

"Say not so," said Mr. Temple, "remember who is father of the fatherless."

"I know, I know," said Lee; "but they *must* live on as factory slaves, no one will countenance them now, and then the evil example will take effect, and all my doing!"

Mr. Temple took some pains to bring him into a better frame of mind, and hinted the intention of his old neighbours to assist him if he should recover, and be able to maintain his family in the country.

"God reward all those who pity us," said Lee, "but I shall not long want assistance; I feel more feeble every day, and my complaints have been too long neglected to be cured now. But the children, Sir, if I could see them out of this vile town, and getting an honest living elsewhere, I should die in peace."

"How did it happen," said Mr. Temple, "that you left Bonfield against the advice of your wife and friends? Who tempted you to come here?"

"The love of gain, Sir, first led me astray, and I was not content with going on quietly as my neighbours did, and I was dissatisfied with my small earnings. I worked as a labourer many years with farmer Jones, and I had a cottage from him, with a small field, at a moderate rent; and as my poor wife had four children to make and mend for, besides the care of the cow and the pig, she could do no more, so that I had to garden, to get up my hay, my potato crop, and to gather my garden fruit, after I got home from the farm: and, fool that I was, I thought money would come in faster if I gave up working at Mr. Jones'; so I laid out a little sum I had in the savings bank, and bought a cart and horse and turned carrier, though there were two others in the village; and I soon found to my cost that I had but a small share of the business; and after a year's trial I began to repent of the change I had made. One day that I had come from Ledston with a load of apples, I was sitting in the public-house, complaining of the low prices I had got for my fruit, when a decent-looking man took up the subject, and asked me many questions and seemed so interested in my concerns, I thought him all at once a friend, and told him how hard I worked for a living; and he strongly advised me to come to Ledston, and work in a factory, where with my wife and four children, who would every day be more useful, and earn higher wages, I should not only live, but lay by money, if I chose to work every day; and so smooth was this man's tongue, (who I afterwards heard was paid for enticing country folks to come to the factories,) that I promised to bring my family at once, and he offered to get me into Mr. Burton's

mill, and I went home quite delighted with my prospects. When I told my wife of my plan, she was stunned, and would hardly believe me in earnest, but I soon told her I was determined on it; and O how she cried that night, and said that her children would be lost creatures, soul and body; but I was hardened, and said she did not consider how I worked like a slave, and was no better, but getting worse in the world; so in a few weeks I gave up all, and came to this town with a sum which enabled me to take a house in a tolerably airy situation, and furnish it decently; and as wages were that year very high, and we all got employment, I thought all my dreams of independence in old age were to be realized; but the next year wages gradually lowered, and my wife fell into bad health after her confinement of a child, which was soon carried to the grave: and the children lost their spirits, and came home tired and worn out, and ready for bed before the night set in. Susan went through the toilsome tasks of scavenger and piecener, but being a strong girl, she was soon advanced to better work: not so my poor delicate Mary, who now lies there, she suffered from the employment given to the younger children, and her bones became soft, her feet swollen, her memory failed, and she came home above a year ago to droop and die, another martyr to the factory system. I have seen her daily dying by inches, sir, and prayed for her release; for she was so patient and submissive under her sufferings, that I feel assured she has joined her mother in heaven. O that I was as fit for the awful change!"

Never had Mr. Temple seen distress realised in more vivid colours than in this poor wretch: the small window just gave light enough to display the wretchedness of extreme poverty; the sick man lay upon a thin straw mattress, with a single blanket and rug over him; the floor was sunk below the street; the walls green with damp, a few cinders burned on the hearth, a small table and two stools were the only articles of moveable furniture, and yet there was an air of cleanliness apparent in the little room.

Mr. Temple used all his efforts to speak comfort to the heart of the afflicted man, and promised something should be done both for him and his children; supposing they were willing to leave Ledston.

"Will you, Sir, not one of my children but would bless God for such a deliverance; and I know my poor lads would go to sea, but their wages are all now I have to live on; and they are good boys, and I don't doubt, if in any other way of earning their bread, they would do no discredit to their master, thanks to the pious counsels of their poor mother; and I do believe her prayers