

ARABIAN NIGHTS.

Jack Bowdoin's Conversion and How It Came About.

BY CLAY M. GREENE.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.
And they walked hand in hand to the house, where Mrs. Brown stood waiting on the veranda.

"Why, what have you got there, Mr. Bowdoin?" she asked.

"I've brought a poor little orphan for you to take care of for me."

"For me to take care of?"

"Yes, why, I can't do it myself." And he related to her the incidents that led to his adoption of little Helen.

"It's a sad story, and I'm real sorry for the poor little thing, but I can't have her here."

"What's that? You pretend to be a Christian woman, and want to turn away this motherless little innocent?"

"I can't be bothered with young ones running about the house. I don't like them, anyway."

"That settles it, Mrs. Brown," replied Jack with determination. "Then you needn't be bothered with me. My board's due to-day, and my things are here. I'll see you for my things before night, and now good-morning."

"Well," stammered Mrs. Brown, now conscious that she had made a mistake, "how much would you be willing to pay for my care of the child?"

"Not a dollar a year to you. You said you didn't like children, and I'll put her with some one that does, if I have to brace every woman in Colorado."

At this, Mrs. Brown slammed the door angrily, and little Helen began to cry. Jack had led her up to the top of the hill, at the same time speaking to her in his cheeriest tone.

"There, don't cry, baby; we'll hit it right next time. The next lady won't refuse."

"What lady?"

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"Miss Charles, I'll take her to her. It's time for my music lesson, and we'll find her at the church now. So come right along and I'll show you an angel that dropped right out of heaven."

"But angels don't eat."

"What are you hungry?"

"Yes, awful!"

"Well, why didn't you say so before? We'll fix that in two minutes."

He carried her up to the nearest restaurant, and the hungry men gathered there—some for late breakfast, some for dinner—received them both with open arms.

"Say, boys, who knows how to feed children?" Jack asked, with considerable anxiety, for, on that point, he was woefully ignorant.

"I do!" answered every man Jack of the crowd in a breath.

"Mush and milk."

"No, crackers and cream!"

"Them's for babies, you ignorant cuss. Give her corned beef and cabbage!"

"No, roast chicken!"

"What's the matter with pie?"

"It's too fillin'. Give her an oyster stew!"

These suggestions, coming in such rapid succession, plunged Jack into a fever of doubt and increased anxiety.

"Pierre!" he shouted to the landlady, "fetch me something you've got and let her select for herself!"

The banquet that was set before the astonished child would have fed twenty men, but she eyed the viands with a confident air that charmed and delighted the admirers crowded about her table.

She chose a variety of eatables that would have plunged a dyspeptic into prostrations of despair, and when she had declared herself "all froo" Jack paid the bill, looked nonchalantly at his watch, and taking his hand by the hand, announced that he had an important engagement, and left the restaurant. They soon arrived at the church and entered. Miss Charles was waiting for her pupil, and when he appeared with little Helen in his arms, she changed her first smile of recognition to a look of surprise.

"Sorry I kept you waitin', Miss Charles," said Jack, apologetically, "but something's happened this mornin' that's goin' to change my whole life." And he related succinctly all the experience of the morning, ending with:

"What do you think?"

"Why, that it was grand and noble in you, Mr. Bowdoin!"

"Do you think so, Miss Charles—do you, honest?"

"I do, indeed! And whatever sins the temptations of the world may have led you to, you've committed 'em all in my eyes, enough to atone for them all."

"Oh, Miss Charles, with an earnestness that sent a pang through the heart of his listener, "do you really mean that?"

"I do, really."

"Then, that's all I want. I don't care now what the whole world may say, for it's through your eyes that I want to see everything. I'm goin' to devote my life to this little one, but I want you to tell me what to do. She's got your name and I want her to be like you; I want her to drink into her little heart some of the goodness that's yours; I want her to have a soul like yours. Then seeing that his earnestness had rather frightened her, he reassured her by bringing his plea to a close.

"Miss Charles, will you take care of her for me?"

"With all my heart."

And she knelt upon the floor, folded her arms about the little waif, kissed her tenderly, and took her into her woman's heart forever. Then, turning to Jack, with a look upon her face that seemed to him the very light of heaven itself, she said:

"Mr. Bowdoin, will you pray with me?"

