

**The nature and extent of charity. A sermon preach'd before the Right Honourable Sir Joseph Jekyll, Kt., Master of the Rolls, President, Thomas Green, Esq., Vice-President, and other Trustees of the Infirmary in James-Street, Westminster : at the parish-church of St. Margaret, on occasion of their anniversary meeting, April 26. 1735 / By ... Thomas, Lord Bishop of Salisbury.**

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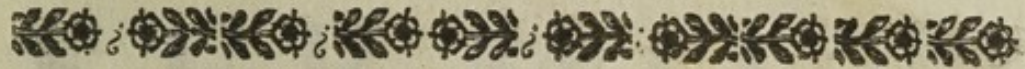
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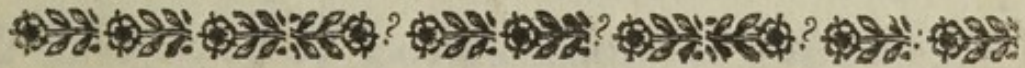
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THE  
 Bishop of *Salisbury's*  
**SERMON**

PREACH'D before the  
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 in *James-Street, Westminster, &c.*



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17  
*The Nature and Extent of CHARITY.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Right Honourable  
Sir *JOSEPH JEKYLL*, Kt.

Master of the Rolls, P R E S I D E N T ;

*THOMAS GREEN*, Esq;

V I C E - P R E S I D E N T ;

And the other

Trustees of the I N F I R M A R Y

in *James-Street, Westminster* ;

A T T H E

Parish-Church of *S<sup>t</sup>. Margaret*,

On occasion of their Anniversary Meeting,

*April 26. 1735.*

---

By the Right Reverend Father in G O D,

*THOMAS*, Lord Bishop of *Salisbury*.

SHERLOCK

*Publish'd at the Request of the SOCIETY.*

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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. and J. P E M B E R T O N, at the *Buck*  
against *St. Dunstan's-Church* in *Fleetstreet*.

M D C C X X X V .

The Nature and Extent of CHARITY.

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R M O N



Preach'd before the Right Honourable  
Sir JOSEPH JEFFREYS, Kt.  
Master of the Rolls, President;  
THOMAS GREEN, Esq;  
VICE-PRESIDENT;

And the other  
Trustees of the INFIRMARY  
in James-Street, Westminster;  
AT THE  
Parish-Church of St. Margaret,  
On occasion of their Anniversary Meeting,  
April 26. 1735.

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,  
THOMAS, Lord Bishop of Salisbury.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY.

L O N D O N:  
Printed for J. and J. P A R N E R T O N, at the Back  
against St. Dunstons-Church in Fleet-Street.  
M D C C X X X V.



LUKE X. 36, 37.

*Which now of these three thinkest thou was Neighbour unto him that fell among the Thieves? And he said, he that shewed Mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*



THE Case of the good Samaritan, to which the Text has relation, was not principally intended to shew the Necessity of Works of Mercy, or to recommend them to the Practice of the World; these were Points in which our Lord, and the Person with whom he discoursed, had no difference. Nor is there in the World any material difference in Opinion upon this Point, as long as the Duty is recommended in general Propositions, and Application is made to the common Sentiments of Humanity in behalf of the

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Miseries and Sufferings of our Fellow Creatures. Nor are these Sentiments peculiar to Christianity, they have their Foundation in Nature, and extend as far as Reason and Sense prevail; and it is to the Pen of an Heathen we owe that memorable Saying, *Homo sum, nihil humanum à me alienum puto.*

But however agreeable these Works are to the Sense and Reason of Mankind whilst they consider them only in general, yet in making the Application to particular Cases in order to Practice, many Difficulties are moved; and Men unwilling to undergo the Trouble or the Expence which attend on Works of Charity, or to lay aside their Prejudices and Resentments against Persons whose Misfortunes and Calamities have reduced them to be Objects of Charity, have found out many Limitations on these Duties; and have let in so many partial Considerations and Restrictions, that Mercy and Humanity, which naturally extend to all the World, seldom reach to one Country, oftentimes not to all the Parts of one Family.

To remove these kinds of Pretences or Prejudices was the direct View of our Lord in stating the Case of the good *Samaritan*; and the Person discoursing with him led him into this Consideration, by admitting the Love of our Neighbour to be a fundamental Duty, and immediately enquiring

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quiring after Limitations and Restrictions upon the Practice of the Duty. That this was the Case will appear upon considering the whole Passage, of which the Text is a Part.

