

# The Newbern Gazette.

NEW BERN, (NORTH-CAROLINA :) PRINTED BY JOHN C. OSBORN, & Co.

[Vol. I.]

SATURDAY MARCH 9, 1799.

[NUMB. 49.]

Messrs Printers,  
Please to publish the following Extract  
for the amusement of some of your readers,  
and oblige a Customer; which may perhaps  
serve in lieu of a recapitulation of the dis-  
tressing scenes of Europe.

## CHARITY,

A moral virtue, which consists in supplying the necessities of others, whether with money, counsel, assistance, or the like.

As pecuniary relief is generally the most efficacious, and at the same time that from which we are most apt to excuse ourselves, this branch of the duty merits particular illustration: and a better cannot be offered than what is contained in the following extracts, (if we may be permitted to make them) from the elegant Moral System of Archdeacon Paley.

Whether pity be an instinct or a habit, it is in fact a property of our nature, which God appointed: and the final cause for which it was appointed, is to afford to the miserable, in the compassion of their fellow creatures, a remedy for those inequalities and distresses which God foresaw that many must be exposed to, under every general rule for the distribution of property.

The Christian scriptures are more copious and explicit upon this duty than almost any other. The description which Christ hath left us of the proceedings of the last day, establishes the obligation of bounty beyond controversy. "When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. And inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." It is not necessary to understand this passage as a literal account of what will actually pass on that day. Supposing it only a fencible description of the rules and principles by which the Supreme Arbitrator of our destiny will regulate his decisions, it conveys the same lesson to us; it equally demonstrates of how great value and importance these duties in the sight of God are, and what stress will be laid upon them. The apostles also describe this virtue as propitiating the divine favour in an eminent degree. And these recommendations have produced their effect. It does not appear that, before the times of Christianity, an infirmary, hospital, or public charity of any kind, existed in the world; whereas most countries in Christendom have long abounded with these institutions. To which may be added, that a spirit of private liberality seems to flourish amidst the decay of many other virtues: not to mention the legal provision for the poor, which obtains in this country, and which was unknown and unthought of by the most polished nations of antiquity.

St. Paul adds upon the subject an excellent direction; and which is practicable by all who have any thing to give. "Upon the first day of the week (or any other stated time) let every one of you lay by in store, as God hath prospered him." By which the apostle may be understood to recommend what is the very thing wanting with most men, the being charitable upon a plan; that is, from a deliberate comparison of our fortunes with the reasonable expences and expectations of our families, to compute what we can spare, and to lay by so much for charitable purposes, in some mode or other. The mode will be a consideration afterwards.

The effect which christianity produced upon some of its converts, was such as might be looked for from a divine religion coming with full force and miraculous evidence upon the consciences of mankind. It overwhelmed all worldly considerations in the expectation of a more important existence. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed, was his own; but they had all things in common. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the pieces of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need." Acts. iv. 32.

Nevertheless, this community of goods, however it manifested the sincere zeal of the primitive christians, is no precedent for our imitation. It was confined to the church at Jerusalem; continued not long there; was never enjoined upon any (Acts v. 4.); and, although it might suit with the particular circumstances of a small and select society, is altogether impracticable in a large and mixed community.

The conduct of the apostles on the occasion deserves to be noticed. Their followers laid down their fortunes at their feet: but so far were they from taking advantage of this unlimited confidence to enrich themselves or establish their authority, that they soon after got rid of this business as inconsistent with the main object of their mission, and transferred the custody and management of the public to deacons, elected to that office by the people at large. (Acts vi.)

There are three kinds of charity, our author observes, which prefer a claim to attention.

1. The first, and apparently one of the best, is to give stated and considerable sums, by way of pension or annuity to individuals or families, with whose behaviour and distress we ourselves are acquainted. In speaking of considerable sums, it is meant only, that five pounds, or any other sum, given at once, or divided amongst five or fewer families, will do more good than the same sum distributed amongst a greater number in shilling or half crowns; and that, because it is more likely to be properly applied by the persons who receive it. A poor fellow, who can find no better use for a shilling than to drink his benefactor's health, and purchase half an hour's recreation for himself, would hardly break into a guinea for any such purpose, or be so improvident as not to lay it by for an occasion of importance, for his rent, his clothing, fuel, or stock of winter's provision. It is a still greater recommendation of this kind of charity, that pensions and annuities, which are paid regularly, and can be expected at the time, are the only way by which we can prevent one part of a poor man's sufferings, the dread of want.

2. But as this kind of charity supposes that proper objects of such expensive benefactions fall within our private knowledge and observations, which does not happen to all, a second method of doing good, which is in every one's power who has the money to spare, is by subscription to public charities. Public charities admit of this argument in their favour, that your money goes farther towards attaining the end for which it is given, than it can do by any private and separate beneficence. A guinea, for example, contributed to an infirmary, becomes the means of providing one patient, at least, with a physician, surgeon, apothecary; with medicine, diet, lodging, and suitable attendance; which is not the tenth part of what the same assistance, if it could be procured at all, would cost to a sick person or family of any other situation.

