

Christian woman, in spite of her various faults and infirmities, she began to look about her to see how she could help Manice and her children and John Boyd's family. She had, so far, confined her good deeds to Mrs. John Boyd, who seemed most in need, but now she thought that to help Jack was the present duty, so she bought him shirts, stockings, handkerchiefs, and collars, to the great saving of Manice's slender stock of money and Jack's carelessly hoarded wages from Mr. Marsh.

At last he was ready. The aunts had said "Good bye" to him. Anne and Alice had hugged him with tears and sobs. Mimy had wrung his hand and said, "Don't ye disappoint your ma for anything. Now *don't* ye!" with a hearty emphasis; and he came up to his mother's room for her farewell.

"Dear Jack," she said, holding back the tears that burned in her eyes, "remember 'No,' you will need to say it more now than ever in all the new temptations of a city. O, Jack, if you were only a Christian!"

Jack gave a sort of dry sob, that he was half-ashamed of, held his mother close and kissed her again and again, picked up his bag without another word, and was off to the train.

His life as a butcher boy was over. The life of his old dreams had begun.

THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT.

It befell Jack, however, as it does all of us, to find out that dreams, even in their fulfilment, are not the same with realities. Mr. Gray found for him a respectable boarding-place, where he had a little attic chamber, a narrow bed, one chair, and a table that served as washstand, with a single gas-burner beside the small mirror. There was a window close to the floor, looking out on a vast extent of roofs and chimneys, and Jack, used to the sight of trees, hills, and the wide sky with its shifting panorama of cloud and sun, moon and stars, felt much like a man in prison, but he had courage, and he resolved not to complain.

In the day he had enough to think of; his work was not all at the desk, he had some errands to do, such as always fall to the "boy" of a bank. "Here, Greeny," called out Frank Sherman, the other young clerk.

The teller was rather a pompous youth, who wore long mustaches waxed to a point, and clothes much too elegant for his position; but then he was the only son of a bank president who had retired from all other business, and Augustus Jones was here merely to learn the routine of banking so that he could step into his father's position at some possible future time.

Meanwhile Augustus magnified his office, and was far more lofty in his manners than either of the higher officials.

"Here, you young fellow," he called to Jack, after a few weeks' acquaintance, "you take these bills ovaw to the First Bank; now don't strew 'em all ovaw the street, or lay 'em down to play mawbles."

"Dear me!" answered Jack. "I guess I'd better take a hack and a policeman; I'm so fresh; reg'lar Paris green, good for pertaters and sech."

"You shut up," said Augustus, forgetting his drawl in his anger.

Jack certainly was impertinent, but he had shut Mr. Jones' mouth effectually, and he considered that he had acted in self-defence, and could not

choose his weapons. Our country boy was by no means perfect, by no means a Christian gentleman as yet.

One day he was astonished to see in a brisk young clerk coming in from another bank his old acquaintance in Mr. Gilbert's store, Lewis Denning.

"Hello! you here?" said Lewis, quite as much surprised as Jack.

"Seems as if I was," laughed Jack.

"Where do you put up?" inquired Lewis.

"Hundred and seventy-six Green street, sky-parlour, left-hand door, top of fourth staircase, *sic itur ad astra*," said Jack, airing a bit of school Latin, which was literally a dead language to Lewis.

"Well, I should think you would be sick of it. Say, what do you do evenings?"

"Various things," answered Jack, coolly.

This was perfectly true. Like a thousand other boys in the city he had no place but his own room wherein to spend his evenings. Mr. Gray had fully intended to look after him, but a financial crisis had kept him too busy and too anxious for these first two

months to give him time for any attention or kindness to his new clerk; and Jack had rather a lonely time after his supper always. Sometimes he wrote to his mother or his sisters, now and then to Will Boyd, but letter-writing was not really a pleasure to him; sometimes he read the newspaper of the day before, borrowed from Mrs. Daw, who was his land-

lady; sometimes he laboriously sewed on his dangling buttons, glad enough that his mother had taught him to sew when he was a mere child, at least enough to do these small things for himself now; sometimes he wandered out in the streets in the early part of the evening, before the stores closed, and amused himself with the various gay and beautiful exhibitions in their windows, but this amusement soon grew tedious.

Frank Sherman had a taste for music, and whenever the cashier stepped into the directors' room, or at noon, or night, was always singing in his rough boy's voice some scrap of opera music, much to Jack's amusement, for a voice that skips from one note to another, half the scale apart, without the mortified singer's intent or consent, is funny to hear. Many a time Frank had urged Jack to go to the opera house with him, but a sturdy "Can't afford it" was always the reply. And indeed it was no effort to give this answer, for Jack had no special taste for music, and was quite as much edified by the hand-organ of a street musician as he would have been by the best orchestra or the most celebrated singer. Now Lewis Denning and Frank had met often before the former recognized in Jack an old acquaintance; they both frequented places of amusement far more than was good for them, and spent more money than was best for their morals or their purses in this way; and naturally when Frank saw that Lewis knew Jack he questioned him about this new comrade, and the fact that Jack had once driven a butcher's cart amused Frank mightily. One day he came in from dinner and found Jack there before him.

"Look here!" said he, "there's a fellow wants you down at the door; on business, I guess—wants to offer you a better situation, I rather think."