At the 25th Verse, A Lawyer stood up, and tempted our Lord, saying, *Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal Life?* Our Lord refers him to the Law, and asks him what he read there: He answers out of the Law — *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind; and thy Neighbour as thy self.* Our Saviour replies, *Thou hast answered well, this do and thou shalt live.* Thus far all was right; and had the Enquirer stopt here, we should have had no reason to suspect but that his Principles at least were sound and uncorrupt. He had great reason to be satisfied with the Answer, when he had received that Approbation from our Lord, *This do and thou shalt live.* — But he goes on, and in the Words of the 29th Verse it follows, — *But he willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my Neighbour?* What now is it that he wou'd justify himself from? No Charge had been brought against him; so far from it, that our Lord had commended his discreet Answer; and if he acted according to the Terms he had proposed, our Lord had promised him Life. This can be no otherwise accounted for but from the Con-

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sciousness of the Person himself, who knew very well that his Practice was not conformable to the general Rule he had laid down, and which had been approved and commended by our Lord. Our Saviour's saying to him, *THIS DO, and thou shalt live,* called him to compare his Practice with the Rule he had proposed; and upon a secret Comparison made in his own Mind, he found that to justify himself the Terms of the Rule must be explained and limited; and therefore he says, *Who is my Neighbour?* In the Sense of the Law, and according to our Saviour's Exposition of it, every Man who wants our Assistance, and whom we are able to assist, is our Neighbour, and as such entitled to our good Offices. The *Jews* had some very near Neighbours, in the restrained Sense of the Word, with whom they were so far from entertaining any Intercourse of good Offices, that all common Civilities had ceased among them: Those were the *Samaritans*; and so far were the Resentments of the *Jews* carried, that when our Saviour desired a Woman of *Samaria* to give him a little Water to drink, she expresses great Wonder at it, and says, *How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest Drink of me, which am a Woman of Samaria?* And the Evangelist gives the reason of her Wonder — *for the Jews have no Dealings with the Samaritans* — (John iv. 9.) This being the Case, when our Saviour put eternal Life upon Obedience to this Law,

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*Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*, there was great reason to ask the Question, *Who is my Neighbour?* Had our Lord told him, in Conformity to the Opinions and Practices of the *Jews*, that they only were Neighbours who were of the Family and Stock of *Abraham*, or of the same Faith and Religion with themselves, the Man had found what he sought after, a Justification of himself; but when our Saviour, demanding his Opinion upon the Case of the good *Samaritan*, had forced him into a Confession that even the *Samaritan* was his Neighbour, he stood condemned out of his own Mouth; and upon the Example of one, whom he reckoned his Enemy, was sent away with this short Reproof and Admonition, *Go, and do thou likewise.*

The Parable of the good *Samaritan* is so well known, that I shall but just mention the Circumstances of it: — One travelling from *Jerusalem* fell among Thieves, was robbed and wounded. A Priest and a *Levite*; who were in every Sense of the Word, Neighbours to the unfortunate Man; and if in Duties of common and general Obligation, one can be more obliged than another; they were, by Character, especially obliged to relieve this poor Neighbour; but they looked on him, and passed by on the other Side. A *Samaritan*, excluded by the *Jews* from all

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Rights of Neighbourhood, came by, and had Compassion on the Sufferer; he dressed his Wounds himself, and afterwards placed him, at his own Expence, under the Care of one, who was to see the Cure perfected.

The Question now was, who was Neighbour to this unfortunate Man, in the Sense of the Law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*: As the Case was stated, there was no room to insist on the near Relation the Priest and *Levite* bore to the wounded Man; the nearer their Relation, the worse Neighbours were they for neglecting him: No room to object against the *Samaritan*, his want of Relation, or his difference in Religion; the less and the fewer his private Obligations were, the more disinterested was his Obedience to the Law, and the better Neighbour was he. Upon the whole of this Case, our *Lord's* Conclusion is, *Go, and do thou likewise.*

Taking then this Direction of our Blessed Saviour, as it stands explained by these Circumstances, it will lead us to consider,

I. The Nature and Extent of Charity, or Love to our Neighbours.

II. The

II. The Value of the Excuses which Men frequently make for Neglect of this Duty. And,

III. The Excellency of that particular Charity, which gives Occasion to this Day's Meeting.

I. Of the Nature and Extent of Charity, or Love to our Neighbour.

I observed to you before, that the principal Intention of our Blessed Saviour was not to shew the Necessity of Works of Mercy, for that under certain Limitations, was admitted on all Sides. Nor was it to recommend one kind of Charity in Preference to another, but to shew the Extent of all. In stating a Case, it was necessary to instance in some Sort of charitable Work; but the Conclusion, *Go and do thou likewise*, is not confined to that kind of Work only, but is intended to shew us who are our Neighbours, in regard to Works of Mercy and Compassion in every Kind.

