

the bull or the sting of the bee, it is misdirected at times, and does harm.

Winter came on, and our weekly wages were lowered immediately after Hallow-day, from twenty-four to fifteen shillings per week. This was deemed too large a reduction ; and, reckoning by the weekly hours during which, on the average, we were still able to work,—forty-two, as nearly as I could calculate, instead of sixty,—it *was* too great a reduction by about one shilling and ninepence. I would, however, in the circumstances, have taken particular care not to strike work for an advance. I knew that three-fourths of the masons about town—quite as improvident as the masons of our own party—could not live on their resources for a fortnight, and had no general fund to sustain them ; and further, that many of the master-builders were not very urgently desirous to press on their work throughout the winter. And so, when, on coming to the work-shed on the Monday morning after the close of our first fortnight on the reduced scale, I found my comrades gathered in front of it in a group, and learned that there was a grand strike all over the district, I received the intelligence with as little of the enthusiasm of the “ independent associated mechanic” as possibly may be. “ You are in the right in your claims,” I said to Charles ; “ but you have taken a bad time for urging them, and will be beaten to a certainty. The masters are much better prepared for a strike than you are. How, may I ask, are you yourself provided with the sinews of war ?” “ Very ill indeed,” said Charles, scratching his head : “ if the masters don’t give in before Saturday, it’s all up with me ; but never mind ; let us have one day’s fun : there’s to be a grand meeting at Bruntsfield Links ; let us go in as a deputation from the country masons, and make a speech about our rights and duties ; and then, if we see matters going very far wrong, we can just step back again, and begin work to-morrow.” “ Bravely resolved,” I said : “ I shall go with you by all means, and take notes of your speech.” We marched in to town, about sixteen in number ;