

Charlie looked steadily in the honest, pale, careworn face of his companion for a few seconds without speaking. Poverty, it is said, brings together strange bed-fellows. Not less, perhaps, does it lead to unlikely confidants. Under a sudden impulse our hero revealed to poor Zook the cause of his being there—concealing nothing except names.

"You 'll 'scuse me, sir," said the little man, after the narrative was finished, "but I think you've gone on summat of a wild-goose chase, for your man may never have come so low as to seek shelter in sitch places."

"Possibly, Zook; but he was penniless, and this, or the work-house, seemed to me the natural place to look for him in."

"Ave you bin to the work-'ouses, sir?"

"Yes—at least to all in this neighbourhood."

"What! in that toggery?" asked the little man, with a grin.

"Not exactly, Zook, I can change my shell like the hermit crabs."

"Well, sir, it's my opinion that you may go on till doomsday on this scent an' find nuthin'; but there's a old 'ooman as I knows on that might be able to 'elp you. Mind I don't say she could, but she *might*. Moreover, if she can she will."

"How?" asked Charlie, somewhat amused by the earnestness of his little friend.

"Why, this way. She's a good old soul who lost