THE *Charitable Society*:

OR, A

PROPOSAL

FOR THE

More Easy and Effectual Relief

OF THE

SICK and NEEDY.

I was Sick, and in Prison, and ye visited me.

LONDON:
Printed by *G. James*, for JONAH BOWYER
at the *Rose* in *Ludgate-street*. MDCCXV.

Mrs. The Revd. Mr. Bowyer having communicated to me a scheme he had met with in a French Sermon concerning an Infirmary in France, we agreed to have it translated and published in manner it is in this Pamphlet wch. proves produced by God's great blessing the Infirmary in St Mary's Street and afterwards the Hospital at Hide park Corner, at Winchester — Bath &c. in Dublin.

a mean and streight Place, is no very agreeable and inviting Sight. But if we consider the poor Wretch as a Representative of *Jesus Christ*, and with the Eye of Faith behold Him, as it were, lying upon the Bed of Sickness. If we consider farther the great Benefit and Advantage which we by this *Labour of Love* shall bring to others, and to our own Souls; we shall acknowledge it to be the most delightful and profitable Sight we can behold; the best and most useful Visit we can make; and the most pleasant and advantageous Work we can be employed in."

My brief account of this tract will have shown that it is, in itself, interesting; but I have a more special object in bringing it before the readers of "N. & Q."

Behind the title-page of my copy is written a curious autograph note, which I copy verbatim:—

"Mem^d. The Rev^d Mr Bowyer having communicated to me a Scheme he had met with in a French Sermon concerning of Infirmarys in France, we agreed to have ye Substance translated and published in ye manner it is in this Pamphlet, wh first produced, by God's great Blessing, the Infirmary in St Margts Westmr, and afterwds the Hospital at Hide Park Corner, at Winchester, Bath, and one in Dublin."

Was the "Rev. Mr. Bowyer" connected with *Jonah Bowyer*, the publisher of the pamphlet; and what further is known of him? Who was his worthy coadjutor—the anonymous writer of the above note?

W. Lee.

THE PREFACE.

AMongst the many great and good Works, which to the Honour of our Church, and the Good of our Nation, have of late Years been wisely established, and successfully carried on amongst us; it must be acknowledged, that they who are Sick *and* Needy *are not sufficiently taken Care of.*

It is true, indeed, the Laws of the Land oblige every Parish to do this; and there are a great Number of Hospitals, *in which they are relieved and recovered; but yet, they who are in the least conversant amongst them, are very sensible (how insensible soever, others may be,* who care for none of these Things) *that there are a great many, not only in publick Prisons, but in private Houses, who perish for want of necessary Care and Sustenance. In the City of* London *there*

are about Five Hundred die weekly, and how many of these die for Want of being let Blood, or having a proper Remedy applied in due time? How many for Want of Cloathing to cover them, and Food to nourish them? Suppose only Two in an Hundred, (and we might suppose a great many more) according to this Computation, there die yearly in this City more than Five Hundred for want of proper and timely Relief.

But then, if we extend our Computation farther; and suppose that in all the Parishes in England *(which are upward of Nine Thousand) there only die Two in each of them yearly, whose Lives might have been saved, if proper Care had been taken of them; then there are more than Eighteen Thousand who die for Want of it.*

And this Consideration will appear more exceeding melancholy, and deplorable; if we add to it, that the Number is much greater of those, who go out of the World without ever seeking or receiving those Things which are necessary for their Soul's Health.

To prevent and remedy this great Evil, to take Care both of the Bodies and Souls of those, who are at the same time oppressed with Po-

verty

verty and Sickness, is the Design of this Proposal; which, as it has been received and encouraged in other Countries, *so it is to be hoped, it will meet with Encouragement and Success in our* Own.

