

neck, and tied my pocket-book to the D's of the saddle. I pulled my rings off my fingers, and put them in my pocket—I had heard of wreckers cutting off the fingers of drowned men—and then was on the point of dashing forward at random, when some inner feeling made me cast another steady glance all round. At that moment, just behind me, something sparkled twice, and disappeared, and then reappearing, shone faintly, but so steadily, that there could be no doubt it was a light on the Cheshire shore. In an instant, my horse's head was turned round. I had gathered him together, dug in the spurs, and crying from the bottom of my heart, "Thank God!" in the same moment, not profanely, but with a horse-man's instinct, shouting encouragingly, and dashed away toward the light. It was a hard fight; the ground seemed melting from under us—now struggling through soft sand, now splashing over hard, now swimming (that was easy), and now and again leaping and half falling, but never losing hold of my horse or sight of the beacon; we forced through every obstacle, until at length the water grew shallower and shallower; we reached the sand, and, passing the sand, rattled over the shingle of high-water mark—and I was saved! But I did not, could not stop; up the loose shingles I pressed on to the light that had saved me. I could not rest one instant, even for thanksgiving, until I knew to what providential circumstance I owed my safety. I drew up at a fisherman's hut of the humblest kind, built on the highest part of the shore, full two miles from Parkgate; a light, which seemed faint when close to it, twinkled from a small latticed window. I threw myself from my horse, and knocked loudly at the door, and as I knocked, fumbled with one hand in my soaked pocket for my purse. Twice I knocked again, and the door, which was unhasped, flew open. A woman, weeping bitterly, rose at this rude summons; and at the same moment I saw on the table the small coffin of a young child, with a rushlight burning at either end. I owed my life to death!

THE LABOURER'S READING-ROOM.

THE other day we talked about "Whole Hogs," or sound ideas which tend to become rotten, since they have been detached from their true place in the body politic. What we then said of social panaceas, may be said of every word, deed, or thought, of which a man is capable. Man, in himself, no less than in society, is altogether complex; and an isolated fragment of him, taken from within or from without, conveys no truth with any certainty; it is little better than a syllable or word extracted from a sentence, with the context left behind. We are about to show what has been done by a few working men who act upon the principle of self-reliance; but, at the outset, we must guard ourselves

and them against a common source of misconception. Self-reliance is not self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency is the "Whole Hog" of self-reliance, and is a state of mind thoroughly swinish.

In the last number of the "Law Review," at the close of a letter from Lord Brougham to Lord Denman upon the subject of Law Reform, there occurs the following passage:—

"You may remember that nearly a quarter of a century ago, with our lamented friend Dr. Birkbeck, we experienced the difficulty of making the Mechanics' Institutes, which he had founded, available to the class of ordinary workmen and their families. Under the advice and with the aid of his worthy successor in these good works, Dr. Elliott, of Carlisle, this most important step has been taken, and I feel assured with success. The men who live by weekly wages have established Reading-rooms, *under their own exclusive management*. That this plan afforded the only means of keeping such institutions to their true object—the improvement of the humbler classes, we never doubted; indeed, we declared it, once and again, both at meetings and in publications. But at length the work is actually done, and it is delightful to see it flourish; for it must of necessity spread far and wide through the country, and produce the most blessed fruits."

The good work is indeed begun; most happily begun, in the right spirit. Hitherto, however, it had been an experiment made in a corner, and known only to a few. If it, really, soon spread its example far and wide through the country, it will be again Lord Brougham whom the public has to thank for one—we trust far from the last—of a long series of aids to the substantial well-being of society.

The Reading-room to which Lord Brougham alludes, and of which we intend presently to give the history, was founded on the humblest scale by a few members of the poorest class of operatives, handloom-weavers. It has been managed exclusively by workmen for themselves; every member of its governing body being, by its laws, a man receiving weekly wages for his labour. In its origin and progress, there is nothing which cannot be imitated by the working men of every town in the United Kingdom. But before we give the details of its origin and progress, let us note how requisite it is that if the working men are to have reading associations, they should be associations managed by themselves.

