

universal consent because of his religious professions. He was not remarkably good, and by "no manner of means" could he have been called a bad man. He had many most excellent traits of character that endeared him to his family and to the rural community in which he lived. He "set a good table," the farmers said, but it knew very few of what the denizens of great cities call luxuries. Salt meats, occasionally a little fresh meat when he killed a calf, a sheep, a swine, or ox to sell, were found upon his table. The smoking hot corn and the "mealy potatoes" were always present in their season, to say nothing of Indian bread and wheaten biscuit. "Enough for all" was his motto, and his faithful spouse was equal to the duties of her station. Rum, gin, whiskey and brandy the deacon had left out of his supplies more than twenty-five years since, but there was always present on the table or on the shelf a moid pitcher filled with "good old cider" for himself, for his workmen, and his numerous callers. Everybody in that vicinity knew two things—the cider "was good" and there was always plenty of it at hand. Why not? He had an abundance of apples, a cider-mill, and wasn't there a great plenty to have the apples wasted by rotting on the ground? And wasn't there an opportunity to sell what cider he had to spare? And didn't the income from his sales of cider help him to buy more land?

There had been a temperance meeting in the school-house "hard by the deacon's" on the previous evening, which the deacon had attended, not so much that he had an interest in that movement, but because the minister that spoke was of his persuasion and was therefore a guest at his house. The deacon was interested in the services. Singing hymns, prayer, and a Gospel sermon—only there wasn't any text—secured his attention and made him think. The theme was "total abstinence from alcoholic drinks the privilege of Christian people."

A privilege! Yes, a great privilege, because neither health, labor, personal nor home comfort demanded their use. And what a saving of money, and time, and health, and life even, was effected by it. It was economical. That held him.

A privilege! Yes, because it enabled one to be helpful to others in many ways, but especially in the development of virtue, morality, and religion—essential elements of a good character and a useful life.

It was a help to the young as a safe example. It would save many a youth from ruin to adopt such a course of life, and make him a blessing to the world as well as a servant of God.

It was helpful to those who had fallen victims to appetite, as it taught them a better way and invited them back to virtue. It was a Christ-like virtue to live for others.

There was a nobler position for a Christian man to occupy than to be a post against which drunkards leaned for support.

In the same room with the deacon sat poor old "Jake" who had been and ruined by drink, listening intently to these strange yet sympathetic utterances. It would be difficult to tell which of the two wondered most at what they heard.

It was urged that even in the use of cider, so common a beverage with some good men, there was danger, even ruin. Were there not cider-drunkards in every community? Was it not a privilege to arrest their steps and save them to humanity and heaven? Was it not a Christian duty as well? The deacon leaned forward to hear every word.

The pledge was offered at the close of the service, but no one took it. It was evident that a number were anxious to do so, but none had the heroism to be singular.

The thinking did not stop, though the dim lights were extinguished in that dingy school-room. Even the quiet old deacon was not composed when he had reposed in his arm-chair in the old kitchen, where for so many years he had kept secluded from the outside world.

"John, do you want to sign the pledge?" he asked of a fourteen-year-old orphan that he had given a place of shelter.

"I'd just as lief if you will," promptly responded the grateful and thoughtful boy.

After a short silence the deacon said: "Do you know what it means to sign the pledge, John?"

"It means that I cannot draw any more cider for you," said the boy, in a kind and reverent manner. "Neither will we offer it to others for their use" was the sentence in the pledge that had given the boy more

trouble than the part requiring personal abstinence. Had he not been the boy whose duty it was to see that the cider pitcher was kept full in the house and the jug full in the field? Could he keep that pledge and retain his place in the only home open to him in the wide world? Had not drink ruined and then killed his unnatural parents, and bequeathed to him a legacy of shame? Was he not a drunkard's child, without a friend in the world outside of that family? Could he sign that pledge and be turned out-doors to pillow his head on the cold ground and be a beggar and a tramp for life?

A neighbor called at this moment and interrupted this conversation, but the subject was not changed. "Two misses," he said, "had talked the matter over since the meeting, and with the consent of their parents, had concluded to sign the pledge; if the lecturer would let him take the pledge he would take it to them and bring it back in the morning."

Turning to the deacon, he said: "Old Jake says he'll take the pledge if you will." Will he not take the reader's time to recount the thoughtful conversation between this old man and the minister who was his transient guest—an earnest, practical discussion of Christian effort, extending far into the night, and followed by prayer for divine guidance and strength.

Morning dawns bright and beautiful. The autumnal frosts have tinged the foliage of the surrounding forests; the chestnut burrs are beginning to open; the squirrels are beginning to gather their winter's supply of food; the chirp of the fall crickets, and the gathering of the birds at their accustomed rendezvous before their annual migration to their Southern home—all seem to impress the mind with the necessity of seizing upon the present moment to do the work of life.

