

Literature, &c.

NIGHT SCENE IN A POOR MAN'S HOUSE.

BY MARY HOWITT.

It was in the middle of winter, on the night of the twenty-third of January, when the weather was miserably cold; it neither decidedly froze, nor did it thaw; but between the two it was cold and damp, and penetrated to the very bone, even of those who sat in carpeted rooms before large fires, and were warmly clad. It was on this evening that the seven little children of David Baird, the weaver, stood huddled together in their small room, beside a small fire which was burning comfortlessly. The baby lay in a wooden cradle on the corner of the hearth. The fire, to be sure, gave some warmth, because it had boiled an iron pot full of potatoes, but it gave very little cheeriness to the room. The mother had portioned out the evening meal—a few potatoes to each—and she now sat down by the round table, lighting the farthing candle, and was preparing to do some little pieces of housewifery.

"May I stir the fire?" asked David, the eldest boy.

"No, no," replied the mother, "it burns away too fast if it is stirred."

"I wish we had a good fire!" sighed Judith, the second girl.

"Bless me," said the mother, "it is a good fire! Why, there's Dame Grumby and her grandchild gone to bed because they have no fire at all."

"I should like some more salt to my potatoes," said little Betsy; "may I have some more, mother?"

"There is none, child," she replied; "I put the last in the pot."

"O dear!" cried out little Joey, "my feet are so bad; they get no better, mother, though I did beat them with holly."

"Poor thing!" sighed the mother; "I wish you had better shoes."

"There's a pair," said Joey, briskly, "at Timmy Nixon's for fourteen pence."

"Fourteen pence!" repeated the mother; "it would take a long time to get fourteen pence."

"Mat Willis begged a pair of nice warm boots," replied Joey, experimentally.

"We will not beg," said the mother, "if we can help it—let me see the shoes;" and Joey put one of his frost bitten feet on his mother's knee.

"Bless thee, poor lad," said the mother; "thou shalt not go to work again till it is warmer."

"Mother," interrupted little Susan, "may I have some more?"

"There is no more," said she, "but I have a whole loaf yet."

"Oh dear, oh dear, how nice!" cried the children, clapping their hands; and give Joey the bottom crust, said one, "because of his poor feet."

"And give me a big bit," cried Susan, holding out a little fat hand.

The mother divided the loaf, setting aside a piece for her husband; and presently the husband came.

"It rains, and is very cold," said he, shivering.

"Please God," said the mother, "it will be warmer after the rain."

David was a tall, thin man, with an uneasy look—not that he had any fresh cause of uneasiness—his wages had not been lowered; his hours of labor had not been increased; nor had he quarrelled with his master; but the life of a poor man is an uneasy life—a life of care, weariness and never ending anxieties. What wonder, then, if his face have a joyless look?

The children made room for their father by the fire; Susan and Neddy placed themselves between his knees, and his wife handed him the portion of supper which had been set aside for him.

Mary, the eldest girl, was sitting on a box, feeding the squirrel with the bread which her mother had given her—she was very happy, and kissed the squirrel many times; Judith was sitting beside her, and David held the cup out of which the squirrel drank.

"Nobody has inquired after the squirrel?" said the father looking at them.

"No," replied Mary, "and I hope nobody will."

"They will not, now," said the younger David, "for it is three months since we found it."

"We might sell it for half a crown," said the father; Mary looked frightened, and held the squirrel to her bosom.

"Joey's feet are very bad," remarked the mother.

"And that Doctor's bill has never been paid," said the father—"seventeen shillings and sixpence."

"'Tis more money than we can get in a week," sighed the mother.

"I go round by the back land, to avoid passing the door," said the father, "and he asked me for it three times."

"We will get it paid in the summer," rejoined the mother, hopefully; "but coals are raised, and bread they say will rise before the week is out."

"Lord help us!" exclaimed the father internally.

"Mary, fetch the other candle," said the mother, as the farthing candle burnt low in the stick, and went out.

"There is not one," replied Mary; "we burnt out the other last night."

"Have you a farthing, David?" asked the wife.

"Not one," replied he, rather hastily.

"Nor have we one in the house," said the wife; "I paid all we had for the bread."

"Stir up the fire, then," said David.

"Nay," rejoined the wife, "coals are raised."

"Lord help us!" again sighed David, and two of the children began coughing. "Those children's coughs are no better," remarked the father somewhat impatiently. And the baby woke—so did Betsy, who had fallen asleep on the floor unobserved, crying, "I am so cold, father; I am so cold!"

