morals are more pure. They flatter themselves with the illusions natural to their age.

It is not true that the poor look forward to charitable institutions to provide for their children. On the contrary, they often look forward to the assistance their children will afford them; and still more frequently they think nothing about it. Want of foresight, a too blind confidence in the future, a too great facility in yielding to their inclinations, are the true causes of imprudent marriages. The remedy must be found in a good education, which will give the laborious classes ideas of order, and habits of reflection. Those who marry with some good prospects for the future, often find them fail, by a reverse of circumstances; but even those who marry imprudently should not, for that reason, be abandoned by us.

If we can obtain the direction of the affairs of a poor family, we should in the first place endeavour to teach them the science of economy. The least attention to it makes a wonderful difference in their affairs. We should, in the first place, show them the great saving that may be made in daily expenses, by always getting just enough, and having no waste in their daily food. This is the most difficult and yet the most necessary economy. Secondly, we should consider those times of emergency, when rent is to be paid, and show

them that nothing is gained by delay of payments, and that short terms are less oppressively felt. It is rendering them an ill service to accommodate them by delays of payment. It brings an emergency, often fatal, when every thing is sacrificed. Besides, assistance is more easily obtained in detail, than in round sums, and it is a kind of succour less liable to abuse. Thirdly, they should be led to see the difference between summer and winter, and during the comparative plenty of the former, to provide for the latter, when wants are greater and more pressing, and resources fewer. We must do all this by counsels and entreaties. And it is necessary to confess that we cannot hope to make the poor always see their own best interests. We must pity these unfortunate beings. It is easier to be severe on them, than to put ourselves in their situation. With so many pressing wants, it is difficult for them to choose wisely the manner of spending the trifling sum which is in their hands. We must not only urge, we must employ indirect means to lend force to our counsels; and we must measure our assistance and the testimonies of our interest, by the docility we meet with.

The poor should be strongly advised to procure, if possible, healthy and airy places of abode, especially those who lead a sedentary life. If tenements could be erected with this especial reference, it would be of the greatest use to the poor; but there are few who are willing to run the risk of such efforts. The more the poor are spread about among those in easy circumstances the better, for they are better taken care of; while many evils are prevented by their separation from each other. It would also favor the adoption of the poor by the richer families.

It is better to lend furniture than to give it to the poor. If we do the latter, in moments of emergency they may sell it. *To sleep on straw*, is an expression we use as synonymous with a state of extreme misery. But it is a very agreeable, and, what is more important, a very healthy bed. Count Rumford proposed beds filled with air, which had many advantages, but they do not seem to have been adopted.

A facility of putting their goods in pawn is a most fatal seduction for the indigent. Always absorbed by the feeling of present want, confident of the future, or utterly regardless of it, they think they obtain a resource in what proves their ruin.

Too much warning can hardly be given them on this point. Assistance in delivering them from this difficulty should be very cautiously given. And we cannot show ourselves too severe towards those who pawn those articles which have been furnished them. This habit is a sign of great want of principle; it shows us that they solicit our aid to abuse it.

We should pay the most particular attention to teaching the poor how to keep what they have. We should, if possible, require of them an account of what they have, reward their care, and even punish their negligence. Neatness is one means of preservation, and a sign which announces the spirit of order; it is melancholy to see how ignorant the poor are of it, and what a symptom of moral disease it almost invariably is. Where we find it, we should grant some confidence, for it is generally deserved.

This consideration will guide us in the choice of articles to be furnished to the poor. When they have not learnt to take care of things, we should give them more ordinary articles.

Count Rumford, M. Cadet de Vaux, M. Bourriat, and many other philanthropists have written much concerning the means of clothing and nourishing

the poor. But these things have not been put in practice. It is not, however, because their methods are not excellent, but because the poor themselves are ignorant of them, and can only be made acquainted with them through the visitor of the poor, whose duty it is to communicate them, and to do away the prejudices, routine, &c. which make it hard for the poor to adopt them. He should therefore make himself acquainted with the details of all the valuable works on these subjects, neither falling in with the prejudices of the vulgar, nor with the frivolous disdain with which men of the world look on these humble studies.

The advice of the visitor of the poor in respect to the price and kind of stuffs which it is best to buy, and the choice of fuel, and the means of warming themselves at the least possible expense, is of great importance to the poor. The many valuable discoveries of modern science on these subjects, can only be diffused among the poorer classes, which are always prejudiced, through their confidence in the friendship and wisdom of their visitor.*

* The author has devoted a large part of a chapter to directions to the visitor of the poor as to the choice of arti-

Sickness and death bring into the families of the poor a thousand real evils; for they bring, in their train, loss of work, discouragement of mind, and almost all the causes of poverty.* No community can be so well ordered that the members of the poorer classes shall not be exposed sometimes to such distress, as charity is called on to relieve. It is not necessary to enter into the details of these evils. They will occur to every one on the least reflection. The visitor of the poor will now be called on to give immediate aid,

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cles and their prices. But as it applies particularly to Paris, the Translator has omitted it. Every visitor of the poor must make such a manual for himself, adapted to the circumstances of his own country, and city.

* The author has devoted a whole chapter to the subject of sickness and convalescence among the poor of Paris. But these things depend so much on the place, that the Translator has omitted it. It is sufficient to say, that he directs the visitor to every means of ascertaining the causes of disease, and of preventing it, which the art of medicine, or the philanthropy of charity have devised, as well as to all the means of relieving it, and of doing away its effects on the constitutions and the affairs of the poor. But this, also, is a subject, which every visitor of the poor must study in the place of his residence, and form directions for himself.

and, in case of convalescence, to encourage and support the weak spirits, to assist in procuring, and not till the health is sufficiently restored, new labor; in case of death, to console survivors, and to aid them in those new arrangements which may be necessary and may require his aid.

CHAPTER X.

WHO SHOULD BE CALLED TO THE OFFICE OF VISITOR OF THE POOR.

To whom shall this difficult, delicate, and sometimes painful ministry, whose functions have been described, be confided? — We answer, to all those who will consent to accept the burden; whatever may be their sex, age, or condition, provided they have virtue enough to feel the value of it, and judgment and experience enough to be capable of fulfilling it with wisdom.

