

and wrote on it a name. The pastor said after he had counted them: "Deacon Emmons, the lot has fallen on you."

"I'm sorry for't," said the deacon, rising up and taking off his overcoat. "I ha'n't got the best of records, Mr. Parkes, now I tell you."

"Well, brethren," he said, "I am pretty well ashamed of myself, no doubt, but I ought to be, and maybe I shall profit by what I've found out these six days back. I'll tell you just as it come. Monday, I looked about me to begin with. I am amazing fond of coffee, and it a'n't good for me, the doctor says it a'n't; so I thought I'd try on that to begin with. I tell you it come hard! I hankered after that drink of coffee dreadful! Seemed as though I couldn't eat my breakfast without it. I feel to pity a man that loves liquor, more'n I ever did in my life before; but I feel sure they can stop if they'll try, for I've stopped, and I'm agoin' to stay stopped."

"Well, come to dinner, there was another fight. I do set by pie the most of anything. I was fetched up on pie, so you may say. Our folks alwas had it three times a day, and the doctor he's been talkin' and talkin' to me about eatin' pie. I have the dyspepsy like everything, and it makes me useless by spells, and onreliable as a weather-cock. An' Doctor Drake he says there won't nothing help me but to diet. I was readin' the Bible that morning while I sat waiting for breakfast, for 'twas Monday, and wife was kind of set back with washin' and all, and I come across that part where it says that the bodies of Christians are temples of the Holy Ghost. Well, thinks I, we'd ought to take care of 'm if they be, and see that they're kep' clean and pleasant, like the church; and nobody can be clean nor pleasant that has dyspepsy. But, come to pie, I felt as though I couldn't! and, lo ye, I didn't! I eat a piece right against my conscience, facin' what I knew I ought to do I went and done what I ought not to. I tell ye, my conscience made music of me consider'ble, and I said then I wouldn't never sneer at a drinkin' man no more when he slipped up. I'd feel for him an' help him, for I see just how it was. So that day's practice giv' out, but it learnt me a good deal more'n I knew before."

"I started out next day to look up my Bible class. Well, 'twould take the evenin' to tell it all, but I found one real sick, been abed for three weeks, and was so glad to see me that I felt fair ashamed. Then another man's old mother says to me, before he come in from the shed, says she: 'He's been a sayin' that if folks practised what they preached, you'd ha' come round to look him up afore now, but he reckoned you kinder looked down on mill hands. I'm awful glad you come.' Brethering so was I. I tell you that day's work did me good. I got a poor opinion of Josiah Emmons, now I tell you, but I learned more about the Lord's wisdom than a month o' Sundays ever showed me."

"Now come fellowship-day. I thought that would be all plain sailin'; seemed as though I'd got warmed up till I felt pleasant towardst everybody; so I went around seein' folks that was neighbors, and 'twas easy; but when I come home at noon spell Philury says, says she: "Square Tucker's black bull is into th' orchard a tearin' round, and he's knocked two lengths o' fence down flat! Well, the old Adam riz up then, you'd better b'lieve. That black bull has been a breakin' into my lots ever since we got in the aftermath, and it's Square Tucker's fence, and he won't make it bull-strong as he oughter, and that orchard was a young one just comin' to bear, and all the new wood crisp as crackin's with frost. You'd better b'lieve I didn't have much feller-feeling with Amos Tucker. I jest put over to his house and spoke up pretty free to him, when he looked up and says, says he: 'Fellowship meetin' day, ain't it, Deacon?' I'd rather he'd ha' slapped my face. I felt as though I should like to slip behind the door. I see pretty distinct what sort of life I'd been livin' all the years I'd been a professor, when I couldn't hold on to my tongue and temper one day!"

"Breth-er-en," interrupted a slow, harsh voice, somewhat broken with emotion, "I'll tell the rest on't. Josiah Emmons come around like a man an' a Christian right there. He asked me for to forgive him, and not to think 'twas the fault of his religion, because 'twas his'n and nothing else. I think more of him to-day than I ever done before. I was one that wouldn't say I'd practice with the the rest of ye. I thought 'twas ever-astin' nonsense. I'd rather go to forty-nine prayer-meetin's than work at bein' good a week. I b'lieve my hope has been one of them that perish; it ha'n't worked, and I leave it behind to-day. I mean to begin honest, and it was seein' one honest Christian man fetched me round to't."

Amos Tucker sat down and buried his grizzled head in his rough hands.

"Bless the Lord!" said the quavering tones of a still older man from a far corner of the house, and many a glistening eye gave silent response.

"Go on, Brother Emmons," said the minister.

"Well, when next day come I got up to make the fire, and my boy Joe had forgot the kindlin's. I'd opened my mouth to give him Jesse, when it came over me sudden that this was the day of prayer for the family relation. I thought I wouldn't say nothing. I jest fetched in the kindlin's myself, and when the fire burnt up good I called my wife."

