

## THE SPIRIT OF INDUSTRY.

A TALE OF HUMBLE LIFE.

*Concluded.*

The appearance of a public-house at some little distance on the road at last cheered him; for though he had no means of procuring a meal, yet there was a bench at the door, and a pump close by and these were something to a weary traveller. He accordingly sat down on the bench, and waited till a team of waggon horses that were getting some hay and water should move away, for his turn to drink. As he was listlessly watching them, he was roused by hearing a rough voice exclaim, "If that ben't Tom Rayland: why, my man, what brings you here?" And, looking up, he saw that he was accosted by the driver of the waggon, a man who had often been on different errands at his father's shop, and for whom he had often performed little acts of neighbourliness—such as holding his horses, opening a gate, and various such services, which Tom, being an obliging lad, was always on the alert to perform.

Tom, however, would rather not meet his acquaintance at this moment. His heart was too full for mere passing talk, and he felt in no mood to cope with the full flow of mirth that usually attended the carrier. But Will Matthews was one who was both merry and wise, and could always suit himself to his company; and a glance at poor Tom's dejected countenance told him in an instant that this was no time for the gibe and the joke. "How is this, Tom?" said he with a softened voice, and sitting down by him on the bench; "why are you here alone, and so dull? Nothing has happened at home, I hope." "All's well at home, I believe," answered the little hero. "But all is not well with you; I'm sure I see something is amiss. Come, my lad, you and I have known each other long: so you may as well tell me what it is." "It is that I can't stay at home any longer; and I am going to seek work somewhere else." Will's eyes flashed with indignation. "Your father has not turned you out, I hope—you so weakly and so lame!" "Oh! no, no," said Tom; "don't think such a thing of him. But he is getting into years, and is not so strong as he was. And mother, too, works till I cannot bear to see her. So I thought if I was away, there would be one less to provide for, and one less to work for: and so I am

going to Norwich." "And did your father and mother know you were going away?" (Tom turning away his face to hide the starting tears,) "No I did not know which way to bid'em good bye; so I thought I'd best come off and say nothing." "And what are you to do when you get to Norwich?" "Seek for some work. I've learned how to make shoes, and am a pretty good hand."

"Have you any friends there?" "No." "And any money?" "Not yet; but Joe is to send me five shillings to-morrow." "And what is to become of you to-night? Come—go home, go home, you foolish lad!" "I can't go home to see my father and mother toiling for me, and I doing nothing: I have been a burden to them long enough. I will never go home till I can earn my living."

"Well," said Will, after a pause, "I'm not very fond of young folks taking fancies into their heads, and leaving their homes all in a tantivy; but, as for you I believe you mean for the best, and what is done from a good motive, God, we may hope, will prosper. So I'll tell you what I'll do for you: I have a brother a shoemaker at Norwich, Jacob Matthews by name; you shall go to him from me, and tell him I've sent you; and he perhaps may help you to a place. At any rate, you may say I wish he would take charge of you till Saturday, when I shall be there myself—but may be I'd better write a bit of a letter."

So saying, he stepped into the house and having written his dispatch, gave it to Tom, telling him to go into the kitchen and get some bread and cheese for that he looked as white as a sheet; then putting a shilling into his hand, he smacked his whip, and he and his horses set off on too full a trot to be overtaken by Tom's overflowing thanks for this unexpected and very seasonable kindness.

Having refreshed himself with a comfortable meal our hero resumed his march with fresh strength and spirits. He was no longer a desolate wanderer not knowing where to go: he was like the dove, that had found dry ground amidst the world of waters. But still, though hope will cheer, hope will not do every thing and it could not lessen the six long miles that yet remained to be toiled through ere he could reach Norwich. But his good fortune again prevailed. A return chaise-driver who had been resting him-

self at the public-house, and had seen something of the scene between Tom and the carrier, overtook him when he had accomplished about half the distance, and compassionating his halting gait and wearied air, invited him to take a seat on the dickey. This was a great help to poor Tom; and happily the postboy knew also where Jacob Matthews lived, and set him down at the nearest point to his house. Jacob and his wife looked rather grave, as might have been expected, at the stranger, thus, as it were, dropped from the skies, and claiming their hospitality. But as Saturday was not far off, and their visitor had a good look about him, they agreed to take him in till William should come.

And now, our friend being thus established in comfortable lodgings for the night, we will go back to the disconsolate family at home. Joe's return brought no satisfaction; on the contrary, the thought of lame Tom alone at Norwich, without a friend and without a farthing of money sank every heart. The mother's only comfort was, that he had always been such a good lad. Still this could not reconcile her to his absence; the house seemed dull and sad without Tom, whose cheerfulness had generally been the life of the family circle. His vacant place—his little shelf of treasured books—the ballad he had last nailed against the wall—the slate on which he had cast up the account of what he had expected would be his year's earning—all, all, were renewals of sad recollection and of grief.

At last the sorrowing parents and their family went to bed. Dick who had been out at work all day, had only heard of Tom's absence when he returned at night and could not close his eyes for thinking of him. "What's the use," at last he said to himself, "of tossing and tumbling about here, a-fretting about the lad? I had better get up, and go and see after him. It is now two o'clock; I can walk to Norwich in four hours, stay two hours there and be back here by twelve, and shall lose only half a day: at any rate, better lose a whole day than lie here, and not know what has become of him." To decide and to act were one and the same thing to Dick; and in less time than it has taken me to write it he was up, dressed, and had quietly quitted the house, without disturbing any one but Joe, to whom he imparted his intention, that