The table has been spread, and the family have gathered to take their morning meal ere the workmen go out to their harvest fields. The pledge has been returned with the names of the two misses written upon it with a bold hand. The deacon adjusts his spectacles, reads over the pledge, calls for pen and ink, and boldly, yet with a tremulous hand, writes his name upon it; then, passing both pen and pledge across the table to his wife for her signature, said:

"I do this for others."  
For whom should he sign it if not for others? Had he not reached fourscore years? Could it be possible that in the winter of his life this cup would ruin him?

The good housewife, worn and wrinkled with many years of toil, affixed her name beneath that of her husband, and then wrote the name of the orphan boy, to which he affixed the mark, X. A young man in his employ, twenty-one years of age, himself an orphan, followed their example.

That was a happy morning to the writer. It was an attestation of the power of truth over a human heart when that truth was brought into immediate contact with it.

It was the closing up of one of Satan's strongholds in that community, for the deacon's cider and the deacon's example had been prolific of evil to the bodies and souls of men. It was the inauguration of a new movement in that community; for that young man secured the names of fourteen other young men that he found at an auction-sale that day. Can any human mind measure the results of that twenty-four hours of service in one of the most unpromising fields in our happy New England?—*National Temperance Advocate.*

THE SIGNED AGREEMENT.

I was driving over our rugged hills in a desponding state of mind some time ago, when a man aroused me from my gloomy thoughts by calling out, "Will yer honor give me a lift? I've walked nigh on to twenty miles, and have got eight more afore I get home."

Looking him squarely in the face, and finding him of an open and ingenious countenance, I said, "By all means, my good man, come up into the trap," at the same time inwardly praying I might be able to drop a word by the wayside that should result in his blessing.

"You are a stranger in these parts?" said I. "What brings you over the hills in this weather?" for the wind was bitterly cold.

"I'm going to change houses, or I want to, and as the landlord of the house I want to take lives at H—, and my missus

thought I had better see to it at once, and get the 'greement paper signed, as there's only a fortnight to Christmas."

"So you believe in making things as sure as you can?" said I.

"Well, yes; you see, sir, we had agreed by word o' mouth, but I thought he might run word afore Lady Day, but 'tis all right now 'tis signed to," said he with evident satisfaction.

"What about that other house you have had notice to quit?" I asked.

"Other house?" said the man, with great astonishment. "I don't rent more than one; leastways, I don't live in more than one."

"Oh yes you do," I said. "You live in two houses. One made of bricks and mortar, the other of flesh and blood—your body. Where are you going when you leave that? Have you a building of God, eternal in the heavens?"

"I'm afraid I have not," said he, "that's just what I want, but I'm afraid 'tis too late."

"No," said I, "it is not, I can assure you it is just the right time, for now is the accepted time, the day of salvation. But why do you think it is too late?" I asked.

"Why, sir," he replied, "it was nigh on to eighteen years ago any one spoke to me as you have on the subject, and then my mother lay dying, and she made me promise I would turn to God and meet her in heaven. I promised her but I've never kept it, and I'm afraid 'tis too late," and he seemed deeply moved.

"No," said I, "it's not too late, for 'to-day if ye will hear his voice,' is God's word, and God desires your salvation, and has made every preparation for it, and nothing remains but for you to accept it."

"I wish I could be sure of it," he said. "How are you sure you are going to live in the new house?" I asked.

"Why, 'tis signed to," said the man, wondering at my apparent ignorance.

"Who signed to it?" I again asked. "Why, the both of us; leastways I put my mark, as I can't write very well," he replied.

"The landlord agreed to let the house under certain conditions, and signed to it. Was that it?" I asked.

"Yes sir."

"Did his signing make you a tenant?" "No. I had to sign as well," he replied.

"Just so," said I. "God has agreed to give everlasting life, to certain individuals, because of certain conditions having been fulfilled by His Son, and has signed to it, by raising Him from the dead—for He was 'delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,' and he has further given proof of His willingness and power by sending the Holy Ghost to convince us of the truth. Now just as your agreement required your signature to put you into possession, so God's agreement requires your signature to give you the benefit, for 'he that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true,' in other words, he that believeth what God says accepts the gift of salvation, 'that everlasting life.'"

"Is it like that?" said the astonished man, "then by God's help I'll sign to it now!"

And as we drove along the country lane he lifted his eyes to heaven, as the tears coursed down his cheeks, and said aloud, "O God, I do accept Thy blessed Son as my Saviour. I will sign the 'greement. Thou hast promised to give everlasting life to those who believe. I do believe, praise God!" and turning to me he said, "Oh, sir, I never felt so happy in my life. I shall have good news to tell my wife to-night."