In 1824, Mechanics' Institutions and Apprentice Reading-rooms were begun in England, chiefly by the exertions of Dr. Birkbeck, who had, twenty-three years before, first given lectures to the artisans at Glasgow. Dr. Birkbeck may be fairly called the founder of Mechanics' Institutions; he gave also munificent assistance in money, advanced by him for the erection of an institute, and never wholly repaid. In a tract on Popular Educa-

tion, published in the same year, 1824, Lord Brougham, an assiduous fellow-labourer in Dr. Birkbeck's cause, pressed upon the attention of the working classes and their employers the extreme importance of giving to the mechanics themselves the chief control over these institutions. In this view, Dr. Birkbeck wholly coincided. So far it was well, and the work of founding these establishments for adult education went on very prosperously. But there was always reason to lament that they did not descend low enough. The Mechanics' Institutes gave education, and the Reading-rooms relaxation, as well as instruction, to a valuable class of artisans; but there were mixed with them a large proportion of clerks, shopkeepers, and small gentlemen. The artisans, in many instances, lost the control over their institution; in many instances they were themselves of a rank or in circumstances superior to the common workman. The process of transition from a true Mechanics' Institution to the species of establishment which now goes by that name, is thus described by one of the working members of the Carlisle Reading-room Committee:—

"Societies had been commenced of various kinds, and it had almost invariably happened that they had fallen out of the hands of the working men who established them, into the hands of others who took no part in their formation. They were not too proud to learn from experience. They looked at other societies, and found it had been so. Now, there was no effect without a cause, and it was a sad effect if they spent their energies and perseverance in establishing an institution of their own, and let it be taken from them. They said such a state of things should continue no longer. But not too fast, brother working men. Whose fault was it if their institution was taken from them? It was not the fault of those into whose hands it fell. The working men of John Street had established a Reading-room; and that their efforts had raised it to something like importance, was evident from the numerous assembly around him. It was not perfection, as yet, it was true; but for twenty months only, out of the pence of working men, it was really wonderful. Well, such institutions got on very quietly at first: there was nobody to interfere with them whilst in their infancy. But when they got a name, and somebody dropped in upon them with a better coat on his back than the members wore, the whisper was passed round, 'Who is that?' 'Oh! it is So-and-so,' was the reply passed back again; and the gentleman had not been three months among them till it was proposed to put him on the committee. He was put on, and did not feel very comfortable. Being brought up in a different sphere, he had not the same feelings that they had; he was rather more polished, and felt rather uncomfortable; but in the course of time a

couple of his companions got in by his influence, and, in their turn, the working men were left in a minority, and felt uncomfortable. The gentlemen appointed to look after the interests of the institution could not do it; it was only the working men themselves who knew what they wanted. Each in his own sphere knew what would suit them; and it was folly to think that those above them could know better than themselves what they wanted. At the commencement—when they were in the very cradle of existence—they made this very law. They would not allow the evil of interference to commence. * * Some persons urged that it was difficult to help the people, because they would not help themselves. And he, too, said it was impossible to help a community who would not help themselves. The more they were helped, the more they wanted help, and the more they were degraded by the energy and wealth spent upon them. Therefore, he said, they must rely upon themselves, if they wished to rise." Thus speaks a working man of the John Street Committee in Carlisle, and let us see now what these John Street Committee-men have done.

In April, 1848, when every ear was daily listening for the great tidings which that period of strange excitement was continually furnishing—in April, 1848, a few poor men, most of them handloom weavers, clubbed their wits together for the means of getting at a daily newspaper. Obviously it was found requisite that they should also club their pennies. The result was, that within the first week after the suggestion had been made, fifty persons had come forward as subscribers of a weekly penny, and a school-room had been lent to them, wherein to meet and read their papers. These men were all of the same class; they had originated their idea, and they were themselves managing its execution. Companions multiplied about them; there was formed quite a prosperous little society of men contributing their weekly pennies, and it was resolved, therefore, to attempt the formation of a permanent reading-room, and a committee was appointed to draw up a code of rules. The working man's reading-room in John Street, Botchergate, became thus one of the institutions of Carlisle, and flourished for a few months; then news became less interesting, trade also was bad, members fell off, funds declined, and the experiment would have been abandoned, but for the judicious and well-timed assistance of Dr. Elliott, and other members of the middle class. These aided the effort of the working men to help themselves, with advice, and cash, and books; their aid was fairly given, fairly taken, no abandonment of independence on the part of the workmen being asked or offered.

