

Johnnie Morrison's Funeral.

THE Morrisons' baby was dead. It had always been a sickly little thing, the only boy coming after six girls. Both father and mother felt the blow terribly when, at daybreak on a lovely summer's morning, the little creature stretched out its arms, and with one faint cry went back to God.

Morrison was a thoughtful, very silent man, seldom expressing his feelings, but he passed his coat-sleeve across his eyes as he looked at his dead baby, though the next moment he went downstairs to light the kitchen fire, and get the house tidy, against the children woke and wanted their breakfast.

Mrs. Morrison was a weakly woman, and had sat up many nights with little Johnnie, so she was fit for nothing after her first sad outburst of grief for her lost lamb. Nothing, at least, but thinking what a grand funeral they must have for their darling. John, careful as he was, wouldn't grudge that, he had so loved the little one.

She said something of the sort to her husband when he came back from work in the evening, but he made no reply at the moment, which was quite his way. By-and-by he brought her two sovereigns for mourning, and said, 'I'll look to the rest,' meaning the funeral, of course; he had ordered the coffin already. And then he opened his mouth once more: 'Don't buy crape for the little uns.'

'Well, it do spoil dreadful with the least spot of rain,' said the mother, sighing, 'and that's true.'

'It's rough and ugly,' said John. 'And look you, Janie, on the day I'd like all the little uns to wear white pinafores.' Then, seeing his wife put on a dazed look, 'White pinnies, like they wear every day.'

'White pinnies, plain white pinnies to go to the funeral in?' Mrs. Morrison wailed out fretfully, raising her voice.

'Yes,' said John. He was just leaving the house on an errand. When the door shut to, Mrs. Morrison threw her apron over her head and burst into tears. So Mrs. Merton, the innkeeper's wife, found her when she called in to sympathise; 'Jane' having been once housemaid at the 'Eagle.' To complete the picture, the four youngest little Morrisons were standing round their mother crying too.

Mrs. Morrison was a truthful, if a weak woman, and she did not pretend to Mrs. Merton that it was grief for the little darling upstairs that caused this special outbreak of woe. No; it was 'John's strange ways.'

'John, what has he done?'

'I didn't think he'd have grudged things nice to our only boy,' sobbed the mother.

'I'm sure he does not,' said Mrs. Merton, 'you must mistake him. He was bound up in his poor little boy.'

'He's so strange,' repeated the wife.

'Come, Jane, you are very tired and upset; bed is the fit place for you, I see. I shall go home and send over Lizzie, your old friend, to get you and the little ones to bed, and warm up these bits of chicken for yours and John's supper.'

'I couldn't touch anything,' said the poor thing, weeping afresh.

When Lizzie, the kitchenmaid at the 'Eagle,' did come over, she had a busy time of it, putting the little ones to bed, and cosseting the mother; but perhaps the most consoling thing she did was to come every now and then into Mrs. Morrison's room from looking at baby Johnnie, to say, 'Well, he is lovely!' 'It do seem 'eavenly in there!'

And when Susan, the third child, asked whether she should leave out of her prayers the sentence only learned six weeks ago, 'Thank God for our little baby brother,' Lizzie almost shook her in her eagerness. 'La, bless you, child, no. He ain't done with. He's your little brother still, wherever