

# A CHARACTER PARADOX.

## Jack Bowdoin's Conversion and How It Came About.

BY CLAY M. GREENE.

**CHAPTER II.—Continued.**  
And the astute Mr. Sampson made the following entry in his subscription book:

"Mary Clarissa Bowdoin, cash \$1,000."  
"And now, Parson," said Jack, "there's something else. I want to learn to play the organ by note, and you can put me on the right road to it."

"How so?"  
"Nobody in Aspen but Miss Charles knows how to teach it, and a month ago you wouldn't let her give me a lesson."

"I was afraid that any connection with you would give her a bad name, that's it. But I'm different now; I'm a changed man. I go to church twice every Sunday. I sent to Chicago and had an organ brought to my place, and every night I play church music to the boys."

"Mr. Bowdoin, you surprise me!"  
"Yes, and you can bet a stack of blues I surprised the boys, too. Why, you hear me, Parson, just give me half a show, and I'll have the church of your own chook full of religious gamblers."

"That would indeed be a most desirable victory of the truth over sin."  
"Well, if it wouldn't, you can break me! And you can help bring it about!"  
"Do tell me, how?" Mr. Sampson was now becoming interested.

"Why," replied Jack, with much warmth, "by writin' a note to Miss Charles tellin' her she must teach me how to read notes. Then the boys won't get tired of the old tunes."

"Do you ever pray with your friends, Mr. Bowdoin?"  
"This was something of a staggerer to Jack, but, as he expressed it in his thoughts, he had 'made the bluff, and must play out his hand.'"

"Well, no. You see, I haven't got the 'hang o' prayin' just yet, and if I had, they wouldn't understand it. So I thought I'd better get 'em started through the inspirin' music of the organ."

"Yes, I think I do. The idea is novel, and ought to prove very effective. I will write the note to Miss Charles."

"That's right, Parson, and let me deliver it."  
The note giving to Miss Helen Charles her pastor's permission to accept Mr. John Bowdoin as a music pupil, "for religious reasons," was duly written, and Jack, seizing it eagerly, arose to go.

"One moment, my friend," said Mr. Sampson. "Have you a Bible?"  
"Er—well—no. You see, I loaned it to a friend o' mine that's goin' to be hung."

"Take this then," handing Jack a small Bible, "as a gift of affection from me, and with it my blessing." And the man of God pressed the gambler warmly by the hand.

As Jack passed out of the parsonage with the precious note in his pocket and the Bible in his hand, he found himself stirred by most peculiar emotions. Several contending forces seemed to wrangle in his breast. He was deeply moved by the soft speech and tender manner of the benevolent old pastor, and within his heart of hearts there was just a tinge of remorseful rebuke for having lived so tremendously to the worthy man.

"I can square it though," he thought, "by makin' it come true, wonder how it'd work? I wonder if the Bible forbids gamblin'? I'll read it to night and find out."

By this time he had reached the Hopkins cottage, and his musings ceased. For the second time he stood at the door, and rapped the bell. It was opened by Helen Charles herself, and before she could recover from her surprise at finding him again in her presence, he had placed Mr. Sampson's note in her hand.

"Here's a letter from the parson, Miss."  
"For me?"  
"Yes, he told me to fetch it to you."

She opened it and began to read. He then he noticed a look of pleasure on her handsome face, but said nothing until she had folded the sheet and replaced it in the envelope.

"Will you learn me now, Miss?"  
"Yes, Mr. Bowdoin," she replied, smiling, "I will be glad to do so."

He said nothing for a moment or two, but looked into her face with eyes full of earnestness and gratitude. Then when he had stammered out a grateful "Thank you, Miss, I'll never forget this as long as I live," two or three great tears tremble down his cheeks and fall at her feet.

Noticing, too, his embarrassment at this involuntary exhibition of weakness, she came to his rescue, the spell was broken, and she said:

"Shall you be ready to begin at once?"  
"Any time you say, Miss."  
"Now?"

