

## Hot Corn; or Life in the City.

## CHAPTER I.

"Hot corn! Here's your nice hot corn, smoking hot, smoking hot, just from the pot!" Hour after hour, last evening, as we sat over the desk, this cry came up in a soft, plaintive voice under our window, which told us of one of the ways of the poor to eke out the means of subsistence in this overburdened, ill-fed and worse-lodged home of misery—of so many without means who are constantly crowding into the dirtiest purlieus of this notoriously dirty city, where they are exposed to the daily chance of death from some sudden outbreaking epidemic like that now desolating the same kind of streets in New Orleans, and swallowing up its thousands of victims from the same class of poverty-stricken, uncomfortably provided-for human beings, who know not how, or have not the power to flee to the healthy hills and green fields of the country. Here they live, barely live, in holes almost as hot as the hot corn, the cry of which rung in our ears from dark until midnight.

"Hot corn! hot corn! here's your nice, hot corn," rose up in a faint, child-like voice, which seemed to have been aroused by the sound of our step as we were about entering the Park, while the City Hall clock told the hour when ghosts go forth upon their midnight rambles. We started, as though a spirit had given us a rap, for the sound seemed to come out of one of the iron posts which stand as sentinels over the main entrance.

Looking over the post, we discovered the owner of the hot corn cry, in the person of an emaciated little girl about twelve years old, whose dirty frock was nearly the color of the rusty iron, and whose face, hands and feet, naturally white and delicate, were grimed with dirt until nearly of the same color.—There were two white streaks running down from the soft blue eyes, that told of the hot, scalding tears that were coursing their way over a naturally beautiful face.

"Some corn, sir," lisped the little sufferer, as she saw we had stopped to look at her, hardly daring to speak to one who did not address her in rough tones of command, such as, "Give me some corn, you little wolf's whelp," or a name still more opprobrious to herself and mother. Seeing we had no look of contempt for her, she said, piteously, "please buy some corn, sir."

"No, my dear, we do not wish any; it is not very healthy in such warm weather as this, and especially so late at night."

"O dear, then what shall I do?"

"Why, go home. It is past midnight, and such little girls as you ought not to be in the streets of this bad city at this time of night."

"I can't go home—and I am so tired and sleepy. O dear!"

"Cannot go home? Why not?"

"O, sir, my mother will whip me if I go home without selling all my corn. O, sir, do buy one ear, and then I shall have only two left, and I am sure she might let little sis and me eat them, for I have not had anything to eat since morning, only one apple the man gave me, and one part of one he threw away. I could have stole a turnip at the grocery when I went to get—to get something in the pitcher for mother, but I dare not. I did use to steal, but Mr. Pease says it is naughty to steal, and I don't want to be naughty, indeed I don't; and I don't want to be a bad girl, like Lizzy Smith, and she is only two years older than me, if she does dress fine; 'cause Mr. Pease says she will be just like old drunken Kate, one of these days. O, dear, now there goes a man, and I did not cry hot corn; what shall I do?"

"Do?" There, that is what you shall do," as we dashed the corn in the gutter. "Go home; tell your mother you have sold it all, and here is the money."

"Won't that be a lie, sir? Mr. Pease says we must not tell lies."

"No, my dear, that won't be a lie, because I have bought it, and thrown it away instead of eating it."

"But, sir, may I eat it, then, if you don't want it?"

"No, it is not good for you; good bread is better, and here is sixpence to buy a loaf, and here is another to buy some nice cakes for you and sis. Now that is your money; don't give it to your mother, and don't stay out so late again. Go home earlier, and tell your mother you cannot keep awake, and if she is a good mother, she won't whip you."

"O, sir, she is a good mother sometimes. But I am sure the grocery man at the corner

is not a good man, or he would not sell my mother rum when he knows—for Mr. Pease told him so—that we poor children were starving. O, I wish all the men were good men like him, and then my mother would not drink that nasty liquor, and beat and starve us, 'cause there would be nobody to sell her any—and then we should have plenty to eat."

Away she ran, down the street, towards that reeking centre of filth, poverty and misery, the noted Five Points of New York.

As we plodded up Broadway, looking in here and there upon the palatial splendors of metropolitan "saloons"—we think that is the word for fashionable, upper-class grog-shops—we almost involuntarily cried, "hot corn," as we saw the hot spirit of that grain, under the various guises of "pure gin," "old rum," "pale brandy," "pure port," "Heidsieck," or "Lager beer," poured down the hot throats of men—and ah, yes, of women, too, whose daughters may some day sit at midnight upon the cold curb-stone, crying, "hot corn," to gain a penny for the purchase of a drink of the fiery dragon they are now inviting to a home in their bosoms, whose cry in after years will be, "Give, give, give," and still as unsatisfied as the horse-leech's daughters.