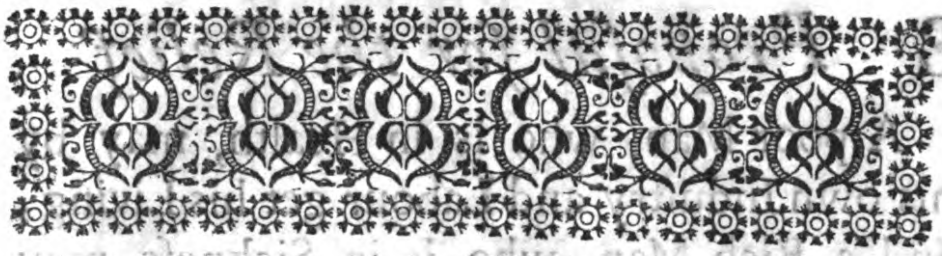
More especially, it is hoped, that the Clergy of the Church *of* England *will be zealous in promoting it: Since it is, in a great Measure, in their Power; (the Fund by which it is proposed to be supported, being chiefly at their Disposal) and will ease them of that great Trouble and Grief of Mind, which the Visiting many more miserable Objects than their Income will enable them to relieve, must necessarily give them; and also lighten the Burden of Instructing and Comforting those ignorant Souls, whom they visit. It is to be hoped, I say, that they will be as Zealous and Industrious in setting up these* Charitable Societies, *as they have been in setting up the* Charity-Schools; *which, to the great Honour and Advantage of our most Excellent Church, have met with such an unexpected and wonderful Success.*

And who can tell, but thro' the Blessing of God, we may in a few Years see the Former, *as universally approved of, received and established,*

eſtabliſhed, as the Latter: *Since they are not leſs Neceſſary and Uſeful, nor leſs Beneficial and Advantageous to the Publick; but are rather liable to fewer Difficulties, and Objections than thoſe at firſt were ſubject to; and require no new Funds or Burdens, only (or little more than) the due Application of thoſe which the Laws have already eſtabliſhed; and the Zeal of charitable and well-diſpoſed People.*

But God only knows what Succeſs this Propoſal will meet with; and to Him alone ought we all to look up for a Bleſſing upon it: As he, who humbly offers it to the Publick, has no other End and Deſign in it, than to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of his Fellow Creatures; ſo, if it may but be the Occaſion of Saving one Soul from Death, he will think himſelf ſufficiently recompenſed.

THE



THE

Charitable Society:

OR, A

PROPOSAL

FOR

The more Easy and Effectual Relief of the Sick and Needy.

POVERTY and Sickness are Two of the greatest Temporal Evils incident to Mankind; yet when they are separated, and do not meet together in the same Person, they are not altogether insupportable.

A poor Man, who is in Health, may by his own Induſtry and Labour get his Living; and a Rich Man, who is in Sickneſs, may ſupply himſelf with Things neceſſary to relieve and cure him: But when the ſame Perſon is both Poor and Sick at the ſame time; when his Sickneſs puts him out of a Condition of gaining a Subſiſtence, and his Poverty deprives him of thoſe Things which are neceſſary to ſupport and ſuccour him in his Sickneſs, he may then be ſaid to be *ſuperlatively* miſerable.

It muſt therefore confeſſedly be of great Uſe, to have *Charitable Societies* eſtabliſh'd, for the *Relief* not of thoſe *Poor* who are in *Health*, (for they do not much want it) nor of the *Sick* who are *Rich*; (for they may relieve themſelves) but for the Relief of thoſe who are equally oppreſs'd with *Poverty* and *Sickneſs*.

This is the great Work I now propoſe; a Work which will indeed be highly advantageous to the Bodies of thoſe who are *Poor* and *Sick*; but infinitely more ſo, to the Souls of thoſe, who ſhall either in their Perſons, or with their Subſtance, contribute to the promoting of it.

I shall therefore,

First, Lay before you a Scheme of this *Charitable Society.*

Secondly, Shew by what Means it may easily subsist. And,

Thirdly, The great Benefits and Advantages of it.

I. It is proposed, That this *Society* consist indiscriminately of Grave and Religious Men and Women; and the Reasons why Women are to be admitted into it, are,

1. Because they are generally more given to Piety and Devotion, and more susceptible of that Tenderness and Compassion, which are necessary for the Relief of the Sick.

2. They are more proper for this Employ, more fit for this Service than Men, and have more Patience to attend upon it; there are also many Things which Men know not how to do, or if they did, are not so proper to be done by them.

3. They are less engaged in Business than Men, and therefore have more Leisure for this *Labour of Love*, and *Work of Charity.*

II. There should be a *Physician*, an *Apothecary*, and a *Surgeon*; and if such cannot be found, as will give their Advice, their Assistance, and Medicines *gratis*; (and, indeed, this cannot well be expected) then let them be paid out of the Common Stock; only this may be desired of the *Apothecary* and *Surgeon*, that they bleed, and give their Attendance for nothing, and be paid a moderate Price for their Drugs and Remedies; or else Application may be made to the *Dispensary*.