"What," some will doubtless say, "have we not administrations, especially charged with the distribution of public charity? When you reflect upon it, is it not a romance that you present to us, when you call upon private individuals to execute a mission of this kind? Where will you find persons, who are able and willing to take charge of it? Will you address yourselves to the worldly, and those occupied with business?" Yes, we answer again, we shall find a great many among those very people of the world, preoccu-

pied with what you call business, whose hearts are accessible to the sentiments of charity. But two main propositions on this subject we hope to establish.

1. Every person, who undertakes to assist indigence, must become himself a visitor of the poor.

2. The visiting of the poor by private persons is necessary to supply the deficiencies of the public administration of charity.

The first proposition results evidently from the considerations developed in the preceding chapters. There is but one way, in which we can dispense with visiting the poor, whom we wish to succour; and that way is, to put the assistance we destine to this end, into the hands of visitors of the poor. But to give blindly, and without any other information, to the beggar at our door, or on the road, is not to give; it is to throw at hazard, and to expose ourselves to do harm, instead of good. If we are happy enough to cause this intended bounty to fall upon the truly unfortunate, without injuring them, still our good action will remain very imperfect towards him; because, having no conviction of the wants of him upon whom it falls, we cannot really sympathize with his suffer-

ings. Nor will it benefit ourselves, since we spare ourselves the application, the fatigue, the employment of time, and the triumph over our repugnances; — that is to say, all that would have been to us a greater sacrifice, than that of a few pieces of money, which, perhaps, imposes upon us no sensible privation.

If we throw these pieces of money into a charity-box, or confide them to hands more practised, and more active, we shall doubtless obtain an assurance of their being used well. But how many things will be wanting in this apparent charity! We shall have avoided the presence of the unfortunate, and all direct communication with him. Our charity will also be still more indolent than it was before. There is, besides, a great deal of assistance, which we cannot thus transmit through others. Such are certain things we can give, of which we cannot easily deprive ourselves, and which we should reserve, if we did not see some unfortunate person, to whom they would be a treasure. Such, also, are good counsels, consolation, encouragement, and useful suggestions. A single word may double the price of important assistance to him who receives it. In short, we deprive ourselves of a multitude of

salutary instructions, which we might have drawn from the exercise of this investigating charity; and thereby, we also deprive ourselves of the means we should have drawn from it, of being more useful to other unfortunates.

Let those then, who are not insensible to the supplications of misfortune, not fear to make their good actions complete. Their presence will be a testimony of their benevolence, much more expressive than their alms; besides that they will learn how far alms are necessary. Have you not your visits of civility and etiquette? Well, sometimes grant one also to the celestial sentiment of charity! You will have your reward.

The second proposition we have announced, springs as it were from the preceding.

In the practice of benevolence, as in all other things, habit too often engenders routine, and gives birth to certain prejudices, which may be called prejudices of the trade, if the expression is admissible on such a subject.

Those who are known to make official investigations, rarely discover all the circumstances of facts. People easily disguise from them what they have an interest in concealing. Besides, official investigators are forced, in order to obtain informa-

tion, to address themselves to strangers, and to third persons who are more or less indifferent and suspicious. But he, who visits on his own account, is on the contrary in a favorable situation to find out every thing more easily. He knows to whom he addresses himself, and he is answered. His interposition is more natural; his questions cause less embarrassment; and a thousand little details come to him without reserve. The poor will be less anxious to deceive him, because they do not see in him the agent of public authority. They will tell him the more, the less he requires. In short, if the presence of a private person does not at first inspire the same respect, as that of a minister of public charity, perhaps, on the other hand, he less intimidates that shrinking of misfortune, which desires to envelope itself in a veil of secrecy. He will have a better chance of obtaining the confidence of that class of the unfortunate who avoid inspection, and even fear pity, than any official investigator. A person will be so much the more easily admitted into the interest of a family, in proportion as he is supposed better prepared to comprehend them.

It is well known that the public administrator has a crowd of poor on his hands at once, and

that his solicitude is necessarily divided. Now people shrink from being assisted systematically. They prefer a private, individual assistance. They seek a personal protection. They feel more attraction, and more confidence towards him, who, not being surrounded by numerous dependents, concentrates his cares upon the family he comes to console. It is no longer mere charity; it is true friendship. Such are the impressions of the poor. They think the protection nearer to them, when they are its direct and personal object.

Shall I say it? There is still another obstacle, which prevents estimable men in official stations, from succeeding in discovering all that is required. I shall be understood by those, who understand the human heart, its susceptibilities, and its weaknesses. Misfortune, when real and deep, is very susceptible. There is something indescribable in the presence of him, whom official duty brings to our aid. We see in him a legal writ, a formula, a rule of conduct. We open our heart more freely to one whom we suppose drawn towards us by a peculiar and spontaneous impulse. We present ourselves before the first, as before a sort of magistrate; we

make arrangements to receive him; we prepare to answer him. It is not the same with regard to the other. We allow ourselves to be taken by surprise. We are what we seem to be. Suppose in this last case, if you will, less perfection of virtue. For that very reason, fearing his presence less, we shall approach him more easily, and confess with less difficulty those very weaknesses, which are a part of our misfortune as well as one of its causes. And this is precisely what it was necessary to know.

There is a counsel, upon which we cannot insist too much to those persons, who are accustomed to assist the poor. It is, to concentrate their gifts upon a small number, and especially to continue them to those whom they have begun to assist. They will thus succeed in bringing out fully the good of which they have planted the first germ. Enlightened by their experience, they will easily correct any errors into which they may have fallen; and will learn to suit their bounty to the exigencies of sufferers. Aware of their relation to the poor, their intercourse will be no longer mere visiting. It will be a sort of guardianship. It will even be friendship.

This guardian and friend has a thousand means of habitual information. The poor man finds access to him at any time. Entering without uneasiness, he comes to relate what he has been doing, and to ask counsel about what he is going to do. Sometimes, when necessity is pressing, and there is not a moment to be lost, he has recourse to him, whose goodness he has already experienced. At other times, when new hopes arise, he goes to confide them to him, who enters into his interests.

This guardian and friend, precisely because he is in the world, and in the midst of its affairs, has a thousand indirect means of doing good to the poor, by the indirect relations which this kind of life procures him. He knows a manufacturer, who will employ the workman who has no business. He can procure some occupation for the wife, &c., can obtain a delay from the creditor, or from the landlord. Having only this family to protect, he can employ himself entirely in its behalf, and thus will be formed the most touching alliances between goodness and misfortune.

