

them, and how many, and how big they were, instead of picking up their everlasting switches and making themselves disagreeable. Perch would bite splendidly to-day, and there are people in this town who'd be glad to have a good mess of perch. I declare! I've just the idea; school or no school, whipping or no whipping, it ought to be done. I'll go right away and see if Matt can't go with me.'

Jack moved rapidly through streets which crossed the main thoroughfare of the town; then he approached a wood-pile where a boy of about his own age was at work; before this boy's eyes Jack dangled two new fish-lines and some hooks, and exclaimed—

'Come along, Matt.'

'I can't,' said Matt, gazing hungrily at the new fishing tackle, 'the governor wouldn't like it at all.'

'Oh never mind the governor,' said Jack, 'I'll explain things to him when we get back.'

Matt seemed to be in some doubt as to whether the influence of his tempter with the governor amounted to much, for the functionary alluded to was master Matt Bolton's own father, a gentleman who held quite firmly to the general opinion about Jack. Besides, Matt was vigorously attacking the family woodpile, his honest heart alive with a sense of the need there was for him to do all their was in his power to relieve his overworked father, and alive, too, with the conviction that he would have to work industriously if he would chop and split a day's supply before school-time. Besides, a fishing excursion implied truancy, which, in turn, implied the certainty of a whipping in school and the probability of punishment at home.

'Father would be very angry,' said Matt, as he sighingly withdrew his eyes from the new fishing tackle, 'and he has already enough to bother him, without having things made worse by me.'

'But Matt, he won't feel bad when he knows what you did with the fish. We'll give them to widow Batty. (This resolution of Jack's was newer even than his tackle, for he had formed it while he talked). 'She's been sick, you know, and I heard your father say the other day that she must have a hard enough time, at best, to feed that large family of her's.'

'But suppose we don't catch any?' suggested Matt.

'Then you can tell him what we meant to have done if we had caught some. Besides, we can't help catching a lot at such a splendid fish-hole as the mill dam. I think it's awful that a whole family should go hungry just because it hasn't got any father. Didn't

your governor ever read you out of the Bible of visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction?—mine has.'

Boys are no more likely than adults to resist Satan when he appears as an angel of light, so Matt speedily agreed to go as soon as he had prepared a day's supply of firewood.

'Get another axe, and I'll help you,' said Jack, and within five minutes those two boys were making chips fly at a rate which would have been the wonder of a hired wood-chopper, while Matt's mother, who happened to glance through a window wondered why Jack's father could accuse that boy of laziness. Then both boys carried the wood to the kitchen door, unearthed some worms between sundry logs at the wood-pile, and disappeared as stealthily as if in their benevolent project were animated by the scriptural injunction, to not let the left hand know what the right hand was doing.

Reaching the brow of the little hill upon which the village was situated, Jack exclaimed—

'I vow, if the river hasn't overflowed its banks.'

'Umph,' replied Matt, 'I knew that a week ago.'

'Well,' said Jack, 'so did I, but I forgot it. We can get to the dam easily enough, though; it's only half a mile across the lowlands to the river, and there are fences all the way. Riding rail fences is bully fun. Wait till I get my rod; I've got two and I'll lend you one.'

Jack extracted two bamboo rods from the black-berry thicket where he habitually kept them, lest they should occasion unpleasant questions, as they certainly would have done had his frequent expeditions with them began at the house of his excellent father. Then both boys mounted the fence, which was of rails, and their trip to the dam was fairly begun.

Now to travel by fence-rail is a delightful method of passing time, as all liberally educated boys know, if one is bound for nowhere in particular, but when one is two, and both are boys, and are in quest of fish, and the middle of the day is approaching, in which fish do not bite, half a mile of rail fencing is a trip which consumes patience with great rapidity. Had the adventurers been other than boys, they would have turned back at once, but when a boy gets a project clearly into his head he never gives any one an excuse to say that the mule is the most obstinate of all living animals. Jack soon grew impatient of his slow progress, and conceived a brilliant idea. Raising himself