

he has white hair he licked the big bluffer in no time. I don't blame him either, for it was awful provokin' what Nels said about Amy."

"Friends," said the pastor, after he had opened the meeting with prayer, "I have called you here together tonight to deal with a very solemn matter. It has been proven conclusively that one of our members has committed the grievous sin, forbidden on the tablets of stone, of bearing false witness against his neighbor. The case is a peculiarly bad one in that the reviled one was one of the weaker sex, a girl whose reputation is spotless and against whom calumny could have been prompted by the evil one alone. But it is not necessary for us to take action in this matter. Mr. Bowers has written a note, addressed to me, which I will read." Amidst a dead silence Pastor Cragg, after clearing his throat, read the following self-indictment from Nels Bowers:

"Dear Pastor—It is true that I told lies about Amy Witherbee. My wife and my daughter knew that it was a lie,

and we made up our minds to do it. The reason, I guess, was that we were jealous. I went to look in the window, hoping I would see something, which, I guess, was worse and more sinful than the lie I told. I resign as a member of the church and also in my wife's name. Some day, maybe, I will feel that I've repented enough to ask you to take me back."

The pastor folded the note and put it away, and an impressive silence lasted for a few minutes. Then the pastor sank to his knees and said, "Let us pray for this unfortunate and misguided man."

After the prayer was over and the pastor was about to dismiss those present with the benediction, Lem Briggs arose and said: "I think we have something more to do. We've got to settle about Amos Witherbee. I ain't findin' any fault about him a-lickin' Nels Bowers, even if it was on a Sunday an' right at the church door. But it seems to me that he has been livin' here for ten years, as it were, under false pretences. He didn't fight Nels Bowers like

any other man in Clark's Corners would have done. If he had, he would have been licked in two jerks of a lamb's tail. But he fit like they do in them prize-fightin' rings. I don't know this of myself, but, I'm sorry to say, I've got a brother as does know. Newt saw the whole scrap an' he says that the only man he ever saw scrappin' (an' he's seen a good few) who handled themselves like Amos was them two champion fellers that he travelled a thousand miles to see. Now I don't think that the church at Clark's Corners has come down so low that it can afford to keep a prize-fighter in good standin'."

Nobody moved or spoke for some time and the silence was beginning to be oppressive when Amos slowly arose.

"Friends," he said, "I will begin by admittin' that I used to be a prize-fighter. After that, when I got too old for the ring I was a trainer. But I ain't neither now; nor haven't been for more than ten years. I ain't sailin' under false pretences. That wasn't ever my style. I've always told you that few an' evil have been the days of the years of

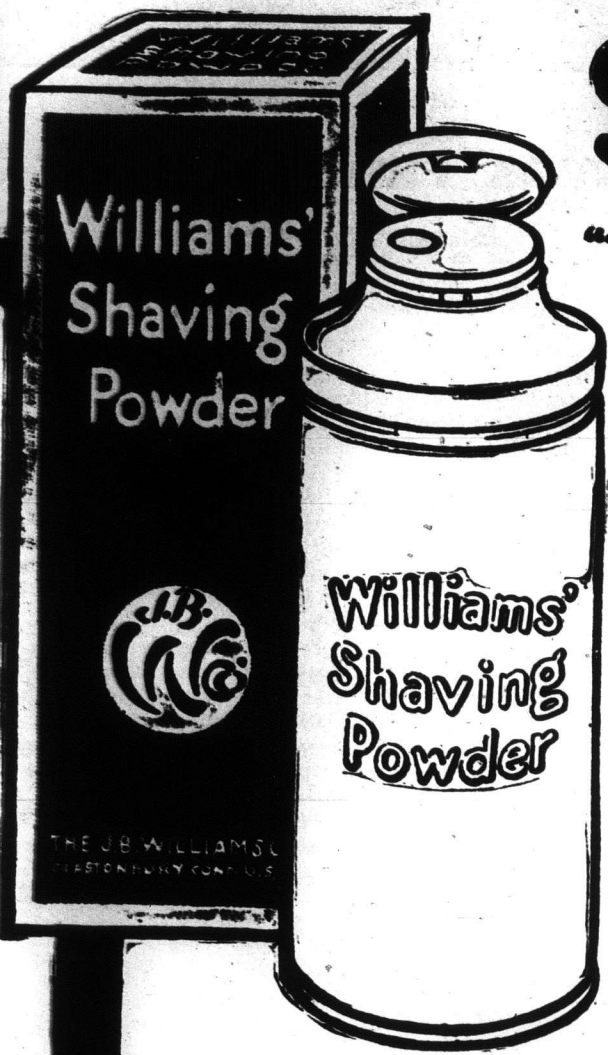
my pilgrimage. If you don't believe me it wasn't my fault; I wasn't tellin' no lie!

"But, dear pastor an' friends, I ain't a prize-fighter now. I only fight now when it's necessary for Amy's sake. I'll stand a whole lot on my own account, but not very much on hers. I quit the fightin' game a little over ten years ago; that is, I quit trainin'! I got religion one night in a little mission an' after that I wanted to git back to the farm. I was raised on a farm an' I always hankered to git back. I bought this fifty acres here an' brought my little Amy, my dead son's child, here with me. I don't expect to do any more fightin'; maybe there isn't anyone around here anxious to take me on. Anyway, Amy will soon have another protector, for she's goin' to be married at the end of the term an' then she'll live in the city.

"But I want to stay here. I like it here; I like the people, at least most of them; an' I like our church. It's here that I want to end the days of the years of my pilgrimage!

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