"Go to bed with her, Mary," said the mother, "for you were up betimes, this morning, washing: pull up your clothes on the bed, and keep her warm."

Mary went into the little dark chamber to bed with her sister, and her mother tried to hush the crying infant.

David was distracted. He was cold, hungry, weary, and in gloom. Eight children whom he loved were about him, and he thought of them only as born to poverty and care, like himself—he felt unhappy, and grew almost angry as the baby continued to cry.

Cheer up, David, honest man! there is that coming even now—coming within three streets length of thee—which will raise the above want for ever! Cheer up, this is the last hour any of you shall want fire; the last hour any of you shall want for candle light. Thou shalt keep thy squirrel, Mary! Betsy, thou shalt have blankets to warm thee! The Doctor's bill shall be paid—nor, Baird, shalt thou ever again skulk by back ways to work to avoid an importunate creditor. Joey, thou shalt turn the wheel no longer—thy feet shall get well in woollen stockings, and warm shoes at five shillings a pair. You shall no more want salt to potatoes, nor shall Susan go short again of her supper. But of this, all this, as yet, you know nothing, about the relief—and such splendid relief, too, that even now is approaching your door! Wait, little baby, and thou wilt—nurse thy poor tingling feet, Joey, by the fire; and muse on thy poverty, David Baird, yet for a few moments longer; it can do no harm, for the good news is even now turning the corner of your street!

Knock, knock, knock! David started from his reverie.

"Some one at the door," said the wife; and up jumped little David. "If it is neighbor Wood come to borrow some meal, you can get her a cup full," added the mother, as the knock was repeated more lustily.

Up rose David Baird, and thinking of the Doctor's bill, opened the door reluctantly.

"Are you David Baird?" asked the letter carrier, who had knocked.

"I am," said David.

"This, then, is for you; and there are twenty two pence to pay on it," said the man holding forth a large letter.

"It is a summons," cried the wife in dismay; "for what is David Baird summoned?"

And she rushed to the door, with the baby in her arms.

"It is not for me," said David, half glad to escape his liability to pay the two and twenty pence.

"But are you not David Baird, the weaver?"

"I am," said David.

"Then," continued the letter carrier, "pay me the twenty two pence, and, if it is not right, they will return you the money at the post office."

"Twenty two pence," repeated David, ashamed to confess his poverty.

"One shilling, ten pence!" said the wife; "we have not so much money by us, good man."

"Light a candle," said the letter carrier bursting into the house, "and hunt up what you have."

David was pushed to the extremity. "We have none," said he; "we have no money to buy a candle!"

"Lord bless me!" said the letter carrier, and gave David the younger four pence to fetch half pound of candles. David and his wife knew not what to think, and the letter man shook the wet from his hat. In a few moments the candle came, and the letter was put into David's hand.

"Open it, can't you?" said the letter man.

"Is it for me?" inquired David again.

"It is," replied the other, impatiently; "what a fuss is here about opening a letter?"

"What is this?" exclaimed David, taking out a bill for one hundred pounds.

"O!" sighed the wife, "if, after all, it should not be for us! But read the letter, David;" and David read it.

"Sir—You, David Baird, the weaver of —, and son of the late David Baird, of Marden-on-Wear, lineal descendant of Sir David Baird, Monkshaughton Castle, county of York, and sole heir to Sir Peter Baird, of Monkshaughton, aforesaid, lately deceased, are requested to meet Mr. Dennis, at York, as soon after the receipt of this as possible. It will be necessary for you to bring your family with you; and to cover travelling expenses, you will receive a bill for one hundred pounds, payable at sight. I have the honor to be, Sir, your humble servant,

J. SMITH, for Mr. DENNIS."

"Sure enough," said David, "David Baird of Marden-on-Wear was my father."

"O, O, O!" chuckled out little David, as he hopped about behind the group, "a hundred pounds and a castle!"

"Heaven be praised!" ejaculated the wife, while she hugged the baby in her arms.

"And," continued David, "the great Sir David Baird was our ancestor; but we never looked for anything from that quarter."

"Then the letter is for you?" asked the man.

"It is." Please Heaven to make us thank-

ful for it," said David, seriously; "but," hesitated he, "you want that money?"

"No," said the letter carrier, going out, "I'll call for that to-morrow."

