

ed of a tear or two which had come unbidden, and the doctor declared that the skin of the young reprobate should pay for those tears. But the cuticle alluded to did not appear, either with or without its natural occupant, nor could a search of the stable throw any light upon the mystery.

Then the doctor drove to Matt's, and discovered that the boy was not there, and he stopped at the jail, ostensibly to ask about the keeper's baby, but really to give the official a chance to say something, if Jack had got into trouble and his old quarters again. But still he remained uninformed, so he began to interview such boys as were visible; these knew nothing, as boys always do when questioned about one of their own number who seems to be wanted by his right guardian. No one had seen him since the balloon caught fire, though they quieted one very unscientific fear of the doctor's by declaring positively that he had not gone heavenward with the balloon itself.

Suddenly the doctor was accosted by Shantz, the butcher, who was driving by, and who said:

'Doctor, you know dot bad, bad poy dot you got?'

The doctor admitted that he did.

'Vell, den,' said Shantz; 'yust you hear vat I say—better it is dot you do it. You not keep dot poy some oder place, den I kick him some oder place, py shimminy cracions? Dat's yust vat is is, I dell you.'

'What had he done to you?' asked the doctor.

'Vat he has done?' echoed Shantz. 'Vell, vat he didn't mebbe come pooty nigh a dooin', dot ding is mighty bad, now I dell you. He drew a big sponge full of fire at my hogs. You dink I vant to sell roast hogs? No, sir! an'ven I do, I puts 'em over de fire—I not put de fire right ofer de hogs, an' den git yust lots of poy to come an' laugh vile de bigs is squeaking, cause I reckon dey don't like to be roasted midout being killed before dot.'

'Why didn't you thrash him, if you caught him at such a trick?' asked the doctor.

'Vy didn't I?' asked Shantz. 'Vell, I yust did, but 'twasn't no goot; he wouldn't holler, but yust tumbled on de ground an' vas worse as a whole dressed pig to pick up again.'

A few questions as to time and place followed, and the doctor drove hurriedly off, vowing that if Shantz had really injured the boy, the burly German should have a large account to settle. To tell a man to punish Jack was one thing—to find that the man had taken the doctor at his word, and in

advance, too, was quite another. The doctor drove toward Shantz's house, looking carefully about him and asking questions of every one he met, so it came to pass that just as Jack was wondering how to get home and explain his absence without telling the whole truth, he heard his father's voice, startlingly near at hand, shouting:

'Jack, did he hurt you much?'

'Sir?' answered the miserable boy. Then Jack recalled the likeness of the giant of the previous night, so he feebly said, questioning, 'Shantz?'

'Yes—the villain!' exclaimed the doctor.

'My poor boy, come here, and let me see what he did to you. It was bad enough for you to throw a burning sponge into his pig-pen, but—'

'I didn't, father,' said Jack. 'The sponge fell from the balloon.' And Jack told in detail the story of the ascension and untimely end of the balloon, though his recital was so fragmentary, and delivered with so much shading of the eyes and rubbing of the head that the doctor grew seriously alarmed for the boy's reason. It took him but a second or two to dismount from his carriage and lay his hand on Jack's head, yet even in this short time his conscience pricked him sorely for his many sins of omission concerning his only son, and he formed enough of good resolutions pave at least a mile of the infernal pathway.

'Let me see your eyes,' said the doctor.

Jack lifted them, heavy and bloodshot.

'No concussion of the brain, thank the Lord,' said the doctor. 'Now show me your tongue.'

Jack opened his mouth, and that very instant the doctor sniffed the air suspiciously; then with both hands he held the boy at arms' length and exclaimed:

'You've been drinking, young man.'

Jack looked up guiltily for just a second, and then dropped his eyes.

'Go home this instant!' said the doctor; 'take off your clothes and go to bed, and stay there until I come. I never gave you a bit of sympathy without finding that I'd wasted it. Go along—quick!'

As the doctor spoke, he reached for his carriage-whip, so Jack moved off much faster than a moment or two before he would have thought possible under the existing physical circumstances. When the doctor had turned his carriage and moved off to visit some patients whom he had been neglecting all the morning, Jack's fears were sufficiently allayed to justify his thinking about the weather, for it seemed to him that the sun had never shown so hotly even in midsummer. Then he wondered what