

reasonable to throw it away for the mere pleasure of a guess? Isn't this 'spending their money for that which is not bread?' I am not glad you went to the billiard-table when you did, but I'm very glad you lost money there so early in your experience, for now you know for yourself, before you have acquired the habit, that gambling is a degrading and desperate employment, a pleasure that is all bitterness underneath its gloss of enjoyment."

And Jack kept away from billiard-tables thereafter, to Lewis's great disgust. That our boy had learned to say "No" early in his life was a wonderful help to him now. He had the strength that a habit of resistance gives the soul, a strength next best to Christian principles. In vain did Lewis try to teach him beer-drinking. His promise to his mother so long ago held him with a band of tried steel against this temptation. He was no more perfect or faultless than most well-trained boys; he had their faults and their short-comings but he was not weak.

In the course of this spring he entered a Bible-class and took a seat in the church to which Mr. Gray belonged, though up to this time he had taken up the wandering habit so common to boys and young men in their first experience of city life and gone about to various churches in an unsettled way, growing critical over the singing, the preaching, the congregation, and the "style of things," until a church became to him a mere place of resort. But when Mr. Gray took him in hand at last he proposed that Jack should attach himself to some one church and take part in its services, if not yet as a member, then as one of its regular attendants. And soon the comradeship of the class, the possession of his own seat, hymn book, and Bible, the friendly hand-shake of the minister, gave the boy a feeling of home that is one of the great and beneficent results of Church organization; and is the means of bringing many who are at first merely of its congregation into that heart of Zion which is really the heart of its Head—"the God and Father of us all."

#### "HANDLE NOT."

Jack went on with his work through the summer, now and then indulging himself with a short sail on some excursion steamer, or a brief ride on the cars to some beautiful suburb where he could have a walk in the woods and fields. He saw little of Lewis Denning, but he had made new friends of a more wholesome sort at the reading-rooms and in the Bible-class—other boys who liked as well as he to take a swim in the sparkling salt water, run races on the green turf, climb trees and hills, and do the thousand things by which boys express their healthy fun and hearty animal nature. It is just as good for boys to play ball, run races, swim, hunt, and fish as it is to read and study. A boy who grows up pale, listless, flabby, with some ache or pain forever knocking at the door of life, unable to eat wholesome food, to sleep well, play well, and work hard with his muscles as well as his brain, is a boy who is good for very little, even if he knows all that his head will hold of what books can teach. For God gives us bodies as well as minds and souls, and we should respect and care for all alike. Honour his gift of flesh and

blood, boys; keep it in good order, clean, pure, and healthy, for he will ask account of that wonderful structure at your hands in the day when he requires an account of the talents, and blesses him as a good and faithful servant who can show a fervent soul, an honest mind, and an undecorated and honoured person.

But Lewis Denning had not quite given up Jack yet. His own funds were rather low, though he had the same salary Jack had; but constant amusement, that costs something five days out of seven, soon makes an empty pocket, even if you never lay up a cent, and Lewis never did.

He thought if once he could get back into intimate terms with Jack he could borrow a little money now and then to help out his own deficiencies of that sort; so he came once in a while to the attic chamber, and Jack was hospitable to him, all the more that he had just come home from his vacation, and Lewis said he wanted to hear all the Danvers news, and intimated that it was for that reason he had come to call the first time. Then, as I said before, he came occasionally, but he did not find Jack as easy to persuade as at first; descriptions of the firemen's balls, the theatre, the various shows he frequented, seemed to fall flat on Jack's ear.

"I saw all I want to of dancing at that theatre," growled he, as Lewis was detailing to him his own delight in a great ball just given by a certain firm to their employees.

"Bless your innocent soul!" laughed Lewis, "you don't think all dancin' is like the ballet, do you?"

Lewis was not "up" in French, as he would have said.

"There's dancin' that is just as good as any thing; lots of very high-toned folks dance. Says in the Bible somewhere that David danced; I dunno as you're any better than he was."

Jack felt puzzled; he was not sure himself; he fell back on an argument that was unanswerable.

"Well, any way, I can't afford it, Lew. I'm savin' up all my extra pennies to get a bicycle next summer; they are such jolly fun. If I had a wheel, you see, I shouldn't have to pay fares on the railroad to go anywhere in the summer. I could just spin it out to Silver Beach, or Fresh Pond, or Hatton, or Milend in no time. I tell you there's nothin' like 'em. And Jack launched into his pet hobby with all the enthusiasm of a boy.

But after Lew had gone, his words about dancing rankled in Jack's mind. He determined to see for himself if King David really did dance.

The psalmist was a favorite character with Jack; he had studied his life lately in the Bible-class in a general sort of way, the teacher choosing for the class such parts of David's history as made a continuous biography, and omitting detail.

Jack had a concordance—his Bible-class demanded honest study, and this was his best help beside a few small maps. He took it out of the drawer as soon as Lewis went, and turned to the word "dance."

To his astonishment there were twenty-two references to this word in its various forms, but he did not look them all out. His searching finger stayed on "2 Sam. 6. 14. David d. before Lord."

