

From the Forget-me-not.

THE RICH AND THE POOR.

BY MARY HOWITT.

Go, child, and take them meat and drink,
And see that they be fed;
Alas, it is a cruel thing,
To lack of daily bread!

Then, come, that I may speak to thee
Of things severely true;
Love thou the poor, for Jesus Christ,
He was a poor man, too!

They told me, when I was a child,
I was of English birth;
They called a free-born Englishman
The noblest man on earth.

They bade me say my lisping prayers
Duly both night and morn;
And bless the Father of the world
That I was English born.

My home it was a stately place,
In England's history known;
And many an old renowned deed
Was graven on its stone.

I saw the high-born and the poor
Low bending, side by side,
And the meek bishop's holy hands
Diffuse his blessing wide.

And round and round the sacred pile,
My reverent fancy went,
Till God and good King George at once
Within my heart were blent.

Those were my years of innocence,
Of ignorance and mirth;
When my wild heart leapt up in joy
Of my pure English birth.

Oh, England, mother England!
Proud nurse of thriving men,
I've learnt to look with other eyes
On many things since then.

I've thus been taught: I saw a man,
An old man, bent and hoar,
And he broke flints upon the road
With labour long and sore.

The day it was a day in June;
The nightingales sang loud,
And with their load of snowy bloom
The hawthorn-trees were bowed.

The very highway side was bright
With flowers: the branches made
Of tenderest green, above my head,
A pleasant summer shade.

The earth, the air, the sunlit sky,
Of gladness they were full:
My heart rejoiced: when there I heard
Laborious sounds and dull.

They were the old man's hammer-strokes
That fell upon the stone,
Stroke after stroke, with bootless aim;
Yet kept he striving on.

I watched him: coach and chariot bright
Rolled past him in their speed;
Horsemen and peasants to the town;
And yet he took no heed.

Stroke after stroke, the hammer fell
Upon the selfsame stone;
A child had been as strong as he,
Yet he kept toiling on.

Before him lay a little heap
Of flints he had to break;
It wearied me but to conceive
What labour they would take.

I watched him still; and still he toiled
Upon the selfsame stone;
Nor ever raised his head to me,
But still kept working on.

'My friend,' said I, 'your task is hard,
And bootless seems your labour;
The strokes you give go here and there;
A waste of power, good neighbour!'

Upon his tool he propped himself,
And turned on me his eye,
Yet did not raise, the while, his head,
Then slowly made reply.

'The parish mites me out my work;
Twelve pence my daily fee;
I'm weak, God knows, and I am old,
Four-score, my age, and three.

Five weeks I could not strike a stroke,
The parish helped me then;
Now I must pay them back the cost;
Hard times for aged men!

I have been palsied, agued, racked
With pains enough to kill;
I cannot raise my head, and yet
I must keep working still;
For I've the parish loan to pay;
Yet I am weak and ill!

Then, slowly lifting up his tool,
The minute-strokes went on;
I left him as I found him first,
At work upon that stone.

The nightingales sang loudly forth;
Joy through all nature ran;
But my very soul was sick to think
On this poor Englishman.

Again; it was the young spring-tide,
When natural hearts o'erflow
With love, to feel the genial air,
To see the wild flowers blow.

And near a mighty town I walked
In meadows green and fair;
And, as I sauntered slowly on,
A little child came there.

A child she was of ten years old,
Yet with no mirth of mien;
With sunken eye and thin pale face,
And body dry and lean.

Yet walked she on among the flowers,
For all her pallid hue;
And gathered them with eager hands,
As merry children do.

Poor child! the tears were in mine eyes,
Her thin, small hands to see,
Grasping the healthy flowers that looked
More full of life than she.

'You take delight in flowers,' I said,
And looked into her face;
'No wonder, they are beautiful;
Dwell you a-neighbor this place?'

'No,' said the child, 'within the town
I live, but here I run,
Just for a flower at dinner-time;
And just to feel the sun.

For, oh, the factory is so hot,
And so doth daze my brain;
I just run here to breathe the air,
And then run back again.

And now the fields are fresh and green,
I could not help but stay,
To get for Tommy's garden-plot
These pretty flowers to-day.

'And Tommy, who is he?' I asked.
'My brother,' she replied;
The factory wheels they broke his arms,
And sorely hurt his side.

He'll be a cripple all his days.
For him these flowers I got:
He has a garden in the yard,
The neighbours harm it not;
The drunken blacksmith strides across
Poor Tommy's garden-plot.'

As thus we talked, we neared the town,
When, like a heavy knell,
Was heard, amid the jarring sounds,
A distant factory-bell.

The child she made a sudden pause,
Like one who could not move;
Then threw poor Tommy's flowers away.
For fear had mastered love.

And with unnatural speed she ran
Down alleys dense and warm;
A frightened, toiling thing of care,
Into the toiling swarm:

Her scattered flowers lay in the street
To wither in the sun,
Or to be trod by passing feet;
They were of worth to none;
The factory-bell had cut down joy,
And still kept ringing on!

Proud was I when I was a child,
To be of English birth,
For surely thought the English were
The happiest race on earth.

That was the creed when I was young,
It is my creed no more;
For I know, wo's me, the difference now
Betwixt the rich and poor!

MEETING OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

A HUMOROUS SKETCH.

Section A.—Professor Aquarius, of Geneva, read a most interesting paper, in which, after having observed that astronomers had long been in darkness as to the nature of the luminous celestial bodies, vulgarly called stars, comets, &c., he stated that he had accidentally made the important discovery, that they are merely the reflections of the various waters of our own globe. A short time ago, he made two ponds in his garden, and, on the ensuing night, he discovered, from his observatory, two stars which were perfectly new to him and all other astronomers. The following day two more ponds were made near to the others; and that evening two more stars were visible close to those observed on the previous night. He then, for experiment sake, made a pond upon the top of a high mound, and, having formed a trench to connect it with one of the lower ponds, he broke down the bank of the raised pond, so as to permit the water it contained to run rapidly into the other. He now looked up, and observed the reflection or star produced by the raised pond running with rapidity towards the reflection of the other pond, thus producing the common phenomenon of a meteor or shooting star. The author concluded by observing that this discovery proves that the stars are not inhabited, and that, as he has no doubt that the sun is only the reflection of the Red Sea, and the moon of the Sea of Azoff, he thinks we may conclude them to be equally tenantless. The learned professor sat down amid most deafening applause, which lasted for two hours and a half.

Professor Frost read a valuable paper 'On Icebergs,' and described many of enormous size. He thought that, if a tunnel were bored through them, the North Pole might be reached very easily. Mr. Snow Harris and Mr. Hailstone said they highly approved of the suggestion, and hoped it would attract the attention of Mr. Brunel.