"Yes, Miss, if it wouldn't be too much trouble."  
"I have no objection at home, but if you have no objection we will go over to the church."

So they walked silently down the hill together and entered the church. This quiet, innocent girl, whose soul had never yet become tainted by a single impure thought, sat trembling beside the professional outcast, who had been cradled in the lap of vice, nurtured into manhood by the fruits of sin; whose whole career had been one of outwary and crime. And there in the little organ loft, with no listeners save the rafters and the pews, the Vulture took his first music lesson from the Dove.

**CHAPTER III.**  
Before the evening fell, the lesson was over, and the mere announcement that it was so fell like a cloud over the spirit of the pupil. The new atmosphere in which for two hours he had found himself made him feel, as though he would never tire, if it could only continue on and on forever. Helen had said nothing to him that was not in the line of instruction, and yet her every word sent a thrill of terror and delight through every nerve. She spoke in a gentle, almost friendly tone, yet he would not for worlds have dared to ask her a single question, lest the sound of his voice might break the spell that had cast about him. She was so close to him at times, that her shoulder touched

his, and you've got to come. It's nine o'clock, and it's half-past eight now. So hurry up! And the representative of the law disappeared.

Jack growled out a grotesque combination of epithets and hurled them at the laws of the country which compelled an independent citizen to sit upon a jury against his will. But he dressed himself, swallowed a cup of coffee, and betook himself to the courtroom.

As outlined by the Sheriff, the jury went to decide upon the sanity or insanity of an unfortunate woman, and the case was easily disposed of. It was a manifestly hopeless one, and, without argument, she was pronounced insane, and the Judge committed her to the State asylum.

"Gentlemen," said the Judge, after signing the commitment, "there is another phrase of this case which is most touching. The woman is entirely out of means, and has left a very young child totally unprotected for support. And the Court regrets such a course, it must commit the little unfortunate to the poor house."

Jack's sympathetic chord was touched at this, and rising quickly to his feet, he addressed the Judge, most earnestly, but with an entire absence of respect for that dignitary.

"Hold on, Judge, that's not right!"  
"What's that? Are you addressing this Court, sir?" retorted the Judge, with dignified severity.

"That's what I'm doing, Judge Strong. I say it's not right! That poor house ain't a fit place to feed dogs in, let alone human beings, and worst of all a little child. It's not right to be respectful, Judge, but it's business, and you know it a heap better'n I do!"

"What other course would you suggest?"  
"I don't know. Thunder, Judge, it's my business to make trouble, not to keep people out of it. You've got a family—why don't you take the little one home yourself?"

"Ahem! Ah—well, that would be altogether out of the question."  
"Say, let's have a look at the kid, will you?"

The child was produced—a girl about 6 years of age, with a delicate face, every line of which was tinged with traces of admiration passed through the court-room, and every eye was turned to look upon the child.

"He looked at the child, held out his hand to her, and she ran to him as though she had known him all ways."

"Judge Strong, do you mean to tell me that you've got the heart to send this poor little thing to that slaughter house?"

"You cannot teach me my duty, sir!"  
"Yes, I can! You bet, I can! You're a good Christian, they tell me, and I'm nothin' but a gambler and jailbird! But I've got somethin' inside this here breast o' mine that I wouldn't trade for your Christianity at odds o' ten to one! Do you know what it is, Judge Strong? It's a pity, and I offer to take the little 'un myself and give her a home."

A burst of applause greeted this speech, and the Judge administered the usual perfunctory rebuke. Then, turning to Jack, he said:

"I would be willing, Bowdoin, to grant you adoption papers for the child, could I be certain that you are the proper person to care for her, which is doubtful."

"Well, give me a chance; that's all I ask. I can't take care of her myself, but I've got the money to pay some one who can care for her, which is doubtful."