We pause here for a minute or two, because this is a point to which we would direct particular attention. The working man, how-

ever poor, has no claim on the charity or the compassion of the middle and upper classes. If he be an honest man, he will ask nobody to pity his condition. Class before class, we have all need to look one another boldly in the face, to render help to one another, and to return thanks for help received. We all talk politics; we all live under laws that expand from the contracted state of social barbarism, much more slowly than the nation which they are supposed to fit. Therefore we are all pinched; some in one way, some in another. We all feel that there are laws by which we are hurt and impeded; those laws we take pains to detect, and when we think we have detected them, we lift up our complaint as well as we are able. That is quite true, quite just. It is true, also, that in the old condition of society—the “good old times,” from which our legislation disconnects itself by slow degrees—the dignity of man was calculated by a very artificial standard, and much slight was put on the undignified. There remains, therefore, more than a fair proportion of the whole amount of legislative injustice allotted to the portion of the working classes. That has to be removed, as time and opportunity permit. As a class, then, the working men not only are justified in telling,—but, in duty to themselves and to their country, are required to cry out,—when they feel that they are hurt. The other classes do the same. The help that we all seek, as politicians more or less profound—most of us, it is to be feared, shallow enough—is of that kind which can be furnished by Queen, Lords, and Commons. But we must not ask the Legislature to do this, or to restrain us from doing that which we can do, or refrain from of our own free will:—The dirty sloven is at liberty to wash and dress himself without an Act of Parliament; the tavern frequenter is not parted by the Whigs or Tories from his wife and children. A wise man, whatever his station, is his own helper to the utmost of his power; and while he will ask no neighbour to do for him whatever he has strength enough to be doing for himself, he does not let his self-reliance inflate itself into self-sufficiency: where his own power really stops, he cheerfully asks aid of any one by whom it can, with reasonable convenience, be given. The worthy folks who patronise the lower orders, who dispense fountains of soup, mints of copper and small change—barterers of left-off clothes for flattery—condescend not to bless, but to demoralise the victims of their ignorant attention. Every man of us, if he would really be a man, must labour thoroughly to help himself and those whom he has chained to his own limbs as partners of his fortune, to help himself and them for ever onward to improved conditions in the world without, and in the soul within. While he does that, he must extend his help, not as an act of grace or pity, but as a thing of course, an ordinary duty, to all other striving men concerning whom he sees that he is able to be useful to

them; and more than that, without feeling ashamed, abashed, or overcome with gratitude, he must receive cheerfully all help that earnest men in the same way extend to him. In the case, for example, of the John Street Society, which we were just discussing, a body of working men formed for themselves a serious and laudable design; they did their utmost to carry it out, but when their strength proved insufficient, a few pounds from men who had more money at disposal, a few books from libraries that would not be much injured by the gift, a little aid of thought from educated men, were cordially given and as cordially received. Why not? It is a mistake to suppose that gifts like these can only flow in that direction which the parlance of society calls downward. A man of the middle class may depend for all his comfort upon half-a-dozen people whom he calls dependent on himself. There is a mutual service; but how often does it happen that the wages can bear no relative proportion to the zealous service, the goodwill, or the affection spent on the employer in return? What we all want is, perseverance, self-reliance, constant labour to improve, and a readiness on all hands to give and to receive help without flinching. This spirit actuated the promoters of the John Street Reading-room established in Carlisle; this ensured its success, and will ensure success to every similar institution which working men in other towns may labour to establish.

We will continue now our sketch of the progress of this particular institution. It should be remarked, that we do not think it is the first, and are not in a position to say that it is the best of its kind. An institution founded on the same sound principle exists at Kendal; others are in Chester and elsewhere. We happen, however, to be best acquainted with the details that concern the Carlisle Reading-rooms; and we wish, by giving details, to assist the operations of those working men who may desire to aid with their own hands in the improvement and elevation of their class. It is in their own power to emancipate themselves from the dangerous influence of a monotonous routine in life, by varying their day's employment, not only with such thoughts as books will furnish, but with the active, voluntary duties of responsible and independent men. The thought and energy employed in founding and sustaining by judicious management an institution of this kind, will be found by its promoters to be both a pleasant recreation and a healthy stimulus to all their faculties. Now, what have they actually done in John Street, Botchergate?

They began, as we said, in April, 1848, a few handloom-weavers, paying a few pennies. In July, 1851, they had one hundred and twelve members, for whom there were taken in two daily and thirteen weekly papers, besides fifteen periodicals; for whose use seven hundred and eighteen volumes were arranged on shelves, which had furnished to

the members, during the preceding year, three thousand readings at their own fireside.