III. That Persons may, with the less Difficulty, be prevailed upon to unite themselves in this *Charitable Society*; Let nothing be demanded of those that are Members of it; nothing but their Labour and their Pains, their Advice and Assistance. Yet, if they are willing to give of their Substance to promote this Good and Holy Work, let it not be refused, but thankfully received.

IV. But altho' none of the Members are required to give any Thing; yet, let all of them be obliged to ask others, and especially

ally when they have pressing Objects, and the Fund not sufficient to answer their Demands; or else, let there be three or four chosen to ask and receive the charitable Benevolence of their Friends and Acquaintance.

V. Let there be the same Number chosen to take Care of those that are sick; and let it be their Business, in the first place, to procure a Nurse constantly to attend upon them, (if there be none in the House that can supply the Place) and to visit them themselves twice a Day; to send for a Minister, Physician, or Apothecary, as Occasion shall require; to read to them, and to instruct them according to their Ability; to prepare them for the Holy Sacrament: Let them also put those that recover in mind of the Promises they made when they were sick; and let either those, or some others be appointed to visit such as are *sick, and in Prison.*

VI. Besides these, let there be others appointed, who are skilled in making Waters, Cordials, and Things proper for the Refreshment of those that are sick; or shall be obliged

liged to apply to thoſe good Women, who are skilled in ſuch Things: And let them, if they deſire it, be paid as much as they lay out, but no more: Let either theſe, or ſome others be appointed, who ſhall have the Care of the Goods and Utenſils, which are to be uſed in the Service of the Sick; as Bed-Cloaths, Pillows, Napkins, Cups, Pots, Spoons, *&c.* which may be lent to them, as there is Occaſion; and, when they are either dead or cured, returned for the Uſe of others.

VII. Let there be a Steward choſen, who ſhall receive all the Money, that is given, from the Hands of thoſe Siſters, who are employed to ask it; and give an Account how, and to whom it is diſtributed; for which End, let there be a Book provided and kept; and alſo a Preſident, who ſhall have an Eye over every Thing that is done, and without whom nothing of Moment ſhall be tranſacted.

VIII. Let there be a General Meeting once a Month of all the Members: At which the Steward's Accounts may be audited; the Si-

ſters,

ſters, whoſe Province it is to ask Alms, and to diſtribute them to the Sick, relieved; and others take their Part of the Trouble, that ſo alſo they may partake of the Reward of it.

IX. Beſides this General Meeting, it may not be improper to have a Meeting once a Week of the Preſident, Steward, and the Siſters, who are employed to receive the Alms of well-diſpoſed People; and of thoſe alſo, whoſe Buſineſs it is to viſit the Sick, that the former may give into the Steward's Hands what Money they have received; and the latter receive from his Hands what they want; that they may conſult together, who are proper Objects to be relieved; and what Relief muſt be given them: And not only they ſhould be eſteemed proper Objects, who have Relief of the Pariſh, but they alſo, who, in Time of their Health, do keep themſelves from being burthenſome to it.

X. That it may be more eaſily known when any poor Perſon is ſick, let him or her be prayed for, by Name in the Church; and let Notice be given to the Miniſter, Preſi-

dent,

dent, or Steward, that they may order the *Visiting Sisters* to go to them; and, if the poor Person should neglect to give this Notice, let the Clerk, Sexton, or Pew-Keeper be obliged to do it.

XI. Let both Poor and Rich, High and Low be invited into this *Society*; yet let none be admitted into it, but by the Vote and Consent of the *Majority*: In large Parishes there may be several of these Societies, who may have their proper Districts, or take Care of their own Townships.

XII. If the Meeting be in some convenient Room of some of the Members Houses, let there never be any Treat given; and, as far as is possible, let all Discourse be avoided, which is foreign to the Business in hand.

XIII. Besides those Superiors and Officers appointed by the Sisters, the Ministers and Curates are always to be at the Head of them; they should be present, and assist at all their Assemblies, and nothing ought to be done without their Advice: Let them

have

have a General Inspection over all the Transactions, and see that all the Rules of the Society be faithfully observed and kept; and they ought to animate and encourage the Sisters by their Zeal and Exhortations.* And it is to be hoped, that the Clergy will be more ready to this good Work, since it is the peculiar Office of the lowest Order of them, and what they solemnly promise at their Ordination.