"Bolt the door after this man; this money requires safe keeping."

"Mend the fire!" said the mother; and her son David put on the shovel full of coals, and stirred up the ashes.

"Kiss me, my children!" exclaimed the father with emotion; "kiss me, and bless God, for we shall never want bread again!"

"Is the house on fire?" screamed Mary, at the top of the stairs, "for there is such a blaze!"

"We are burning a mould candle!" said Judith, "and such a big fire!"

"Come here, Mary," said the father; and Mary slipped down stairs wrapped in an old cloak.

"Father's a rich man! we're all rich—and shall live in a grand castle!" laughed out young David.

"We shall have coats, and blankets, and stockings and shoes!" cried little Joey all alert, yet still remembering his frost bitten feet.

"We shall have beef, and plumb pudding!" said Susan.

"We shall have rice pudding every day!" cried Neddy.

David Baird was again distracted; but how different were his feelings; he could have done a thousand extravagant things—he could have laughed, cried, sung, leaped about, nay rolled on the floor for joy; but he did none of these—he sat calm and looked almost grave. At length he said, "wife, send the children to bed, and let us talk over this good fortune together."

"You shall have your Sunday clothes on to-morrow," said the happy mother, as she sent them upstairs. To bed they went, and after a while laughed themselves to sleep. The father and mother smiled and wept by turns, but did not sleep that night.

DREAMS OF THE PAST.

As we wander alone where the moonlight reposes,

And the wind o'er the ripple is tuneful and sweet,

When the stars glitter out as the day flower closes,

And the night bird and dew drop are all that we meet,

Oh! then, when the warm flush of thought is unsealing

The bonds that a cold world too often keeps fast,

We shall find that the deepest and dearest of felling,

Is pouring its tide in the dreams of the past.

Oh! who shall have travelled through life's misty morning,

Forgetting all waymarks that rose on their track,

Though the things we loved then had maturity's scoring,

Though we cast them behind, yet we like to look back.

And the present may charm us with magical numbers,

And lull the rapt spirit, entrancing it fast,

Yes! 'tis rarely the heart is so sound in its slumbers,

As to rest without mingling some dream of the past.

Oh! the days that are gone—they will have no returning,

And 'tis wisest to bury the hopes that decay,

But the incense that's purest and richest in burning,

Is oft placed where all round it is fading away.

Though the days that are gone had more canker than blossom,

And even that blossom too tender to last,

Yet had we the power, oh! where is the bosom

Would thrust from its visions the dreams of the past?

New Works.

Rome, as it was under Paganism, and as it became under the Popes.

MAGNIFICENCE AND VOLUPTUOUSNESS OF ANCIENT ROME.

The entire palace was lighted up and decorated for some grand festivity, as if for the reception of a bride. Yet there was no one to be seen, save now and then a slave, gliding, like a melancholy vision, over the noiseless pavement, to tend the lamps or scatter perfumes and sweet scented leaves. The song of one handmaid, as she adjusted a lily in a garland, startled the venerable pilgrim as it had been a parable:—

Thou, too, for thy bloom art cherish'd;

But when that bloom hath perished,

Thou, too, shalt be flung away.

At last, the voluptuous swell of music came from a distance upon the ear; and, directed by the sound, the pilgrims came to the interior recesses of the palace, where lay the "triclinium" or hall of feast. It was a sumptuous hall, oblong in form, and divided, as to style of decoration and arrangement, into two unequal parts. The greater division was occupied by the guests, disposed upon couches, on that side of the tables next the colonades, so that the various attendants and ministers of the feast were free to move about on the centre space, extending from the cross table at the head, between the two lateral ones, down to the second or lesser division of the hall, occupied by the orchestra and the stage for jugglers, dancers, and pantomimes, who exhibited during the intervals of the long protracted banquet. Taste the most refined directing the arts, then in the meridian of perfection, and ministered to

