

Literature, & c.

From the N. Y. Spirit of the Times.
STARVING MAD.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

THE city of Boston is a staid and sober city. True benevolence is a characteristic of its inhabitants.

There is much of misery existing in its precincts—nevertheless!

STATE STREET—with its magnificent Exchange—its elegant banks, and its costly buildings—crosses one extremity of Broad Street. Out of Broad Street—towards the water—extend eastward, numerous dingy, dirty by ways, misnamed "streets"—so close, narrow and filthy, that the pure air of heaven but seldom finds a passage through them!

The man of ease, or the wealthy banker, who daily lolls his hour or less on 'change, knows little of the wretchedness existing scarce a stone's throw distant from the clean bright pavement which he treads so leisurely, in polished boots and costly broadcloth.

But there is one "Street" among those many dirty ones, to which I shall allude. This particular passage is especially narrow; and its peculiarity in distinction from its neighbours, consists in its extreme filthiness. The time worn buildings there, are crammed together as if the only building space under heaven was on that precise spot, and all creation—individually and collectively—had pitched upon it for the piling up of their surplus lumber, bricks and mortar. The cold wind whistles and croaks, alternately, amidst the numberless chimneys, which are thrust into the air from every angle of the house-tops, and which resemble so many huge black coffins—standing bolt upright—in the thick and smoky atmosphere, above! For half a century the sun light has never penetrated below the blackened chimney pots, which surmount these tall soot pipes, and it is almost well that it is thus! Such wretchedness and squalor as exists beneath those roofs, like rankest weeds, will flourish best in darkness! The denizens of that good city will scarcely credit it, but the incredulous should make a visit to that quartier, they might find use for alms there, too—if charitably disposed.

A cheerless, freezing night in February, 1844, had succeeded an unusually stormy day. Before midnight, a driving easterly storm had set in, which continued till morning without cessation. The "Old South" bell had tolled the hour of one o'clock. The watchmen exchanged salutations at the corner of the miserable by way spoken of, and one of them turned into it from Broad Street, in the hope of finding a partial shelter from the pitiless and raging storm. A gust of wind, surcharged with sleet, dashed over him as he entered the narrow street, and though he was enveloped in a comfortable rough weather suit, he gladly hurried along on his round of duty.

The night was dark as Erebus. The sickly ether, had many hours previously, been agitated by the high wind; and save the dull, phosphoric glimmer, which came and went with the sleeping clouds of snow and hail—no sign of light cheered the deep, heavy loneliness of the scene.

As the night guardian passed the door of a cellar about half way down that narrow street, his ear was saluted with a sort of stifled groan. He listened, but concluding it was but the howling of the wind, he continued on.

While the millions whom Providence blesses with the means of subsistence—while the thousands who never knew what labor was—while the "well-to-do," the wealthy, or the poor, were enjoying the sweets of refreshing slumber on beds of down, or of straw—in that lone street, with no hand to succour or soothe a human being, as worthy, or adventure, as the rest, lay, crippled by misery—GRAPPLING WITH DEATH!

The wind continued to howl, the snow and sleet still dashed upon the pavement, the housed and sheltered slept soundly, the watchman muttered to himself "all's well!" and the sufferer still struggled in her misery!

INSANITY.

READER! in the course of life's experience, you have, undoubtedly, witnessed many phases of insanity.

You have seen the tender bud of promise ensnared in the foul meshes of the libertine—destroyed, crushed, and left to waste away with a broken heart! You may have seen that bud decaying, day by day, imprisoned in a mad house, bereft of reason, lost forever to herself or family. You have chanced to hear the name of her destroyer mentioned in her presence, and have watched her crimson cheek, and seen the scalding tear—while no word could pass her lips. You have known a heart, "widowed to the core," and you may have watched the life strings as they tightened and susdered, leaving the victim a nameless thing! You, perhaps, have known the man of means—whom Fortune dealt too harshly—embark his all upon a final hazard, and lose that all—his reason with it! And, haply, you have seen him gaze upon the stars, from out the casement of a narrow cell, when he supposed them golden worlds! He'd watch, and watch, and bless the night which brought him stars to look upon—because he thought them his—and he would stare and strain, and strive to clutch them, in his madness! Or, you have seen the gambler, who had played away a fortune with his last throw—throw reason to the winds. Have you not seen ambition's fool picture himself a prince, a king, an Emperor?

