

CHRISTIAN MIRROR.

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF RELIGION AND GENERAL LITERATURE.

"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL xii. 4.

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No. 23.

POETRY.

For the Christian Mirror.

TO A MOTHER ON THE DEATH OF HER CHILD.

ADDRESSED TO ***

THERE'S a home in the heavens, a blessed sphere,
Where the eye is ne'er dimm'd with a single tear;
There's a world without sorrow, or pain, or care,
And the child that thou mourn'st is there, is there.

There's a land where the evils of sin are unknown,
And the enemy Death is hurl'd from his throne;
A region of spirits—all bright and fair—
And the child that thou mourn'st is there, is there.

There's a garden of blossoms, all blooming and bright,
The chosen, the cherish'd, the children of light;
Whose souls are as pure as the robes that they wear,
And the child that thou mourn'st is there, is there.

There are mansions of bliss in the realms above,
And thrones that resound with a Saviour's love;
Where millions with millions in happiness share,
And the child that thou mourn'st is there, is there.

He was thine, but the Saviour has call'd him away—
Oh! would'st thou restore him to death and decay?
No—rather in Heaven to meet him prepare;
For the child that thou mourn'st is there, is there.

Montreal, June 2, 1842. J. D. M.D.

GENERAL LITERATURE.

[In a late number, we inserted a short account of a most affecting and truly distressing circumstance, which occurred in the month of April last, in the township of Preston, Nova Scotia. The following narrative of the transaction, which we copy from *The Church*, originally appeared in the *Nova Scotian*. It will be read with interest, especially by our young friends.—Ed.]

THE BABES IN THE WOODS.

Most children, who can read, have read the touching little Nursery Tale of the Babes in the Woods, and thousands, who cannot read, have wept over it as better informed playmates, nurses, or grandmothers, poured it into their infant ears, with variations, embellishments, and exaggerations, which, if all duly preserved, would fill a book as large as Robinson Crusoe. We have seen all the touching incidents of the scene so often portrayed in woodcuts and engravings, that at any moment we can conjure up the bed-room in which the dying parents consigned the innocents to the cruel but fair-spoken uncle—the wild glen in which the ruffians quarrelled, upon the point of conscience, as to whether they should be murdered or left to perish in the wood—and then, the wood itself, in which they wandered so long, hand in hand, quenching their thirst in the running brook, gathering sloe-berries to satisfy their hunger, and sleeping at night beneath the trees in each other's arms.—Truly this little legend has enjoyed a popularity more extensive than thousands of tales of more complicated plot and elaborate execution. The boys and girls of the present generation read

and listen to it with as much delight and as tender a sympathy as the boys and girls of the past, and who can say how many centuries may pass before it shall cease to be remembered, or be shorn of any proportion of the popularity it now enjoys.

We have had of late our "Babes in the Woods," and the object of this little sketch is to record some incidents, in humble life, in which the people of Halifax, Dartmouth, and the settlements in their vicinity, take at the present moment a very lively interest, and which it is probable will be held in painful remembrance by hundreds until their dying day. Our story lacks something of the dramatic cast of the old one—there being neither avarice, cruelty, nor crime in it, yet 'tis "pitiful, 'tis wondrous pitiful." The town of Dartmouth lies on the eastern side Halifax harbour, directly opposite to the city of that name. The township of Preston lies to the eastward of Dartmouth, and embraces scattered agricultural settlements, through the principal of which the main road runs which leads from Dartmouth to Porter's Lake, Chizetcook, Jedore, and all the harbours upon the south-eastern seaboard. About half a mile from this road, at a distance of some four miles and a half from the Ferry, lived John Meagher, a native of Ireland, his wife, and a family of four children. His house is prettily situated on an upland ridge, between two lakes, and overlooking the main road. His cleared fields were chiefly in front, the rear of his lot being covered by a thick growth of bushes and young trees, which had sprung up in the place of the original forest, long since levelled by the axe, or overrun by fire. Behind the lot, in a northerly direction, lay a wide extent of timber and scrambling woodland, granite barren and morass, the only houses in the neighbourhood lying east or west, on ridges running parallel with that on which Mr. Meagher lived, and which are separated from it by the lakes that extend some distance in the rear of his clearing.

On Monday morning, the 10th day of April, Meagher, his wife, and two of the children, lying sick with the measles, the two oldest girls, Jane Elizabeth, being six years and ten months, and Margaret only five years old, strolled into the woods to search for Lashong, the gum of the black spruce tree, or tea berries. The day was fine, and the girls being in the habit of roaming about the lot, were not missed till late in the day. A man-servant was sent in search of them, and thought he heard their voices, but returned without them, probably thinking there was no occasion for alarm and that they would by and bye return of their own accord. Towards evening, the family became seriously alarmed, and the sick father roused himself to search for his children, and gave the alarm to some of his nearest neighbours. The rest of the night was spent in beating about the woods in rear of the clearing, but to no purpose, nobody supposing that girls so small could have strayed more than a mile or two from the house. On Tuesday morning, tidings having reached Dartmouth,

Halifax, and the neighbouring settlements, several hundreds of persons promptly repaired to the vicinity of Meagher's house, and, dividing into different parties, commenced a formal and active examination of the woods. In the course of the day the tracks of little feet were discovered in several places on patches of snow, but were again lost—the spot at which the children crossed a rivulet which connects Lake Loon with Lake Charles was also remarked. A colored boy named Brown, whose dwelling lay about three miles to the north and west of Meagher's, also reported that he had heard a noise, as of children crying, the evening before, while cutting wood, but that on advancing towards it and calling out, the sound ceased, and he returned home, thinking, perhaps, it was a bird or some wild animal.

The tracks, the coloured boy's report, and the subsequent discovery of a piece of one of the children's aprons, stained with blood, at the distance of three miles from their home, gave a wider range to the researches of the benevolent, who began to muster in the neighbourhood of the place in which the piece of apron was picked up, and to deploy in all directions, embracing a circle of several miles beyond and in rear of it. Monday night was mild, and it was pretty evident the children survived it.—Tuesday night was colder, and about two inches of snow having fallen, the general conviction appeared to be, that, worn out with fatigue and hunger, and having no outer clothing, they must have perished. Still there was no relaxation of the exertions of the enterprising and benevolent. Fresh parties poured into the woods each day, and many persons, overpowered by the strength of their feelings, and gathering fresh energy from the pursuit, devoted the entire week to the generous purpose of rescuing the dead bodies, if not the lives of the innocents, from the wilderness. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday passed away, and no further trace was discovered of the Babes in the Woods; every newspaper that appeared was eagerly searched for some tidings—every boat that crossed the harbour was met by anxious and enquiring faces—Dartmouth was constantly occupied with vehicles and pedestrians moving to and fro.

As the week closed, all hopes of finding the children alive were of course abandoned, and yet nobody thought of discontinuing the search. An air of mystery began to gather about the affair. The accounts of the man-servant and of the coloured lad were eagerly canvassed—what meant the blood upon the scrap of the apron? Had there been crime? Had wild animals destroyed them? How could they have wandered so far? How could hundreds of persons have traversed the woods for five days, without finding them? All these were questions which every body put to his neighbour, and which none could answer.

On Sunday morning, it was quite evident that the interest had deepened rather than declined. A load seemed to hang upon the mind which was excessively painful. Many who had been confined all the week, unable to join in the good work, determined to