This is sufficient to give a General Notion of this *Charitable Society*; which will admit of great Improvements, but they must be left to the Judgment and Discretion of those, who shall be stirred up by the Grace of God to promote so good a Work.

Nor is it so difficult to be carried on, as may at first be imagined; if it be burthensome to any, it is to those who have the

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* Vid. *The Ordering of Deacons, where the Bishop says,* It is his Office, where Provision is so made, to search for the sick, poor, and impotent People of the Parish, to intimate their Estates, Names, and Places where they dwell unto the Curate, that by his Exhortation they may be relieved with the Alms of the Parishioners and others. Will you do this gladly and willingly?

Answ. I will so do by the Help of God.

Charge

Charge of *Visiting the Sick*; and yet this, according to the Method proposed, will not be great; no more being required of them than to visit once or twice a Day; nor will they be long obliged to this Trouble; since if the Society consists of *thirty* or *forty* Members, 'twill not come to their Turn one Month in the Year.

The greater Difficulty will be to have the Charges of it defrayed; and to find, and raise a Fund sufficient for its Subsistence; how this may be done, is what I proposed in the

Second place to shew. The greatest Charge attending this Work, will be the providing a Nurse constantly to wait upon the Sick, (and this will not be necessary, where there is a Wife or Daughter capable of it) a *Physician* or *Apothecary*; of the former, there is already a *Charitable Society*, who give their Advice *gratis*; or at least, there are some who may be gotten to accept of lesser Fees; and except in extraordinary Cases an experienced *Apothecary* may do; and he is supposed to demand nothing, but a moderate Price for his Drugs. As for the Food of those

that

that are ſick, it is not much, and they, whoſe Buſineſs it is to viſit them, may procure it of Rich Members of their Society, or of the Neighbours of thoſe that are ſick, who are generally ready to ſend in proper and comfortable Things to them: Nor will it coſt much to ſupply them with Firing, which ſhould be paid for out of the Common Stock.

For the Raiſing whereof, we have already hinted at a Method, *viz.* That *three or four Siſters be appointed, whoſe Buſineſs it ſhall be to go amongſt their Friends, and ſuch as are able and well-diſpoſed:* And I doubt not, but there are very many good People, who will be glad of an Opportunity of giving their Charity to Perſons they are aſſured are proper Objects; and are alſo aſſured, that it will be juſtly applyed.

Beſides, it is to be hoped and expected, that many will, of their own Accord, ſend in of their Charity; particularly thoſe who are in Conſcience bound, as they value their Salvation, to make Reſtitution of their unjuſt Gains; and know not the Perſons whom they have wronged, and to whom they are obliged to make Reſtitution.

If theſe Means ſhould fail, and not raiſe a ſufficient Fund; yet is there a ſure and certain one, which will, in a great Meaſure, ſupply the Demands that may be made, without any further Charge or Trouble; and that is, the *appropriating the Offerings of the Sacrament to this Uſe.* It is Matter of Grief to a great many good People to obſerve, that in many Pariſhes in the Country, there are no Offerings made at the Holy Sacrament; and that in ſeveral Pariſhes in this great and rich City, they are applyed to the *Poor's Rates*, and ſerve only to leſſen them; which, in Effect, is not giving to the *Poor*, but eaſing the *Rich*; who, by the Laws of the Land, are obliged to maintain them: And this makes many of them very ſparing in their Offerings at the Sacrament; whereas, if they were aſſured, that what they gave would only be applyed to the Uſe here propoſed, without doubt they would give more plentifully. And to make Pariſhes more willing to apply the Offerings to this Uſe, (though it is chiefly, * if not ſolely in the

* *See the Rubrick after the Communion, which orders that,* If the Church-Wardens do not agree with the Miniſter, it ſhould be left to the Diſcretion of the Ordinary.

Power

Power of the Clergy to diſpoſe of it as they ſhall think fit) it may be ſo ordered, that they who are ſick and needy ſhould, whilſt they continue ſuch, have no other Relief from the Overſeers, but what comes from this Fund; and be altogether under the Care of this Society; except the other Members of their Family want Relief from the Pariſh during the Sickneſs of the Head of it.

And that this may be more effectually and carefully performed, it will be proper that the Church-Wardens and Overſeers, and their Wives, as alſo the Wife of the Miniſter, or Curate be invited to enter into this *Charitable Society*.