"Dear me!" says she. "I've got such a-headache, 'Siah, but I'll come in a minnit." I didn't mind that, for women are always having aches, and I was jest a goin' to say so, when I remembered the tea' about not being bitter against 'em, so I says, 'Philury, you lay abed. I expect Emmy and me can get the vittles to-day.' I declare, she turned over and gave me sech a look; why, it struck right in. There was my wife, that had worked for an' waited on me twenty odd years, 'most scar't because I spoke kind of feelin' to her. I went out an' fetched in the pail o' water she'd always

drawn herself, and then I milked the cow. When I came in Philury was up frying the potatoes, and the tears a shinin' on her white face. She didn't say nothin', she's kinder still, but she hadn't no need to. I felt a little meaner'n I did the day before. But 'twan't nothing to my condition when I was goin', towards night, down the sullar stairs for some apples, so's the children could have a roast, and I heered Joe up in the kitchen say to Emmy: 'I do b'lieve, Em, pa's goin' to die.' 'Why, Josiah Emmons, how you talk?' 'Well, I do; he's so everlastin' pleasant and good-natured I can't but think he's struck with death.'

"I tell ye, brethren, I set right down on them sullar stairs and cried. I did, reely. Seemed as though the Lord had turned and looked at me jest as he did at Peter. Why, there was my own children never see me act real fatherly and pretty in all their lives. I'd growled and scolded and prayed at 'em, and tried to fetch 'em up jest as the twig is bent the tree's inclined, ye know, but I hadn't never thought that they'd got right an' reason to expect I'd do my part as well as their'n. Seemed as though I was findin' out more about Josiah Emmons' shortcomings than was real agreeable."

"Come around Friday I got back to the store. I'd kind of left it to the boys the early part of the week, and things was a little cuttering, but I did have sense not to tear round and use sharp words so much as common. I begun to think 'twas getting easy to practice after five days, when in come Judge Herrick's wife after some cart'in calico. I had a han'some piece, all done off with roses and things, but there was a fault in the weavin', every now and then a thin streak. She didn't notice it, but she was pleased with the figures on't, and said she'd take the whole piece. Well, just as I was wrappin' of it up, what Mr. Parkes here said about tryin' to act just as the Lord would in our place come across me. Why, I turned as red as a beet, I know I did. It made me all of a tremble. There was I, a door-keeper in the tents of my God, as David says, really cheatin', and cheatin' a woman. I tell ye, brethren, I was all of a sweat. 'Mis' Herrick,' says I, 'I don't believe you've looked real close at this goods, 'taint thorough wove,' says I. So she idn't take it; but what fetched me was to think how many times before I'd done such mean, on reliable little things to turn a penny, and all the time sayin' and prayin' that I wanted to be like Christ. I kep' a trippin' of myself up all day jest in the ordinary business, and I was a peg lower down when night come than I was a Thursday. I'd rather, as far as the hard work is concerned, lay a mile of four-foot stone-wall than undertake to do a man's livin' Christian duty for twelve workin' hours, and the heft of that is, it's because I ain't used to it and I ought to be."

"So this mornin' came around, and I felt a mite more cherk. 'Twas missionary mornin', and seemed as if 'twas a sight easier to preach than to practice. I thought I'd begin to old Mis' Vedder's. So I put a Testament in my pocket and knocked to her door. Says I: 'Good mornin' ma'am,' and then I stopped. Words seem to hang, somehow. I didn't want to pop right out that I'd come to try'n and convert the folks. I hemmed and swallowed a little, and fin'ly I said, says I: 'We don't see you to meetin' very frequent, Mis' Vedder.'

"No, you dont?" says she, as quick as a wink. 'I stay at home and mind my business.'

"Well, we should like to hev you come along with us and do you good," says I, sort of conciliatin'.

"Look a here, Deacon!" she snapped, 'I've lived alongside of you fifteen years, and you kr. wed I never went to meetin'; we a'n't a pious lot, and you knowed it; we're poorer'n death and uglier'n sin. Jim he drinks and swears, and Malviny dono her letters. She knows a heap she hadn't ought to, besides. Now, what are you a comin' here to-day for, I'd like to know, and talkin' so glib about meetin'? Go to meetin'! I'll go or come jest as I darn please, for all you. Now get out o' this!' Why, she came at me with a broomstick. There wasn't no need on't; what she said was enough. I hadn't never asked her nor her'n to so much as think of goodness before. Then I went to another place jest like that—I won't call no more names, and sure enough there was ten children in rags, the hull on 'em, and the man half drunk. He giv' it to me, too; and I don't wonder. I'd never lifted a hand to serve or save 'em before in all these years. I'd said consider'ble about the heathen in foreign parts, and give some little for to convert 'em, and I had looked right over the heads of them that was next door. Seemed as if I could hear him say: 'These ought ye to have done, and not have left the other undone.' I couldn't face another soul to-day, brethren. I come home and here I be. I have been searched through and through and found wantin'. God be merciful to me a sinner!"

He dropped into his seat, and bowed his head; and many another bent too. It was plain that the Deacon's experience was not the only one among the brethren. Mr. Payson rose, and prayed as he had never prayed before; the week of practice had fired his heart too. And it began a memorable year for the church in Sugar Hollow; not a year of excitement or enthusiasm, but one when they heard their Lord saying, as to Israel of old: "Go forward," and they obeyed his voice. The Sunday school flourished, the church services were fully attended, every good thing was helped on its way, and peace reigned in their homes and hearts, imperfect perhaps, as new growths are, but still an offshoot of the peace past understanding.

And another year they will keep another week of practice, by common consent. *Rose Terry Cooke, in the Congregationalist.*