"My child," said the Judge, "do you wish to go with this gentleman?"  
The little waif climbed upon Jack's knee, threw her arms about his neck and nestled her tiny face in his breast.

"That's all right, your charge of Mr. John Bowdoin, pending the consideration of the issuance of adoption papers."

Cheer upon cheer greeted this decision of the court. No attempt was made this time to quell them and the Judge, in whooping and whistling, declared an adjournment and withdrew.

Stock in Jack Bowdoin as a result of this touching proof of his goodness of heart had risen 200 per cent. in the estimation of the good people of Aspen.

The story of his wild life, and how he passed down the street with the child in his arms he received congratulations and friendly smiles from men who an hour before would not have spoken to him. One prominent citizen, who had twice attempted to have him arrested for keeping a disreputable resort, approached, and grasped him warmly by the hand.

"Bowdoin," said he, "I have done you wrong, and I ask your pardon. Your action regarding this child proves you every inch a man."

"Why, that's all right, Mr. Hastings," replied Jack, modestly. "I only done what any one with a soul ought to do."

"Not at all," asserted Mr. Hastings, with much warmth. "Judge Strong claims to have a soul, and has provided for its salvation by close attention to what he assumes to be the duty of a good Christian. He has been in error. You taught him that duty to-day, Jack, and are, at heart, a better Christian than he."

"That's what I want to be, Mr. Hastings, and I'm studyin' out the combinations now."

"Continue as you have begun, and you will succeed, my boy. Good morning. And they shook hands again and parted."

"It's a comin'," thought Jack, as he trudged up the hill towards Mrs. Brown's with his burden of sunshine. "It's a comin' sure. I may not get to be such a crackin' good Christian, but I'll be square man, and that'll see me fixed comfortably when the end comes."

Here his reverie was interrupted by a tiny little voice from the direction of his right shoulder.

"Where are you taking me to?"

"Hello, little one. Why, I come pretty nigh forgettin' yer. I'm a takin' over to Mrs. Brown's, where I live, and she'll be a second mother to yer."  
"I don't want Mrs. Brown. I want you."  
"Oh, I'll be there to see that she treats you right. But I say, you ain't told me yer name yet, what is it?"  
"Helen."  
"The sound of that name went to his very soul, and he felt a thrill of love that went to the very tips of his fingers and sent the blood to his face. He placed her upon the ground, brushed back her matted curls, and kissed her reverently upon the forehead."  
"That settles it, baby; all the gold in these here mountains couldn't get you away from me now."  
"What's your name?" she asked.  
"Well, you'd better call me Jack, I reckon."  
"I don't like that," she said, poutingly. "I want to call you papa. I like 'papa.'"  
He clasped her impulsively to his heart, and kissed her again and again. "So you shall, my little darling, and the man never lived that was as good a papa as I'll be to you."  
"What are you cryin' fer?"  
"Cryin'? Why, them ain't tears. I'm so full o' joy and happiness and sunshine that some of it's got to leak out, that's all. But I see Mrs. Brown on the stoop. Like 'nough she's worryin' cause I'm so late to breakfast. Come, and I'll introduce yer."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

**Better than He Expected.**  
Boston has the reputation of being a city of unusual culture. No doubt this reputation is deserved; but Bostonians do not, as the humorous paragraphs so frequently intimate, converse in the street in Greek, or conduct their business affairs in Latin. This was just the impression, however, which a visitor to the modern Athens recently received. He was from one of the mountain districts of the South, and was visiting Boston for the first time. He strolled about the city, taking in its sights, getting lost in its winding streets, and thoroughly enjoying himself.

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**Jane Scrimshaw** lived in London during the reign of eight sovereigns, from Elizabeth to Anne. Of her 127 years, eight of them were spent in an almshouse.

A woman in Caribou, Me., tendered a Confederate note of \$20 in payment for goods recently and was indignant, when the shopkeeper refused to take it.



THE LITTLE WAIF CLIMBED UPON JACK'S KNEE.