I have seen the mother weep hot, burning tears, for loss of husband, or her little ones, and while she wept she had no spark of reason in her brain. I've looked upon the idiot in his cell—I've seen the lunatic, the phrenzied, calm, blood thirsty mad—I've known of wrecks, where talent, wealth, ambition—everything most dear in life—have awaited at the beck, or order of the victims. I have seen destruction follow the brightest hopes—I have witnessed the downfall of the old and young, of beauty, innocence and worth—and I have watched the rake, the drunkard, the murderer, in their fall—but neither you nor I have ever gazed upon a sight so terrible—misery so indescribable as that which wait on MADNESS FROM STARVATION!

But the watchman continued on his rounds, and as he approached the door of that lonely cellar again, his attention was arrested by a repetition of the groan. He called but no one answered; and descending some half a dozen rickety wooden steps, which threatened to give way under him at every instant—his head suddenly came in contact with the top of the door frame. He groped about in the darkness for the latch or handle, but without success. He halloed, but still obtained no reply, save the intolerable moaning below—he made a half desperate plunge against what he supposed to be the door. This effort was unnecessary, however. The boards which served as a sort of shelter to the inmates, gave way, and they fell to the ground. In the midst of mud, snow and filth, the watchman groped his way to the farthest corner of the cellar, whither he was attracted by the continued moaning. Finding it impossible to gather anything from the sufferer, he left the scene, and repairing to the nearest spot for aid, he obtained a lantern and returned to the cellar, where a scene was presented such as is but seldom witnessed in this land of charity and benevolent institutions!

RETROSPECTION.

The holy institution of Marriage was vouchsafed as a blessing to humanity. How often does it prove a terrible curse!

The following history is commonplace—the fate of the victim is briefly told.

A poor girl the child of indigent, but worthy parents—had chanced to meet a man upon whom her affections were lavished, and she afterwards became his wife. A few short years of happiness had passed, when the husband became addicted to habits of intemperance.

From bad to worse he sped, and finally, confirmed in drunkenness and debauchery, he proved a noted sot. His labor was neglected, and the little he had hitherto earned, and which had served them for a scanty support, was entirely cut off. The faithful wife found it necessary to assume the position of protector—and, to toil for him—to delve day and night for his comfort—to be his slave—in the hope of saving him—served to buoy her up in the midst of all the heart burnings and privations which wait upon a drunkard's wife. But sickness overtook her, she was unable to descend, until, at last, they were glad to find shelter from the winter's cold, even in that miserable cellar!

The brute who called himself her husband continued to wallow in his filth, and on the very night in question, he was accompanied to his dreary lodgings by a wanton—his poor wife now suffering in the last stages of a fatal malady. No thought had been taken to supply her with food or nourishment, and after lingering for some days in pain and want, delirium had overtaken her.

The shades of evening came. It was a cold and cheerless season, in mid winter. The storm which had raged throughout the day increased as night set in, and the rain dashed into the cellar, already sufficiently cold and damp. On one side of the apartment, in a large open fire place, might be seen a few embers, which had been extinguished by the rain that poured down the ample old fashioned chimney, and in another corner a few wet boards were thrown together, upon which lay extended, all that remained of the form of Mary Edwards. The poor wretch was burning with fever and pain, her body was scarce half covered with the fragments of a miserable coverlet, nor had she tasted food for two whole days. The clock struck ten, and the husband stumbled into the cellar, accompanied by his paramour! Appropriating the bed quilt (which half sheltered his dying wife,) to his own use, he lay down on the hearth with his companion, and they were soon asleep!

"Mike," said the poor wife, faintly, and imagining she heard an answer she added—
"Ah me! It is very cold, and there be poor creatures who have not even a cellar to shelter them on this dreadful night! Now it burns! Oh! how hot—hot—I suffer!"—but the exertion was too much, and a terrible groan finished the sentence.

A watchman halted in front of the cellar at this moment. He listened, but supposing himself deceived by the night wind, he passed on, ignorant of the misery which caused that moan!

"Mike," she shouted suddenly, "Mike! for the love of God, some water! One drop, only one drop—I faint!"—and the poor woman fell back upon the boards again, in agony.

"O, never mind," she continued, "it's all well—yes! pretty, pretty! I see it. Oh no! Pain? no, no, not pain—ha! ha! No. I'm just as you see me—heartly and bright! But I wish I were "little Mary, again—so pretty, too! But I am, now, you see—rosy cheeks, all the same. Mike! save me! save! Oh! chill—chilly!"—and a terrible shudder shook that worn out frame. But again she rallied.