Over this Reading-room and Library, it is a fundamental rule, that no man shall exert an influence by holding office or by voting, unless he be a man dependent upon weekly wages for support.

It is also a rule, that any member capable of getting and of doing work, shall be expelled if he leave his contribution for a month unpaid; but in the manly spirit which has guided the whole management of this society, it is made also a fundamental law, that any member who is out of work, through real inability to get it, or to do it, shall be entitled to continue in the enjoyment of the privileges of the institution, without payment and without responsibility.

Finally, to save the property of the society from all risk of dispersion, it is vested in the Corporation of Carlisle.

When this society had been in existence for about a year, and its members felt able to take safely one step farther in advance towards their own improvement, they determined to connect a school with the establishment for the benefit of such among themselves as were deficient in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and also for the education of their children. Able men undertook to teach, and a committee of five was appointed to attend when required, and arrange the general business of the school. The result of this effort is thus stated in a report published by the young society:—

"The attendance of the members and their sons soon became so numerous that not more than one-half could be accommodated; and it is gratifying to us to notice the fact, that many of the adults walked out of the schools in order that boys might be admitted, whilst those boys who could not by any means secure seats, were heard to whisper that they would be there an hour sooner on the following night to get a seat. In consequence of this pressure, it was resolved to establish a second school, and though the fitting-up of it, together with that of the former one, cost a considerable amount of money, the members of the institution voted it freely. * * The scholars pay a penny per week each; and with the view of procuring them school-books and slates as cheap as possible, the committee have purchased a large stock, which they retail at prime cost, to be paid for at the rate of a penny per week. The quantity thus disposed of is as follows:—Testaments, forty-eight at fourpence each; Arithmetics, sixty at seven-pence each; Slates, seventy-two at fourpence and seven-pence each; Grammars, eight at nine-pence each. The attendances have averaged fifty each night since the opening of the schools."

While speaking of schools, we may add a notice of another school in Carlisle, established by adult working men for the education of themselves, and connected with a little library.

The Duke Street Adult Evening and Sunday School was established in March, 1845. Each member pays a weekly penny, and finds his own materials for writing and arithmetic. The school is entirely under the control of a committee of its members (pupils), elected or re-elected every three months. The male pupils must not be younger than twenty-one, the females not younger than sixteen. There are seventy men and forty-nine women in attendance. The men attend on two evenings in the week for instruction, the women on two other evenings; on the other three evenings the rooms are open for the use of the young men who go thither to read. Upwards of fifty applicants for admission to this school are now on the list waiting for their turn. The little library contains one hundred and fifty volumes, of which one hundred are in constant circulation; three London weekly papers, and the local prints, are also taken in.

This is what working men can do; and there is no duke who can be made, by virtue of his title, more noble than the labourer who thus strives in his own behalf. He need not mind the good old gentleman who informs him that he ought to touch his hat and be respectful to his betters. The good old gentleman who has let the world outrun him, and made little effort to keep pace therewith, might much more properly uncover the head to him. The best minds claim him as their kindred, and the help of others ever presses upon him who helps himself.

Two or three men, however poor, if they will have faith in the force of a right heart and a stout will, may gather to their council other poor mechanics like themselves; and there is no town in which, according to its size, one or a dozen true Mechanics' Institutions may not rise to occupy the place which Dr. Birkbeck's institutes were meant to fill, but which they have insensibly vacated. The combined labour of men scattered through the country, working each with firm determination in his little corner, is sufficient to produce a whole result larger than we dare picture in the present day. The elevation of a whole class, by its own inherent, well-directed energy, is, in this case, a work so grand and so impressive, that we are half afraid to hope, and yet so simple that we are ashamed to fear, in looking forward to its execution. Let it, however, be distinctly impressed upon the minds of all who may wish to take part in the establishment of these Libraries and Schools, that working men must found them for themselves, and be exclusively the managers. Aid from others will be wanted generally—small subscriptions, little gifts of books. Such aid, however, must be given or received at the price of no imposed patronage of no condition. Dr. Elliott, of Carlisle, the most active and judicious helper of the working men's Library in that town, lays just stress upon this, and has illustrated his argument with the case of a working-