This is not all. The person, who gives charity, without seeing or being seen by the unfor-

tunate one who receives it, loses the opportunity of being excited to give again, which would be the consequence of having immediate communication with him. In the crisis of a fit of sickness, or in pressing need, he will not only himself furnish what urgent necessity claims; but his friends and relations to whom he will naturally relate the afflicting circumstances of the honest and unfortunate family, will also be affected, and will wish to associate themselves in giving assistance, and thus the number of benefactors will increase. The children of the house, hearing and repeating this story, will also like to be of the party; will reserve some of their pocket money; will watch for the moment, in which they shall go to see the poor family, and joyfully offer their little tribute. A multitude of useless things which have been neglected in the family as rubbish, which were wasted without reflection, will acquire an unexpected value; for with some care and repairing, they may still be of great use in a poor family. The refuse articles of the rich are often the luxury of the poor. With refuse garments they will make a decent one; the old linen will become useful to the sick and wounded. Thus will be

prevented the waste of so many articles, thrown by, by those in easy circumstances; and thus a thousand streams will be opened, to bring their waters into the channel of beneficence; thus a new treasure will be created, without a privation to any one. But in order to obtain this creation, direct personal interest, and consequently immediate contact, is necessary. A private individual will not send a portion of soup to the charity-office, but he will willingly carry it to that poor woman, who has just been confined in the neighbouring house. Doubtless there is an enlightened charity, which, rising to general views, is moved at the mere thought of the sufferings of humanity. I admire, I honor it, even when it contents itself with concurring in the relief of these sufferings by a pecuniary contribution in the form of a subscription, renewed periodically. But I count more upon the effect produced by the sight of misfortune, to melt the heart of most men, and to teach them the beautiful science of charity.

This consideration alone would be sufficient to justify the views, which we here present. We would almost venture to assert, that the increase of succour, naturally obtained by individual pa-

tronage, would be so great, that without effort these succours would become proportionate to the wants, and that there would be no deficiency. Is it not a great good, too, for the unfortunate to feel themselves the object of affection and benevolence, which is personal? to know the features of their benefactor? to be able to repeat his name; to be able to love and bless him, and to recommend him to Heaven? The emotion of gratitude consoles a sufferer; it ameliorates, purifies, and leads him to virtue. He will more wisely use the bounty to which this sentiment has added a new value. Now these consolations, and this amelioration, are among the blessings, which misery expects from us; and not the least essential in view even of their physical welfare. Health returns with serenity of mind; suffering is borne with more patience, labor is pursued with more ardor.

You have dropped your money into a charity-box, because you wish to remain unknown. Your action is generous, nor do I wish to diminish the merit of it. The veil with which you wish to envelope yourself, enhances this merit in my eyes. But I transport myself to the side of the poor man to whom your gift has arrived by a third person!

Unenlightened, and little practised in going back to causes, the image of Divine Providence presents itself to him in the assistance he receives, in a form too fugitive and imperceptible. He receives coldly perhaps this gift from the stranger. Attempt to make one sacrifice more for him, that of your modest diffidence. Do not fear to show yourself to him. Let him express his gratitude to you; and he will be the better for it, and will find his affections again, which he had perhaps lost. And amidst his ruin, was not this his greatest loss?

What a noble and beautiful institution it would be, if every rich family could live near, and be in the confidence of, and exercise protection over, some poor family!

But, it will be objected, that what I demand of a visitor of the poor, requires much time. Who will have the leisure to take upon him so many cares, and to continue them afterwards? Much time! Have we calculated the time which we dissipate in a thousand idle things, or even that which is consumed in listlessness? But no: these calls may be very short, for they have no fixed and necessary hour. They are made as opportunities occur; moments, otherwise lost, are devoted to them. And, besides, the more we succeed in

multiplying those who will accept of this ministry, the less time it will require of each one. "There is no one," you say, "who refuses to answer a request, or who does not sometimes give, in passing, to the beggar whom he meets on the way. But, if we must mount into a garret to inquire into a thousand details, it is quite another thing. The fountain of kind feeling, which suffices for the first kind, does not ever inspire such solicitous charity." Now, it is precisely this effeminate beneficence, which, because it gives alms, thinks to accomplish the divine law of charity, that we would bring under the spirit of this law. This is the germ of goodness, which we would wish to make blossom. They, indeed, assist the poor, who in any way contribute to their necessities; or at least, they *intend* to do so. We would wish to lead them to love the poor. If they make a first visit, the second will be more easy, and will meet with less repugnance. By degrees they will become accustomed and attached to the service; at the same time they will also become enlightened, and will have obtained the education for it which was wanting to them.

CHAPTER XI.

ADVANTAGES TO BE REAPED BY THE VISITOR OF THE POOR.

LITTLE confidence is to be placed in that sensibility to misfortune which feeds on theatrical representations and fictitious reading. There is a great gulf between the reveries of the imagination and the charity of the heart. One may weep in reading, in a romance, of the misfortunes of a family, and of the generosity of its deliverer, and pass afterwards with a dry eye before the door of a miserable hovel, or contemplate, with more repugnance perhaps than tenderness, a spectacle which has nothing in it of the picturesque.

But what book is worth such a spectacle? From what school can be derived such instruction? — This is a great subject. Let a few facts speak.

My friend A—— is an honest man, who annoys and injures no one, and, having a great talent for business, has given himself up to it all his life. Living like all the world, he was accustomed to

breakfast, dine, sleep, read his newspaper, and cultivate the relations of society. He did not himself suspect the ordinary nature of his existence, the frozen temperature of the atmosphere he breathed. He fulfilled his external duties, went punctually to church every Sunday, for that is only reputable; but he did not comprehend the secrets of moral life, the high destinies of our nature, the sublimer vocation of man. The maxims of sages upon this matter seemed to him an idle speculation; he smiled at the illusion of those who raise themselves to these ideas; as to himself he had no time to lose in philosophizing. But one day I proposed to him to accompany me in a visit I was going to make. He could not go; he had an appointment; the order of his day could not be deranged: besides, could not I do better than he? He begged me to take charge of what he had to bestow. I persuaded him, however, and, though a little out of humor, he went with me. We entered into conversation with this family, which had also its own business, which he made them explain to him. I left him, without his perceiving it, in the midst of the afflicted circle. He gave useful counsel, and took the charge of some necessary step to their affairs; he

obtained their confidence, and had the happiness to render a service.