The Works of Mercy are as various, and of as many Kinds, as the Wants and Infirmities of Men, which are the Objects of Mercy. Were Men perfect, there would be nothing in them to pity or compassionate. Every kind, therefore,  
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and every degree of Mercy, is an Object of Mercy ; and whether Men are exposed to Calamities by the Necessity of their Condition, and the over-ruling Providence of God, or whether they bring them on themselves by Sin and Wickedness, or by Folly and Indiscretion, yet still, considered as miserable, they are Objects of Pity. If this were not so, Mercy would not be one of the Attributes of the Deity, for he is not moved by a Fellow-feeling of our Calamities, or any Apprehension for himself, for no Evil can approach him. Sin and Wickedness are attended with Guilt as well as Misery, and therefore also Objects of Justice and Punishment ; and it may, perhaps, be a Case attended with Difficulties, when we attempt to reconcile the Operations of Justice and Mercy, with respect to the same Subject. But if God be a God of Mercy, as undoubtedly he is, the Conclusion must stand, that Misery viewed by the Eye of Reason, is an Object of Compassion ; and the Consequence must be, that in the reason of Things, Mercy is as extensive as Misery ; and not to be confined by any particular or partial Considerations, to Misery of one Kind, or of one Man more than another. If we consider ourselves, therefore, merely as reasonable Creatures, no Reason can be assigned for excluding any Object of Misery from our Pity and Compassion. But if we consider our selves as Men, there is another, and

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and perhaps a more sensible Inducement to the Practice of the Works of Mercy, and which upon Examination will be found, as far as our Power of doing Good goes, of like general Influence. And this arises from reflecting that there is no Misery we see, to which we are not ourselves liable. The Case therefore of the Miserable is a common Case, and in some Sense every Man's own. If we find ourselves better than others, so as to avoid the Calamities which Sin and Iniquity bring upon many; or wiser than others, so as to shun the Evils which Folly and Indiscretion draw down upon Numbers; this is so far from being a Reason why we should despise or neglect their Sufferings, that it daily reminds us to ask of ourselves this Question, *Who made thee to differ from another?* And if we answer it as we should, it will furnish us with another Reason for the Exercise of Charity, which will extend to all Men.

For, if all Men are the Sons of one Common Father; if all Conditions of Life are the Appointment of one Common Master; no Man can be reckoned a Stranger to us, who is Son of the same Father, and Servant of the same Master; however he may, for Reasons unknown to us, be placed in a lower Condition of Life, and called

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to serve in a meaner Station; endowed with less and fewer Abilities.

Carry these Considerations with you into the World, and view the Wants and Necessities of the Poor; listen to the Cries of Widows and Orphans, to the Moans and Complaints of those who suffer under the Torments of Body or of Mind: Take into your View the Follies and Weaknesses of Men, who are perpetually struggling with the Inconveniencies, which a little Prudence might have prevented, but which require a great deal of Care and Sorrow either to cure, or to bear them; and think a little, what Reason, what the Sense of your own Infirmities, what the Regard due to the Common Father and Master of all, require at your Hands. One duly attentive to these Reasons, could never fall into the little Considerations, whether *this* miserable Man was his Countryman or Townsman, whether *the other* was of the same Party or Opinion with himself; for the great and true Reasons on which Mercy and Charity are founded, exclude all such little Respects and Relations.

As the Case stands thus upon the Foot of Reason, and the natural Sentiments of Men, so likewise have the Precepts of the Gospel bound these Duties upon us in the same Extent,

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Honour, Esteem and Reverence, are due to those who deserve Honour, Esteem and Reverence; but Love is a Debt due to all Men, and is a Debt never to be fully paid and exhausted. Therefore St. *Paul* commands, that we *render* to every Man *his Due*, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour *is due*; but when he comes to speak of Love, he varies his Style, and considers us in this Respect, as Debtor to every Man; *owe* no Man any Thing, *but to love one another*: As if he had said, all other Debts due to particular Persons, you must take Care to discharge; but Love is due to all, and you must never think of paying or clearing the Debt of Love to each other; for that is a Debt which will be owing as long as you live; it is a perpetual Duty, and can never have an End. In the same manner are the Precepts of Love and Mercy enjoined by our Blessed Saviour in general Terms, not confining them to particular Objects, but leaving them at large, and open, to be applied to all Men: *Blessed*, says he, *are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*: Had this been a Duty owing to any Persons, as they stand particularly related to us, our Lord would not have left this material Duty imperfect, by neglecting to specify the proper Objects of it; but having directed our Love and Mercy to no Men in particular, we must conclude that all in general are the Objects of it.