man's Reading-room in another town, which had been lax in its adherence to that necessary principle. It is part of a report from the founder of that other Reading-room, who says:—"We have been always getting gradually more aristocratic ever since we started; and that, I believe, is the constant course of such institutions. Not that the managers have ever done anything with that tendency, but the young men themselves become more steady in their habits, and then the shabby, careless ones are ashamed to come; or if they do join for a week, they feel ill at ease, and soon quit. Three or four years ago, a great many might be seen reading or writing in their working jackets; now I observe nobody comes till he has been home "to clean himself;" and one has almost difficulty in recognising, under the neat frock-coat and well-washed face, the man one met a couple of hours before with a baker's tray on his head, or all covered with paint or whitewash. Whether this may be approved or not, it has come of itself, and I believe could not be otherwise. There may, too, be a smaller proportion of mere labourers, and rather more sons of the little tradesmen of the place, particularly of those who are working with their fathers."

So it will always be, unless the workmen act and govern for themselves, abide within their jackets, and provide, to the utmost of their power, for their own wants, full of self-reliance, although free from self-sufficiency.

MORE FRENCH REVOLUTIONS.

IN Paris it has not been a matter of very rare occurrence to see certain stray bubbles of discontent suddenly unite; and, rising, descend with the fury of a cataract, overwhelming all before it. In history the event is a great fact for future ages: in Paris, a few short weeks pass by, and the harmless resident who does not particularly trouble himself with politics, might almost believe the past to be a fiction. Apprehension has apparently been removed with the barricades, and confidence replaced with the paving stones. As for changes of ministry—stormy debates—and stray *émeutes*—such accidents will happen after the best regulated revolution, and are of no earthly consequence to thousands. The new rule is in the main quietly taken for granted; and Paris dines, dresses, lounges, and amuses itself just as usual. At the Opera not a cadence is wanting in correctness; not a cravat is seen to deviate from its propriety. At the balls there are no dancers out of time; at the *cafés* there are no drinkers out of temper. The case of the client who did not know how ill-used he had been until he heard his cause pleaded by his counsel, has its analogy in that of many a good-humoured *bourgeois*, who is now and then surprised to learn from the newspapers

what a very glorious fellow he ought to consider himself.

To a foreigner, who has even less chance than the good-natured *bourgeois* of feeling the effects of the various benefits achieved by revolutionised France, it is amusing enough to note the numberless minor changes—all little revolutions in themselves—that France (that is to say, Paris) has seen since '48:—changes significant and insignificant; changes in persons and things; changes in thoughts, habits, and formalities; changes that one runs against at street-corners, and encounters wherever the miscellaneous mass of the population meet on common ground. As for the *salons* of what is called "society," their observances are always essentially conservative, and are useless as studies.

To begin with the streets. Who can walk about Paris for a couple of hours—unless he be a man of business, a lover, or an idiot, or all three together, which sometimes happens—without observing a thousand little revolutions, of a social and perhaps unimportant character, but which seem to concern him more than all the great political changes by which they have been caused? The very "dead walls" are alive with great facts. Once upon a time the philosopher who preferred wasting his time to wetting his boots, might, while standing under some sheltering archway, be greeted with no higher subject for reflection than was contained in the announcement that he was requested not to stick bills on the wall opposite. The chances would be that his tendencies did not lead him to stick bills, and that he suffered no more inconvenience by the restriction than the occupants of very small apartments in which it is impossible to swing cats.

For the bill-sticker, however, the walls of Paris are by no means a desert; some he is allowed to vivify with his wondrous announcements. Enormous offers of luxurious journeys ("*voyages de luxe*") to and from the London Exhibition for an inconsiderable number of francs, are repeated wherever a few feet of surface can be safely pasted over. Proprietors of public gardens lure adventurous Parisians by means of flaming invitations—red upon yellow—with gratis chances in lotteries, whose prizes are "*Voyages de Luxe à Londres*," &c.

Advertisers, like air, abhor a vacuum. Unoccupied surfaces not protected by law—whether they be the roofs of omnibuses, or those of railway carriages, the floors of public halls, or the bodies of unemployed workmen—are converted into agencies for informing the world at large respecting every possible article that can be bought for money. In Paris, the declining drama seeks resuscitation not only by proclaiming itself upon every post and on every wall; but, in turn, seeks to profit by letting out the most conspicuous surfaces at command, for the purposes of publicity. This is a decided revolution in the drama. The act-drops of more than one of the minor