by unbounded opulence, had exhausted every resource upon this sanctuary of indulgence. The ceilings that beamed with the effulgence of a golden firmament, glittering with starlike gems, were so contrived as to vary in aspect with the successive courses, and from them showers, as it were, of the most exhilarating and aromatic dews were made to distil upon the languishing voluptuaries. The hangings were of Tyrian purple. Flowers, in festoons, were suspended from the arcades and niches, where stood Apollo, the Muses, Venus, the Psyche, the Graces, and the quiver-armed god. Endless, in short, was the variety of scenes and emblems that had been conceived by poetic fancy to revel in that temple of delights; and triumphant art, as with a wand, had given them the very air and breath of life. The mosaic pavement, figured with the most grotesque devices, was scattered over with the soft powder of odorous wood, damped with saffron, vermillion and other brilliant dyes. It glittered with fillings of gold and the dust of the sparkling stone. The board of the feast, made of citron wood from the furthest confines of Mauritania, was supported on feet of ivory, and covered with a leaf or plateau of silver elegantly enlaced. The couches, each of which accommodated three, were made of bronze overlaid with silver, gold, and tortoiseshell; the mattresses were of Gallic wool, dyed purple; the pillows and cushions of the softest down were covered with the priceless embroidery of Babylon. Abandoned to every effeminacy as they lolled upon these beds like so many deities on sun lit clouds, the lordly voluptuaries were regaled with every dainty of air, earth, and ocean, while nymphlike, and obsequious forms were stationed with fans and vases of perfume, or moved round the couches to sounds of soft melody with goblets of racy wine. Others buried incense, or placed fresh viands and flowers on the altars of the household deities, or fed with oil the lamps and candelabra that cast a mellow splendour over the entire scene.

HORRIBLE TREATMENT OF THE CHRISTIANS UNDER NERO.

No sooner were they proscribed by Nero, than they were every where pursued, and subjected to the most execrating tortures, as wretches hateful alike to gods and men. They were tormented by slow fires, some on grid-irons, some tied to stakes, some to cauldrons, made red hot; others were suspended by the feet, that while their bodies were burned with torches applied to the most sensitive parts, they might be at the same time suffocated with the smoke and heat. Tigellinus, one of the most infamous minions of Nero, and his chief adjutor in burning the city, so signalized himself by exploits of cruelty, that even the pagan writers have animadverted on the execrable ingenuity of one species of torture, to which he seemed to have given the preference. The process is described thus: the Christian, stripped naked, was forced to put on a garment called the *tunica molesta*, made of papyrus, smeared on both sides with wax, and was then fastened to a high pole, from the top of which they continued to pour down burning pitch and tallow, a spike fastened under the chin, so as to escape the liquid fire, until the whole body, and every part of it was literally clad and cased in flame. Such multitudes were destroyed by this one mode alone, that the whole area of the Vatican circus, round which they were impaled, was inundated knee-deep with the residuum of their bodies. Some were chopped to atoms; others fastened on wheels, and torn to pieces by being turned round against serrated spikes or hooks of iron. They were stoned to death, beheaded, crucified, whipped with what they called "scorpions," till their bones and entrails were laid bare; they were fastened to wild horses, who dashed their heads against rocks, and tore their bodies against thickets and rough ways in their flight. Some, besmeared with honey, were tied to stakes, that they might be stung and eaten alive by wasps and insects; others were flung into holes to be devoured by rats; others buried alive; others, while living, were fastened to putrid carcasses, or crushed between two blocks of stone, or torn asunder by having their legs fastened to the boughs of two opposite trees, which, being brought into proximity by main force, when that force was suspended, flew back to their natural positions with such violence, as to carry with them each its mangled half of the martyr. Myriads were torn to pieces by lions, tigers, or eaten by wild dogs; they smeared their bodies with pitch, and set fire to them; poured boiling lead upon their heads, or cast their bodies into it, or made heat; sit down naked in chairs of iron at a red heat; they put them in acts to be tossed on the horns of wild bulls, or into sacks with dogs and serpents, and cast them into the sea; they have plucked out their hair and their teeth with pincers, cut off their ears, their noses, tore out their tongues, inserted reeds under the nails of their toes and fingers, chopped off their hands and feet, flayed them alive, disemboweled them, or distended their bellies upon their racks, until every bone started from its socket. "The judge gloried in devising new and unheard of tortures," says Eusebius. "It was deemed a virtue in them to do so. It was their study, the summit of their ambition; and that one triumphed over the others, who had surpassed them in refinement of cruelty."

From Sam Slick, new work.

BUNKUM.

Bunkum! I said, pray what is that? Did you ever hear of Bunkum? No, never. Why you don't mean to say you don't know what that is? I do not, indeed. Not Bunkum!

Why, there is more of it to Nova Scotia every winter than would paper every room in Government House, and then curl the hair of every gal in the town. Not hear of Bunkum? Why