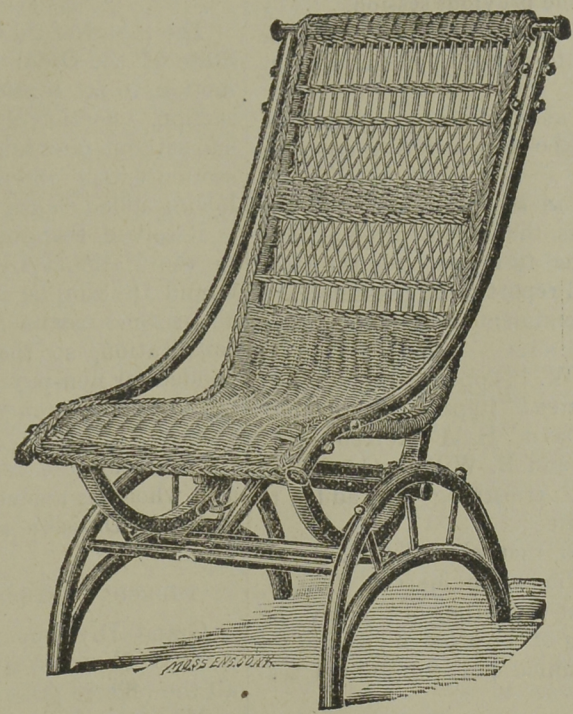


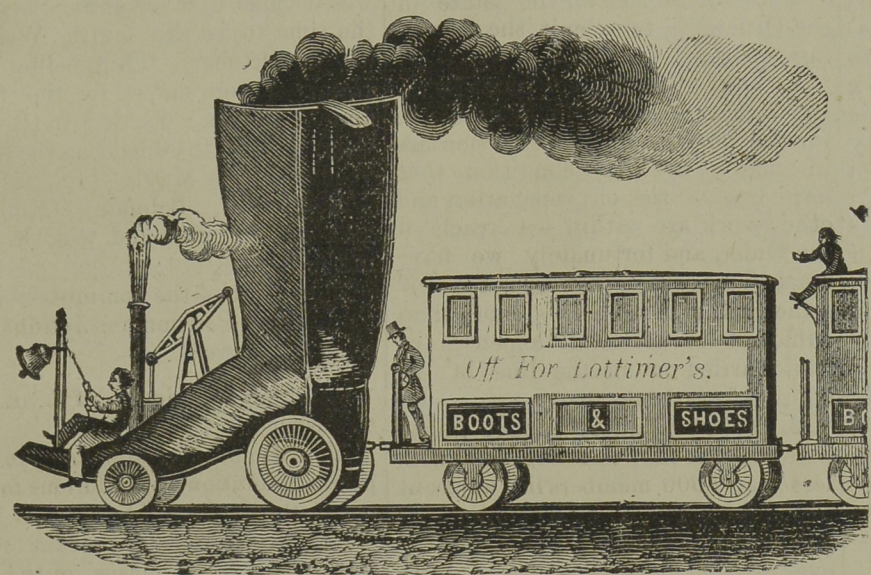
Chairs! Chairs!

