

"Oh yes, my dear; I was going to explain how I took them to be monks. You know, my dear, they are called Odd Fellows,—and you know, too, that monks are vowed to celibacy;—very well!—now, any man that's vowed to celibacy must be a single man, and every single man an odd man, and consequently every monk must be an odd man. But a number of odd men living together in fellowship, must be Odd Fellows; and therefore I hope you'll allow that monks are Odd Fellows. Very well. Now, my dear, all this allowed, there is but one conclusion more to come at, and that is, that if all monks are Odd Fellows, of course, all Odd Fellows must be monks."

"Capital! capital!" shouted Mr. Anderson, "most logically argued! I must confess you have surprised me, Mrs. A.; I never conceived from your general method of argument, that I had such a treasure of unexplored wisdom in you. If Ptolemy had had the good fortune to have possessed you for a wife, he would never have asked the Greek geometer for 'a shorter path to science.' You would have levelled all before you, I warrant you."

"Really, my dear," returned his good lady, simpering, "you quite overpower me with your compliments. But I must confess that there was one thing that puzzled me—that was, their attending our church."

"True, my dear, very true! There certainly was a slight anomaly there; but it is the province of an acute and sound reasoner to reconcile contradictions; and no one, who knows you, my dear, would for one moment doubt, but that you would be perfectly *au fait* at anything in the shape of a contradiction. But you have asked me what an Odd Fellow is, and if you will allow me, I will take you this evening, where, being an eye-witness, you shall yourself judge of what material one Odd Fellow is, at least, composed."

To this proposition Mrs. Anderson readily assented, and the carriage was ordered to be at the door at six precisely, about which time, true to his promise, he handed her into it, enveloped in velvet and furs, and for some time they proceeded in silence.

This state of things was not, however, likely to last long with Mrs. Anderson, and accordingly after an, for her, unusual taciturnity, she commenced with, "You are very silent, Mr. A., pray what are you thinking of, now?"

"I was thinking," replied that gentleman, "that Fortune was truly represented blind. I wonder, in the course of our short passage through these crowded streets, how many poor wretched beings we have passed, footsore and weary, who would almost give the world for a sound pair of shoes to protect them from the wet which gushes with every step, perhaps ankle high, saturating the miserable relics of stockings which they wear; while we, who possess those comforts, and have not even the necessity to walk at all, can have our carriage to roll on in, and splash the hungry beggar as we pass."

"'Tis too true!" replied Mrs. Anderson, sighing, "but"—She was interrupted by the sudden stopping of the carriage. "Bless my soul!" she exclaimed, "we have soon come to our journey's end."

"We have not yet come to our journey's end," answered her husband, as he handed her from the carriage, "but it is necessary that we should walk the rest of the way; for the sight of a carriage in the street to which I am going to lead you, would entirely destroy the object of our visit. Let me beg of you now to be silent."

Mrs. Anderson promised compliance, and they accordingly threaded their way through several lanes and narrow streets, till at last they turned into an alley, still more unpromising in its appearance than any they had even yet passed through. They had not proceeded far when Mr. Anderson stopped, looked round, as if trying to discover in the murky gloom which per-

vaded the atmosphere around, whether they were watched, and then suddenly entered a dark and yawning passage, along which he groped his way, till he had turned an angle, and then once more stopped.

"We have arrived at our destination!" he whispered. "Do you see that ray of light which proceeds from that window a little further on? Go! look through it! and receive a lesson which should make human pride ashamed."

Mrs. Anderson did as she was bid, and her humanity received a severe shock from the unexampled misery of the scene before her. The room into which she looked was scarcely twelve feet square, and was entirely divested of furniture, with the exception of a few wooden stools of the commonest and most homely description.

There was no vestige of a bed; but a bundle of straw in one corner told plainly that still the room was used for a sleeping apartment. There was no fire in the grate, and a candle of the thinnest description, placed in what appeared to be a piece of hardened clay, on one of the stools, threw its rays feebly across the apartments, as if, in humanity, trying to hide the wretchedness of the place from its still more wretched inhabitants.

A young woman, pale, squalid, and unhealthy, though bearing the marks of having possessed some personal attractions, sat by the fire-place, as if trying to extract warmth from the senseless grate, though cold, (cold as the heart of a wealthy man to his suffering brother,) and labouring to still the wailing of an infant, apparently but a few months old. The other occupants of the room were a decently-dressed, and respectable-looking young man, and two children, the elder of whom could not have reached the age of six years, and they were as dirty, as ragged, and as wretched in appearance as the woman.

"Who are these unfortunate people?" asked Mrs. Anderson in a whisper, but with a tremulousness of tone which did not escape her husband, and which gratified him exceedingly.

"The husband of the woman," answered Mr. Anderson in the same guarded tone, "died about twelve months ago, leaving his widow and his helpless family,—all, alas! not then born,—to the mercy of the world, and you may see yourself what mercy the world has shown them."

"God help them!" almost involuntarily responded Mrs. Anderson.

"He will! He has!" answered her husband fervently, though still cautiously confining the sound of his voice, "He has sent us here to help them."

"And the young man?" whispered Mrs. Anderson.

"He was a friend of the deceased husband, and, as you may perceive, is now endeavouring to instruct his children."

"And he is, I presume, an Odd Fellow?"

"Hush!" whispered Mr. Anderson, "be silent! or they will hear us."

At this juncture, the young man left off his task, and exclaimed, patting the elder boy on the head,— "Well done, Billy! you are a capital boy to-night. Do you know, I was feeling in my waistcoat pocket this afternoon, which has a hole in it, and my finger slipping down into the lining, I discovered a penny there, so as I came along, I bought you a little book, and there it is."

"I don't want a book!" answered the child a little sullenly, "I want—"

"Billy!" said the mother, in a sepulchral hoarseness of voice, which made Mrs. Anderson's flesh creep, and the child stopped immediately.

"Not want a book, Billy?" said the young man, "Havn't I often told you, that if you can only learn your book, you never need want."

"But I have learnt my book, and I do want," said the boy, looking at his mother, as though half afraid.