A few days after, I met him and made my apologies for having taken him away from his business. But he was no longer the same man, the expression of his countenance was changed. He was more affectionate than I had been accustomed to see him. His conversation took another direction, and he asked me various questions about the objects of our solicitude. He had discovered something new in life; he had begun to conceive that man is not created and put into the world merely to make an establishment and live at his ease in peace with his neighbours. There was a book on his table. He had discovered that there is another, superior region, whose influences ennoble and animate the monotonous existence of earthly interests.

I knew Mrs. —— to be an amiable and gentle woman; her house was ever attractive, and her purse open to the poor. But serious conversation wearied her. Effort was painful to her. She wished that every thing should go on of itself; her children were at a boarding-school. Dress and company cheated time of its languor. The excitement of pulpit eloquence, when there was any, in-

terested her; but she relished serious reading little. I solicited this lady to accompany me in one of my visits. Nothing seemed more impossible; dust and filth inspired her with insuperable disgust; rude manners were her antipathy. I did however obtain what seemed so impossible. The next morning I found her by the bed of the invalid she had visited with me. She had returned of her own accord and without me. But this was not all. The employment of her time was soon changed; her husband found her more attentive and affectionate; the education of her children awakened in her more interest; — her friends soon discovered a new expression of sensibility in her conversation; and what a guardian had this poor family found! I had visited it more than once, had inquired of the neighbours and landlord; but she found out immediately all I was trying to learn, and provided what I intended to procure; I was only obliged to warn her to be economical in her bounty.

One young friend of mine was frivolous and fond of pleasure, and less afraid of dissipation than of *ennui*: he had natural talents, but was too indolent to study. He had good qualities, and was a devoted friend, but wasted all his time.

Another of the same age was dissipated and prodigal, ostentatious and vain, and wasted his property.

Can visitors of the poor be made out of such subjects? I tried; the former followed me without reflecting, but soon his good heart enlightened his reason, and he came to himself; the latter would not hesitate to do a proper and worthy thing, but his vanity soon became a proper sense of character.

How did these changes come about? In the first instance, surprise and almost horror was awakened in a man ignorant of the great trials that Providence sends on man. He discovered a new aspect of human life, which if he had vaguely suspected, he was unwilling to define to himself. But the voice of God's creatures was heard; the tears of a widow, the languid eye of an old man met the eyes of the man of the world, and melted his heart. Questions were asked, and heart-rending details were obtained. Faculties and powers, till then slumbering, were waked up in the soul of the man of the world; his mind became concentrated, and he returned pensive to involuntary meditation. He looked within, and for the first time his thoughts passed beyond the narrow bounds of present and material things.

Soon the relief he witnessed gave him the idea of a new order of pleasures, and the confidence he inspired acted on him as a sacred engagement. His soul opened to a new order of affections, and he commenced the moral life,—the only real life. The poor man's house was his school, and benevolence introduced him to the other virtues.

Another visitor of the poor I had the influence to make of a lady, who had much mind, and was thought to have extreme sensibility. She swooned at the recital of an accident; she could not bear see to a tiler on a house; her table was covered with romances; no one was more eloquent in expatiating on the interests of humanity; she was admired of both sexes. But she was not liberal; she was not even careful to pay her debts; her house was in disorder; no one commended her temper. She neither knew how to diffuse happiness nor to be happy. She went with me, because it seemed to her a romantic adventure, and was something new. She became simple and natural; her native generosity was revived and exercised, and happiness awoke within and around her.

Such are the natural effects of the principle of holy humanity, when not interfered with by vicious habits, and neither luxury nor pride separates us

from our suffering brethren. In the natural world, the humble fountain is fed by the overflow of the large lake; the little bird is sheltered in the foliage of the oak; — and should not, in the moral world, prosperity be the shelter of weakness and misery? Prosperity? — the word may well make us tremble — oh, should not the unstable prosperity of this world shelter itself under the benedictions of the relieved poor?

The holy principle of humanity often leads us to discover our own wants, of which we were ignorant. There is a poverty more fatal than that of external privations, a poverty of soul, of which the remedy is in the holy emotions of sympathy. In doing good, man recovers all his faculties. But I must stop. I should have too much to say, if I said all that offers itself to my thoughts, all that fills my heart. Yet let us penetrate one step further into the moral maladies of humanity.

There are men of fine moral tone, and great sensibility, who become disgusted with the world, through the disappointment of their noblest desires. They have seen the dark side of human nature, and have withdrawn themselves from intercourse with a practical indifference to their fellow-creatures. They renounce their youthful, ingenuous

hopes of doing good, in a sort of misanthropical despair. I have induced such men to accompany me in my visits to the poor; to become the counsellors and guardians of poor widows, who needed to have their inexperience and ignorance assisted, and to be supported in bringing up their families. I have found this to be a specific for this interesting misanthropy. The relieved and benefited could understand the characters of which the world was not worthy.

Another instance occurs to me; — it is that of a young man, who, though he loved virtue, committed one great fault which embittered all his reflections, and from the importunity of which he endeavoured to escape by doubting every thing. Just as the abyss was opening at his feet, he had it in his power to give some momentary assistance to an old man, who needed the aid of his arm, and who conducted him to his humble abode. The miserable being had only straw to lie on, and nothing there to eat. The young man was touched with compassion, and betrayed it. The signs of it reanimated the old man, and his expressions of confidence operated as a sort of engagement on his accidental visitor. A new interest was awakened, and the exercise of beneficence restored him to his own esteem.

One day I was myself sinking in spirits under the inflictions of injustice and malice, and went out, even in ill humor, to breathe the air, when a little child met and recognised me. She immediately accosted me with "Oh, please to come and see my poor mother, she is ill." I allowed myself to be conducted by her. Oh how puerile seemed the little crosses of life by which I was affected! What were they in the presence of real suffering?

At another time my health had been affected; in a constant state of languor I was sad and uneasy; acute pain came at intervals, and I was condemned to numerous privations. Oh, how difficult is the exercise of patience! how many times I was ready to murmur! When will this trial end? Shall I have the courage to bear it to the end? In the midst of this, I was required to give an opinion upon the choice to be made between several poor people, who desired a vacant place in a hospital. I was obliged to ascertain the truth of their situation, and to find out and compare their claims. I soon wondered that I had dared to complain, the object as I was of so much care. The picture of suffering offered to me, brought me to feel how small were my

miseries in comparison with those which made an asylum in a hospital sought with so much ardor.