Jack opened his Bible, found the place, and read:

"And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod."

Jack shut the Bible; boy-like, he looked no further. He was disappointed; the only dancing he had ever seen was a wild orgy, as far removed from the lofty King of Israel as the fairy whirl of gnats in the dazzle of an afternoon's brief sunshine is from the awful march of the starry host through the midnight sky; indeed, further removed, for the gnats are soulless atoms, not responsible women.

Jack felt like Michal, at once disappointed and outraged; but he did the best thing for him to do, he sat down and wrote to his mother. Happy boy, to have such a refuge! A wise and loving mother is the true vicegerent of God to her children before they have learned to know the King himself. This is what he wrote:

"DEAR MOTHER: I'm awfully bothered; you know I told you about that horrid dancing I ran away from. Well, Lew has been to see me, and he was talking about a big ball he went to, and I guess I fired up some, and he said there was real respectable dancing; good people did it. He said King David did; that it was in the Bible. I didn't believe him, but I looked it out. Mother, he really did! I mean David. Now is it right to dance? O, I am so puzzled with things! Good bye. This isn't a letter, you know, only a question.

"JACK."

Manice laid down the letter with a sigh. Should she tell Jack to break off his acquaintance with Lewis Denning? Would that avert the danger if he obeyed her? Satan is not so ill off for messenger boys that to get rid of one sets them all out of the way. Then it might put Lewis into that character of forbidden fruit that from Eden down has been so attractive to poor humanity.

She felt weak and incapable before this new attempt to delude her boy; she could only ask with the eagerness and stress of great need for the help that had never failed her; and when she lifted her head, calmed and strengthened, she answered Jack's question:

"MY DEAR BOY: If you had read all that chapter in Samuel, instead of one verse, you would have seen why David danced; he was so glad to get the ark, that is, the personal presence of God, back into his own city with him that he did not think of anything but his gladness. In those old days dancing was the way in which people expressed their joy in anything that happened, as you will see if you look out all the texts in your concordance. I have no idea that David danced as people dance now; he certainly did not do it as an amusement, but 'before the Lord' in holy joy. Dear Jack, if I could see you so filled with joy and gladness and welcome for the coming of God into your heart and soul I should not care if you 'danced' all the way through the city streets!"

"Your very loving MOTHER."

Jack gave a long sigh of relief, and inflicted the whole of his mother's letter on Lewis when he next came.

"Your mother's awful pious, aint she," Lewis commented, suppressing a yawn.

"You bet!" emphatically answered Jack.

"Well, I guess you wouldn't take to balls, p'rhaps; you're such a feller to read. Do you like stories?"

"Yes. I haven't read a great many. I like books about people that travel and have adventures, like Robinson Crusoe, only more."

"Then I'll fetch you one that'll suit you to a T; it is the greatest book, 'The Horrid Hunter of Hallicash.' I bought it at an auction; it is splendid."

So Lewis brought the book, a cheap, badly illustrated story of adventure, where the hero escaped at least ten times from sudden death, sometimes by an apparent suspension of the laws of nature in his favour, sometimes by the sudden appearance of a lovely girl, a hoary hermit, or a loathly hag hopping up like a Jack-in-the-box at the most improbable times and places. Natural history, geography, physiology, probability, even possibility, were all set at defiance, but nevertheless Jack was breathlessly interested in the dashing hunter who wore a death's-head mask to disguise his lordly countenance and alarm his enemies, and turned out at last to be an imperial prince of the House of Hapsburg.

Under this course of reading Jack grew very tired of the tedious work of his daily life; he was all the time dreaming of wild rides through forest and prairie, of encounters with rushing herds of buffalo, or shots at prowling lions. He dreamed of precipices and shipwrecks, of despair and rescue, and awoke unrefreshed. He did not like to study his Bible lesson as once he did, and the class ceased to interest him; the sermons of the pastor fell on deaf ears, for he was dreaming of adventure and prowess instead of listening to the Gospel. More than once Mr. Gray reproved him for carelessness, and still oftener the teller snapped him up for forgetting his daily duties.

One day, however, Lewis left him a book of another style, by the author of "The Horrid Hunter." Jack had been looking over his mother's letters to fix some date he wanted, and two or three lay open on the table beside him, as he eagerly turned to the new book. It is not necessary to describe or retail its contents. Their tone was new to Jack. He read a few pages, and suddenly he seemed to see that forgotten ballet rise before him. His face burned, his soul revolted. He turned his head aside and caught at the glance one sentence from one of his mother's letters, "Jack, be careful what you read!" and crash went the book through the window out on to the roof of the next house.

He felt poisoned, and he was, but not fatally; for the draught had not been sweet to him, and he had discovered its venom soon. He had to pay for the book and replace the broken glass, but it was a small fine of deliverance. He had broken the net, though with torn hands in the effort, and it was many months before his mind recovered its natural healthy tone, or ceased even against his struggling will to recall words and ideas that never should have been imprinted on it. Well says the Arab proverb, "There are three things that return not: the spoken word, the sent arrow, and the lost opportunity."

(To be continued.)