"What, Mrs. A man like me pray?"

"A man like you need have no fear—God will listen to you."

"As I said just now, Miss Charles, I want to say everything through your eyes. It's a go."

So they knelt together, there in the organ loft—the Christian, the waif, and the gambler. Helen prayed for divine assistance in the new obligation she had undertaken, and the waif, who was a prodigal, whose tenderness of heart had made it possible for her to

rescue a little unfortunate from a life of sin, might be forgiven and taught at last to learn the truth.

"And as prayer was ever closed with a more fervent Amen! than came that summer afternoon from the unhallored lips of Jack Bowdoin, gambler and outcast."

CHAPTER IV.

The days that followed were full of sunshine and life to Jack Bowdoin, full of doubt and restlessness to Helen Charles, and this condition of mind increased in force with every week.

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"That settles it, Mrs. Brown," replied Jack with determination. "Then you needn't be bothered with me. My board's due to-day, and my things are here. I'll see you for my things before night, and now good-morning."

"Well," stammered Mrs. Brown, now conscious that she had made a mistake, "how much would you be willing to pay for my care of the child?"

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agita fero in the Bible, but all straight people say it's wrong, and I'm going to give it a try."

Several of the boys, in violently emphasized tones, expressed themselves as being sorry to lose him.

"It's a good of you to say so, boys; let's have a drink."

The drinks were served, and he addressed one of the men:

"Now, Stone, here's your chance. You offered me \$50,000 for the plant and goodwill of 'The Little Casino' last week. I've thought over it, and she's yours."

"And the money's ready for yer, old pard, just as soon as we can get the papers drawn up."

The preparation of the documents necessary for the legal transfer of Jack's right, title and interest in his gambling business, and the buildings thereunto appertaining, to Charley Stone occupied several hours, and when they were signed, sealed, and delivered, and a case of champagne opened to bind the bargain, Jack played a last tune on the organ, bade all of his old companions farewell and closed his doors for 'The Little Casino' behind him forever.

Little Helen was waiting for him by the time he reached the corner, and he kissed her as usual.

"This is our last meetin' on the old corner, baby. I've quit gamblin' and sold out the place."

"What are you going to do now?"

"I don't know. Join the church, I reckon. Let's go and tell her right away, and as I'm in a hurry, I'd better come with you."

The distance up the hill was traversed in an incredibly short space of time, and as they approached the cottage Jack noticed that Miss Charles was waiting for them at the gate.

"Miss Charles," he said, as he drew nearer, and set little Helen upon her feet, "I can be a gentleman now. I've quit gamblin' and sold out the whole shebang."

"Your victory is more than half won, Mr. Bowdoin. I am proud of you! And when they shook hands this time it was without a tinge of restraint on either side.

"But I was forgetting something," Helen continued. "Mr. Sampson is here, and he's waiting for you. He's the most painful duty, and I was just about to send for you."

"What have I got to do with it?"

"I don't know—we shall find out of him."

The three entered the house together, and seated in the parlor were Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins and the worthy pastor of the little brown church. The latter arose and greeted them.

"Mr. Bowdoin," he said, "I'm glad you've got to have a duty to perform in which you are directly interested."

"No, have you? Well, fire away!"

"The mother of your little ward Helen has a son, and I've just called on him to send for you."

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edlions' eddies of sin, and taught there was a God?"

"Yes," Helen, Yertias you see, my heart is open to you—creep into it, gal, and fill it with the sunshine that never knows a cloud. Will you come to me—will you be my wife?"

"Yes!" and she walked over to him bravely and placed her hand in his.

"Mine; she's mine at last!"

"Helen!" cried Mr. Sampson, in alarm, "what are you doing?"

"Accepting the protection of the man I love. We will walk together and find a creed that does not teach its followers inhumanity. Come, Helen. Now, Jack, take me away."

And these three, united at last, never to be separated again, went out of the house, into the road, past the little brown church closed against them now forever, and crossing the town, knocked at the door of another. It opened to receive them, and there Jack and Helen, with their little charge between them, were made man and wife.

And this was Jack Bowdoin's conversion. Not to creed; for, as a result of his own experience, he concluded that there was no prayer without restraint, untrammelled by canons, degrees or dogmas, and his wife agreed with him.