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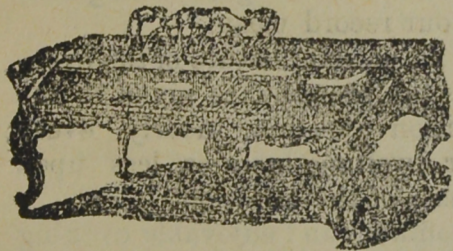
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they were, for not getting up, and any sort of excuse is better than none. She was undressed, and it was such a trouble to dress again: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" And then she had washed her feet before retiring, and to get up, and go down stairs, and open the door, would undo all that had been done. "I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" You and I would say, they were rather lame excuses, not much in them, altogether too thin.

But that is just the point. The best excuses are no excuses at all. Ask men why they are not christians, and they will urge a variety of reasons. Perhaps they will rail against the people of God, and blame them for it all. The short-comings and inconsistencies of christians have indeed a very great deal to answer for. Or, perhaps they will excuse themselves on the ground that they are too busy to give attention to so weighty a matter. Or, perhaps there are questions of grave importance, doctrinal questions, points of nice distinction, and they want to have them all settled. But, one and all, they are empty excuses, wretched subterfuges, that are of no weight whatever when the salvation of the soul is at stake, when it comes to the reception or rejection of Christ.

O men, do you let such reasons, as you urge for your not being up to your duty here, your not being christians, your not being members of the church, and so on, stand in your way in other things? Because, for instance, somebody you know, some fellow-citizen of yours, some one who lives on the same street and goes to the same church, makes a terrible failure of it in business, cheats his creditors, turns out to be an arrant scoundrel, and gives the whole city a bad business-name;—does that, I ask, deter any energetic business-man from going into business? You know it does not. You say: "I will go into business right over the ruins of his failure, and I will guard against the mistakes he made, and so succeed where he failed." And you do it.

Why, then, are you not doing it here? The truth is, my hearer, you are not awake to your duty, your soul is still asleep. If you were wide awake, if you were really concerned, if you were in earnest and realized how matters were, you would not sit still and die in your sins there. You would say: "Here is life; I must have it! Here is salvation for my poor soul; I must get it. Here is my duty, the door of opportunity for me; oh to be saved! Oh to be Christ's! Is He near? Is Jesus at my door standing knocking! Oh let me to His arms! Not a moment will I keep Him out in the cold of the night waiting on me. Jesus, blessed Jesus, welcome, welcome!"

Oh this cruel ease of ours, this wicked indulgence, that talks like this: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? The best Friend I have is out at my door knocking. He has come miles and miles through the night to see me. He loves me, and wants to help me. I know His rap so well. How urgent He is! But really I do not feel like seeing Him tonight. He can come again some other time, and perhaps I will feel more like seeing Him. If I let Him in tonight, it may not be pleasant for Him nor me. And, then, I am not prepared to receive visitors. Hark! That is His word: Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove! Open to me, and let me in out of this dreary night; my head is wet with the dew, my locks with the drops of the night!"

But your ease prevails. You let Jesus stand and knock. You let Him plead in vain. He has to go away, wet and weary. He has to go away from your door with His dripping locks and moist garments. He has had to die on the cross to do what He has done for you, come to your door with words of invitation and grace and love, still He has to go away, and the greatest opportunity is lost to you.

Am I speaking to you in parables? O my hearer, so often you have said in your own way: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" You look out Sabbath morning, and it is cold, disagreeable, and so you say to yourself: "I will not go to church today. I know Jesus is to be there. He is to be there to meet with me, to wash away my sins, to renew my heart, to lead me in the way of life, to open for me the door into Heaven. Still, another day will do as well as this." And then you think you can have a word with Him in your own chamber. You can read a chapter, and that will do as well; or a sermon perhaps, or some good book. And so Jesus comes and goes, and He is not yours, and you are not His.

Why is it, my hearer, you are still without an interest in Christ, still unsaved, still a stranger to all that is good? I will tell you why it is. It is because you have been trifling and foiling with your opportunities straight along; and if this is to go on with you, you are lost.

Does a physician say, when some one comes after him in the night, and rings and shouts him up out of bed: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" No. Perhaps half a dozen times he is waked up, and waked up very unnecessarily sometimes; still, he puts on his

coat, and stumbles out into the darkness to do what he can.