Again a reverse of fortune came across me; my situation was changed; it was necessary to alter the whole arrangement of my life. I was asking myself whether I could have the courage to resign myself to so many sacrifices. But when I entered the house of an infirm father of a family, the labor of whose hands could no longer support his wife and children, whom hunger and cold were besieging; I learned to support my own privations; I discovered that I was still enjoying an abundance. Could I not still share with them something of that which remained to me? Ah, yes! I was still rich!

This time the unfortunate man I visit, is, indeed, less to be pitied than myself. Whatever may be the adversity which weighs upon him, he is at least surrounded by the objects of his affections; his faithful wife is at his side; his children smile upon him; a true friend remains to him. Alas! Heaven has subjected me to trials which are unknown to him! my soul has been torn by grief; mourning is my lot; the tomb alone will unite me to those for whom

I lived. But in visiting him, who has lost only material wealth, I discover that I can console the misfortunes of others; what a light! I seem to receive a message sent to me from Heaven by those I weep for here below. They teach me that I can honor them, and preserve with them a sacred intercourse by doing good. I shall have the courage to live and accomplish my task upon earth.

CHAPTER XII.

SPIRIT OF ASSOCIATION.

On entering a subject so full of interest, as that of the spirit of association applied to the work of charity, one reflection already strikes me ; — Who can be better situated than the visitor of the poor, to conceive the idea of this kind of association, and to point out its true ends ? Who will bring to it better dispositions or more favorable sentiments ? Who will be better fitted to coöperate successfully with it ? Where will these noble creations be likely to spring up or be applied, if not among those who have seen for themselves the evils which afflict men ; who have studied their causes and remedies ?

The spirit of association, that powerful principle, so fruitful in all the great creations of industry, which is the principle of life in human nature, acquires a new power and fruitfulness, when it bears upon the good of mankind. Here it no longer confines itself to making known men's views, experiences, and efforts, to diffusing and

propagating knowledge by free discussion; but it communicates a new energy to the sentiment which has produced the creation, and which must give it life; seeming to lend new faculties to the members of the assembly; for it is the nature of all moral sentiments to tend to communicate themselves, and to receive by intercourse with others, through the principle of sympathy, their most remarkable developement. If, in public assemblies, the emotion produced by a noble action is transmitted with the rapidity of lightning; if it acquires in the soul of each one, by the unanimity of those who share in it, a power which it never could have obtained as a solitary impression; what must be the effect of an habitual intercourse upon not merely the theory, but the practice of charity? I enter one of these assemblies; I see men absorbed, not in the frivolous object of shining and appearing well, but in the most serious thoughts, in the desire of being useful to their fellow mortals. I see modest and perhaps obscure men, but full of devotedness, whose simple and sincere language breathes benevolence. They are happy to meet in the same views without disputing the merit of originality. What one presents, another developes. Some show the

end, others point out the means. Some show difficulties, others teach how they may be overcome. No one aspires to honors and influence; but if there are painful commissions to be performed, sacrifices to be made, many are ready to accept them. Confidence unites all the members together; they enjoy reciprocal esteem; they enjoy the good done in common, and holy friendships are formed among them. I return, better and happier for having been admitted to this intercourse; my ideas are enlarged; an honorable emulation is kindled in my heart. To see a good action done, is somtimes sufficient to show us that we are capable of it ourselves. The noble words of Correggio, "*And I also am a painter,*" revealed the painter of the graces. But the spirit of Christianity is not a peculiar gift; it is the patrimony bequeathed to all, though so often unrecognised. However sweet may be the charm we feel in doing a good action, there is one more delicate and more inspiring still, — it is to do it in company with others. If I were a painter, I would represent two good men, confiding to each other the design of a generous action, associating together to put it in execution. I would make joy sparkle in their answering looks, and would

endeavour to announce, by the joining of their hands, what power there is in the union of two wills! This is what association produces in a more or less numerous assembly, and renews every day. Honor is due to those generous associations, which the love of doing good has inspired, and which come to the aid of mankind in a thousand forms. There cannot be a more noble alliance than that, of which virtue is the principle, and good actions the fruit.

Why are not such useful associations multiplied in all countries? Why are they almost unknown in many? Their formation and developement suppose two conditions; on one side, that there exists a certain public spirit, and on the other, that a knowledge of the wants of the unfortunate, and of the proper means to relieve them, is diffused through society, and has fixed the general attention. The first of these two conditions supposes, in its turn, the existence of institutions of a generous character, knowledge generally diffused, and freely circulating; and the influence of a wise political liberty and good public morals.

What better means are there of securing the second condition supposed, next to the influences of a religious spirit, than the presence of a number

of persons, in the midst of society, who maintain continual communication with the poor? It is evident how many advantages there are in the visitors of the poor being taken from the midst of society. They are precious centres of heat and light in the midst of the world. It is by them that the world is initiated into the secret of the sufferings which weigh upon the poor; that its distracted attention is reminded of the claims of charity, amidst the tumult of business, and the intoxication of pleasure.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE COÖPERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ESTABLISHMENTS OF HUMANITY.

In all the establishments formed for private industry, the mature have naturally the good sense to associate the young with them as useful auxiliaries. Fathers have the wise precaution to prepare their sons, by gradual apprenticeship, to the exercise of the professions they are one day to pursue. The rostrum prepares advocates for the bar. I see the notary surrounded by his young clerks, the merchant and the manufacturer putting in motion their young apprentices; and, to choose an example more in relation to our subject, in our hospital, the most experienced physicians are accompanied by pupils who prepare and administer their prescriptions. And why should not the noble career of beneficence also have its neophytes?

What precious fruits have the establishments of humanity already reaped, from the assistance of females, to whom Providence has seemed to con-

fide the touching mission of being the consoling angels of the unfortunate; and whom it has endowed with such exquisite sensibility, such delicacy of kindness, such tender pity, and whose virtue draws from religion the benefits it diffuses over the unhappy! How noble it would be to complete the work, by associating in it that happy age which is so rich in gifts and hopes! How useful would such coöperation be, both to the unfortunate and to the young people themselves.

