

CHARITY.

("Je suis la Charité.")

[February, 1837.]

"Lo! I am Charity," she cries,
"Who waketh up before the day;
While yet asleep all nature lies,
God bids me rise and go my way."

How fair her glorious features shine,
Whereon the hand of God hath set
An angel's attributes divine,
With all a woman's sweetness met.

Above the old man's couch of woe
She bows her forehead, pure and even.
There's nothing fairer here below,
There's nothing grander up in heaven,

Than when caressingly she stands
(The cold hearts wakening 'gain their beat),
And holds within her holy hands
The little children's naked feet.

To every den of want and toil

She goes, and leaves the poorest fed;
Leaves wine and bread, and genial oil,
And hopes that blossom in her tread,

And fire, too, beautiful bright fire,
That mocks the glowing dawn begun,
Where, having set the blind old sire,
He dreams he's sitting in the sun.

Then, over all the earth she runs,
And seeks, in the cold mists of life,
Those poor forsaken little ones
Who droop and weary in the strife.

Ah, most her heart is stirred for them,
Whose foreheads, wrapped in mists obscure,
Still wear a triple diadem--
The young, the innocent, the poor.

And they are better far than we,
And she bestows a worthier meed;
For, with the loaf of charity,
She gives the kiss that children need.

She gives, and while they wondering eat
The tear-steeped bread by love supplied,
She stretches round them in the street
Her arm that passers push aside.

If, with raised head and step alert,
She sees the rich man stalking by,
She touches his embroidered skirt,
And gently shows them where they lie.

She begs for them of careless crowd,
Of earnest brows and narrow hearts,
That when it hears her cry aloud,
Turns like the ebb-tide and departs.

O miserable he who sings
Some strain impure, whose numbers fall
Along the cruel wind that brings
Death to some child beneath his wall.

O strange and sad and fatal thing,
When, in the rich man's gorgeous hall,
The huge fire on the hearth doth fling
A light on some great festival,

To see the drunkard smile in state,

In purple wrapt, with myrtle crowned,
While Jesus lieth at the gate
With only rags to wrap him round.

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SWEET SISTER.

("Vous qui ne savez pas combien l'enfance est belle.")

Sweet sister, if you knew, like me,
The charms of guileless infancy,
No more you'd envy riper years,
Or smiles, more bitter than your tears.

But childhood passes in an hour,
As perfume from a faded flower;
The joyous voice of early glee
Flies, like the Halcyon, o'er the sea.

Enjoy your morn of early Spring;
Soon time maturer thoughts must bring;
Those hours, like flowers that interclimb,
Should not be withered ere their time.

Too soon you'll weep, as we do now,
O'er faithless friend, or broken vow,
And hopeless sorrows, which our pride
In pleasure's whirl would vainly hide.

Laugh on! unconscious of thy doom,

All innocence and opening bloom;
Laugh on! while yet thine azure eye
Mirrors the peace that reigns on high.

MRS. B. SOMERS.