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Ambitions

Mary Graham Bonner

"Do you know what ambition means?" asked Daddy.

"I think it means wanting to get on," said Jack. "When someone is called ambitious, it means they want to improve themselves and move forward."

"Exactly right," said Daddy. "That saves me the trouble of explaining entirely."

"Well. As the New Year was drawing near, Billie Brownie was making his evening calls, with the Dreamland King's help to smooth his way. He knocked on the door of a little boy whose name was Jasper."

"How are you this fine evening?' Billie Brownie asked.

"I'm thinking about what I want to do when I grow up,' said Jasper. 'I have very great ambitions.'

"Goodness,' said Billie Brownie. 'That does sound impressive. Would you like to tell me about them?'

"Enormously,' said Billie Brownie.

"Well,' said Jasper, 'when I grow up, I want to be very famous. I want to write great books and have everyone say I'm better than Shakespeare. I want to write plays and have the audience leap to their feet and cheer. I want to give concerts where every seat is sold and people are standing in the aisles.

"I want to be so popular that I'll never have to pay for anything — people will always be honoured to treat me. I want to make a great speech and have the police called out to hold back the crowds. I want to sing so beautifully that people stand in the rain for hours waiting to get tickets. And I'd like to walk a tightrope in a circus and have everyone admire me.

"I'd like to have long hair and have people think me clever without my having to say a word. And I want to act in a show where all I'd have to do is smile and people would think me marvellous.'



"Well, well,' said Billie Brownie. 'Anything else?'

"Yes,' said Jasper. 'I'd like to make a great deal of money and have an important job without having to work at all.'

"Billie Brownie was quiet for a moment.

"Jasper,' he said at last, 'what you want is to be famous and rich and admired — without doing anything to earn it. Those aren't ambitions. Those are appetites. If I were you, I'd make a New Year's resolution to be good and kind and to work hard — to make yourself *worth* something rather than simply to be worth a great deal. And when you've found out how much fun it is to work hard and play hard and be genuinely kind to people, you'll discover that you're happy. And happiness is greater than fame. Billie Brownie knows.'"

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