3. The last, and, compared with the

former, the lowest exertion of benevolence, is in the relief of beggars. Nevertheless, the indiscriminate rejection of all who implore our alms in this way, is by no means approved. Some may perish by such conduct. Men are sometimes overtaken by distress, for which all other relief would come too late. Besides which, rebolutions of this kind compel us to offer such violence to our humanity, as may go near, in a little while, to suffocate the principles itself, which is a very serious consideration. A good man, if he do not surrender himself to his feelings without reserve, will at least lend an ear to importunities which come accompanied with outward attestations of distress; and after a patient hearing of the complaint, will direct himself by the circumstances and credibility of the account that he receives.

There are other species of charity well contrived to make the money expended go far; such as keeping down the price of the or provision in case of a monopoly or temporary scarcity, by purchasing the articles at the best market, and retailing them at prime cost, or at a small loss; or the adding of a bounty to a particular species of labour, when the price is accidentally depressed.

The proprietors of large estates have it in their power to facilitate the maintenance, and thereby encourage the establishment of families (which is one of the noblest purposes to which the rich and great can convert their endeavors) by building cottages, splitting farms, erecting manufactures, cultivating wastes, embanking the sea, draining marshes, and other expedients, which the situation of each estate points out. If the profits of these undertakings do not repay the expence, let the authors of them place the difference to the account of charity. It is true of almost all such projects, that the public is a gainer by them, whatever the owner be. And where the loss can be spared, this consideration is sufficient.

It is become a question of some importance, under what circumstances works of charity ought to be done in private, and when they may be made public without detracting from the merit of the action; if indeed they ever may, the Author of our religion having delivered a rule upon this subject, which seems to enjoin universal secrecy. "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth; that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly." (Matth. vi. 3, 4.) From the preamble to this prohibition, it is plain, that our Saviour's sole design was to forbid ostentation, and all publishing of good works which proceeds from that motive. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father, which is in heaven: therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto thee, they have their reward." v. 2. There are motives for the doing our alms in public besides those of ostentation; with which therefore our Saviour's rule has no concern; such as to testify our approbation of some particular species of charity; and to recommend it to others; to take off the prejudice which the want, or which is the same thing, the suppression of our name in the list of contributors, might excite against the charity or against ourselves. And, so long as these motives are free from any mixture of vanity, they are in no danger of invading our Saviour's prohibition: they rather seem to comply with another direction which he has left us: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." If it be necessary to propose a precise distinction upon the subject, there can be none better than the following: When our bounty is be-

yond our fortune or station, that is, when it is more than could be expected from us, our charity should be private; if privacy be practicable; when it is not more than might be expected, it may be public: for we cannot hope to influence others to the imitation of extraordinary generosity, and therefore want, in the former case, the only justifiable reason for making it public.

The pretences by which men excuse themselves from giving to the poor, are various; as,

1. "That they have nothing to spare;" i. e. nothing, for which they have not some other use; nothing which their plan of expence, together with the savings they have resolved to lay by, will not exhaust: never reflecting whether it be in their power, or that it is their duty, to retrench their expences, and contract their plans, "that they may have to give to them that need;" or rather that this ought to have been part of their plan originally.

2. "That they have families of their own, and that charity begins at home." A farther is no doubt bound to adjust his economy with a view to the reasonable demands of his family upon his fortune; and until a sufficiency for these is acquired, or in due time probably will be acquired (for in human affairs probability is enough) he is justified in declining expensive liberality: for to take from those who want, in order to give to those who want, adds nothing to the stock of public happiness. Thus far, therefore, and no farther; the plea in question is an excuse for parsimony, and an answer to those who solicit our bounty.

3. "That charity does not consist in giving money, but in benevolence, philanthropy, love to all mankind, goodness of heart, &c." Hear St. James, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" (James ii. 15, 16.)

4. "That giving to the poor is not mentioned in St. Paul's description of charity, in the 13th chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians." This is not a description of charity, but of good nature; and it is not necessary that every duty be mentioned in every place.

5. "That they pay the poor rates." They might as well alledge that they pay their debts; for the poor have the same right to that portion of a man's property, which the laws assign them, that the man himself has to the remainder.

6. "That they employ many poor persons;"—for their own sake, not the poor's;—otherwise it is a good plea.

7. "That the poor do suffer so much as we imagine; that education and habit have reconciled them to the evils of their condition, and make them easy under it." Habit can never reconcile human nature to the extremities of cold, hunger, and thirst, any more than it can reconcile the hand to the touch of a red hot iron; besides, the question is not, how unhappy any one is, but how much more happy we can make him.

8. "That these people, give them what you will, will never thank you, or think of you for it." In the first place, this is not true: in the second place, it was not for the sake of their thanks that you relieved them.

9. "That we are so liable to be imposed upon." If a due enquiry be made, our motive and merit is the same: beside that, the distress is generally real, whatever has been the cause of it.

10. "That they should apply to their parishes." This is not always practicable: to which we may add, that there are many requisites to a comfortable subsistence, which parish relief does not always supply; and that there are some who would suffer almost as much from receiving parish relief as by the want of it: and lastly, that there are many