The number of men who enjoy the privilege of being able to devote themselves wholly and undividedly to the noble duties of benevolence, is very small. This privilege belongs only to those who have retired from business and have acquired a certain independence in fortune. But at an advanced age their activity often fails, their strength is almost spent; and if their wisdom and long experience peculiarly fit them for giving good directions, for laying down rules, for judging and advising, yet they cannot themselves always go through the details, and survey and execute what they have conceived. Men of mature age, also, can only give to these labors a few moments at a time; they cannot follow their inclinations entirely; they are restrained by family ties and

imperious duties. The young can supply to them these inevitable deficiencies by seeking and obtaining the requisite information. They can explore the vast and varied field of human woe. They can be the bearers of consoling words, and the distributors of proper succours. Doubtless the young would be exposed, by their very simplicity, to be easily deceived by the artifices too often attempted by the poor; and they would not sufficiently observe, in the distribution of charity, that prudence which is especially demanded. But these inconveniences are not to be feared, when the young would only act under the direction of others; and we find, in the young, certain admirable things, which are too often wanting at an advanced age, — ardor which nothing terrifies or wearies; promptitude to seize the favorable moment; vivacity of mind which discovers and imagines all resources.

We are sometimes astonished and afflicted at a sort of languor that seems, at length, to paralyse certain benevolent administrations, and obstacles that arise from the mere habits of routine. The coöperation of the young would give new life to these institutions; would extend the circle of ideas, and give an opening to useful improve-

ments. They will wake up those, who, with the best intention in the world, think they could not do better than they have done or are already doing.

If the exercise of true beneficence is an art as difficult in the choice and employment of means, as it is immense in the sphere it embraces, why should it be the only one that does not require training? The experience of a whole life is not too much to teach its secrets; for it cannot be studied in books, it is only taught by practice. But it is true that, in practice, errors are fatal. They not only waste the resources already scarcely sufficient, but they may increase the evils they propose to cure. And how can the beginner escape these errors? How can he escape the snares which disguised immorality holds out to him under the sacred garb of misfortune? How can he escape the seductions of his own heart, whose tenderness prevents reflection and examination, whose delicacy repels suspicion? If you grant him the novitiate we solicit, the lessons of experience will come to aid the warmth of zeal, and the first essays of benevolence will be subjected to a prudent control. Thus our young philanthropist will obtain, without doing any harm,

that education which will teach him the different ways in which human miseries may be efficiently remedied. So the art of healing forms its most skilful pupils near the bed of the sick. In proportion as the ranks of those virtuous men, of whom our charitable administrations are composed, disappear, numerous candidates will present themselves to take their places, and the recollection of the devotedness of their predecessors will inspire them with a noble ambition. The choice which may fall upon one of them, calling him to do still more good, will be the reward of the good he has already done. He will no longer have any thing to learn, he will only have to apply what he has already learnt.

People are still ignorant of how much is to be done, to remedy the evils of all kinds, which afflict humanity; or at least if they see how much there is to be done, they despair of resources. This is an error. With the resources we have, we might provide for more wants than exist, but there is a genius for beneficence as well as for the other arts. This genius requires a certain youthfulness of heart, a certain vivacity of imagination, and an enthusiasm whose warmth has not yet been cooled. If we have not had

the advantage of receiving the severe and fruitful education of adversity, we can supply this, at least in part, by mingling from our youth in that class of society which is disinherited by fortune, and by uniting ourselves with it by the tie of a generous sympathy. Thus our young novices will begin by being the confidants of grief, in order to be better prepared for aiding it at a future time.

And who can better obtain the confidence of the afflicted heart? The amiable and earnest benevolence, the warmth of heart and ingenuousness of the young, encourage openness and freedom. In their words there is a charm which captivates, and in their countenance a something which inspires hope. People love to tell them what they dare not confess to a graver man; they are reanimated by their presence. The benefit they confer is given with more grace, and the joy they feel in bestowing, is a new consolation to the receiver. The unfortunate person sees in a young man, a protector who is secured to him for many years and who will watch over the whole course of his destiny. Children, especially, will become attached to one, whose age approaches their own. They will listen to his counsels; they will show him with pride the fruits of their

labors; they will say to themselves, "Here is one who will serve me as a guide, and support my mind through every period of my life."

What a touching sight is that of a young man, in the midst of a desolate family! Each one presses round him, and recognises in him a messenger of peace and love. He is the best comforter, who is most easily softened. In the primitive church, when Christianity, in its infancy, offered to the astonished world the first example of a society closely united by the bonds of charity, although the higher functions of the ministry were reserved for old men, it was in the hands of the young, that were deposited the gifts destined for the suffering. This ministry was the first degree of religious consecration. It was judged the most worthy means of introducing men to the service of the altar. It was thought that as true piety is the most fertile source of beneficence, beneficence, in its turn, constantly leads the heart to pious sentiments; for, *the two great commandments are like to one another*, and the love of God is blended with the love of man. Ah! may this early age, to which it has been given to know so well how to love, understand the sentiment in its sublimest and purest acceptation, as an entirely

celestial emanation, which in rising to the Creator, embraces by compassion all his creatures, and especially the unfortunate. To imitate the Supreme Benefactor, is to do our duty to him. Religion collects the tears of pity as the most acceptable offering. The heart that is full of true love, can be satisfied only by diffusing and devoting itself. What is love if not delight in giving? To give, is in itself but little; to give is not charity; but charity is to love him who suffers. The gift is only the effect, or the sign, and receives all its value from the sentiment which inspires it. Let us offer then to the unfortunate, as to God himself, the best fruits of our faculties, and the spring-time of our life!