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If we consider these Laws as derived from the Author of Nature, and of the Gospel, we shall find that they proceeded from a Love as universal as that which they enjoin; the general Good of Mankind is the End provided for in these Laws. The Miseries and Calamities of Life are many, and not to be avoided; and perhaps wise Men, tho' they complain least, feel them most. It is a melancholy thing to reflect how much of this Misery is of our own making, and what a great Abatement might be made in the Sorrows of Life, if every Man would but lend his Hand to make himself and the rest of the World happy. The unkind Offices we daily receive from Malice, Ill-nature, and Revenge, from Envy, and causeless Resentments, make a much greater Figure in the Calamities of Life, than all the Evils which the Providence of God and the Condition of human Life bring on us. And even the Calamities which cannot be avoided, might be mitigated by the kind Offices of our Brethren. And therefore to oblige Men to Charity and Mercy, is to unite them in a Confederacy against the Evils and Miseries of Life; that no sooner shall Misfortune seize one, but all shall be alarmed, and Help flow in from every Quarter; that every Hand shall bring Assistance, and every Tongue bring Comfort to the Afflicted; and each Man's Happiness be the common Concern,

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cern, while every Man loves his Neighbour as himself. What a blessed State would this be! And how much Happiness did the wise Author of Nature design for us, when he made the common Interest of Mankind to be every particular Man's Duty! What Love to Man did the Author of the Gospel shew, when he required it, as a Mark of our being his Disciples, that we should love one another!

Having considered now the Extent of this great Duty of Love and Mercy towards our Brethren, it will be easy in the second place to estimate by this Measure what Value there is in the Excuses which are frequently made for the Neglect of this Duty.

But to speak without Confusion on this Subject, it is necessary to distinguish between Love, as merely a Sentiment and Habit of the Mind, and as coupled with a Power and Ability to exert itself in external Acts of Mercy. Considered as an Habit and Sentiment of the Mind, it must be universal, without Exception; and no Pretence whatever can justify Malevolence and Hatred in any Instance. But it may be, and often is the Case, that those who have the Habit of this Virtue, are able to exert it in very few Instances; they are too poor to give Alms, too ignorant to give Advice,  
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of too little Consideration in the World to aid or protect their Neighbours. In all these Cases want of Ability is something more than an Excuse, for an Excuse goes to the Omission of Duty; but there can be no Duty or Obligation on any Man to do what he has no Power or Ability to perform. But yet let the meanest among us consider, that there are Duties of Love proper to their Station; if they have no Money to bestow, yet they have good or ill Words to bestow on their Neighbours; they are able to assist in vindicating or aspersing their Characters; and this is an Instance in which their Good-will or Malevolence may be as effectually shewn, as if they had great Revenues to dispose of; and I am afraid the poorer Sort, who are Petitioners for Charity of another kind, want often to be put in mind of *this kind* of Charity themselves. But to go on.

Where Mens Fortunes and Stations in the World enable them to exert their Love and Mercy in Acts of Generosity and Benevolence to Persons in Distress, there is often an Unwillingness; and always an Excuse to attend it. From what has been said of the Duty in general, it is evident, that to confine our Charity to Relations, Acquaintance, or Men of the same Country, is acting inconsistently with the great Reasons on which the Duty itself is founded, and is therefore a Breach  
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of the Duty which cannot be justified; and it is indeed that very Pretence which our Saviour intended to exclude and condemn in the Parable of the good *Samaritan*. But what shall we say to the personal Merit of those who are Objects of Charity? In the Parable the Person relieved was a Stranger to him who reliev'd him, and was known to him only by his Misery and Distress; and therefore in this Example set before us the personal Character had no Influence in the Charity. And in other Places of the Gospel we are exhorted to follow the Example set us by our heavenly Father, who maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust. But as no Man's Ability to do Good in any way is unlimited, it is commendable surely to seek after the properest and most deserving Objects of Charity; and in this Consideration the Virtue and Innocence of the Sufferer must be of great moment.

