

"What do you want, Billy?" asked the young man soothingly.

"Some bread!" said Billy, bursting into tears, "and Sammy, he wants some too;" and here Mrs. Anderson observed that the woman rocked herself and the infant which she had hushed to sleep, backwards and forwards, and that tears, the bitter scalding tears of a heart writhing in its own anguish, rolled down her emaciated countenance.

"How is this?" asked the young man tremulously, and looking first at the children and then at the woman,—"Is this true?" But the woman rocked herself as before, and returned no answer.

"Poor Sammy!" said the young man, patting the younger boy on the head, "have you had no bread, then, since dinner?"

"They have had nothing to-day!" said the mother in the same unearthly tone, and giving way to a torrent of tears; "I could not tell you, but my heart was well nigh bursting, when I saw how patiently they bore your labouring to teach them, when I knew that one crust of bread was more to them than all the learning in the world."

"Good God!" exclaimed the young man, "I was not aware; but what is the use of my saying that, I cannot help you, I cannot assist you! What I said was the truth, I spent my last penny to-night. Tomorrow I shall receive a little; but my wife knows of every penny. But surely the sovereign which the gentleman gave me for you, a fortnight ago, is not all gone yet?"

"I deceived you there, too!" answered the woman hoarsely; "by some means the landlord heard of it; and as he never offered to molest me when I had no money, it was but just he should be paid when I had. Eighteen shillings was his due, and we have eked out the other two shillings till last night. It is truth! I am starving to death, with my children around me, and I cannot tell a lie."

"God's will be done!" exclaimed the young man, at length awaking from the stupor of amazement into which this intelligence had thrown him; "there seems indeed no help for it!"

"There is! there is!" said, or rather screamed, Mrs. Anderson, bursting into the room, followed by her husband, her fine face flooded with tears, and every look testifying that her feelings were excited to the highest pitch. "Here," she said, laying a purse and a card on the stool, "provide whatever is necessary for yourself and hungry babes—call on me to-morrow, and I will see that you are provided for in an honest and creditable way. That card is my direction. Young man, Mr. Anderson shall take care that your humane attention to this poor widow and her orphan children does not go unrewarded. No thanks! we require none!" and, thus saying, the benevolent lady took her husband by the arm, and abruptly left the place, apparently anxious to escape the outpouring of gratitude which she knew would follow; but the mingled prayers and blessings of the unfortunate people she had so opportunely relieved, sounded in her ears as she hastened down the alley, and fell upon her spirit, more grateful and more soothing, than all the luxury and ostentation which wealth could have bestowed.

We need scarcely tell our readers that Mr. Anderson was highly delighted at the line of conduct his wife had adopted. He pressed her hand to his lips, as they threaded one of the narrow passages before mentioned, and whispered in her ear, "I always loved you, Charlotte, but now I venerate!"

"Nay, nay," answered Mrs. Anderson, laughing, "continue to love me; it will be time enough to venerate when I am grown old and venerable. But, by the bye, there is one thing I was going to mention. How comes it that the Society of Odd Fellows neglect the widow and orphans of their body?"

"He was not one of their body—the husband of the woman was not an Odd Fellow. But you wrong them even there. She has obtained relief from the Order; but it was impossible for them to do much. Having widows and orphans of their own to relieve, it would be as unjust to neglect them for others, as it would be absurd to suppose that a father would neglect his own children to support the family of a person who had no claim upon him."

"And this poor young fellow," asked Mrs. Anderson, "contentedly spent his evening, and the few pence he could spare from his hard earnings, to instruct the children of his deceased friend?—and are these the principles of Odd Fellowship?"

"If you may judge the principles by the practice, they are," answered Mr. Anderson, "and I fancy, that, after all, that is the surest criterion to go by."

"Then I shouldn't care, my dear," replied the lady, "if you became an Odd Fellow yourself."

"That, my dear," answered Mr. Anderson, smiling, "is past praying for now—I have been an Odd Fellow some time."

"And you never told me," said the lady, bridling up a little, "what an Odd Fellow was before."

"I have not told you, now, my dear," answered Mr. Anderson. "I have shown you what an Odd Fellow is. Does the sample please you?"

"So well, my dear," returned Mrs. A., stepping into, and throwing herself back in her carriage, "that I should like to be one myself, Mr. A.; do you think you can get me made an Odd Fellow? You know, my dear, when I set my mind upon anything, I generally——"

How Mr. Anderson contrived to evade this difficulty, it is not our province to determine; but as we never, by any chance, heard of the initiation of the lady, we presume he found himself adequate to the task. It was a difficult one we own;—but what is impossible to an Odd Fellow?

#### IMPROVEMENT OF THE LABOURING CLASSES.

It is our firm conviction that no panacea is to be found for the privations and sufferings of the working classes, in any legislative measure or combination of measures. Legislation may assist, but it can only assist. Their physical improvement can be but gradual, and every step will be gained with difficulty. We do not believe that their condition will ever be materially improved by a poor-law or a ten-hours' bill, or any other eleemosynary or protective system, which assumes that the free workman is still, virtually, in a servile state; and that he is to be preserved against the action of competition by regulations conceived in the spirit of the Slave Codes. We look to the improved education—intellectual, religious, and moral—of the working classes; to the formation of better habits; and to the diffusion among them of sounder opinions—for the principal causes of their economical amelioration. \* \* \* \* \* In our opinion, the true practical wisdom with respect to legislation for the labouring classes of this country at the present time, lies in a clear recognition of the necessity of working out the practical consequences of their *free condition*; and in seeking to prepare them for a time when all the vestiges of a servile state may be obliterated from our law and our practice. The object of our legislature ought to be to make the working man truly independent, and capable of acting and providing for himself, without being placed in the tutelage of the State and the upper classes of society. At the same time, while this object ought to be kept steadily in view, the utmost caution should be observed in its pursuit: it ought never to be forgotten, that we cannot change the moral and intellectual condition of the grown-up generation; and that however unwise it may be to sacrifice the future to the present, it is not always safe to sacrifice the present to the future.—*Edinburgh Review.*