Does a business-man stay at home from his shop, because the weather is somewhat unpleasant? No; that is not the way to make money, that is not the way to success.

Oh if we would attend to religion as men attend to business, if we would be as earnest and eager to embrace opportunities, it would be very much better with our souls today than it is! But how can we be saved, trifling and fooling with our opportunities as we are? Is it much of a wonder that we find ourselves making a failure of life? The wonder is, that we have not made more of a failure than we have. Oh away with these utterly empty excuses! They are the bane of souls, the things that wreck lives, lose Heaven to us. No longer trifle. No longer delay. No longer neglect. Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart. Today Jesus calls. Today He knocks at your door. Today He is saying to you, O my hearer, "Open to me! open to me!" Oh then, let not your ease keep the door shut against Him! It is that, and nothing else, that is in the way of your salvation.

And opportunities do not wait. Jesus knocks at your door today, and His word is: "Open to me!" But tomorrow He may have gone. No more of His knocking for you! No more calling. Ah! then how anxious and earnest you will be. But it will be too late. Then you will seek Him, but you will not find Him. You will call, but He will not answer. Too late! too late! Oh let it not come to that with any of us! And yet, it is so easy to let it come to that.

AMEN.

How admirable is the arrangement through which human beings are led by their strongest affections to subject themselves to a discipline they would else elude!

Manners are of more importance than laws. Upon these, in a great measure, the laws depend. The law teaches us but here and there, now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarise or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation like that of the air we breathe.

In matters of conscience first thoughts are best; in matters of prudence last thoughts are best.

Carlyle says there is always a black spot in our sunshine, and it is the shadow of ourselves.

Humility is most serviceable as an under-garment, and should never be worn as an overcoat.

Doing is the great thing. For if, resolutely, people do what is right in time they come to like doing it.

COOKING RECIPES.

EVER READY PICKLE.

Chop fine four large, crisp cabbages, and six medium sized onions; salt them to taste and let them stand over night. The next morning scald two quarts of vinegar, adding two pounds of brown sugar, and two tablespoonfuls each of ground mustard, black pepper, cinnamon, turmeric, celery seed, scraped horse radish, allspice and mace. Pour it boiling hot over the cabbage, and for three mornings drain it off, scald it and pour it over again. On the fourth morning put cabbage, and over the fire and heat it to a boil. Let it boil five minutes, and when cold, pack it in jars. You can use it at once.

SPICED BAKED PEARS.

Select handsome, smooth-skinned pears, and pretty-colored ones, wash clean, and bake them in a baking pan, and over them sprinkle one pint of sugar and add a pint of water, then cover with another baking pan until tender. Have ready boiling hot, one quart of good, pure vinegar, into which one quart of granulated sugar, teaspoonful each of bruised cloves and cinnamon bark has been stirred. When the pears have been bottled pour over the hot syrup and seal. If care is taken these pears will, when opened, look natural and tempting.

TEACH YOUR BOYS.

- To read aloud when requested.
- To cultivate a cheerful temper.
- To help their mother and sister.
- To wipe their boots on the mat.
- To run, swim, carve and be neat.
- To sew a button and to do an errand.
- To speak pleasantly to an old woman.
- To cut kindlings and to sing, if they can.
- To help the boy smaller than themselves.
- To put every garment in its proper place.
- Not to tease boys smaller than themselves.
- To be honest, make a fire and be punctual.
- To remove their hats upon entering the house.

A MISSOURI ROMANCE.

How a Pretty Typewriter Girl Won a Wealthy Young Man's Love.

