

Miscellaneous.

LINES BY MILTON IN HIS OLD AGE.

This sublime and affecting production was but lately discovered among the remains of our great epic poet,—and is published in the recent Oxford edition of Milton's Works.

I am old and blind !
Men point at me as smitten by God's frown ;
Afflicted and deserted of my kind ;
Yet I am not cast down.

I am weak, yet strong ;
I murmur not that I no longer see ;
Poor, old, and helpless, I the more belong,
Father Supreme ! to Thee.

O merciful One !
When men are farthest, then Thou art most near ;
When friends pass by, my weakness shun,
Thy chariot I hear.

Thy glorious face
Is leaning towards me ; and its holy light
Shines in upon my lonely dwelling place,
And there is no more night.

On my bended knee
I recognise Thy purpose, clearly shown ;
My vision Thou hast dimm'd that I may see
Thyself—Thyself alone.

I have naught to fear :
This darkness is the shadow of Thy wing ;
Beneath it I am almost sacred, here
Can come no evil thing.

O ! I seem to stand
Trembling, where foot of mortal ne'er hath been,
Wrapp'd in the radiance of Thy sinless land,
Which eye hath never seen.

Visions come and go ;
Shapes of resplendent beauty round me throng ;
From angel lips I seem to hear the flow
Of soft and holy song.

It is nothing now,
When heaven is opening on my sightless-eyes—
When airs from paradise refresh my brow
The earth in darkness lies.

In a purer clime
My being fills with rapture—waves of thought
Roll in upon my spirit—strains sublime
Break over me unsought.

Give me now me lyre !
I feel the stirrings of a gift divine,
Within my bosom glows unearthly fire
Lit by no skill of mine.

THE LATE FEARFUL ACCIDENT AT THE NINTH WARD SCHOOL, CITY OF NEW YORK.

The following sad history of this melancholy occurrence, we have compiled from the extended accounts in the local papers of the accident itself, and of the protracted investigation of the Coroner's Inquest on the bodies of the forty-two innocent sufferers. The verdict of the Jury with its accompanying memorandum is worthy of the careful attention of all parties engaged in the construction of school-houses and other public buildings :—One of the most distressing calamities that ever visited this city, occurred yesterday afternoon, between 2 and 3 o'clock, at the Ward school-house No. 26, in Greenwich Avenue. We were upon the spot a short time after the accident occurred, but cannot convey to the reader any adequate conception of the excitement and anguish and desolation of the heart-rending scene. Nearly fifty children were killed, and forty-nine were more or less severely wounded. The school-house is a large, five story, brick building, the basement being level with the street, and forming in fact the flagged playground for the children, the building being so constructed that the children can play either in the open yard, or run for shelter underneath the school-house. The four floors above are reached by a winding, or what is technically called a "well" staircase, the bottom of the well or terminus of the staircase being upon the flagged floor of the basement, and about ten feet square in extent. It was by precipitation into this well that so many of the children were killed, many of them by suffocation alone.

Miss Harrison, one of the teachers of the female department, who had been for some days indisposed, was seized with paralysis of the tongue, and a call for water was raised by some of the children near her. The cry for "water" seems to have given rise to the idea that something had caught fire, and this alarm spread so rapidly that before any preventive measures could be taken, the main body of the scholars rushed toward the door, and a scene of indescribable confusion and horror succeeded. This department was in the third story, its elevation from the flagged floor being about thirty feet. In the rush some children were forced over the bannisters of the staircase, and falling upon the flags below, were mangled and instantly killed. The panic spread also through the other departments of the school, including the male department on the fourth floor, and under this augmented pressure the ballustrades from the foot to a point above the second story gave way or were forced out, and the children as they eagerly rushed forward were instantly precipitated into the well of the staircase, the uppermost smothering or suffocating those who lay beneath. Before the current could be arrested, the well was filled with the bodies of children to the depth of about eight feet. At this juncture the alarm reached the Ninth Ward station house, the fire-bell was rung, and a detachment of the police hurried to the scene. Here a new difficulty presented itself. The afternoon session of the school having commenced, the main outer doors, which open upon the foot of the stairs had been closed. Against these the affrighted children were wedged in masses, and as the doors open inward it was some time before relief could be given them. The police fortunately effected an entrance by a rear door, but for which timely help probably many more of the children would have been suffocated.

Much commendation is due to the teachers for their presence of mind. Miss McFarland, one of the assistants in the primary department, finding the children of her department becoming alarmed, placed herself in the doorway, and exerted her utmost strength to arrest them as they endeavoured to rush from the room, and although several times thrown down and trampled upon, she still persisted in her efforts, until finally she was so much injured as to be compelled to relinquish the post. So impetuous was the rush, however, that five of the teachers were forced over the bannisters and fell with the children into the well. The sterner discipline exercised over the boys' departments prevented them generally from joining in the rush. Only three of the pupils in the upper male department were among the killed. Some of the boys jumped out of the windows, and one of them had his neck broken by the fall. There were altogether in the building 1233 boys and 600 girls. Hundreds on hundreds went over the stairs, until there was a pile of human beings—a mass of children—eight feet square and about twelve feet in height. The police soon took possession of the premises, and commenced handing out the children from their perilous position. Those that were on top were but slightly injured, but as soon as these had been removed, the most heart-rending spectacle presented itself. Some among the policemen were fathers, whose own children were there. They worked manfully, and body after body was taken out : many of them lifeless at first, came to when they once more breathed the fresh air, but many were beyond aid, and death was too plainly marked upon their pallid features. Some were injured by the fall, and lay writhing in agony ; some moaned while others shrieked with pain, and others, again, when released started off for home, apparently unconscious of the awful scene through which they had passed. The bodies of the dead and wounded were mostly taken to the ninth ward station house, which is near the school. In a few minutes news of the accident spread through the neighbourhood, and mothers came rushing to the scene by scores. Occasionally a mother would recognize the lifeless form of a child as it was lifted from the mass, and then the piercing cry of agony that would rend the air. One after another the bodies of the dead were removed ; and at length litters were provided, and the wounded were carried away also. Nearly one hundred families either mourned the loss of children or watched anxiously over the forms of the wounded.

Verdict of the Jury.—The investigation into the cause of the fatal accident, occupied the attention of a Special Jury for several days, and on the last day the jury retired at about half past five o'clock, and at nine o'clock they agreed on the following verdict :

The jury unanimously concur in the opinion that the cause of death in the cases of—(here the names are recited)—was suffoca-