Jack hoped it was somebody from home, and went with an eager face to Mr. Gray for leave of a few minutes' absence. He hurried out, seized his cap, and flew down the bank steps, but no one was there; a butcher's cart stood by the curbstone, its driver out in the street apparently bargaining for a load of cabbage with an old farmer. Jack looked around him, quite puzzled, but presently recalled the mischief in Frank's eyes, and being quick-witted about jokes divined that Frank had found out his previous occupation and meant to twit him with it. He stood a minute and pondered, for he was a little vexed; then he threw up his cap, caught it again, laughed to himself, and went up the steps on a run.

"Did you have a pleasant interview?" politely asked Frank.

"Not quite, my dear young friend," answered Jack. "My interviewer was disappointed; wanted to buy a calf, you see, and thought he'd heard one bleatin' in here. Had to explain 'twas only a musical youth; took him down some of course."

After that Frank teased him no more. Not long after this Lewis Denning came to Jack's boarding-house one evening and found him in his "sky-parlour" yawning over a letter to his cousin Will.

"Well!" exclaimed Lewis, "you are up in the world, I declare. What a perch! You don't mean to say you stay here evenin's?"

"Haven't got anywhere else to stay," curtly answered Jack.

"You are green. Here's your chance to see life, somethin' worth seein' here in a big city, and you flop right down in a garret and write letters. I thought you'd got more spunk about you."

Jack felt a thrill of curiosity. To be sure there was, there must be, many a curious and delightful thing he had no idea of to be seen and heard here.

"Where would you go?" he asked. "Frank wanted me to go to the opera, but I can't afford it, and if I could I shouldn't go, for I don't care a cent about music; not that kind, anyway."

"I believe you!" laughed Lewis. "The opera's a touch above us fellers. Frank's got a father behind him with money in his pockets; he boards to home and gets spendin' cash besides his salary. But there's lots of shows and gay little theatres where you can get gallery tickets real cheap, and lots of fun. Come along; I'll stand treat for once."

So Jack put on his cap and followed Lewis. Now, his mother had never said anything to him about theatre-going; she had an idea that forbidding any special thing was apt to enhance its value, and make it more of a temptation. She tried to bring her boy up in pure and wholesome principles, and trust him to discriminate between good and evil when both should be set before him. Perhaps she erred here. If she had talked to Jack about the theatre and its tendencies in a quiet way, and showed him that it was not the right sort of amusement for a boy, he would not have gone with Lewis, for Manice's sake, and his mind would not have received some impressions that tainted it for a time.

The place to which Lewis Denning guided Jack was one of those minor theatres where sensational dramas and

ballets are the staple entertainment, and for a small price boys can find admission to gallery seats, always crowded to their utmost capacity. It did not seem altogether agreeable to our boy to be so crowded into a hard seat between a dirty news-vender and Lewis, in an air reeking with stale tobacco smoke, the poisoned breath of whiskey drinkers, the rank smell of pea-nuts, and the cheap perfumery that was shaken from the handkerchiefs of tawdry women in the tier below; but the sparkling lights, the gay walls frescoed roughly in bright colour, the painted curtain, all arrested his attention, and when that curtain rose his eyes were riveted on the stage. The drama was not in itself objectionable as to plot. There was a persecuted girl, a persistent villain, a lover who always appeared at the right crisis and rescued the maiden, a lovely being whose rags did not disguise her beauty—what she had—and a bereaved and howling mother who shrieked much and loudly about "me chyild! me dyarling chyild!" and had something much like a fit of epilepsy on discovering her in this often-rescued heroine.

It was more funny than tragic, even to Jack, and he too far from the stage to hear the interpolated coarseness and vulgarity which set the roughs in the pit roaring every now and then. He was really quite amused by the spectacle, but when it was over, and the ballet of the after-piece came on, Jack sat stunned. His mother and sisters were sweet, modest, delicate-minded women. What were these? He felt like creeping under the bench. Both shame and disgust filled his soul. Manice's training triumphed. He grasped his cap, elbowed his way past Lewis, and out of the gallery without stopping to explain, though Lewis grasped his arm and tried to detain him, but he pulled away and fled down the stairs and home to his gullet. His brain reiterated the thought, "O what would mother say to those women!"

Lewis Denning came over next day as the bank closed, and walking home with Jack railed and laughed at him all the way; but Jack was not to be moved.

"Come again you big fool!" said Lewis. "You're green, that's all. You'll get used to it."

"I don't want to get used to it!" said Jack, indignantly.

"Whe-ew; you're rather stuck up, young feller! Why every body goes to them places."

"No they don't. Do you think my mother or my sister would go there?" and Jack faced him with blazing eyes.

"Well, p'raps not. 'Tisn't just the place for ladies, I'll allow."

"Then it's not the place for gentlemen, and I want to be a gentleman."

"Hul-lo, here's a crowin' bantam! Don't be a fool, Jack; you can't be so squeamish and see life in a city."

"If that's life I don't want to see it."

"O come now; get off your high horse, old feller; the' must be a first time for greenies. You won't mind it half so much next time, and I'll treat again jest for old times. Say you'll go to-night and see if it don't come more natural."

"No!" roared Jack. Lewis retreated—for that time.

(To be continued.)