

Temple said, "Our first care must be to inquire of the farmers the character of William Lee, and if we find him honest, as well as unfortunate, something may be done to draw his poor children out of the state of temptation to evil ways, in which they have been so unhappily placed;" and, accompanied by Mrs. Temple, he that evening paid a visit to Farmer Jones, to whom he related the history of Lee, as he had it from his daughter.

"O, Sir," said Jones, "if William Lee had but been content to go on quietly in this village, I never knew a man more likely to raise a family respectably than he was, what with his own exertions and those of his wife, who was an example for cottagers' wives; and she brought up her children so well, they were the civillest, neatest, and cleanest that ever went to the school, and we all looked for good servants amongst them; but some foolish stories, set about by cunning men, of fortunes being made in a quick way in the factories, and wages being at that time high, and three of his children at an age to get employment, he rejected the advice of his poor wife, who was sadly set against the factories, and took his whole family to Ledston; and after a few months, wages lowered, his wife fell into bad health, and died a few months since, and I have heard nothing of him lately; for you see, Sir, we all thought him so foolish, that he lost all his old friends by the change, and as for his children, why I suppose they are like others that work in the factories, good for nothing out of them."

"I hope not," said Mr. Temple; "surely good examples at home have kept them from contamination."

"O, Sir, you don't know the factories as well as I do; you have not lived all your life so near Ledston as I have done; I am convinced that for the most part all those who work in them are destroyed soul and body, and many honest labourers in all the villages hereabouts, have rued the day they were enticed to enter them. Can any wages pay a man for fifteen or sixteen hours of incessant labour in hot unwholesome rooms? And when the hour of rest comes, he spends his nights in some dirty close lane, where the breath of heaven never enters, and where the sun never shines. I say, Sir, human nature cannot stand it, and the churchyards are filled with the victims; strong men are laid low before they have seen half their days; as for women and children, they die by hundreds. O! it is a shameful slavery in a free land! thousands in that town, Mr. Temple, are as badly off as William Lee; but there is no redress; the task-master will make money, and he must have slaves, and the slaves must have bread, and so they toil on till death releases them."

I am sorry for poor Lee," said Jones, "and would do a little to help him for old acquaintance sake, but you see, Sir, no one likes to take a servant into their house who has been in a factory, for fear of their corrupting their fellow-servants; 'one black sheep mars the whole flock;' and we have found it so."

"I regret," said Mr. Temple, "to hear such an account of the demoralisation of the people compelled to work in masses; to youth it is particularly injurious. 'Evil communication does indeed corrupt good manners.' I have made the round of one mill since I came to Bonfield, and I was shocked at the bold and reckless appearance of the operatives, young and old, and not one happy face did I see amongst them."

"Happy face, Sir! that is a sight most rare in Ledston, and though I live so near, I never went over but one factory in my life; why the sight of the pale meagre, decrepid, melancholy looking children, wasting away to fill an early grave, was enough for me: I hastened home to gladden my eyes with our village children playing on the green, full of noisy mirth suitable to their age; but when you have lived longer in this country, Mr. Temple, you will learn what a curse these factories are to this country, and I say they will be the ruin of it before this century is past and gone. The masters have much to answer for, and the day will come when gold will cease to dazzle the eyes, and then they must leave their possessions behind them: it is not for such as me to judge, but I can't help thinking that when death is near, the remembrances of tyranny to their fellow-creatures will come with force, and disturb the last moments of those who have used it."

"No doubt," said Mr. Temple, "it is a melancholy thought, and happy are those who have not been tempted in the search for riches, for we know not our own strength."

"Very true, Sir; and as to Lee and his family, if any thing can be done for them, I am one to assist, and I will speak to others of his old neighbours on the subject."

"Thank you, Mr. Jones, I feel a great wish, if possible, to draw the young people at least from such bad examples, and I shall go to Ledston to-morrow to make further enquiries about them."

The next day Mr. Temple was early at Ledston, and introduced himself to Mr. Selwyn, being the most likely person to know the real circumstances of Lee and his family. The latter gentleman gave a good account of the deluded man, and was loud in praise of his exemplary wife, who exerted herself to the utmost to keep her children from evil contamination, or rather by good words to warn them of the fruits of it hereafter; but