

## \* \* \* The Story Page. \* \* \*

### Luck and Pluck.

REV. C. A. S. DWIGHT.

There is probably in more natures than we imagine a streak of superstition, not always the same streak in all characters, but varying according to circumstances. That there was a touch of this spirit of ignorant credulity in the nature of Jack Hatley, for example, became manifest when that bright-eyed youngster was appointed to a position as cash boy in the great mercantile establishment of Brownley & Henton. It was with a look of blank amazement that Jack heard the announcement that the number of the brass badge he was to wear on his blouse as he ran on errands about the aisles of the store was to be "13."

"Thirteen!" gasped Jack—in tones only audible, however, to the boy who stood next to him in line. "What can I do with such a number as that?"

But Jack was wise enough to make no open objection to this registration, as he was not yet secure in his position. Yet it was with a heavy face that he went home that night. "Mother, I know I will not be successful so long as I am No. 13!" he cried.

"That is bad luck!" replied his mother—who should have known better, but who had neither the education nor the devotion necessary to train Jack up in right notions as to things. And Jack, therefore, went back to the store the next morning to begin on his first day's duties, but confirmed the more strongly in his false idea that a number, larger or smaller, could affect his chances of business success.

All went well for a few hours, when Jack was suddenly dispatched to carry a message to a distant part of the store, and bidden to "be quick about it, too!" With a boy's impulsiveness, he started off on a run, and allowing his thoughts to go wool-gathering (on the subject of the number of his badge) had the misfortune to jostle—in turning a sharp corner—an employee who was carrying a vase in his hand, with the result that the valuable bit of china was knocked upon the floor, thus at a blow shattering its beauty into worthless fragments.

This piece of carelessness of course brought Jack a reprimand, and only as a mark of special clemency was he saved the vexation of having the value of the broken vase charged against his pay.

This incident sobered Jack astonishingly, so much so indeed that he made himself liable (by his absorbed dejection) to several sharp calls to attention from sales-people and floor-walkers. And it was a very despondent little fellow who walked into the humble lodgings which his mother and he called "home," the evening of the first day at the big store! Both agreed that the fault lay wholly with his unlucky number.

The second day went hardly better than the first. To be sure, Jack Hatley broke no more vases, and was far more attentive to calls for "Cash!" But he made some stupid blunders when sent on errands, and began to be looked upon with suspicion by his superiors. Already "That unlucky 13" began to be said, as a kind of current proverb, about the establishment.

But it was upon the third day that matters came to a climax. Jack was called up suddenly by a floor-walker and bidden to carry a small check across the store. Grasping the check firmly in his hand (as he supposed) he started off at once to execute the commission. On the way, however, he was obliged to brush by a group of people who were blocking one of the aisles. Somewhere there the check must have disappeared; for certainly it was not in evidence when Jack arrived at the counter to which he had been sent.

"Unlucky me!" he cried, when he discovered the loss. "What shall I do?" And Jack Hatley felt badly enough to tear the pretty badge numbered "13" from his coat, and cast it contemptuously on the floor in his hasty displeasure and chargin. What he did, however, was to go at once, and with burning face confess the loss. The floor-walker, who really had tried very hard to be kind to the boy, looked very grave when he heard the story, and at once took Jack into the presence of a member of the firm.

There the circumstances of the loss were detailed, while Jack could scarcely control the tears of vexation that started to his eyes. Then the dignified Mr. Brownley inquired as to Jack's previous record.

"Perfectly honest, sir!" replied the floor-walker, but—"But what, sir?"

"Apparently the boy is rather careless in his ways, and somewhat inattentive to his duties!"

"How long has he been with us?" asked Mr. Brownley.

"Only two full days as yet!"

"This is not a promising beginning?" remarked Mr. Brownley gravely.

"What have you to say for yourself, my boy?"

Half frightened at being thus directly addressed by such an august personage as a member of the firm, Jack stammered out some explanation of his experiences, ending up with, "O sir! It's all the fault of my number.