There would perhaps be little reason upon the whole to be very nice and curious in the Choice of Objects, were it not for the many Frauds and Cheats which are daily practised upon the Charity of well-disposed Persons. Begging is become a Trade, and without doubt it is a very wicked one; it is not only a Cheat on the Giver, but it is robbing the Stock of the Poor, and perverting what  
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was intended for the Comfort of real Distress, to the Support of Idleness. It is greatly injurious to the Poor in another Respect, as it lays a general Suspicion upon all who apply for Alms; and many a proper Object fails of the Relief due to him, because he can say no more in his true Case than Counterfeits say every Day in a false one.

There is another very great Discouragement which charitable Persons are under, from observing the ill Use which the Poor often make of their Benefactions to them. One would imagine that a Man who wanted Food and Raiment, and all other Necessaries of Life, was pretty well secured against the Excesses of strong Liquors, or any other Temptations, which must necessarily exhaust his little Stock, and leave him unable to provide for his Wants. But the Case is far otherwise; the general Corruption of Manners, too plainly to be seen in this Country, has spread among the lowest; and Necessity itself is grown luxurious. It is very much to be lamented, that so much Art and Skill have been shewn of late Years, to make Drunkenness the cheapest of all Vices; for it will, it already has made it the commonest, and let in all the Vices which follow this Excess upon the poorest of our People; who were formerly so far happy in their Poverty, that their Want secured

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them from many Vices to which their richer Neighbours were exposed.

How to advise charitable Persons to steer clear of these Inconveniencies in their private Benefactions, I know not; perhaps it may be a good Rule in general not to be too curious, or hard to be satisfied in these Cases. — But with respect to the great Work of Charity, which has called us together this Day, I can with Pleasure observe to you, that it stands free of these Difficulties; it will appear so to do from the Nature of the Charity it self, and the Method in which it is conducted; and tho' neither the Persons who have undertaken this good Work desire to have their Praises set forth, nor is it my Intention to do it; yet, in Justice to the Work itself, give me leave to mention very briefly some Circumstances attending it that may recommend it to the Approbation of good People.

In the first Place then; the Persons admitted to partake in this Charity are real Objects, and from the Nature of the Thing they must be so: The Blind, the Lame, the Diseased of various Kinds, resort hither for a Cure of their Evils. That such are proper Objects of Charity, there is no Doubt; but when Complaints of this Nature are used to move private Charity, they are often coun-

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terfeited; and the Money intended for the Relief of a poor Cripple, is perhaps given to a sturdy Vagabond. But that Case can never happen here; for Cheats and Counterfeits never come to an Hospital to be cured; they never desire that their Complaints should be examined by the skilful Eye and Hand of the Surgeon. Whatever therefore may happen in other Cases, you may be sure to meet with no Frauds of this Kind in this Charity.

There are Distempers, indeed, which may be pretended, and in judging of which, even the Skilful may be imposed on; but neither will such Frauds come here; for nobody will pretend such Diseases, merely for the Sake of going into a Course of Physick, and submitting to the Rules and Orders of a Place, which, though it affords ample Provision for the Wants of the Miserable, yet it affords no Temptation to the Idle and Vicious, that they should desire to come under the Rule and Discipline of it.

*Secondly,* Whatever is given in Support of this Institution, flows from the true and generous Principle of Charity, before described: All Persons are entitled to Relief here, if they really want it; and every Contributor is moved by the general Regard to the Good of Men, without  
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any Regard to the little Partialities, which often influence our private Charities, whether we intend they should or no. But to subscribe to support an Hospital, open to all just Complaints, is a general Subscription for the Assistance and Comfort of Men in Misery and Distress, without any other Consideration whatever: And therefore this Charity has this excellent Ingredient in it, that it is *Love without Partiality.*

*Lastly,* There is one Inducement more, which is the good Management and Oeconomy shewn in the Application of this Charity. I have mentioned now a Thing worthy to be highly commended and extolled, but not by me in this Audience. I shall take Notice of it, therefore, only as a Fact, a Fact published by laying the Accounts of this Charity before the World, and in which every Man, who pleases, may at an easy Rate, have full Satisfaction.

If this Consideration is, and surely it is a great Inducement to Benefactors to encourage this good Work; it is an Argument also to those who have employed their Time and their Pains in the Affairs of this House, to persevere in this Work of Love: Their Charity is more, perhaps, than they imagine; others give, whatever their Proportion amounts to, but these, by their good and  
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wise Administration, encourage many to give; it is a Circumstance which they may reflect on with Comfort here, and it will surely have its Reward hereafter.

Go on therefore with Chearfulness, in this great and good Employment; and in Confidence that you are serving a Master, who will not forget this your Work and Labour of Love.

*F I N I S.*

