

'May I have tools of my own?' asked Jack.

'Yes,' replied his father, 'the best that money can buy. And I will go right away and find some one who will teach you.'

The doctor went straightway to the best builder in the neighbourhood, and had the proposition civilly but promptly declined.

'Every boy I ever took managed to ruin all my best tools within a year,' explained the builder, 'to say nothing of the lumber which he worked up into fancies of his own and ruined by failures of one sort and another.'

'I'll buy my boy the best and largest set of tools that you can select,' said the doctor.

For a moment this offer seemed an inducement to the builder, for there were many tools which he disliked to buy, yet needed occasionally to use; he might borrow from the promised outfit. But as he thought further, he replied:

'You're very fair, but tools aren't everything. If I do the square thing by the boy, I must use a great deal of time in teaching him, and time is money. My time is money. My time is worth a great deal more than the boy's work will be for a couple of years.'

'I'll pay you cash for your time,' said the doctor; 'I'll give you a thousand dollars in advance, if you say so.'

This offer staggered the builder, prosperous though he was, for where is the man who does not want a thousand dollars?

But still the builder hesitated, and the doctor asked:

'What else do you want?'

'Well,' said the builder, prudently retiring to the doorway of a house he was building, 'what I want is to tell you something that maybe you won't like, but I can't help taking it into consideration. They do say—I don't say it, mind, but I've heard it from a good many—that Jack is the worst boy in town.'

'It's a lie!' roared the doctor. 'He's the best—that is, he has the best stuff in him. He's never quiet; he learns his lessons as quickly as a flash; he hates work about the house, just as I'll warrant you did when you were a boy, and he must do something. He likes to handle tools, though, and wants to be a carpenter.'

'Liking its all very well,' said the builder, 'but sticking to work don't naturally follow.'

'Did you ever hear of his dropping a job of mischief until he had thoroughly finished it?' asked the doctor.

'No,' answered the builder with great promptness.

The final result was that sundry papers and monies passed between the doctor and

the builder, and on the following Monday morning Jack was at work at seven o'clock railing planking upon a barn. The news got about town very rapidly, and by noon there were at least twenty boys looking at the unexpected spectacle, and tormenting Jack with ironical questions. When night came Jack's hand felt as if it could never grasp a hammer again, and he was otherwise so weary that he declined without thanks, an invitation to go with the other boys to serenade a newly-married couple with horns and bells. Then he helped shingle a portion of the roof of the new barn, but his mind was greatly distracted by the awkwardness of a boy, in an adjoining pasture, who was trying to braid together the tips of the tails of two calves; the consequence was that he had progressed so short a distance with his own row of shingles that the other workmen had gone across the barn and returned to start afresh, and, as they rested until Jack got out of the way, they ungratefully upbraided him because of his slowness, and he wasn't going to be called slow again, not for all the calves' tails in the universe.

This book might have been continued indefinitely, had it not been that Jack was steadily at work which he liked, and had a great deal of his father's society out of working hours. Gaining these he lost his reputation for being the worst boy in town, for although he remained for several years a boy and a very lively one, he had something beside mischief to exercise his busy brain upon, and a boy cannot be honestly busy and mischievous also, any more than he can eat his cake and have it too. Even the doctor and Mrs. Wittingham reformed, though it was very hard for the latter to stop fretting at the boy, and for the former to cease acting as if his son, like his horse, merely needed food, rest and correction.

Jack did not go about preaching reform to the boys and advising them all to be carpenters, but he unconsciously talked from a standpoint very different from that which he had habitually occupied in other days, and his talk came gradually to exert considerable influence among the boys, though they seldom noticed the change themselves. Jack's very title, "The Worst Boy in Town," was in considerable danger of lapsing for lack of a successor, and the inhabitants of Doveton are still undecided as to where it belongs.

As for the doctor's great work on heredity, it is not in print yet, for the doctor happened one day, while mourning over a neglected and consequently unproductive Bartlett pear tree, to drift into some analogies between