"Hungry, did you say? Why, no. Oh no, not hungry. I had some soup—ah! it seems

good—now, three days gone. No, not hungry. What's that? Give me, give!"—and she plunged her teeth into her fleshless arms, unmindful of the ragged wounds her fury caused!

"Well, well, they always said it would be thus! I'm dead and buried—dead? Yes, dead and buried in this lonely cellar. Oh how dark and cold! I'll—ha! ha! ha! Here, help! help! Ah, God of mer!"

"Eh?" enquired the watchman, mentally, "I thought I heard that groan before. What, ho! here what's the matter? Do you here?"

The repeated groaning was the only reply he obtained. He descended into the cellar, and finding it impossible to learn anything in the darkness, he departed for a light and assistance, as has been stated.

THE SCENE.*

Upon a temporary platform, composed of a few wet rough boards, in the extreme corner of the cellar, the watchman found a human being, half covered with a ragged and filthy apparel, moist with the foul dampness which pervaded the apartment, and which was enhanced to an oppressive degree by the putrid effluvia which arose from a drain, running in a sort of gutter across the ground of a cellar, and which served the purpose of a common sewer to the neighbourhood. This being proved to be a woman, about thirty five years of age. It was evident she was near death's door, and her fleshless cheeks and emaciated limbs, told plainly that her sufferings had been neither light or brief! On the right, at another extremity of the cellar, lay a man and woman, sleeping heavily, undisturbed by the awful scene which was enacting before them! The only article found in the place, were a broken stool, an old candlestick, and a black junk bottle. Fuel was obtained, a fire was lighted, and a physician was immediately called. The husband, (for such he proved to be) was aroused, but he seemed totally indifferent to all that was passing, and shortly after the fire commenced burning, laid himself down on the hearth before it, and was asleep again! Restoratives were applied to the temples and nostrils of the sufferer, but she was too far gone for human aid to save her. Recovering a little, she suddenly raised herself on her long arm, and throwing back her matted hair she madly shrieked for "help, help! In God's name, help!"

"What will you, good woman?" asked the physician.

"Help; here! Give me food—give—water—some drop! Ah! God help me, I die. Mike, some drink!"

A bowl was placed to her lips, but she dashed it furiously to the ground.

"No, Mike! not poison, that's cruel! Drink, Mike, I say—there, hold him back—I see! That girl, ha! ha! There she is! Her face is bloody—help, water—no, no, no! I will. There, I'm very feeble, and I'll try—you see I am not strong—don't choke me, Mike—I'm hungry, and—ah, I can eat, now! Bear me gently, Mike—I'm better—better—bet!"

Tris—her breathing became less distinct, and in spite of every effort to save her, in the midst of "the most heart-rending moans, she expired!"

The neighbors came in the next morning and performed such offices as charity suggested—she was wrapped in her shroud, and the city authorities eventually took charge of her remains.

* This occurrence took place about a year since. The newspapers of the day chronicled the facts, and the circumstance was forgotten.

From the New York Sun.

THE PLAY AT VENICE.

BY THE LATE WILLIAM LEGGETT.

SOME years since, a German Prince, making a tour of Europe, stopped at Venice for a short period. It was the close of summer; the Adriatic was calm, the nights were lovely, and the Venetian women in the full enjoyment of those delicious spirits, that, in their climate, rise and fall with the coming and departure of the finest season of the year. Every day was given by the illustrious stranger to research among the records and antiquities of this singular city, and every night to parties on the Brenta. When the morning was nigh, it was the custom to return from the water, to sup at some of the palaces of the nobility.

In the commencement of his intercourse, all national distinctions were carefully suppressed; but, as his intimacy increased, he was forced to see the lurking vanity of the Italian breaking out. One of its most frequent exhibitions was in the little dramas that wound up these stately festivals. The wit was constantly shaded by some contrast of the Italians and the Germans, some slight aspersions on Teutonic rudeness, some remark on the history of a people untouched by the elegance of southern manners. The sarcasm was conveyed with Italian grace, and the offence softened by the humour. It was obvious that the only retaliation must be humorous.

At length the prince, on the point of taking leave, invited his entertainers to a farewell supper.

He drew the conversation to the infinite superiority of the Italian, and above all of Venetian, acknowledged the darkness in which Germany had been destined to remain so long, and looked forward with infinite sorrow to the comparative opinion of posterity upon the country to which so little of its gratitude must be due. "But, my lords," said he, "we are an emulous people, and an example like yours cannot be lost even upon a German. I have been charm-

ed with your dramas, and have contrived a little arrangement to give one of our country, if you will condescend to follow me to the great hall." The company rose and followed him through the splendid suit of Venetian villas to the hall, which was fitted up as a German barn.

