

his fair lady that he could be so unmindful of me. Thoughts and dreams that are vivid and life-like when night has shed her sweet influences over the soul, oft-times flee away like the morning dew when the sun arises and floods the world with light. Longings and aspirations that fill men's hearts when alone in the solemn midnight, too often seem but sickly or foolishly enthusiastic fancies when they recur to the mind during busy working hours. Perchance my master felt something of this when, standing near the feeble fire drawing on his gloves, he cast one glance at me—at all events he passed hurriedly out.

He was not so late that night, and he looked much brighter and happier when he came into the room and began putting together the fast-dying embers in the grate. He even sang softly to himself as he worked. I could scarcely catch the words. The refrain seemed to be

"There is none like her, none!"

and I wondered if it was she of whom he had been speaking. I think it must have been, for while he was yet singing he came up to me, and began collecting my "belongings" together; then he laid out a sheet of strong paper on the table and proceeded to wrap me up, thereby confining my powers of observation too much to be agreeable to an active machine like myself. I must confess I could not feel regret when, in spite of caution, my tension protruded through the paper, thereby making an opening through which I could see my master's annoyed face.

"Too bad," growled he, "and not another piece of paper have I. Well, it will have to do. I wonder if *ma belle* will guess who sent her Christmas box. Will she ever think it was Reginald Leigh, the poor fellow who haunts her whenever she goes out? and will she care any more for it if she does guess? Idle questions, Reginald, worse than idle! It won't do, my boy!" He laid me gently down, and, drawing near the fire, he put his feet on the fender, his hands in his pockets, and, leaning back, looked up earnestly at his mother's portrait.

I watched for the reaction. I knew it would come after such a flow of spirits. The change did not come quickly. Gradually the shadows deepened on the fine face, until a faint mist stole over his eyes, and he closed them wearily, with a long-drawn sigh. It was a delicate, sensitive face I gazed on; worn and old it looked now; and very sad when the proud, haughty expression had quite left it. I pitied the lonely, homeless man on that Christmas Eve, when so many happy families were gathered together.

Perhaps in that busy town there were few as lonely as Reginald Leigh. Was he thinking of happy Christmas Eves spent with his mother long ago? or was he dreaming of still happier ones he longed for? A ghost of a smile came flitting across his face; it faded, but calm settled on the worn features. He had fallen asleep like some tired child.

(To be continued.)

THE LONELY HOUR.

BY FRANK JOHNSON, ASCOT.

There is an hour of loneliness;
 'Tis not when evening's zephyr sighs,
 But ere the breath of morn has breathed,
 And all around still silent lies;
 Save when the watchdog's sullen bay,
 Or clarion cry of chanticleer,
 Breaks on the stillness but to make
 The dreariness around more drear:
 Or saving when from yon bell'd tower
 Goes forth the accomplished hour of night,
 So dully, moaningly, as if
 The expiring hour's sepulchral rite.
 All nature mopes,—the hooting owl
 Hours since has sought its ivied home,—
 The warblers still their hedge haunts keep,
 Still nothing cares abroad to roam.
 The air that stirr'd the drowsied leaves
 With them is slumb'ring overhead;
 The lovely flowers hang drooped and drenched
 With their petals folded, as if dead.
 The very stars seem wearied with
 The long, long watching through the night;

The mist of morning mingling with
 The darkness breeds a sickly light.
 Too well, in turn, the sigh that waits
 On memory's pains attests its power;
 Will no one wake to share with me
 The loneliness of that same hour?
 Beneath the coverlet of my couch
 I, saddened, shrink, and sighing, pray
 Forgetfulness again to shroud
 And tomb me till the dawn of day.
 'Twas at that hour, that dreaded hour
 I rose of old to cross the main,
 And, parting, pressed a mother's lips
 Never to press those lips again.
 'Twas at that hour, that sickening hour,
 I grasped a father by the hand—
 His words remain, "Good bye, my boy;"
 But where is *he?*—*you understand!*
 And at that hour the dearest child,
 The dearest from his day of birth—
 His last words whispered, "cover me,"
 And so I did—*beneath the earth.*