I knew 13 would be an unlucky number when it was given me. Oh, please, sir, do change it!"

"Nonsense, boy!" said Mr. Brownley, with a touch of sternness in his voice. "Let me now give you a piece of advice. If you've done wrong, confess it. If you've done what is right, stand up like a man and defend your reputation. Be attentive to your duties, and vigilant and enterprising always. But never lay the blame of your ill deserts—or shortcomings—on such an inoffensive thing as a brass badge, or such a perfectly harmless circumstance as a number which happens to be made out of a 'one' and a 'three,' and which some people very foolishly think 'unlucky.' Write it on the journal of your memory, on the ledger of your mind, so to speak, that there's no such thing as 'luck,' but that wonders are achieved in this world—with God's blessing—by downright pluck."

Jack listened half awe-struck to the words of this big man, who held his business destiny in his hand, and as he left the counting-room (having been accorded one more chance to redeem his reputation in the store) he resolved that he would prove that "13" could be the token of successful pluck, as well as (it had been supposed) the source of unfortunate "luck."

The check that had been lost was speedily found, so Jack felt relieved somewhat on that score; and with all his powers of application and attention the boy now applied himself to his tasks as cash-boy. His duties were sometimes quite distracting, but with patient industry he tried to perform them all with satisfaction to his employers. All the while the floor-walker was watching him, and making (unbeknown to Jack) weekly reports with regard to his progress to Mr. Brownley. One little incident that helped along Jack's good fortune was his detecting a flaw in a piece of goods, and reporting it to his superiors—for which he was commended in that store, where reputation was dearer than dollars. Another thing that helped him on was his absolute honesty, which was proved to the entire satisfaction of his employers on more than one occasion of secret testing. Again Jack was the first to report one day a tongue of flame, which, if left unextinguished, might have grown to a big conflagration—for which he was substantially rewarded by the firm. And all the while Jack remained No. 13—nor did he care now whether he did or not, since the sound advice of Mr. Brownley, whom he revered as a very wise and successful business man, had effectually cured him of his boyish superstitions.

But the event which, more than anything else, advanced Jack Hatley's fortunes with the firm, transpired one evening, just as the clerks and cash-boys were pouring out of the store on their homeward way. As Jack came out of the door he noticed a fine team of horses and a splendid carriage by the curb. Into the coach an elegantly dressed lady had just entered. But as it happened, the coachman had the moment before jumped down from the box to fix something that was wrong with the harness, when he was suddenly knocked unconscious by a box that projected from a dray that was passing. At the same instant the horses started and began to rear and plunge. Everybody looked on, but nobody seemed to know what to do. The lady in the carriage was in great peril, as her white face testified, although she had sufficient self-control not to scream, or to take undue risks by jumping out. Jack Hatley saw all this in a flash; and the next instant what the by-standers saw was a little fellow hanging at the bits of the two horses, trying desperately to control them, but yet carried on a few yards up the street, as the terrified animals pranced and trembled in a nervous terror for which they were really not to blame. But the horses could not run far so long as that bruised and battered, but gritty little fellow hung on at the bits; and so presently they were secured by a policeman or two, and brought to a standstill.

Then Jack, half unconscious, was lifted to the sidewalk, just about the time that a portly gentleman came running up. "My wife!" he cried. "Is she hurt? No? Who saved her? A boy? What boy?"

"That unlucky No. 13," called out a voice from somewhere in the crowd.

"No, no!" answered another voice, in a different tone.

"Say, that plucky No. 13!"

"Well," rejoined a third voice, replying at once to the other two, "if I believed in such things, I would say, knowing what a generous man Mr. Brownley is, lucky No. 13!"

