

stolen money in your pocket?' said the minister.

"I said something about a trade is a trade, and men must look out for themselves when they swap horses—but he cut me short.

"Your own soul,' said he, 'will not admit the excuses which your selfishness invents.'

"But the rule you apply,' said I, 'will cut off the heads of church members as well as mine. There's Deacon Rich; he trades in horses, and shaves when he can.'

"No matter,' said he, whose head is cut off; no matter what Deacon Rich does. You have to deal with your own soul, and with the Lord. And I will tell you, whether you are out of the Church or in it, a single dollar which you have unjustly and knowingly taken from any man without rendering him its full value to the best of your ability—a single dollar, I say, will be like a mill-stone hung upon your neck to sink your soul into the sea of spiritual death?'

"I couldn't stand that. The Spirit of God used those words with terrible effect upon my heart. I was greatly agitated. The truth spoken by the pastor appealed to my understanding with irresistible power. I went away, but I couldn't rest. So I took seventy-five dollars and went to Peter and paid him, making him promise not to tell anybody, for I was ashamed to have it known that I was conscience-stricken and had paid back the money.

"Then I went to the minister again, and told him what I had done. He didn't praise me as I thought he would. He took it as a matter of course, and no more merit in it than it is to wash my hands before I sit down to supper. On the contrary, he seemed to suspect that my hands were not quite clean yet. He wanted to know if I had wronged anybody else besides Peter. I tried to say no, but my conscience wouldn't let me. I could have told a plumper lie than that once without flinching—yes, and flattered my own heart to believe the lie. I was discouraged. I felt bitterly disheartened. It was, indeed so much harder being a Christian than I supposed, that I regretted going to talk with the minister at all. Like the young man who had great possessions, I was on the point of going away sorrowful. But my heart burned within me, and I was forced to speak.

"In the way of business,' said I, 'no doubt I have taken advantage here and there—as everybody does—as church members themselves do when they can.

"What everybody does is no rule for you and me, Captain Ball,' said the minister.

'It is to be Christians in the fullest sense—not simply church members—that we must strive with all our hearts. The fact of our being in the fold does not make the lamb; there are wolves in the fold, alas! but we are by no means justified in doing as the wolves do, even when they appear in sheep's clothing.'

"I felt the rebuke. 'Well,' said I, 'there is Deacon Rich—I think he paid me a note twice. The first time he paid it we were transacting other business, and by some mistake the note wasn't destroyed. I found it among my papers afterward. I was a good deal excited, and lay awake more than one night thinking what I ought to do about it. The Deacon was a hard man, I considered, and took advantage of people when he could. He had driven more than one hard bargain with me.'

The Deacon, who was present, heard the allusions to himself, whined and coughed uneasily. Captain Bell went on without appearing to mind him.

"So,' said I to the minister, 'I concluded I would serve the Deacon as he would probably have served me under the same circumstances.'

"I kept the note by me a good while, and when I thought the particulars of our settlement had slipped his mind, I said to him one day, may be he would like to take up that note, which had been due then a considerable time. He was surprised—looked excited and angry—said he had paid it, and held out stoutly for awhile; but there was the note. There was no proof that it had ever been paid, and finally he took out his pocket-book, and with some pretty hard words, paid it over again with interest.'

"And now,' said the minister, 'what are you going to do about it?'

"I suppose,' said I, 'the money must be paid back.'

"So I went to the Deacon the next day, told him that on reflection, I was convinced that he was right and I was wrong about the first payment of the note, and returned the money—one hundred and thirteen dollars—a good deal to his astonishment.

"I hoped, then, all was right," continued Captain Ball. I tried to satisfy my conscience that it was. But I was afraid to go back to the minister, he has such a way of stirring up the conscience and finding mud at the bottom when we flatter ourselves that because it is out of sight, there is no impurity there. And I knew that, as long as I dreaded to see the minister, something must