

poverty has left us as a sacred heritage. We tell ourselves soothingly that we are poor in spirit, knowing not the meaning of the term.

'As I looked about your city the other day—for I am a stranger in your midst—I could not but note what magnificent temples you have erected to Mammon. Verily, Solomon in all his glory never dreamed of such buildings. How they tower towards the skies and spread themselves out, as if to boast of the millions they cost! Their massive pillars, their marble floors, their sculptured walls and ceilings, shriek of money. And there are many concerned in their erection who scoff and sneer when approached in regard to some simple adornment for the house of the King of Heaven and earth. I could not but think of these things as I measured my pigmy height against those gigantic piles. Oh, I could not but think in comparison of the patient lives of the poor of the city's uncounted poor, of their unspeakable hovels, their season-changed distresses, their unutterable suffering! I felt like crying out to God to spare this city lest its magnificence fall upon it and crush it.

'It was while I was crossing one of the streets, thinking these things, that my eyes fell upon one of the most pitiful sights I have ever seen. At the corner of one of the great buildings that stretched almost a block in its towering splendor, there sat an old woman whose years must have totalled at least seventy-five. Wrinkled and grey-haired and poorly clad, there she was in the piercing wintry wind, offering her papers for sale. Of those who passed by many glanced at her casually, as if hardened to such sights, others pityingly, hurrying on as if to forget. Perhaps, poor souls, there was nothing else they could do. Some stopped to buy a paper, and I was glad to see, several refused the change from the larger coin they gave in payment.

'But, great God, the pity of it! Someone within that magnificent building thought he was doing a very fine thing in permitting the poor old woman to sell her papers so near the door of his great temple of trade. He had a mother, that man. Perhaps she's dead, but dead or living, a mother he must have had, and for her sake he might have placed that poor old tottering woman in comfort for her few remaining years. But the poor are proud, and it may be that she preferred her independence thus obtained to being cared for by a stranger. So we will absolve the man who gave her permission to sit near his temple gate. But I found that there was within that great building a man with a heart so hard, so black, so utterly without human feeling, that it seems almost impossible to believe that there is such a heart beating in the world to-day. Oh, I hope that I may never meet that man! I would not like to touch his hand, the hand that is lifted up to strike one of Christ's poor a bitter blow. I hope he does not pretend to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ. No, that is too abhorrent a thought; that could not be, that one who had ever tasted the sweetness of the Sacramental God could sink so low. Yet Judas was at the first Sacred Banquet—the tense voice had sunk to a soft, sorrowful musing, but his breathless hearers did not miss a word.

In one of the front pews a white-faced man shrank and cowered, waiting for the lash to fall, and presently it fell.

'Would you believe it, my friends, that man found this poor old paper-seller so repulsive a sight that he had the privilege of selling her papers in that place taken away from her. She was an eyesore to this fine gentleman who would have only elegant, money-begotten objects about him. She told me with the scant tears of the aged in her dimmed eyes. She had greeted me with the reverent little courtesy of the older Irish born for the priest. In answer to my few questions the simple story was laid bare, the death of her husband, of her children, the story of her long struggle, her poverty, and her desire to be of use, to support herself. And she had managed well enough with her meagre earnings to keep her one room, to buy

the little food and clothing she required. Now the assurance of that little was to be taken from her.

'“But surely,” I said, “this man will provide other means for your support; will send you to some good home. It cannot be that he can stand to see you turned adrift after cutting you off from this place where you have established a small trade!” Sadly she shook her head. That day and the next, which was Saturday, she might remain, but after that she could come back no more. I thought it a simple matter to find another place, but she smiled at my credulity. “The places were all taken by those younger and more active,” she said, and indeed I found, as I went along afterwards, that that was true.

'I gave the woman a hope of help, though I could not promise much, being a stranger. But oh! I think that as long as I live the name of your wonderful city will conjure up for me the pathetic sight of that bent old figure in the faded grey shawl against the background of the great building that looked so pitilessly cold and grim. And I ask that in your charity you will pray for that man to whose sight the poor old paper-seller was so offensive, for indeed he has need of prayers. If such as he had gone to the Crib of the Infant Saviour, had remained long enough to take in its unparalleled lesson, what a different world it would be. He would have seen, then, with that clearer, higher vision, that that poor old woman, struggling so courageously for independence at her advanced age, was an infinitely more beautiful sight than all the man-constructed buildings in the world. He would have seen the sweet, kind soul that looked out of her brave old eyes, growing dim to the things of earth because they were so soon to glow brightly in eternity.

'Ah, that seems a hard lesson for us to learn, my friends, that the poor are perhaps more beautiful in the sight of the Almighty God than our immaculate, well-clad selves. We look upon them as eyesores, as blots on creation, to be patronised and snubbed and looked down upon. We give them the things we no longer want and boast of our charity. Oh, will we ever succeed in remembering when we look upon them that, in scorning our poorer brethren, we scorn and condemn the Son of God, who so loved and honored poverty as to deliberately choose it as the condition of His earthly sojourn, who was born in a stable, lived a life of lowliness and labor and died the death of the poor and abandoned?

'During the rest of the Mass, to his wife's surprise, Tom Fordham remained on his knees. There was something about him that made her fear he was ill, but there was something, too, that made her refrain from questioning him. On the way home and at lunch he was abstracted and silent. Mrs. Fordham missed his decidedly expressed views on the topics of the day. None that she tried to bring up for discussion seemed to interest him. Early in the afternoon, with no adequate explanation, he went out.

Father Stanley, over at St. Martin's rectory, was surprised when a caller was announced, for he knew no one in the city. The man who awaited him in the little reception room was a total stranger. The young priest went forward, however, with outstretched hand, for he felt lonely and the other priests in the house were busy. But the man's hand did not go out to meet his.

'You said very recently that you would not like to touch my hand,' was his odd greeting. 'I am the unspeakable wretch you described in the pulpit this morning.'

Father Stanley started a little, but his eyes did not flinch from the challenging eyes of the man before him.

'Yes?' he said, and there was no apology in his tone nor in his look.

'I don't know why I have come to you,' Fordham went on when the priest said nothing further. 'Somehow it seemed as if I was compelled to come.'

'Yes?' Father Stanley said again, but the magic voice was hopeful.

'I—I have beenuffed up with pride and self-satisfaction. I have blinded myself with wealth until

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