Chairs of all Kinds



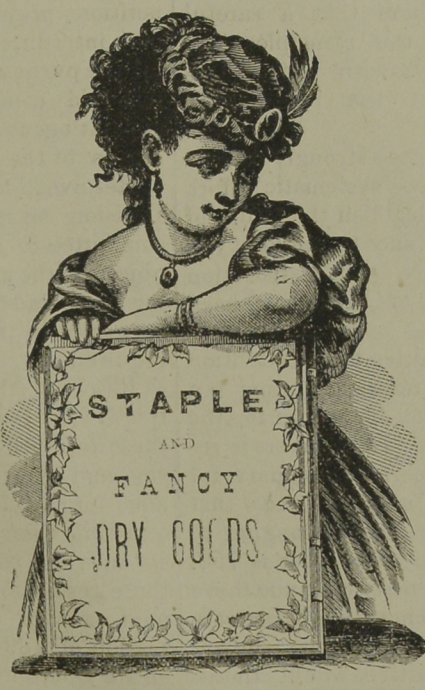
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baptism and the Lord's Supper. Its seeming success only makes it all the more dangerous. Through the press it keeps us posted as to the great good it claims to be doing both at home and abroad. But at home it flourishes only on the churches. We do not find it going where the churches have not gone before it and done the hard pioneer work. It could not live but for the churches, and yet it is doing all it can to hurt them. And then abroad it does as it does at home. It goes to India where the churches have gone, and drums up quite a following out of their weak converts, and then it proclaims to the world the great good it is doing. But let it go, as the churches do, to new fields, to the raw heathenism, to the remote islands of the Pacific, or to the inland provinces of India and China, and drum drum there where they will interfere with no church-work, and then tell the world what they are doing. The truth is, much of its work is sham, and instead of proving a blessing, it may grow as other isms have grown to be a great and wide-spread error. You say, "See how it is advancing?" My answer is, error grows as the truth does not grow. See how Mohammedanism has grown! See how Mormonism grew! Let us be on our guard against it, for it is clearly not in accord with the teachings of the Master and His Apostles, whatever it is. I wish I could have something better to say of it, for I never like to find fault with anything that seems to be good lest it might be more of God than I think; but the more and more I come to know what it is at home and abroad, and the methods of its work, the less and less I like it. It is a broken cistern, and the water it holds is far from being pure, whatever else it is.

And there are so many other things today that profess to be of God and so good, so helpful, so blessing bringing, such as perfectionism, the faith-cure idea, and a multitude of other things that have not reached us here as yet, and they will be found wanting and hurtful instead of helpful.

Thus of the sensationalism of today I think the Lord utters this complaint: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

Again, I find here a complaint against modern churches, our own perhaps as much as others.

We find fault with the uprising of sects and societies, Plymouthism and the Army and so on; but the churches have themselves to blame for them. If the churches were doing all they might do and ought to do to reach the masses, and lift them up and save them, there would not be these abnormal manifestations of religious activity set on foot by earnest but erratic men, and there would be no occasion for them. But, as churches, the world-spirit grows up in us, and we become cold and careless. We let men die all around us, and we make no efforts to reach them and save them. There are grand towering churches in the populous cities of the world, and yet so few go to them, or want to go. Now, there is clearly something wrong. It is not because the gospel of the Lord Jesus is a dry uninteresting theme, a subject men care nothing about. That is not so. It is because the gospel is not preached, or if preached, it is not preached in its purity and simplicity and power. Where it is thus preached, the people are there hungry and earnest, and they are being fed. Where the living water bubbles up, there they come to drink.

The danger today that we must guard against is too fine and expensive churches. It costs so much to keep them up that the poor cannot go to them, cannot afford to go to them. They cannot pay their pew-rents. They cannot dress well enough to go to them. Only the rich and fashionable can go, and the poor stay away.

Then the free-seat idea does not seem to work much better. That is being tried everywhere with but indifferent success. To cheapen the gospel so that it costs men all but nothing to have it, is to teach them to despise it. Unless we can get the people to feel that it is their money that built the church, and their money that supports it, we do not get a right hold upon them. It seems to me the true idea is somewhere between too expensive churches on the one hand, and too cheap ones on the other.

The tendency today, however, and it is an evil tendency, is away from the simple gospel. We build grand churches, towering steepled edifices. We have fine music, a splendid ritual, a pompous service, a great Doctor of Divinity who is away up in all the learning and philosophy of this age to preach learned discourses, and so on, and so on. Ah! can we not see that such a church is a broken cistern that can hold no water? It is not where the living water gurgles as it flows. It is not where souls are born. It is not where men are helped, comforted, saved. It is not where hearts are stirred, and consciences awakened, and hardened sinners are convicted and converted. Oh how dry and cold and empty such a church is! How God cries out here in the text against such a church: "For my people have com-

mitted two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water!"

O my brethren, is the Lord thus complaining against us as a church and people? Are we getting away from the grand simplicity of the truths as we have it here in the gospels and epistles, the psalms and the prophets? Are we getting too fine, too worldly, too uppish, too exclusive, to be of use to the poor and wretched around about us? Let us look to it, and if we are, let us humble ourselves at the feet of God, and beseech Him not to cast us off, but to come and fill us with His presence and power and grace, and make us useful. I do feel that the gospel is not here the power it might be. Men are not coming and asking what they must do to be saved. Hardened sinners are not being won. Let us seek to have triumphs and trophies that we can point to, and say, "God is among us indeed! See what He is doing for us!"

