

ought to be thankful; you've found out at the beginning of your life just what you are good for, and that is a great thing. Most of us have to blunder along through a good many years before we find out what we can do best."

"Don't do me any good," said Jack, bluntly; "I've got to be a lawyer."

"Is that what your father means to make of you?"

Jack nodded. "And I'm going away to-morrow to a school back East where they can make lawyers out of anything that comes along."

Mr. Meacham laughed and went on; and after a hasty luncheon, Jack hurried back to the railway yard. He was surprised to find the men already at work on the engine until he remembered that Mr. Meacham had a telephone; and while he was watching the preliminary blocking and wedging, the master-mechanic came down the yard arm-in-arm with Judge Brinton-Hoard.

Jack saw them, and for a little while he succeeded in keeping the bulk of the big locomotive between himself and his father. Then the judge saw him and called him, and together they stood upon a pile of cross-ties and watched the demonstration of Jack's problem. Mr. Meacham stood near them, giving the necessary orders; and as the work went on, Jack had the satisfaction of seeing that the master-mechanic was following his plan in all of its important details. When the last pair of wheels dropped into place on the rails, Mr. Meacham turned to the judge.

"There, sir; that's as clever a bit of work as I ever saw, and the credit is Jack's, just as I told you. I was satisfied in my own mind, but I wanted you to see for yourself."

The judge did not reply, and now that the anxious interval was over, Jack remembered that his father had been silent and preoccupied from the first. Thinking it was the silence of disapproval, he held his peace on the way home; but when his father led him into the library and began to pace the floor with his hands clasped behind him, Jack understood, and immediately became as clay in the hands of the potter.

"Don't mind it, father—it's the last time, and I'm sorry I did it," he began, but the judge stopped him.

"You mustn't stultify yourself, my son; you know it's the proudest day

of your life, and you think I ought to rejoice with you, but I can't."

Jack put his perplexity into words. "I don't understand what you mean," he said; and honestly, since he had not thought of taking praise to himself on account of the demonstrated problem.

"Not now, perhaps, but you will, some day, when you have to give up the thing you have set your heart upon. Ever since you were a little chap in knee-breeches, Jack, I've been planning for your future, because you are all I have—and now I've been made to see that these plans have to be given up."

In all his life, Jack had never seen his father so profoundly moved, and a loyal spirit of self-abnegation prompted his reply.

"I won't disappoint you now, father; I'll go on and try my very best to do whatever you want me to."

The judge stopped in his walk and laid his hand on Jack's head.

"That was spoken like a brave lad, my son, but I mustn't let you outdo me in generosity. I am pretty sure now that between us we should spoil a good mechanic on the chance of making a poor lawyer, and that wouldn't do. Mr. Meacham has offered to take you into his office as soon as school closes, and I have decided to let you try it, if you want to."

A full heart ties the tongue quite as effectually as an empty one, and it was some little time before Jack could find the words to ask, "But mother—what will she say?"

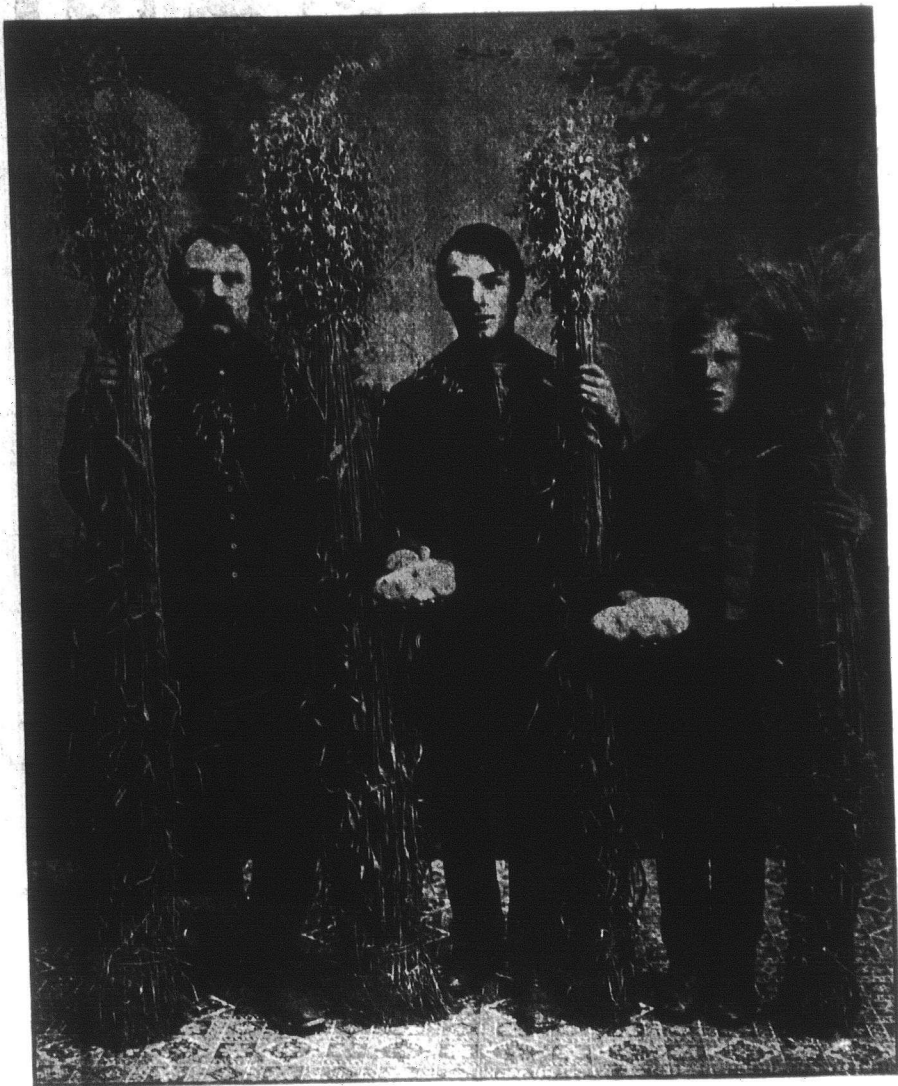
The judge resumed his walk, and a curious little smile played about the corners of his mouth.

"That remains to be seen, Jack, but I think you'd better leave the telling to me. Who knows but you may yet be able to make us both proud of you?"

It was some years afterward that Mrs. Brinton-Hoard visited Aunt Lascelles in New York.

"And Jack couldn't come with you, after all," said the aunt, when the greetings were over.

"No; and I was so disappointed. You know Jack's invention has made him quite famous, and he had to go to San Francisco to meet a party of mine owners who want to consult him as an expert. It was dreadfully provoking, and at the last minute, too, but we are very proud of Jack."



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