Again, as we passed on up that street, still busy and thronged at midnight, as a country village at mid-day intermission of church service, ever and anon from some side street came up the cry of "hot corn, hot corn!" and ever as we heard it, and ever as we shall through all years to come, we thought of that little girl and her drunken mother, and the "bad man" at the corner grocery, and that hers was the best, the strongest Maine law argument which had ever fallen upon our listening ear.

## CHAPTER II.

The next night after the interview with that neglected, ill-used little girl, the same plaintive cry of "Hot corn, hot corn, here's your nice, hot corn!" came up through our open window on the midnight air, while the rain came dripping down from the overcharged clouds, in just sufficient quantity to wet the thin, single garment of the owner of that sweet young voice, without giving her an acceptable excuse for leaving her post before her hard task was completed. At length the voice grew faint, and then ceased; and then we knew that exhausted nature slept—that a tender house plant was exposed to the chilling influence of a night of rain—that an innocent little girl had the curb-stone for a bed, and an iron post for a pillow—that by and by she would awaken, not invigorated with refreshing slumber, but poisoned with the sleep-inhaled miasma of the filth-reeking gutter at her feet, which may be breathed with impunity awake, but, like the malaria of our southern coast, is death to the sleeper.

It was past midnight when she awoke, and found herself with a desperate effort just able to reach the bottom of the rickety stairs which led to her home.—We shall not go up now. In a little while, reader, you shall see where live the city poor.

Tired, worn with the daily toil—for such is the work of an editor who caters for the appetites of his morning readers—we were not present the next night to note the absence of that cry from its accustomed spot; but the next, and next, and still on, we listened in vain—that voice was not there. True, the same hot corn cry came floating upon the evening breeze across the Park, or wormed its way from some cracked fiddle voice down the street, up and around the corner; or out of some dark alley, with a broken English accent, that sounded almost as much like "lager beer" as it did like the commodity the immigrant, struggling to eke out his precarious existence, wished to sell.—All over this great, poverty-burdened and wicked-waste, extravagant city, at this season, that cry goes up nightly, proclaiming one of the habits of this late-supper-eating people.

Yes, we missed that cry. "Hot corn" was no longer like the music of a stringed instrument to a weary man, for the treble string was broken, and, to us, the harmony spoiled.

What was that voice to us? It was but one of the ten thousand, just as miserable, which may be daily heard where human misery has its abode. That voice, as some others have, did not haunt us, but its absence, in spite of all reasoning, made us feel uneasy.

It was this feeling that prompted us, as we left our desk one evening, to go down among the abodes of the poor. We followed in the route we had seen that little one go before—it

was our only cue—we knew no name, had no number, nor knew any one that knew her whom we were going to find. Yes, we knew that good missionary, and she had told us of the good words which he had spoken, but would he know her from the hundred just like her? Perhaps. It will cost nothing to inquire. We went down Centre street with a light heart; we turned into Cross street with a step buoyed by hope; we stood at the corner of Little Water street, for the sound of prayer, followed by a sweet hymn of praise to God, went up from the site of the Old Brewery, in which we joined, thankful that that was no longer the abode of all the worst crimes ever concentrated under one roof. Hark! a step approaches. It were a curious question to ask a stranger, in such a strange place, particularly one like him, haggard with over-much care, toil or mental labor. Prematurely old, his days shortened by over-work in young years, as his furrowed face and almost frenzied eye hurriedly indicate, as we see the flash of the lamp upon his dark visage, as he approaches with that peculiar American step which impels the body forward at railroad speed. Shall we get out of his way before he walks over us? What if he is a crazy man? No; it is that good missionary,—that man who has done more to reform that den of crime, the Five Points of New York, than all the municipal authorities of this police-hunting and prison-punishing city, where misfortune is deemed a crime, or the unfortunate driven to it, by the way they are treated, instead of being reformed, or strengthened in their resolution to reform, by hard words rather than prison bars.

"Sir," said Mr. Pease, "what brings you here at this time of night, for I know there is an object; can I aid you?"

"Perhaps. I don't know—a foolish whim—a little child—one of the miserable, with a drunken mother."

"Come with me, then. There are many such. I am just going to visit one who will die before morning—a sweet little girl, born in better days, and dying now—but you shall see, and then we will talk about the one you would seek to save."

We were soon threading a narrow alley, where pestilence walketh in darkness, and crime, wretched poverty and filthy misery go hand in hand to destruction.

"Behold," said our friend, "the fruits of our city excise. Here is the profit of money spent for license to kill the body and damn the soul." Proved by the awful curses and loud blows of a drunken husband upon a wife, once an ornament of society, and exemplary member of a Christian church, that came up out of one of the low cellars that human beings call by the name of home.

