

Till one cried "Father!" then he raised  
his head

With such a look: I see it to this hour—  
And turning, stamp'd down hard the new  
laid sod,

Mutt'ring with half-clench'd teeth, "One's  
gone, thank God!"

"One's gone!" I echoed, glancing where  
my own

Slept in her grave: "and thou can'st tread  
that spot

So rudely, speak those words in such a tone!  
Art thou a father?" "Would that I  
were not!"

Facing quick round his questioner to scan,  
Made answer stern that miserable man.

Dark scowling from beneath his close-knit  
brow,

His gloomy eye full fix'd on mine, he said,  
"Children may be good gifts to thee, and  
thou

May'st love them living, and lament them  
dead;

But mine are born to misery and despair;  
They're better off in heaven, or any where."

'Ye're of the Factories,' I began, but he  
Broke in with horrid laugh, 'Aye, who  
can doubt

That same, that sees us? Fact'ry hands  
are we—

Their mark's upon us, and it don't wear  
out.'

And dragging forward one poor girl, 'Look  
there!'

He shouted out, and laid her shoulders bare.

Tearing the ragged shawl off, "That's fresh  
done—

They sent her home scored black and blue  
last night,

To serve as mourning for the little one—  
We've no black rages—and that's a goodly  
sight

For parent's eyes—that poor demented thing—  
He was born straight and healthy, Duke or  
King

Might have been proud of him—sharp-wit-  
ted too,

Aye, 'cutest of them all—till his time  
came

For the curs'd mill: They strapp'd him  
on to do.

Beyond his strength: he fell against a  
frame,

Struck backward—hurt his spine, the doctors  
say,  
And grew deformed and foolish from that  
day.

Sir, when your young ones are in bed asleep,  
Mine must slave on—in dust, and steam.  
—and see,—

You may with yours, the Lord's day holy  
keep

In his own house—'tis more than I can do,  
(Brute as you think me,) from this rest that  
day,

Poor little wretches, to drag mine away!

I've been myself a wretched Fact'ry boy—  
Untaught, uncared for,—a poor foundling  
too,

I never felt the feeling you call joy,  
Nor leap'd nor laugh'd as happy children do,  
But I liv'd on, and married like the rest  
In reckless folly. And I say 'tis best

To die a sinless child, as mine lies there.

With aching pity, tenderly I strove  
To sooth the wretched man in his despair—

I talked to him of seeking strength above,  
He shook his head—of comfort found in pray-  
er—

He groaned out, pointing to the grave, 'There,  
there.'

But we must seek him in his home distress,  
Where ague struck his helpless partner  
lies,

Nursing a wailing baby at her breast.

That drains her life blood with its scant  
supplies—

And we must try what Christian love can do,  
For the sick soul, and staking body too:

And oh, my children, fervent be our  
prayer

This night before we sleep, and day by  
day,

That from our country, this good land and  
fair!

The mortal plague spots may be wiped  
away,

Ere from her heights, like guilty Tyre she's  
hurled,

The wonder and opprobrium of the world.

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