And certainly Mr. Brownley's reputation for generosity and gratitude, thus certified to by the floor walker (for it was he who spoke last), was not belied by the later course of events. For calling Jack to his office a few days later, when the boy was out once more at his duties, Mr. Brownley said:

"Some time ago, Jack, when you were brought to me in disgrace, and asked me to have what you called your unlucky number changed, I refused your request, because I knew that success in life depended more upon your own efforts than on any term or figure by which you were called or numbered. But having watched your

course with care since then—noticing how faithful you have been to the duties of a cash-boy—and now having had this evidence of your manly and unselfish pluck and daring in your determined attempt to save my wife from harm, when the horses became frantic the other day, I would like to relieve you altogether of your number, and to give you a start in life such as otherwise No. 13, as you have been called, would never have had. I will send you to school, and college, too, and thus give you the opportunity of choosing a professional career—or if you like a business life, under more favorable conditions than those under which you could have worked your way along here!"

Mr. Brownley was as good as his word; and today Jack Hatley, who has now almost forgotten that he was ever despised "Number 13," stands first in the Senior class of a noted American college.

Mr. Brownley says that he and his wife are surely coming up to the next commencement, to see Jack, for whom all his friends prophecy a bright career, graduate. And curiously enough, the subject of Jack Hatley's commencement oration is to be "Luck and Pluck."—Presbyterian Banner.

### \* \* \* Happiness.

All attempts to have a heaven on earth have failed. We use the proverb, "Happy as a king," but kings deny that they are happy. In them is proved the human sense of the loss of a forfeited Eden. Solomon wrote: "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." Nicholas I., of Russia, said at his accession: "I am the most miserable of men." James II., of England, said: "Even my children have forsaken me." Good Queen Victoria long since carved in marble and granite: "Broken-hearted widow; sorrowing mother." All the Czsars live in fear. The Austrian Emperors are austere and sad. The Spanish kings were gloomy, as also the Napoleons. A confidential councillor of two of England's proud monarchs said of kings in general: "They derive no happiness from their grandeur; they are the most miserable of mankind." Others with a wealth and sense of power almost equal to royalty have striven in vain to fill the void in the heart made by the loss of the hearts chief good. Thirty miles south of San Francisco, in the lovely Santa Clara valley, is an estate Edenic in its beauty. Rich soil, wondrous crops, stately edifices, magnificent views, a clime of balm, and all things that make life desirable, apparently, are there; but on that princely estate is a marble tomb, thirty feet in length. On a casket therein is a wreath with the words: "To my dear son." The valley of Santa Clara and all the earth is spiritually the valley of the shadow of death. There is only one paradise and that is above. —Ex.

### \* \* \* An Honest Man.

An honest man will not buy what he knows he cannot pay for; he will not borrow money when he can see no way to pay it back; if he cannot meet an obligation, he will come forward in a manly way and tell his creditor the whole truth; he will not hide out when pay day comes, but will face the world and say: "I cannot now meet it, but give me time and I will; I will not run away from my debts." Such a man as that can always get credit, be he ever so poor.

The business world is beginning to place more confidence in good moral security than in the best of real estate and money collateral. This puts a premium on honesty. A man's money may slip through his fingers, but if he be a man of honor he will always be willing to pay what he owes, and some day God's bounteous hand will be held out to him, and he will not only be willing, but ready. After all, there is much truth in the old saying about honesty being the best policy, and in Pope's famous line:

"An honest man's the noblest work of God."

Let's be honest; we can't afford to be otherwise. God intended that we be honest and true.—Memphis Christian Advocate.

### \* \* \* "Old Jim."

(THE COMMONWEALTH.)

Little boys, do you know that you cannot be cross to a horse without his telling on you? But then, he is just as ready to tell when you are gentle and kind. Do you wonder how a dumb animal can "tell?" Well, let me tell you a true story and see if you cannot find out. My brother, who is a doctor, bought "Old Jim" from a gentleman who was slightly disabled in both arms, that is they were not very strong. He frankly told my brother that he was selling the horse because it was so restless and nervous he was a little afraid to drive him. Indeed, he could only be kept still long enough for any one to get into the buggy by the hostler's standing at his head and keeping tight hold of the bit. After my brother bought

him, his wife was the new master was the general a harsh word. The consequence patient as he without being wondered g account for taken care the doctor tempted to snake had hold of the dancing and before we had been c you see a l and by his

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