And, in conclusion, let us look at the text as for us as individuals. Am I, are you, committing these two evils? Are we forsaking the Lord the fountain of living waters, the joy and hope, the comfort and help, the salvation of souls, and are we going back to the world and its waters, its follies, its luxuries, its drinks, its empty joys, its broken cisterns, for our good, our happiness? Business is more to you than it should be. The world, the world, how it is taking hold upon you. And you are not here as much as you used to be? You are not so consistent, not so faithful, not so earnest. Oh beware! Jesus alone can save. He is the fountain for cleansing and life, the source of grace and peace, and to forsake Him is to go to ruin. Oh, then, let it not be said of us as individual christians: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

AMEN.

BUILDING.

We are building every day,
In a good or evil way,
And the structure as it grows
With our inmost self disclose.

BUILDING.—Be careful how you build. Let nothing go to form your character that will not make it better or stronger. Let each brick be an honest one, and let it be laid carefully, with an earnest purpose to make of yourself a good, noble man or woman. If already poor material has entered into your character, seek divine help to remove it. Get out every bad piece, every worthless habit. You cannot afford to have only an ordinary, much less a weak, character. While building see that you build of first-class material. You can build but one character in a lifetime, and it is to be yours for eternity; so make it the very best possible. But no character can be built of the best material unless we go to the Bible for it, nor built in the best way unless under the direction of Jesus, the master-builder. Gathering your material from the word of God, laying every portion with the trowel of prayer and under the direction of Jesus, the great master, your character will be one that will stand all trials, pass all tests, and remain through eternity well worth the life-time it took to build it.

We all praise contentment. But how few of us practice it.

Search others for their virtues, but your own heart for vices.

It is easier to believe an ill report than to inquire into the truth thereof.

Recipe for keeping faith from degenerating into hard bigotry—Link it always with a loving act.

Heaven leaves a touch of the angel in all little children, to reward those about them for inevitable cares.

Life is not victory, but battle. Every battle declined, as well as every battle drawn, is a battle lost.

If a young lady has that discretion and modesty, without all knowledge which is little worth, she will never make an ostentations parade of it, because she will rather be intent on acquiring more than on displaying what she has.

The weakest living creature, by concentrating his powers on a single object, can accomplish something. The strongest, by dispersing his over many, may fail to accomplish anything.

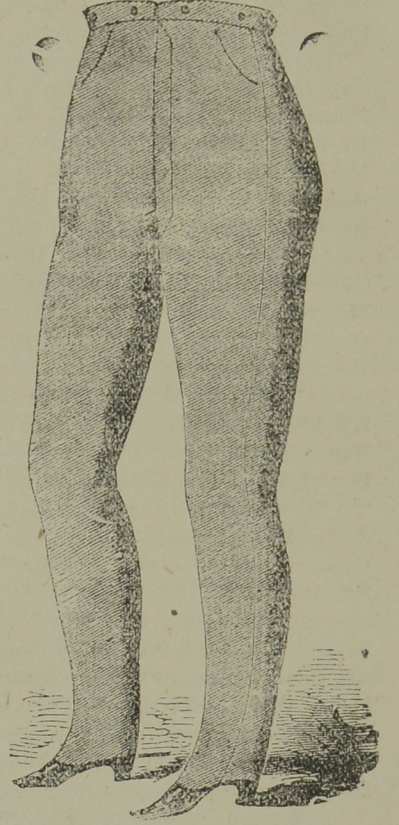
What furniture can give such finish to a room as a tender woman's face? And is there any harmony or tints that has such stirrings of delight as the sweet modulations of her voice?

There is the danger now which there was in the old time lest we mistake the reflection of our own imaginings for the shape of God's promises. We see a little and forthwith we are tempted to make it all. We yield to the temptation and become blind to the larger designs of Providence.

Jas R Howie

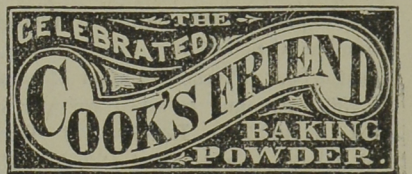
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