The fetid odor of this filthy lane had been made more fetid by the late and almost scalding hot rains, until it seemed to us that such an air was only fit for a charnel-house. With the thermometer at 86 at midnight, how could men live in such a place, below the surface of the earth? Has rum rendered them proof against the effect of carbonic acid gas?

We groped our way along to the foot of an outside staircase, where our conductor paused for a moment, calling our attention to the spot. "Here," said Mr. Pease, "the little sufferer we are going to see, fainted a few nights ago, and lay all night exposed to the rain, where she was found and beaten in the morning by her miserable mother, because she had not sold all her corn."

"Be careful," said he, "the stairs are very old and slippery."

"Beat her?" said we, without regarding what he was saying.

"Yes, beat her, while she was in a fever of delirium, from which she has never rallied. She has never spoken rationally since she was taken. Her constant prayer seems to be to see some particular person before she dies."

"O, if I could see him once more—there—there—that is him—no, no, he did not speak that way to me—he did not curse and beat me."

"Such is her conversation, and that induced her mother to send for me, but I was not the man.—Will he come? she says every time I visit her; for, thinking to soothe and comfort her, I promised to bring him."

We had reached the top of the stairs and stood a moment at the open door, where sin and misery dwelt, where sickness had come, and where death would soon enter.

"Will he come?"

A faint voice came up from a low bed in

one corner, seen by the very dim light of a miserable lamp.

That voice. We could not be mistaken. We could not enter. Let us wait a moment in the open air, for there is a choking sensation coming over us.

"Come in," said our friend.

"Will he come?"

Two hands were stretched out imploringly toward the Missionary, as the sound of his voice was recognized.

"She is much weaker to-night," said her mother, in quite a lady like manner, for the sense of her drunken wrong to her dying child had kept her sober, ever since she had been sick, "but she is quite delirious, and all the time talking about some man that spoke kindly to her one night, and gave her money to buy bread."

"Will he come?"

"Yes, yes, through the guidance of the good spirit that guides the world, and leads us by unseen paths, through dark places, he has come."

The little emaciated form stared up in bed, and a pair of beautiful soft blue eyes glanced around the room, piercing the semi-darkness, as if in search of something heard but unseen.

"Katy, darling," said the mother, "what is the matter?"

"Where is he, mother? He is here I heard him speak."

"Yes, yes, sweet little innocent, he is here, kneeling by your bedside. There, lay down, you are very sick."

"Only once, just once, let me put my arms around your neck, and kiss you just as I used to kiss papa. I had a papa once, when we lived in the big house—there, there—Oh, I did want to see you to thank you for the bread and the cakes; I was very hungry, and it did taste so good—and little S's, she waked up, and she eat and eat, and after a while she went to sleep with a piece in her hand, and I went to sleep; haven't I been asleep a good while? I thought I was asleep in the Park, and somebody stole all my corn, and my mother whipt me for it, but I could not help it. Oh, dear, I feel sleepy now. I can't talk any more. I am very tired. I cannot see; the candle has gone out. I think I am going to die. I thank you; I wanted to thank you for the bread—I thought you would not come. Good bye—Sissee, good bye, Sissee—you will come—mother—don't—drink—any more—Mother—good bye."

"'Tis the last of earth," said the good man at our side—"let us pray."

Reader, Christian reader, little Katy is in her grave. Prayers for her are unavailing. There are in this city a thousand just such cases. Prayers for them are unavailing. Faith without works won't work reform. A faithful, prayerful resolution, to work out that reform which will save you from reading the recital of such scenes—such fruits of the rum trade as this before you, will work together for your own and other's good. Go forth and listen. If you hear a little voice crying *hot corn*, think of poor Katy, and of the hosts of innocents slain by that remorseless tyrant, rum. Go forth and seek a better spirit to rule over us. Cry aloud, "will he come," and the answer will be, "yes, yes, he is here."

## Extracts from the Minutes of the Western Association of New-Brunswick.

(Concluded.)

## TUESDAY MORNING SESSION.

Preaching at 10 o'clock, A. M., by Brother Hugh Ross, Messenger of the Eastern Association of Nova Scotia. After which the Moderator resumed the Chair. Prayer by brother Miles.

The Committee on the Bible Cause reported as follows:—

Your committee on the Bible cause beg to Report, that they rejoice to know that Baptists have invariably taken a deep interest in the universal circulation of the Word of God without note or comment, and that they have always cherished an earnest desire that the Book of Inspiration should be faithfully translated into all languages that exist in the world, that all men may read in their own vernacular tongue all the words of this inspired volume. They would therefore commend all Bible efforts adapted to accomplish these important objects to the sympathies and prayers of our churches, and would express their sincere hope that they will aid this good cause by their contributions, as far as they can do so in accordance with the numerous and ur-