To open to young people the career of an active beneficence, is therefore to offer them the surest initiation into a deep and enlightened piety; to exercise them beforehand in the other virtues, and inspire a taste for them in their minds. The emotions which they will experience, in this noble apprenticeship, will leave durable impressions with them and become a germ of good actions. Their souls will be kept in habits of pure sensibility, and will be guarded against the influence which results too often from the tumult of

business and worldly intercourse, an influence which leads to the cold calculations of selfishness. They will be naturally preserved from the numerous dangers which dissipation, frivolity, and factitious pleasures, sow on all sides under the steps of youth. They will better enjoy innocent pleasures. Their all-devouring activity will find proper aliment, and new energy, in the inward satisfaction which arises from the remembrance of the good accomplished. They will hasten with ever-increasing ardor to the labors imposed upon them. Talent will receive its most fruitful inspirations from following this career; for the mind is always enlightened by the holy emotions of virtue. Great thoughts spring from noble sentiments. Thus will be nourished, within the breast of youth, that generous flame which produces courageous acts, and the masterpieces of genius. Thus will be preserved the inward calm, the unalterable peace, which render the judgment sound, and alone procure true security. Oh, how beautiful are the tears which flow over a face brilliant with youth, but softened by modesty, timidity, and innocence! How I love to see a youthful heart expand with the hope of relieving the woes of others; discovering, in the morning of life, its sweetest privilege, the pleas-

ure of causing happiness, and enjoying the Christian triumph which is obtained by self-sacrifice for our brethren, and glad consecration to a career, which alone can satisfy a boundless ambition, without being troubled by any bitterness!

What is more just and perfect, than that the natural exaltation of youth, should be associated with an enthusiasm for doing good. This exaltation, which is capable of so many things, deceives its own instinct, if it does not incline us to be useful to others. Every thing which nature has decorated with bright colors and graceful forms, announces and promises good; and it is always adorned with youth when it brings to human beings the gifts that it destines for their nourishment. Let us understand the alliance expressed by this symbol. Let the young who are the ornament of the state, be also its honor, and the heralds of beneficence to all men. Excuse me if I pause with a kind of delight upon this image, and return to it incessantly, for it charms and captivates me. The rising of the dawn is less enchanting to my eyes than celestial charity appearing upon earth in the form of youth.

Our public institutions have opened all kinds of schools for the instruction of the young. They are

established for belles-lettres, for the different branches of science, for the liberal arts, and for mechanical industry. But there is still another great school, not less fertile in positive knowledge, and not less necessary to this age, where we may learn to know misfortune, and to study human destiny. The young man whom I introduce into this new school, which is entirely practical and experimental, will discover many things which he might not have learned, or at least not so well have learned, in any book. He will see, with his own eyes, what profound and innumerable sufferings are hidden under the brilliant mantle which the world seems to unfold before the eyes of the superficial beholder, and these sufferings will reveal to him the designs of Providence, who wills that man's passage over the earth shall be a laborious pilgrimage. He will perceive how great is the anguish of pain, what aids religion and virtue offer against despair, and how sterile and impotent, in this terrible crisis of our nature, are all consolations, not drawn from this source. He will have opportunity to admire patience and resignation in their noblest manifestations, exercised in desolation, abandonment, and obscurity. He will often meet, under the rags of misery, the truest, most spontaneous virtues, virtues more difficult

of attainment than those which are celebrated by the praises of the world. He will find out secrets of the human heart, and moral truths, unknown by speculative philosophers. He will become convinced of the end to which the disorders of vice conduct, of the dangers to which levity and imprudence expose men, and will learn the sad consequences which ignorance and prejudice bring in their train. He will honor labor more, and will feel all the value of economy and good order, which alone preserve the fruits of labor. The emotion which his heart will feel at the sight of so many different troubles, and the sympathy which will associate him with those who bear them, will reveal to him the strength of the bond of that sacred brotherhood which unites all human creatures; and in this single sentiment, he will possess, as it were, the torch which enlightens the whole region of morality.

But will it be said that a young man cannot give himself up to the exercise of private beneficence? This may be; but by associating this young man in a humane establishment, you will offer him an occasion which perhaps might have been wanting to him, or which he might perhaps have neglected to seize. Besides, most young people can carry

individually, but very limited contributions, as pecuniary resources, to the unfortunate. You will offer to them a means of joining to these a multitude of active services, of a kind for which young people are so well adapted, and which form the most important and fruitful branch of enlightened beneficence. It will not be necessary for them to be rich themselves, in order to serve as channels of communication between those who give and those who receive. Private beneficence can only embrace certain kinds of misfortune in its sphere. But, as an organ and minister of an establishment of charity, a young man will go over, on a much larger scale, the extensive and varied field of human misfortunes. And this is not all. By himself, he could only make isolated attempts; but, initiated into the application of a general system of philanthropic daministration, he will gather up all the knowledge which has been accumulated by a long experience. He will not limit his observations to his own action; he will see those act who are already perfected in this great art. How many useful notions he will collect even unexpectedly in the employment confided to him! He will penetrate into workshops and cottages; he will become acquainted with the details of manufacturing and agricul-

tural industry, of which, without this circumstance, he might have been always ignorant. He will collect precious facts about domestic economy, and he will even have an opportunity of acquiring insensibly some ideas concerning the physical education of children, ordaining diseases, and the most common accidents. He will learn their causes and the most simple means of remedying them. In his relations with the different classes of society, he will observe their manners, and thus acquire the knowledge of men. He will study characters, and exercise himself in the art of persuading. He will learn to appreciate the means of exerting the only useful and honorable influences; I mean those which rest upon confidence. If he is afterwards called to a public career, he will find a multitude of useful elements in his numerous recollections, of which he will be able to make use, either as an officer of government or as a discusser of the great interests of legislation, and of society. I think if I had to choose a governor for a province, I should like to meet with an individual who had received such an education.

But one of the greatest advantages which this association would offer to young people, would be the putting them in immediate and habitual relation

with the respectable men who preside over the establishments of beneficence. Such an intercourse would elevate their souls, would cultivate their reason, extend their ideas, and inspire them constantly with the need of their own esteem, and show them the end towards which they are worthy to direct their ambition. What examples will be displayed before their eyes! what instructions will be offered them! what guides and supports are prepared for them in time of need! What emulation will be excited in their hearts! What a recompense they will have in the approbation of these good men! What dignity will be imparted to their manners, and what a serious direction given to their lives! How should we love to see those venerable men, who watch over the destiny of the poor man, surrounded, in the functions of this touching service, by a troop of young disciples whose eyes were fixed upon them, eager to assist them.

The fundamental rule which should separate the functions peculiar to administrators, from the cooperation confided to their assistants is, in always reserving the direction and decision to the former, and committing the execution only to the latter.

These young auxiliaries might be arranged in several classes or degrees, and in each, they might receive different kinds of offices.

