

to keep me going, one for bricks, and another for mortar; while one fellow makes himself precious unpleasant, by keeping on going "puff! puff!" like a steam-engin', because I worked so fast. But I let them chaff as long as they liked; and bime-by I comes to be working alongside of my steam-engin' friend, and jest as he'd been going it a little extra, I says to him quietly:

"Ever been out o' work, matey?"

"Not to signify," he says.

"Cause if ever you are, and come down werry close to ground, you'll be as glad to handle the trowel again as I am." He didn't puff any more that day, not as I heard.

London work was something fresh to me. I used to think that I'd been about some tidy buildings down our way, but what was the tidiest on 'em to the London jobs I was put on! Jobs where the scaffolding must have cost hundreds upon hundreds of pounds more than the house, land, and everything else put together, of the biggest place I had ever worked upon. I used, too, to think I was pretty strong in the head; but I soon began to sing small here—specially when I had been up about a week and was put on at a big hotel, right up so high, that one turned quite creepy, and used to get thinking of what would be the consequences if a sharp puff of wind come and upset one's balance. I could never have believed, neither, that such a Jacob's Ladder of scaffold-poles could have been built up to stand without crushing and snapping those at the bottom like so many reeds or tobacco-pipes; but I suppose them as builds them knows best what should be done, and what they'll bear. But though I did not like it much, I took good care not to mention it to my lass, for I knew she'd have been on the sidget all day if I had told her.

By degrees I got to stand it all pretty well; and we began to feel a bit settled in our one room. Not that we much liked it, but then it was werry pleasant to go in the crowd on pay day, and draw your week's wage, good wage too, just as I had seen it when settin' in my own place at home. We still called it home, for we couldn't get to feel that we were at home in London, and Polly she said she never should, after having a little house of her own; but as there was only our two selves, we made things pretty comfortable.

The big hotel was getting on at a tremendous rate, for there was a strong body on us at work, and it used to make me think and think of the loads upon loads of stuff the hotel swallowed up, and how much more it would take before it was finished. One day when I was bricklaying up at the top—I don't know how many feet from the ground, and I never used to care to look to see, for fear of turning giddy—one day it came on to blow a regular gale, and blew at last so hard, that the scaffold shook and quivered, while, wherever there was a loose rope, it rattled and beat against the poles, as if it is impatient of being tied there, and wanted to break loose and be off.

It blew at last so werry hard, that I should have been precious glad of an excuse to get down, but I couldn't well leave my work, and the old hands didn't seem to mind it much; so I kep' at it. Whenever the wind blows now, and I shut my eyes, I can call it all back again; the creaking and quivering of the poles, the rattling of the boards, the howling and whistling of the gale as it swept savagely by, in a rage because it could not sweep us away.

A high wind is pretty hard to deal with, sometimes, on the ground; and I have seen folks pretty hard driven to turn a corner. So it may be guessed what sort of fun it is right up on a spidery scaffold, where a man is expected to work with both hands, and hold on by nothing, and that, too, where a single step backwards would be—there, it's a thing as allus makes me nervous to talk about.

It was getting to be somewhere about half-past three, and I was working hard, so as to keep from thinking about the storm, when all at once I happened to turn my head, and see that the men was a-scuffling down the ladders as hard as they could go. And then, before I had time to think, there was a loud crash, and a large piece

of the scaffolding gave way, and swept with it poles, boards, and bricks, right into the open space below.

I leaped up at a pole which projected from the roof above me, just above my head, caught it, and hung suspended, just as the boards upon which I stood but an instant before gave way, and fell on to the next stage, some twenty feet below. Tightly clasping the rough fir pole, I clung for life.

Think? I did think. I thought hundreds of things in a few seconds, as I shut my eyes and began to pray, for I felt as I could not hold on long, and I knew as I should fall first on the stage below, when the boards would either give way, or shoot me off again with a spring, and then I knew there would be a crowd round something upon the ground, and the police coming with a stretcher.

"Creep out, mate, and come down the rope," cried a voice from below. I turned my head, so that I could just see that the pole I was hanging to had a block at the hand, through which ran a rope for drawing light things up and down to the scaffold. For an instant I dared not move; then, raising myself, I went hand over hand towards the pulley, and in another instant I should have grasped it, when I heard a rushing sound, and the creaking of a wheel, as the rope went spinning through, and was gone: the weight of the longer side having dragged the other through. As I hung, I distinctly heard it fall, perhaps a hundred and fifty feet.

As the rope fell, and I hung there, I could hear a regular shriek from those below; but nobody stirred to my assistance, for I was beyond help then; but I seemed to grow stronger with the danger, though my arms felt as if they were being wrenched out of their sockets, and my nerves as if they were torn with hot irons. Sobbing for breath, I crept in again till I was over the stage first; then close into the face of the building; and there I hung. Once I tried to get some hold with my feet, but the smooth bricks let my toes slip over them directly. Then I tried to get a leg over the pole, so as to climb up and sit there; but the time was gone by for that. I had hung too long, and was now growing weaker every moment.

