

THE COTTAGE AND ITS VISITOR

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The Cottage and Its Visitor by Maria Louisa Charlesworth

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MARIA LOUISA CHARLESWORTH

**THE COTTAGE
AND ITS VISITOR**



—sitting at their cottage-door.

THE
Cottage and its Visitor.

BEING A REVISED EDITION OF

"THE FEMALE VISITOR TO THE POOR."

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"MINISTERING CHILDREN," &c.



"Only they would that we should remember the Poor."

Gal. ii. 10.

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PREFACE.

THIS little volume is dedicated to the service of those who, with a desire to benefit the Poor, may feel the drawback of personal inexperience. Its counsel is the result of long and intimate acquaintance with the Poor; its narrative illustrations are strictly true, and the subjects of them were personally known to the writer. It is humbly and thankfully offered to Him, "who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."—
2 *Cor.* viii. 9.

London, 1856.

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THE COTTAGE VISITOR.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

VISITING THE POOR.

"Through the tender mercy of our God ; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."—Luke I. 78, 79.

ONE of the most affecting declarations of Holy Scripture is that, which with all the tenderness of a divine lament, refers the alienation of man's heart from God, to the fact that man *knows not God*. May not the same in its measure be said of those high though subordinate objects of interest, which God has placed within our reach? if our feeling towards them be one of indifference, the cause lies in our not having acquired a true knowledge of their claims on our regard. If then our feeling with reference to the Poor be one of indifference, it proves that we as yet have no true knowledge of their claim to our interest. And as we shall be held personally answerable if we be

found without that knowledge of God, which binds the heart in devotion to Him, shall we altogether escape responsibility if we neglect the means, provided for us in the Scriptures of truth, and in the life of every day, for acquiring that knowledge of the Poor which is essential to rightly directed efforts for their good?

When we listen to the voice of Him, who "through the tender mercy of our God hath *visited* us," we hear Him say, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." John xiii. 15. Can we then also hear the divine declaration, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge!" and not hasten on the heavenly mission, proving that the love of Christ constraineth us? Be assured you need not take a single step in such a work unaided, unblest. He who stands before you in the way undertakes to be your guide, and says to you, "*Follow Me!*" He knows your inexperience, and says to you, "*Learn of Me!*" He knows your insufficiency, therefore He says to you, "*Ask, and it shall be given you!*" If you go forward in obedience to these commands, your way will be pleasantness, and your path peace.

Our Lord, when teaching us beforehand the final test by which He will Himself pass an eternal sentence of blessedness or woe upon us, does not merely say, "Ye gave Me drink; ye clothed Me;" but also, "Ye *visited* Me; ye *came unto* Me!" St. James in his brief summary of "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father," speaks not merely of relieving the temporal necessities of the Poor, but of *visiting* the fatherless and widows in their affliction—he singles out bereavement's saddest desolation, and by that one word "visit" forcibly implies an exercise of personal sympathy and aid, a light

of tenderness, counsel, and comfort, beaming upon those over whom sorrow's night has darkened. We have a beautiful illustration of a "visit," in adversity's hour, when Joseph enters the dungeon where the king's prisoners were bound; "He came in unto them in the morning," probably in the discharge of a trust committed to him; but how quickly do we feel him not the keeper of the captives so much as their *visitor*, full of compassionate tenderness; "He looked upon them, and behold they were sad; and he asked saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?"

Let the rich man make himself a home where he will, the homes of the Poor gather around it. "The Poor," our Saviour said, "ye have always with you, and whatsoever ye will ye may do them good." The joy of doing good to the Poor may be yours—Their Maker, Preserver, and Redeemer, has given you His permission and assurance; Oh esteem it not lightly, for once neglected and lost no ransom can win it back!

The secret of successful intercourse with the Poor, is the training your own heart in Prayer and Sympathy. Of *Prayer* I have before spoken as the means which you are encouraged and enjoined to use by our Lord Himself; it is indeed the key by which you must continually seek to open the Treasury of God's mercy and grace for the supply of *all* your need. "In *everything*, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. iv. 6. The necessity and power of *sympathy* may not at first sight be equally apparent, yet it is the attractive influence by which the heart of the Poor will be drawn to your own. Sympathy is more than Pity; pity is an occasional feeling, sympathy an abiding disposition—a fellow-feeling disposing us to take an inte-