The aspect of the theatre produced at first surprise, and next a universal smile. It had no resemblance to the gilded and sculptured saloons of their own sumptuous little theatres. However, it was only so much the more Teutonic. The curtain rose. The surprise rose into loud laughter, even among the Venetians, who had been seldom betrayed a smile, for generations together.

The stage was a temporary erection, rude and uneven. The scenes representing a wretched and irregular street, scarcely lighted by a few twinkling lamps, and looking the fit haunt of robbery and assassination. On a narrow view some of the spectators began to think it had a kind of resemblance to an Italian street, and some actually discovered it to be one of the leading streets of their own famous city. But the play was on a German story; they were under a roof. The street was, notwithstanding its ill-omened similitude, of course, German. The street was solitary. At length a traveller, a German, with pistols in a belt round his waist, and apparently exhausted by his journey, came pacing along. He knocked at several doors, but could obtain no admission. He then wrapped himself up in his cloak, sat down on a fragment of a monument and soliloquized.

"Well, here have I come; and this is my reception. All palaces, no inns; all nobles, and not a man to tell me where I can lie down in comfort and safety. Well, it cannot be helped. A German does not much care; campaigning has hardened us. Hunger and thirst, heat and cold, dangers of war, and the roads, are not very formidable, after what we have had to work through from father to son. Loneliness, however, is not so well, unless a man can labor or read. Read! that's true; come out Zimmerman." He took a volume out from his pocket moved nearer the decaying lamp, and soon seemed absorbed.

Another soon shared the eyes of the spectators. A long, light figure came with a kind of visionary movement, from behind the monument, surveyed the traveller with keen curiosity, listened with apparent astonishment to his words and in another moment had fixed itself gazing over the volume. The eyes of this singular being wandered rapidly over the page, and when it was turned, they were lifted to heaven with the strongest expressions of wonder. The German was weary; his head soon drooped over his study, and he closed his book.

"What," said he, rising, and stretching his limbs; "is there no one stirring in this comfortless place? Is it not near day?" He took out his repeater, and touched the pendant; it struck four. His mysterious attendant had watched him narrowly; the repeater was traversed over with an eager gaze; but when it struck, delight was mingled with wonder, that danced in his eyes. "Four o'clock," said the German. "In my country, half the world would be thinking of going to their day's by this time. In another hour it will be sunrise. Well, then, I'll do you a service, you nation of sleepers, and make you open your eyes." He drew out one of his pistols, and fired it. The attendant, still hovering behind him, had looked curiously upon the pistol, but on its going off, started back in terror, and with a cry that made the traveller turn.

"Who are you?" was his greeting to this strange intruder.

"I will not hurt you," was the answer.

"Who cares about that?" was the German's retort; and he pulled out the other pistol. "My friend," said the figure, even that weapon of thunder and lightning cannot reach me now; but if you would know who I am, let me entreat you to satisfy my curiosity a moment. You seem to be a man of extraordinary powers."

"Well, then," said the German in a gentler voice, "if you come as a friend, I shall be glad to give you information; it is the custom of my country not to deny anything to those that love to learn."

The former sighed deeply, and murmured, "And yet you are a Teuton. But you were just reading a little case of strange, and yet more interesting figures: was it a manuscript?"

"No, it was a printed book."

"Printed? What is printing? I never heard of but writing."

"It is an art by which one man can give to the world, in one day, as much as three hundred could give by writing, and in a character of superior clearness, correctness, and beauty: one by which books are made universal, and literature eternal."

"Admirable, glorious art!" said the inquirer; "who was its illustrious inventor?"

"A German."

"But another question. I saw you look at a most curious instrument traced with figures. It sparkled with diamonds; but its greatest wonder was its sound. It gave the hour with miraculous exactness, and the strokes were followed by tones superior to the richest music in my day." "That was a repeater."

"How? When I had the luxuries of the earth at my command, I had nothing to tell the hour better than the cleopatra and the sun-dial. But this must be incomparable from its facility of being carried out—from its suitability to all hours—from its exactness. It must be an admirable guide even to a higher knowledge. All depends upon the exactness of time. It may assist navigation, astronomy. What an invention! Whose was it? He must be more than man."

"He was a German."