I got him to repeat several texts of Scripture ere I parted from him (as he could not read), which he learnt, and on leaving he grasped my hand with both his, saying,

"God bless you, sir, I shall have to thank God to all eternity for my ride in this trap. Believe me, sir, when I put my foot on the step of your trap I felt as I had never felt for eighteen years before. I thought to myself, 'That man's a Christian—like my mother.' My first step on your trap was my first step toward heaven, and if we never meet on earth we shall meet there, sir. And now, sir, I've no fear whenever the notice to quit comes to me"—striking his breast—"I have a better house sure and certain above, for 'tis signed to."

I have never met him since, but I believe I shall meet him in heaven. I need scarcely say I returned that day to the "plants and hedges" with a joy somewhat akin to the "joy among the angels," feeling that, though

but a simple conversion, God could, and did, use it to his glory. Many such souls are to be found all round us; they are just waiting to be spoken with, and pointed to Jesus. If the "potters" but dwell "with the King," will He not give them the right thing to do at the right time? Infinitely better for us to be satisfied to do "the next thing" God gives us than to be deploring our inability to do the thing He sees fit to appoint to our neighbor.

"She hath done what she could" is a memorial that no language can possibly excel, and the opportunity of gaining such a reward lies within the reach of every one of the King's servants. May the Lord help us to "go and do likewise," for

In this "little white" doth it matter,  
As we work, and we watch, as if we wait,  
If we're filling the place He assigns us,  
Be His service small or great?  
There's a work for me and a work for you,  
Something for each of us now to do.

—W. J. H. Brealey, in *Word and Work.*

PATCH.

"Here comes Rags and Patch. Holloa, rag-man, here's a bargain for you," and the scholars just set free from study hours clustered around a little boy, whose coat was patch upon patch, and a girl whose thin pink calico dress did not keep out the keen March wind.

Dick and Celis Bennett were the children of a man who had set out in life with bright hopes, and for a time he bravely ran his race, but, oh, his love of drink had dimmed all those hopes, made weak the strong arm, and blurred his moral senses. Now, the sunny, cosy home was gone; the father did little but drink and doze; the mother, by washing, barely kept a shelter over their heads, while Dick and Celis often went hungry as well as ragged.

"Arn't they handsome, though? Mabel Rand, don't you want the pattern of that hood?" said Roy Gordon, a boy of twelve.

"Wouldn't they make 'illegant' scarer-crows to keep the birds away from Pat Flynn's berry trees and raspberry bushes? Let's tell the old man to engage them for the season," said another.

The group of well-dressed little girls should have been pitiful toward the shy Celis who stood shivering and cowering in their midst, but they, said to say, helped to tease and torture the children.

"I think they are almost a disgrace to our school. Mother says we ought to be very careful about our playmates," said a haughty little miss.

"Suppose we see what this coat is, or rather was, made of at first," said Roy Gordon, and he thrust his fingers into a rent and coolly tore one of the patches.

"Oh, please don't do that. Mother said up late last night to wash and mend Dick's coat," sobbed little Celis.

"Hain't you better inquire where your most honorable daddy is, and what his occupation is at the present time?" sneered Roy Gordon. At this Dick ceased his sobbing, stood up straight, and looked directly at Roy and Mabel.

"Yes, Roy, perhaps I had better go to your father and ask him where mine is. If he doesn't know I'm sure Mabel can tell me. Many nights have Celis and I gone at midnight to bring him home, for, wretched and poor as he is, our mother loves him yet and sent us to guide him home. We usually go to Mr. Gordon's first. If not there, we always find him at Mr. Rand's. It isn't always easy for me to love my father, 'cause he drinks so hard and lets mother work so hard, but it is said, 'Woe unto him that putteth the bottle unto his neighbors' lips,' Celis and I are ragged, I know, but, thank God, our clothes are not bought with blood-money. I'd rather go hungry and shabby than dress grand with money taken from poor families. My father was a gentleman. Who made him what he is? Mabel Rand and Roy Gordon; I'd rather be Celis and me than either of you," and Master Dick led his sister toward their poor home.

"Bravo!" cried the crowd that had collected, and the well-dressed children were glad to leave the place. When Dick got home his anger was gone. He laid his head on his mother's lap and told his story. Little comfort could the poor woman give. Her poor husband was so weak, and temptations everywhere. Many homes, once happy and blest, are now as desolate as Celis's and Dick's. Shall we not all try to spare the feelings of the drunkard's poor, suffering children; make their woes lighter, if we can?—*Selected.*