

snatched him away from the wife who had joined him, and said,—

"Samuel, that experience of yours rather disappointed me. It wasn't all there. There was something left out,—a good deal left out."

"I guess not, deacon. I said all I knowed."

"Then you ought to know a good deal more. You've only got at the beginning of things. No church 'll take you into membership if you don't believe more than that."

"Maybe I'll know it in the course of time, deacon, if I keep on a-learnin'."

"Maybe you will,—if you do keep on. But you didn't say anything about your hope of salvation, nor the atonement, nor your being nothing through your own strength."

"I couldn't say it if I didn't know about it," Sam replied, "All my troubles an' wrong-doin's have come of not living' right: so right livin' is all I've had time to think about an' study up."

"You need to think about dying as well as living," said the deacon.

"He that took care of another thief that was dyin' 'll take care of me if I get in that fix, I guess, if I hang on to him tight."

"Not unless you hang on in the right way," said the deacon. "You must believe what all Christians believe, if you want to be saved. You don't feel 'hat you're prepared to die, do you?"

"I felt it a good many times, deacon, when I was in that jail: an' sometimes I half wished I could die right away."

"Pshaw!" muttered the deacon. "You don't understand. You're groping in darkness. You don't understand."

"That's so, deacon, if you mean I don't understand what you're drivin' at."

"Don't you feel Christ in you the hope of glory?"

"I don't know what you mean, deacon."

"Don't you feel that a sacrifice has been made to atone for your sins?"

"I can't follow you, deacon."

"I thought not. You haven't got things right at all. You haven't been converted: that's what's the matter with you."

"Do you mean, deacon," said Sam, after a moment, "that what I'm believin' about Jesus is all wrong, an' there ain't nothin' in it?"

"Why, no; I can't say that," the deacon replied, "but—but you've begun wrong end first. What a sinner needs most of all is to know about his hereafter."

"It's what's goin' on now, from day to day, that weighs hardest on me, deacon. There's nothin' about dyin'; leastways, you'd think so if you was built like me, an' felt like I have to feel sometimes."

"You're all wrong," said the deacon. "If you can't understand these things for yourself, you ought to take the word of wiser men for it."

"S'posin' I was to do that about ev'rythin': then when Judge Prency, who's a square man an' a good deal smarter than I be, talks politics to me, I ought to be a Republican instead of a Jackson Democrat."

"No," said the deacon, sharply, for he was a Jackson Democrat himself. "I'll have to talk more to you about this, Samuel. Good-night."

"Good night, deacon."

"He knows more'n you do about religion," said Mrs Kimper, who had followed closely behind, and who rejoined her husband as soon as the deacon departed.

"He ought to, seein' his head-piece an' chances; an' yet I've heerd some pooty hard things said about him."

When the couple reached home, Sam looked at the long heap of straw and rags on which his children should have been sleeping, but which was without occupant except the baby. Then, by the light of the coals still remaining in the fireplace, he looked through some leaves of the little book which the prison-visitor had given him. When he arose from the floor he said to himself,—

"I'll stick to Him yet, deacon or no deacon,—stick to Him as if He was Andrew Jackson."

CHAPTER V.

Sam Kimper spent several days in looking about his native town for work. He found many sympathetic assurances, some promises, and no work at all. Everybody explained to everybody else that they were sorry for the poor wretch, but they couldn't afford to have a jail-bird around.

Meanwhile, Sam's stock of money, accumulated by overwork in the State prison, and augmented by Judge Prency's present, was running low. He kept his family expenses as low as possible, buying only the plainest of food-material, and hesitating long to break a bill, though it were only of the denomination of one dollar. Nevertheless the little wad of paper money in his pocket grew noticeably thinner to his touch.

His effort to save the little he had in his possession were not assisted by his family. His wife, thanks and perhaps blame to the wifely sense of dependence upon her husband, had fallen back upon him entirely after what he had said about his intention as to the future of the family, and she not only accepted his assurances as bearing upon the material requirements of several mouths from day to day, but she also built some air-castles which he was under the unpleasant necessity of knocking down. The poor woman was not to blame. She never had seen a ten-dollar bill since the day of her marriage, when, in a spasm of drunken enthusiasm, her husband gave a ten-dollar Treasury note to the clergyman who officiated on that joyous occasion.