

“THERE'S SUMMAT IN IT.”

“BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM.”

“Well, Thomas, is all ready for the meeting to-night?”

“No, Sir; I was just going to name to you that there's no oil for the lamps. What you ordered from town, sir, has never come. I thought maybe it might be lying at the station, but I sent Bob over in the light cart to enquire, and it wasn't there.”

“Then drive down to the village, Thomas, and get what you want at Tomlinson's.”

Thomas stood irresolute, the old habit of military obedience preventing a negative reply to any order.

“What is it, Thomas?”

“Sir, you remember what the old man said the last time we went to his shop for oil?”

The Colonel smiled. “Did not approve of these meetings, rather inclined to denounce them, was not that it?”

“Yes, sir,” said Thomas; “he flew out at me quite spiteful, and said he would refuse to send oil to help such doings.”

“Well,” continued the Colonel, “though I pity the old man's ignorance, I cannot but admire his honesty and independence, for he must have known that he was risking our custom in speaking so.”

“He doesn't believe in either God or devil, so I'm told,” said Thomas, with suppressed wrath.

“Poor fellow! He will learn better by-and-bye. We must pray for him. His must be a dismal life with a creed like that. However, Thomas, we must face the enemy again; you and I don't believe in discouragement, do we? You just drive over and give my compliments to the old man, and say I particularly want a supply of oil for the meeting to-night, and if he declines, we must have wax lights, that is all.”

Thomas was, like his master, an old veteran, but like many of his class he could face the roar of cannon far more bravely than the strife of tongues, and his heart sank in a manner very unusual to it, during his drive to Fullerton.

Jerry Tomlinson's store was in the middle of the village, and being the only shop in the place, the old man did a thriving business, though his rough eccentric manners frightened many of his customers, and he made no secret of his contempt and hatred for everything “religious.” Some of his neighbours who had attended Colonel Waldegrave's meetings, and had learned there of pardon and peace through the atonement of Jesus, often looked with pity at the gloomy, hard-faced man, and prayed that the Sun of Righteousness might shine into the darkness of his heart, but they dared not speak.

But by this time Thomas had arrived at his door. The upper half was swung back on its hinges, and over the lower half the old man was to be seen peering out into the gloom. He came forward with unusual politeness as Thomas drove up, and listened attentively to the Colonel's message, which Thomas delivered with a quaking of heart that no one would have suspected who looked at his erect bearing and unmoved face.