A pretty little romance is rounding into shape in the office of an investment company in this city, says the Kansas City Times. A handsome and worthy young lady typewriter and a young man of substantial business standing, of good habits and pleasant place, are the parties to it. An aged and rather well-to-do widower, who lives in a suburban town, had a good deal of business with the investment company and was favorably taken with the typewriter letters that he had from the company. "These things are gotten up in good shape," said he, "and I'd like to see the one that composes 'em. They are easy to read and are to the point." The old gentleman's son, by way of a joke, told his father that a handsome young woman prepared the letters, and that she was the sweetest and most practical girl on earth. The old man said little, but began an investigation, and at the office of the company was directed to a roughish young woman, who admitted the authorship of the letters. The old man meant business and very promptly and pointedly told her that she would win a good home and a snug fortune by marrying him. The young woman would not make a positive reply, but to carry on the joke gave tacit assent to the old boy's suit. About this time word was conveyed to the son who had sought to be funny with his father that the old gentleman and the young woman had really serious intentions. He then set about to stop it. Going to the young woman, he said to her in his matter-of-fact way that he was decidedly opposed to a marriage between her and his father; that he had money of his own and would gladly contribute any reasonable sum that she might name rather than have the marriage take place. This was the first intimation that the young woman had that the affair was growing serious enough to be looked upon as a certainty by the old gentleman's family. She very frankly confessed to the solicitous son of the aged swain that she had only been romancing and that he need not fear that she would take the office of step-mother to him. In this interview both were characteristically pleasant and frank, and they parted good friends and so on. The young man found it necessary to call again and again, and the young typewriter welcomed him cordially each time. And so visits have gone on, and the friendship has grown into love between them, and here is the romance. This explains why a wealthy young man is soon to marry a pretty typewriter girl.

A BRAINY BRAKEMAN.

How a Green Country Boy Made His Way in the World.

It was only a few years ago, says the Washington Post, that a green country boy, applied to Division Superintendent Hitchcock, of the Galesburg division of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroad, for work. Mr. Hitchcock could set him at nothing but braking on a freight train, and disliked to give such work to him because of the lad's youthful appearance and the dangers besetting that vocation. The boy, however, pleaded until he secured the employment. On one of his first trips, if not indeed the very first, it chanced that his train met another freight train at a station where the side-track was not long enough to accommodate either. The conductors were discussing the question which train should back up to a point where they could pass, when the green boy ventured to suggest that neither need back up; that they could pass by means of the short side track if they worked it right. This occasioned a

good deal of laughter on the part of the older and more experienced trainmen, but the boy insisted he could work the trains by each other.

"Well, how would you go about it?" asked one of the conductors, confident that the lad would soon be up a stump. The boy took up a stick and traced in the sand a diagram of how he would do it.

"By thunder," or worse, said the conductor, "I believe that will do it." They tried it and it did do it. To-day every trainman in America probably knows how to "saw by" two long trains on a short side track, but until that inexperienced country boy worked it out of his noddle the practice on the old "Q" road had been for trains either to avoid meeting at such points or, when they chanced to meet, for one of them to run back to a longer side track.

That boy is C. H. Chappell, and he is general manager of the Chicago, Alton & St. Louis road, which when he took hold of it a few years ago was little more two streaks of rust and a right of way, but which is now one of the best equipped and successful lines in the West.

We don't know what has become of the trainman who laughed at the green country boy. We don't know whether they are watching crossings or have given up rail-roading altogether.

Story of a Keg of Nails.

A Hartford (Conn.) lady tells this true relation concerning her ancestor, who was a direct descendant of John Eliot, the great missionary and scholar. This lady lived in New Haven, and had occasion to send to Boston for a number of kegs of nails, New Haven at that time (about 1765) not producing these necessities. In due time the kegs arrived, and, on opening them, it was discovered that one was filled with Spanish dollars. The family wrote to the Boston merchant, telling him that one of the kegs held something more valuable than nails. He replied that he had bought them for nails, and his responsibility therewith ended. Well, they were kept among the family treasures for many years untouched and unclaimed until the death of the head of the house, who, in her will, ordered that they be melted and cast into a communion-service for the New Haven church, which was done, and it is still probably in use.

Wonders of Philosophy.

The polypus, like the fabled hydra, receives new life from the knife lifted to destroy it. The fly spider lays an egg as long as itself. There are four thousand and forty-one muscles in the caterpillar. Hook discovered fourteen thousand mirrors in the eye of a drone; and to effect the respiration of a carp, thirteen thousand three hundred arteries, vessels, veins, bones, etc., are necessary. The body of every spider contains four little masses pierced with a multitude of imperceptible holes, each hole permitting the passage of a single thread, all the threads to the amount of a thousand to each mass, join together when they come out, and make the single thread with which the spider spins its web; so that what we call the spider's thread consists of more than four thousand united.

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