

THE IRISH FAMINE.—BY MR. ALARIC A. WATTS.

A cloud hung o'er green Innisfail—gem of the silver main;
 Oh! who that saw that fearful sight, might dare to look again?
 The earth with fruitful verdure clad, man held his head on high,
 (But man even in his best estate is less than vanity,)
 Abroad he looked o'er east and west, as though defying fate;
 A curse went forth across the land, and it was desolate.
 "Hope against hope" awhile prevailed, we said, 'tis early dawn;
 The day will show bright promise yet, the cloud will be withdrawn.
 Men spoke in whispers, each one feared to meet the other's eye;
 As iron seemed the sterile earth, as brass the sullen sky,
 But Patience had her perfect work, abundant faith was given;
 Oh! who shall say the scourge of earth does not bear fruit for heaven!

Slowly arose the unwilling call, broke forth the smothered cry—
 "Lo! Famine cometh o'er the land; send succor, or we die!
 The hand that smites our fertile fields hath passed your island o'er;
 Of your abundance let us share, and Heaven will bless your store."
 The bond of brotherhood prevailed, forgotten was our strife,
 And freely was our gold poured forth to buy the staff of life.
 A little while! a little while! and louder did they say,
 "Gaunt Famine is within our gates, oh send us help to day!"
 Then children's eyes were dim with tears, and woman's cheek grew pale;
 Men who had braved the battle's brunt now trembled at the tale.
 We did not dare to turn aside, although in fear we read,
 And grain by grain was gold implored to buy the famished bread.

Yet still went forth the strong appeal, still louder waxed the cry,
 Brave Self-Denial started up, true fount of charity;
 First, Taste her idols sacrificed, the sinless joys of mind;
 Treasures that science priceless holds were willingly resigned;
 Lightly Privation's self was borne that we might have to spare;
 Rich boards with lavish plenty crowned sank down to hermit fare.
 Beauty her baubles cast aside, as if in holy strife;
 Childhood its playthings would forego, and youth the pride of life.
 All hearts were opened, and each hand responded to the call;
 Weak Penury her mite cast in, the richest gift of all;
 The standard-bearers of the church, amid severest wo,
 As Israel wrestled with their God, and said, Thou shalt not go;
 As ONE MAN bowed the nation down, while myriad voices prayed;
 "Stand thou between the quick and dead, and let the plague be stayed."

YE never heard that fearful wail, YE never saw the sight
 That almost might put out the sun, and turn the day to night
 No pleading glance to you was raised, YE heard no suppliant sigh;
 The voice that roused your heart of hearts was inborn sympathy,
 Or visitant, like his of old, that ever seemed to say,
 "Come over now to Macedon and give us help to day."
 Broad ocean rolls between our homes, yet spirits are akin;
 Wide waters cannot quench the love the christian heart within.
 Our prayer was to the Lord of hosts; to him our hearts were spread;
 The prayer was heard, and by your hands He sends the daily bread.

Prayer, that can pierce the highest heaven, can reach beyond the sea:
 Hearts that may never know your names send heartfelt thanks by me
 The blessing of the voiceless thought that dies upon the tongue;
 A blessing on your matrons fair, and on your maidens young;
 A blessing be above your path, a blessing round your bed;
 A blessing on the stripling brave, and on the hoary head;
 A blessing such as Christ be-towed, upon your children small;
 A blessing "ere the sun goes down," upon you, one and all;
 A blessing on your fruitful fields, and on your garnered store;
 Rich blessings rest upon you, friends, now and for evermore!

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