

## The Family Circle.

### JACK DENT'S EXPERIENCE.

HOW A SKEPTIC WAS RECLAIMED.

**E**VERYBODY in Easton wondered how it came that Jack Dent was a skeptic. His parents were conscientious, God-fearing people, and his ancestors so far back as they could be traced were staunch churchmen of the strictest sect.

His sister Julia, too, had professed her faith in Christ while a mere school girl, but for some reason, no one could tell what it was, Jack came home from Yale a scoffer; and, much to the sorrow of his godly parents, he kept himself out of the way of all religious influences during the interval that elapsed between his home-coming and the trip of exploration to the far West which he undertook during the following year.

All they could for him now was to pray for him, and after he was gone their petitions became more earnest, more importunate than ever. If there was one thing in the world that Julia prided herself upon it was her thoroughness, and a girl who could read Kant in the original, and quote Dante in the soft "Tuscan tongue," could not be said to be superficial.

Jack came home at the end of the year as brown as a Turk, but as full of life and spirits as he went away. No reference was made to his peculiar views, and as he had never written home concerning any change in his feelings, neither his parents nor sister were prepared for the good news he had in store for them. It was at a Home Missionary Thank-offering meeting that the surprise burst upon them, "Minerva-fashion"—full-grown.

The meeting was in charge of the Women's Missionary Society, but, on account of the great need of the home field, the pastor had solicited thank-offerings from all who felt disposed to give. Most solemnly and tenderly the good man had urged God's claim upon the silver and gold he had intrusted to his people and still more earnestly the honor of being "workers together with him," as well as the sacred joy of giving something for the cause of him who had given even himself a ransom for them.

"I wish to pay a tribute to the Home Missionaries scattered over the prairies and mountains of the far West," said a deep, rich voice, that sent a thrill through more hearts than those of the Dent family, "You all know that I had wandered far away from from my father's God before completing my college course, but I am here to-night a trophy of grace, saved through the faithfulness of a home-missionary.

"While riding over a bad bit of prairie I came suddenly upon a little dug-out in which I found the familiar faces of a young couple who went out from your own midst. Knowing the comfort,

even luxury, that this devoted pair had forsaken for the privilege of telling the story of the cross to the benighted souls around them, I could no longer doubt the reality of the religion they professed.

"You who have never seen a dug-out have no conception of the inconveniences which these substitutes you have sent out experience. I could scarcely stand erect in this one occupied by Mr. Romans and his year-old bride. There was a lean-to curtained off for a study and sleeping room. The main apartment contained stove, table and a few chairs, and notwithstanding the fact that the minister's wife had exhausted her skill as well as material to make the tiny-place home-like, it was bare and gloomy, and except for the sunshiny face of its mistress would have been as uninhabitable as the snow-huts of our Greenland neighbors.

"That you have your tables loaded with the choicest delicacies of the season may know how they subsist, I will say that the *menu* for supper that evening of my arrival consisted in rye bread, potatoes without butter, and for desert, baked-apples and coffee, without either sugar or cream. And even this was rather better than usual in honor of me. They were out of money as I afterwards learned, and had too much principle to go in debt, notwithstanding the fact that the salary promised was overdue.

"Now I have no faith in a religion that prays in plush pews and neglects to pay the missionary sent out to look after the souls for which its professors at home are responsible. I like the kind these home missionaries possess, however—the kind that thinks no sacrifice of bodily ease or comfort too great to be made when the salvation of immortal souls is at stake. They seem to have a bold upon the Almighty that, like Jacob's wrestling, commands the blessings sought.

"I asked Mrs. Romans why she remained in that wretched place under such distressing circumstances, and her shining eyes more than the words she spoke convinced me that the salvation of souls was much dearer to her than her own ease or advancement. Her reply was, 'You don't know how much real joy there is in my humble work. If there is one thing in this world that I would like to live for alone, it is to be able to go up and down the earth whispering in the ear of every one I meet, 'God loves you, God loves you.'

"She whispered this sweet strain over and over in my ears, 'God loves you,' until my soul caught the glad refrain and began repeating it for itself. Yes, God loves me, and because he first loved me I love him, and desire to-night to add my testimony concerning the all-sufficiency of his love to that of thousands of others who have found him all and in all.

"Oh, the matchless love of Christ! Is there anything too good or too precious to withhold