

spirits fell, an' all the time the profits of the shop was goin' to the New Jerusalem, as they called the speculation. An' I began to think if the brother was in the union more than 'im an' me would be well provided for. 'Owsoever, I got that lonesome —. Well, lonesome wasn't in it! So I played a little joke," went on Thomas, with a wink. "If Polly won't only associate with saints, blest if I won't be one myself! An' I tell you of it; an' Polly sent the last of our savin's to the New Jerusalem as a thanksgivin' offerin'. I was that riled. It's just as well I'd been livin' on vegetables—a 'onest pie might a over-eated me. I was bilin'. Keep quiet—that's my motto—keep quiet, an' for six mortal months I kep under. Twice a week I went to hear Brother preach; 'e brayin' out so that it went through you like a gun. The Brother was killin' polite to me, 'e was, no one could be politer, but 'e smiled above my 'ed in a manner that fetched Old Nick to my finger tips. It took the likes of me to know the likes of 'im—I was shammin' myself—but 'ow to proceed, that's what I ask you? When a man's only shammin' 'e's a saint, what nex'?" Thomas screwed up his small eyes and looked interrogations.

"Complications — usually," responded Howard.

"An' right you are, sir! Things got wuss and wuss, Polly refusin' to touch, taste, or 'andle that unclean thing—pork, an' the good shepherd a-shearin' 'is sheep consistent. 'Owsoever, not content with that 'e set 'em marchin' through the streets singin' they'd rather spend a day in the New Jerusalem than a thousand anywheres else, an' there I were stranded. I sort, a got chock full of spirituality. What with trampin' through the open streets up to 'er neck in mud an' other mortifications Polly's flesh was nearly done for, an' she took to coughin' 'orrid.

"'Now, look 'ere, Polly,' I sed, 'drop it'—that's the words I said, 'drop it, pork or no pork, 'am or no 'am, 'usbands or brothers, saints or sinners, there's too much grace in your dealin's with me, and it don't agree

with you neither. Take a little rum 'ot, and go to your bed an' be nussed up a bit, and blow the New Jerusalem!"

"She looks at me with shining eyes, and she seys, 'I affirm,' she ses—for that was the saint's way of denyin' evil—"that there is no sickness, an' no sorrer. All is good!"

"An' you may think I am not tellin' you the truth, but she smiled in such a way that it got into my throat. An' I said:

"'Things is gettin' darned bad, and it seems to me they'll get wuss before they mend!"

"'Put a denial on fear, brother Thomas,' she answered back. 'All is good.'

"'Not that good, but I've seen better,' I sed, an' I'll not deny it to you I was gettin' riled—mad, I was. 'Sister Polly,' I ses, sarcastical like, 'the sweetness o' these yer saints don't settle on my stummock—it turns to bile.'

"'I deny gall an' bitterness,' she went on affirmin' in the clap-trap of the Brother, lookin' all the while that miserable an' down I could a—well there!

"'Polly, old girl,' I ses, 'wasn't we 'appy in the old days when you stayed in your own 'ome, an' loved your own 'usband, an' made the centre o' the neighbourhood, eatin' your grub with a will? Answer me!' An' she answered with a little smile that peeped out behind a mist, an' went in agen like a winter sun-glint.

"'Them were days o' darkness,' she ses.

"'Then blow me,' I ses, 'if I don't wish it was that murky we couldn't see a hinch before our mutual noses——' That was my words, 'an' we 'ad to 'old 'ard to one another to get along at all. Are you goin' to give up this tommy-rot, or hain't you?"

"'I thought,' she ses, 'you was a renewed man—I'm disappointed in you, Brother Thomas—an' you professin' too!"

"'Renewed!' I ses, 'renewed es it? I've been renewed out a 'ouse an' 'ome! Renewed inter skin an' bones! Renewed from a 'onorable man wot owed no man anythink into a bankrup'—that's wot I've been renewed inter. An' as to professions—well, all the brother there is about me is—no