The employment which ought to precede all others, consists of the numerous investigations which humane establishments need, in order to form a body of preliminary information. Our young explorers should be sent out to make observations. They should be called on to collect and state facts, taking care to bring together all the circumstances. It would be well to have two young people charged, at the same time, with obtaining the desired information. This association would become an occasion of holy friendship, and the charm of these friendships would increase their zeal, by offering them a sweet reward in their labors.

A second kind of office should have for its object that detailed superintendence which consists in assuring themselves that what has been prescribed has been faithfully accomplished, and in order to acquit themselves of this office, it would be necessary for them to be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the orders given, of the end to which they tend, and the conditions they suppose. We conceive that these cares would give to our young people happy habits of regularity and precision.

They would themselves appreciate the effects and results of the concerted distributions.

The superintendents, however, should not on this account cease to make their own visits, to inquire for themselves, and assure themselves of every thing. Nothing can dispense with an administrator's seeing with his own eyes. But he cannot be every where. He can therefore be aided, and the investigation may become more extensive and more frequent. The administrator, in his visits, may be accompanied by some young pupils, who will learn, from his example, the difficult art of observing carefully.

As yet our novices have only been called to see; and it is indeed needful to begin thus in every thing. Facts are the elements of science; afterwards they might begin to act, or at least participate in action. They should act under the eyes of the administrator, following the instructions received from him; coöperating in that part of the execution which requires most activity and promptitude, but which is the least discretionary: their labor would resemble that of apprentices in workshops; they would be regulated by a model, and finish what had been traced out by others.

Thus are our philanthropic pupils in motion, in the sphere which an establishment embraces. They receive, carry, and bring back knowledge and relief; afterwards they will be called to the centre of action, and find other employments, always without disturbing the economy and unity of the administrative system. Some will make reports, others keep records, or be charged with a part of the correspondence, and they may thus diminish the expenses of secretaryship. Some can examine memorials, and take notes or extracts. Those who have occasion to travel, can visit, in the cities where they stay, analogous establishments, and observe the methods and proceedings which are adopted in them. Each of these youthful coöperators may be put to such or such a service, according to the direction which his studies have followed, or to the profession he has embraced. Thus the commission-merchant may be usefully employed in purchases, and the manufacturer in making articles of furniture. Young advocates might be sent to visit prisons, and those who continue to cultivate sciences and letters might become superintendents of schools.

If some persons, who are accustomed to rank among vain theories whatever they have not seen

executed, and to treat as beautiful dreams all views for the public good; and discouraged by the sight of the world in which they live, raise doubts about the possibility of realizing the plans which have just been proposed, a positive experience is their answer. For some years a generous emulation has been developed in the French youth, and several honorable associations have been formed. Since the creation of the saving's bank at Paris, we have seen a great number of clerks of the banking-houses of the capital, come and offer themselves voluntarily, with laudable eagerness, for book-keepers; joyfully sacrificing their Sunday, their only leisure day, for this fatiguing toil. In several of our associations for the public good, we count young people in the number of subscribers, assiduous at meetings, and ready to fulfill all the commissions given them. Some young people have received at Paris the office of inspectors of free schools, and have put forth such zeal in the cause, that the schools under their superintendence have made rapid and unlooked-for progress. Some have been called to the office of dispensing charity, and the poor have found in them friends full of ardor for their interests. We see some young people who visit the

hospitals of Paris, and sit down at the pillows of the sick, and read to them, or talk to them edifyingly. We have seen young people visit the Hôtel de Dieu of Lyons, and render a kind of care, which requires the conquest of much natural repugnance. An estimable society of young men has been occupied for three years, at Paris, with placing orphans in apprenticeship, and giving no less care to their moral education than to their industry. There is nothing good which we may not expect from the generosity of this age, and the enthusiasm which is peculiar to it. Let a voice be raised and say, "Come, you who are the object of so many affections, the source of so many hopes, whom we see disputing with so much ardor for academical honors, and who leap for joy at receiving testimonies of satisfaction from your guardians, and the encouragement of your families; you, whose young hearts beat anew, when noble actions are mentioned to you; who, in your literary essays, are happy in finding an occasion to express the noblest sentiments; you, whose souls, yet fresh and pure, are eager for generous emotions; come, we offer you celestial joys, inexhaustible pleasures, and a glory so much the more true, as it is free from the seductions of vanity.

You, who are happy, upon whom every thing in the world and in nature smiles, come and learn to compassionate and relieve; come and be the friends of misfortune, assist those good administrators whom you venerate, and be the heralds of their beneficence. Come and amass such treasures for the rest of your life as fortune cannot take from you. The sanctuary, where charity dwells to console human misery, is open to you; come and carry thither your first offerings; come and be with us, second us, and begin to receive our inheritance in advance. Prepare to do one day better than we have done; and may Heaven, as a reward for your labors, one day give you sons who resemble yourselves."

What do I say? It is not only in the heart of young men that has resounded the voice of the unfortunate imploring pity; it is not only from their hands that generous aid has been received. The genius of charity has raised up young girls, as yet inexperienced and strangers to the world, to the dignity of this noble ministry, which adopts and relieves the unfortunate. Can we see, without admiration, nearly two thousand young girls put into a common stock their little savings of thirty cents per month, to adopt poor children of

their own age and sex, whom they place in apprenticeship, and to whom they furnish necessary articles, which each of them has the right of presenting, when they visit them? * Can we see, without deep emotion, another very numerous society of young ladies, who form also by their subscriptions, under the eyes and direction, and with the aid of their parents, an annual fund for procuring clothing and garments for poor old men; and who go, guided by their mothers, to these unfortunate persons, take an account of the situation in which they have found them, explain their wants, and take charge of them? † Touching beginnings which promise a long career of good actions! Affecting homage offered to those who are ready to quit life and have felt its trials, by those whose hearts are open to all affections, and who, without having yet experienced misfortune,

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* *The Society of the Young Economists.* The example seems to have been set by the city of Lyons, where a society of this kind comprises nearly all the young ladies of the city.

† *The Society of Children for the Care of Old Men.* A venerable lady, a living model of active, enlightened, indulgent charity, has essentially contributed to this interesting institution, of which we know no other example.

already know so well how to compassionate it! It might be called a chaplet of flowers laid upon the altar of Beneficence. It is thus that the sacred sentiment of humanity brings together all ages and all conditions, and tends to form but one single chain of humanity. Let us meditate upon these examples; they teach us where we shall find amiable candidates for *visitors of the poor.*

THE END.