I can't describe what I felt. All I know is, that it was horrible, and that long afterwards I used to jump up in bed with a scream; for so sure as I was a little out o' sorts, came a dream of hanging to that scaffold-pole, expecting every moment to be one's last.

I can't say, either, how long I hung; but feeling at length that I was going, I made one last try for it. I thought of my poor lass, and seemed to see her a-looking at me in a widder's cap; and then I clenched my teeth hard, and tried to get on to where the end of the pole was fastened. I got one hand over the hard bricks, and hooked my fingers, and held on: then I got the other hand over, and tried to climb up, as a cheer from below encouraged me; but my feet and knees slipped over the smooth bricks, and in spite of every effort they hung down straight at last, and I felt a sharp quiver run through me as slowly, slowly, my hands opened, my fingers straightened, and, with eyes blinded and blood-shot, I fell.

Fell what seemed to be an enormous distance, though it was only to the next stage, where boards, bricks, and tools, skaken by the concussion, went with a crash below. The deal planks upon which I lay, still kep' in their places, but with their ends jolted so near the edge that it seemed to me that the least motion on my part would make them slip, and send me off again. I was too exhausted and frightened to move, and lay there for some time, not knowing whether I was much hurt or not. The first thing as recalled me to myself was the voice of a man who came up a ladder close at hand; and I could see that he had a rope and pulley with him, which he soon had hooked on to the ladder.

"Hold on, mate," he says. "If I throw you the end of the rope, can you tie it round you?"

"I'll try," I says. So he makes a noose, and pulling enough rope through the block, he shies it to me, but it wasn't far enough. So he tries

again and again, and at last I manages to ketch hold on it. But now, as soon as I tried to move, it seemed as if something stabbed me in the side, and, what was more, the least thing, would, I found, send the boards down, and of course me with them.

"Tell them to hold tight by the rope," says I; and he passed the word, while I got both arms through the noose, and told him to tighten it, which he did by pulling, for I could not have got it over my head without making the boards slip.

"Now then," he says, "are you ready?"

"All right," I says, faintly, for I felt as if everything was a-swimming round me; but I heard him give a signal, and felt the snatch of the rope as it cut into my arms above the elbows, and then I swang backwards and forwards in the air; while, with a crash, away went the boards upon which I had been a-lying.

I couldn't see any more, nor hear any more, for I seemed to be sent to sleep; but I suppose I was lowered down and took to the hospital, where they put my broken ribs to rights in no time, and it wasn't so werry long before I was at work once more; though it took a precious while before I could get on to a high scaffold again without feeling creepy and slivery; but, you know, "use is second nature."

Polly showed me the stocking t'other day, and I must say it has improved wonderful, for wages keep good, and work's plenty; and as for those chaps who organise the strikes, it strikes me they don't know what being out of work is like. But, along o' that stocking, one feels tempted very much to go down in the country again, but don't like to, for fear o' things not turning out well; and Polly says, "Let well alone, Bill." So I keeps on, werry-well satisfied, and werry comfortable.

A CASE OF REAL DISTRESS.

THE cattle plague is not a pleasant subject for an article in a pleasant magazine; and the Editor is very wise in keeping it excluded from his columns, says an English writer.

Still I wish to say what happened to me lately through the plague, and it really was no joke, as I think, it will be granted.

For the benefit of his health, the other day I went to see a country friend of mine, whose brains required enlivening by my sprightly London small-talk. His reason for my visit was that I looked seedy, and required fresh air and quiet, which latter in his neighbour-hood is certainly abundant.

"Come and stay a week with us, and we'll soon set you up, and make quite a new man of you."

This was how he phrased his friendly invitation: and I mentally replied that, as an act of purest charity, I would tear myself away from London for a week, and devote my wits to keeping him from snoring after dinner.

The artful fellow did not tell me, when he wrote, that the district where he lived had been especially infected, and that in consequence he drank his tea and coffee without cream, and let neither milk, nor beef, nor butter be seen upon his table. Now, like our Yankee cousin, I am vastly fond of "cowjuice," and I never have been able to acquire the Russian taste for tea with lemon sprinkled in it. Milk or cream of some sort is essential to my comfort, and in London I have never any trouble in procuring it. All throughout last summer, when the cows were at their worst, I had abundant cream for breakfast, and I never dreamed of asking if it were deleterious. One learns in London not to be too nice about one's food; and I should about as soon have analysed a sausage at a chop-house, as have thought of ascertaining if the sediment I noticed at the bottom of my creamjug were cow-born or calcareous.

I discovered these privations the first evening of my visit, for, as I had forgotten to say when I was coming, I found upon arrival that my friend, his wife, and daughters had all gone out to dinner. "The childing," said the servant, "were agoing to hev their tea," which I took as a broad hint that it was no use asking cook to serve a