

be wrong; and on looking carefully into my heart, I had a little matter of a mortgage which I had foreclosed on a poor man, and got away his farm, when he had no suspicion but I would give him time to redeem it. By that means I had got into my possession property worth two thousand dollars, for which I did not actually pay, and for which Isaac Dorr never actually realized more than half that amount. But the proceeding was legal, and so I tried to excuse myself. But my awakened conscience kept saying, 'You have taken a poor man's land without giving him a just return; the law of God condemns you, although the law of man sanctions the wrong. You shall have no peace of soul; your heart will burn you, until, with justice, you wipe out your own injustice to him, and to all others whom you have wronged.'

Against the decree of my conscience I rebelled a long time. It was hard for me to raise a thousand dollars together, with the interest due from the time the mortgage was foreclosed; and it was like taking a portion of my life to be obliged to abstract so much money from my gains, and give it to a man who had no legal claim on me. I groaned and mourned over it in secret, and tried to pray; but that mortgage came right between my prayer and God, and heaven looked dark and frowning through it. At last I could not resist the appeals of conscience any longer, and I went again to the minister. I told him my trouble, and asked him what I would do.

"There is a simple test," said he. "Do you love your neighbor as yourself? If you do, you will be just to him, if it takes the last dollar you have in the world."

"That was a terrible sentence. I went out staggering from it, as if I had received a blow. 'O God,' I said, 'how can I be a Christian?' But I had help beyond myself, otherwise I could never have ended the struggle. I knelt before God and solemnly vowed for His sake, for the sake of His pardon and love, I would not only do justly to the poor man I had wronged, but would give up, if need be, all that I had in the world, so that I might find peace in Him. A strange, soothing influence came over my soul, and a voice seemed to say, 'Though you lose all you have, God and Christ and the blessing of a heart pure and at peace, shall be left you—the best and only true source of happiness and life.' And in the solemn night-time, after I gave up the struggle, that comfort seemed to me so great and precious that I felt willing, if it would only

stay with me, to accept poverty, and to go into the world poor and despised, hugging that priceless blessing to my heart. The next day I was as light as if I had wings. Nothing could keep me from going to Isaac Dorr, with a couple of hundred dollars in my pocket and a note for the remainder of what I owed him.

"Well," said the narrator, with tears running down his cheeks, "I only wish that every person here could have seen the Dorr family when I visited them and made known my errand. Poor Isaac had grown discouraged, and had just made up his mind to quit his wife and children and go to California. His children were crying, and his wife in an extremity of distress and despair. She received me a great deal better than I anticipated; I had acted according to law, she said, and Isaac, careless and improvident, was greatly to blame.

"Yes, said Isaac, with the firmness of a desperate man, 'it was a savage game you played me, but I was a fool ever to get in debt as I did, and then fancy that any man would not take an advantage when the law permits it. I am ruined in consequence, and here you see this woman and babes—'

"The poor fellow broke down as he looked at them, and then cried like a child.

"Isaac," said I, as soon as I could speak, 'I have come to show you that a man can be honest even when the law does not compel him to be. I want to do right because God commands it, and I have come to tell you that you needn't leave your wife and babes yet, unless you prefer to.

"Prefer to—go off into a strange country, and leave them here to suffer?' he cried, and caught the children in his arms, and wrung his wife's hand, and sobbed as if his heart would break.

"Then I counted out the money I had brought, and explained what I intended to do and gave him the note; and such surprise and happiness I never saw. They would have kissed my feet if I would have let them. It seemed to me as if heaven were opened then and there—and it was opened in my heart, with such a flood of light and joy as I had never experienced, or thought possible, before.

"My friends," added the captain, his once hard voice now almost as mellow as a woman's, his cheeks still moist with tears, "I have been constrained to make this confession; I thank you for listening to it. The minister tells me a man may be a church member and not a Christian, I mean to be a Christian first, and if I fail—"