But if this Method ſhould not be approved of, or what is raiſed by it ſhould not be ſufficient: What is then to be done? Why, Application is to be made by the *Petitioning Siſters* to the Overſeers of the Pariſh, who, by the Laws already in Force, are obliged to relieve the *Sick* and *Needy*: So that there is no Occaſion of any new Law; no new Burthens laid upon the People.

And if the Members of this *Society* did nothing elſe, but only make it their Buſineſs to ſearch out thoſe that are ſick, and

want Relief; and then ſee, that they had that Relief from the Pariſh, which is neceſſary to preſerve them from periſhing for Lack of Suſtenance, they would do a great and good Work.

To encourage which, and to ſhew the great Benefit and Advantage that will attend it, is what I in the third and laſt Place propoſed: We ſhall be encouraged to this good Work, if we conſider,

1. That it is reckoned amongſt the Chief of thoſe, which will be more eſpecially enquired into, at the Day of Judgment.

For thus will our Bleſſed Saviour ſay to thoſe on his Right Hand; *I was ſick, and ye viſited me*, to thoſe on the Left Hand, *I was ſick and ye viſited me not*, Matth. xxv. 36-43. and again, to the former; *Inaſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, ye have done it unto me*, ver. 40. to the latter; *Inaſmuch as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it not to me*, ver. 45.

What terrible Words are theſe to ſuch as neglect this Duty? What Comfort do they afford to thoſe who perform it? If we have any Love and Reſpect for our Bleſſed Saviour;

our; any Gratitude for the great Things he hath done for us, we ſhall be always ready to viſit, and to do all kind Offices to the Sick and Needy; ſince he himſelf hath told us, *that inaſmuch as we do it to one of the leaſt of theſe, we do it unto him:* Yet further, if we have any Regard to our own Safety and Happineſs, we ſhall be conſtant and conſcientious in the Performance of this Work of Charity; ſince *by it we ſhall be juſtified, and by the Neglect of it, we ſhall be condemned.*

And as our Bleſſed Saviour hath in his Word commanded, and by his gracious Promiſes of Acceptance invited us to this Duty; ſo alſo hath he, by his own Example, encouraged us to it; for *he went about doing Good, healing every Sickneſs, and every Diſeaſe among the People:* This was his continual Buſineſs; we find him conſtantly employed in it. And, as if he thought his whole Life was not ſufficient to teach us Humility, and Condeſcenſion, in doing the meaneſt Offices for the meaneſt of our Brethren; the laſt Thing that he did, *after he aroſe from Supper, was his taking a Towel, and waſhing his Diſciples Feet*; the

Reaſon

Reaſon of which, he himſelf tells us; *If I your Lord and Maſter have waſhed your Feet, ye alſo ought to waſh one another's Feet: For I have given you an Example, that ye ſhould do as I have done to you*, Joh. xiii. And wherein do we imitate this Example? Wherein can we ſo well imitate it, as in viſiting the Sick and Needy, and miniſtring to them with our own Hands?

In Obedience to, and Compliance with it, the Kings and Queens of the Earth have on *Maunday-Thurſday* laid aſide their Crowns and Scepters, and in Perſon adminiſtred to the Poor and Needy: *Now* they do it by their *Almoners*; and my Author (to whom I am in a great Meaſure obliged for this new Scheme which I here offer to the Publick) tells us, that in *Paris* the Princeſſes, Ducheſſes, and thoſe who are of the higheſt Quality, and neareſt to the Crown, do with Chearfulneſs enter into this Charitable Society for the Relief of the Sick and Needy; and take Pleaſure in viſiting them; and in miniſtring to them with their own Hands: Others protect theſe Societies by their Authority, and ſupport them by their Liberality.

As

As alſo he tells us, that it is generally eſtabliſhed in all the Pariſhes in *France*; and that even in thoſe, where there ſeemed leaſt Means capable to ſupport it, and the Eſtabliſhment of it was at firſt thought a Thing impoſſible, and ridiculed, it has wonderfully ſucceeded; and produced very great and good Effects.

Since therefore, we have the Command and Example of our Bleſſed Saviour; and alſo the Example of thoſe whom in other Things we excell; it is to be hoped, that we ſhall in no whit come behind them, in imitating our Lord's Example, and in obeying his Commands.

And as this Work of Charity is moſt acceptable to *Jeſus Chriſt*. So

2. It is highly Beneficial and Advantageous to thoſe that are relieved by it: It extends both to their Bodies and Souls; and may be a Means of ſaving both from Death: Beſides, it will mightily refreſh their Spirits, and fill them full of Conſolation and Joy, to ſee thoſe who are their Superiors condeſcend to viſit and aſſiſt them; It will be of great Uſe to the Miniſters of Chriſt, not only

only (as we have already ſhown) in that it will eaſe them of the Pain, which the ſeeing thoſe poor ſick Perſons, which they are not able to relieve, neceſſarily gives them; but alſo it will give them an Opportunity of knowing thoſe that are ſick in their Pariſh; of viſiting and adminiſtring the Sacrament unto them: And yield them Help and Aſſiſtance in inſtructing and comforting them. It will be uſeful to the *Phyſicians*, *Apothecaries*, and *Surgeons*; as it may give them more Practice and Experience, and a greater Inſight into Diſeaſes: It will be uſeful to the Publick, not only as it will ſave many of the ſick and needy Members; but alſo as it will draw down the Divine Favour and Bleſſing upon thoſe, that are in Proſperity and Health. Therefore,

Thirdly, It will be moſt Beneficial and Advantageous to thoſe that are employed in it: For it will give them an Opportunity of exerciſing many Vertues, particularly Patience and Humility, Tenderneſs and Compaſſion, Mortification and Self-Denial; and give them ſtrong Motives to the Exerciſe of them: It will ſerve to convince them of the

the Folly and Vanity of the World; that none of the Things of it will *give a Man Peace at the last*, or afford any Comfort to him when *he lies upon a Bed of Sickness*: And of the Danger of trusting to a Death-Bed-Repentance; and how improper a Time that is, to begin that great Work, which can never be begun too soon: It will naturally lead them to consider the great Blessing of Health and Plenty; to be thankful for them; to examine what Use they have hitherto made of them; and to resolve to make a better for the Time to come: It will teach them also to be content in their Condition, be it what it will; since they see others in a much worse; and lastly, it will draw them off from the Pomps and Vanities of the World; and put them in mind of their own Death; and give them frequent Opportunities of thinking on it; which is one of the most effectual Means of preparing for it. Upon these Accounts it is, that the wise Man says, *It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting*: And St. *James* describes it to be *pure Religion, and undefiled before God, to visit the Fatherless and the Widow.*

And now let it not be objected, that this Work of Charity is a troubleſome and unpleaſant Work: It is true indeed, that a poor Cottage where the Wind blows in on every Side; an hard Bed ſtuffed with Straw, on which the poor ſick Wretch lies; a few Tattered Rags, which ſerved to be a Covering to his weak and naked Body; but above all, that noiſome Smell which ordinarily attends him languiſhing upon the Bed of Sickneſs in ſuch a mean and ſtreight Place, is no very agreeable and inviting Sight: But if we conſider the poor Wretch as a Repreſentative of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and with the Eye of Faith behold Him, as it were, lying upon the Bed of Sickneſs: If we conſider farther the great Benefit and Advantage which we by this *Labour of Love* ſhall bring to others, and to our own Souls; we ſhall acknowledge it to be the moſt delightful and profitable Sight we can behold; the beſt and moſt uſeful Viſit we can make; and the moſt pleaſant and advantageous Work we can be employed in.

And as for thoſe, who becauſe of the Buſineſs and State of Life they are neceſſarily engaged in; or for Want of Humility, Charity,

rity, and Zeal, do not enter into this *Charitable Society*; it is to be expected from them, that they will, out of their Abundance, supply the Lack of their Personal Service, and contribute more bountifully to the Support and Maintenance of it: As also it is to be hoped, that even they, who of *Silver or Gold have little or none* to spare, will give of their Meat, Drink, Linnen, and other Things which are to themselves of little Worth; but may be of great Use and Benefit to their poor Brethren. And *Psal.* xli. *Blessed are they who* in any Respect *consider the Sick and Needy; the Lord will deliver them in Time of Trouble; the Lord will preserve them, and keep them alive; and they shall be blessed upon the Earth; and he will not deliver them into the Will of their Enemies; the Lord will strengthen them upon the Bed of Languishing; and make all their Beds in their Sickness; yea, he will be merciful unto them, and heal their Souls*, though they have sinned against him.

F I N I S.