THE PRIVAT-DOCENT PLAN

Feature of the German University System Recommended for Our Colleges.

Sharp Criticism of the Common Practice of Retaining Incompetent Teachers in Service —Great Injury Done to Students.

Prof. Charles M. Moss, in Northwestern Christian Advocate.

The person named in the heading above does not exist in America. It is the purpose of this article to indicate that his presence among us would be fruitful in good results.

Each year after commencement season, and at divers times additional, the church press, and not unfrequently the secular page as well, teems with plaudits of various educational institutions. As a general rule, they deserve much praise for the welfare they lend to the community. They also deserve much special praise in certain instances. But the fulsome eulogy of "reports" cannot be intelligently qualified by the public, from lack of specific information. It is an undisputed fact that a large field of friendly but severe criticism lies behind these encomiums. We refer to the obligations educational institutions are under to the public at large, and specifically to their patrons, through their teaching forces. It is well for that public to keep steadily in mind that the sole vital criterion of the excellence of a school is the teaching power of the faculty, supposing them to be men of good character. Buildings, museums, laboratories can, to no small degree, be omitted, provided you have men whose personality is more than these things. Where both are united the best conditions obtain for gaining an education worth the name.

Doubtless there are some institutions whose teaching force is thoroughly good and needs no weeding out; but they are few, although our four hundred colleges and universities vociferate that they all belong in this category. The fact remains, however, that inefficient men and women are to be found upon most faculties, inefficient by reason of idiosyncracies, laziness, incompetency, or other special deficiencies. Probably the general public understands that when a board of management discovers this fact a change is made. The truth is, however, that in a majority of cases the board does not know the fact. Why should they? They meet but once or twice a year. They are men who, many of them, have no idea what an institution really needs. They listen to the president's report and usually accept it without a question, his praises constituting a proof of efficiency, or dispraise of incompetency. This fact admits of great wrong being done, and it is done.

WHERE THE GREATEST WRONG IS DONE.

But a more deplorable status is found in the unwillingness or downright refusal of boards to remove inefficient instructors. This is constantly occurring. We have confidence in saying that in a hundred institutions at this date are men and women known to be deficient but retained—those who have outlived their usefulness and should be pensioned; those who are platform speakers, not teachers; some who might be useful, but are too lazy to be so; some who have influence back of them, but mediocre ability; some, indeed, who have great learning, but are utterly unable to impart it; beside many others. A president of a very large university recently said that a third of his faculty should be removed at once. He designated them as wet logs. Will they be removed? No. A young man recently remarked that at the college which he had been led to attend through vivid representations of interested friends was one man who was shortly removed for imbecility, after retention for five years in that state; one or two had great abilities, but were worthless as instructors; one was too lazy to do anything more than routine class work; several others had moderate abilities and moderate teaching capacity; and from only two or three did he get any real value for the years of time and thousands of money that his education had cost him. He complained bitterly that he had been handicapped in the race of life by false representations of the college authorities. The reader may say that he should have gone elsewhere; but where? Was he certain of meeting anything different? Further, any college man knows how exceedingly difficult it is to change colleges after one is caught in the maelstrom of a college life.

The serious phase of the matter is twofold. First, that it is nothing less than a fraud on the part of those in authority. Ignorance may mitigate, but not excuse this. Second, it is a harm that can never be undone; that young people, anxious for the future, having only one chance for a college education, are first deluded and then dwarfed in the procedure. A few will rise above these limitations by natural endowment. Most expect the work of instruction to make good natural deficiencies, and they have a right to be satisfied. This right is never taken into serious consideration by those in authority, when personal interest or some other whim operates to retain ineligible men upon faculties. No code of morals can justify the retention of an inferior man if a better can be had; and he can, usually.

WHERE A REMEDY IS FOUND.

A swift and sure remedy for this kind of mischief could be found in the introduction of a modification of the German system of privat-docent teaching. At the German universities bright young men who think they have something to say are allowed to come and give instruction. Their pay is the fees received, which often are small, to be sure. The student has his final examination to pass, and it makes no matter where he gets his instruction, provided he has been registered at the university a due time. If these young men show that they have abilities they may find a professorship after a time. Meantime two results are reached. The best talent of the empire, in scholastic lines, is attracted to the universities, where success depends upon literary activity, ability and value. A stimulus of the most decided kind is urging these young men on. Second, while the regular professors are appointed for life, the prodding of conscience at the thought of young men emptying their lecture-rooms acts as an incessant goad to spur them on. The gravitation they themselves received, many of them, from the privat-docent life is an added inspiration. It is no wonder, under this regime, that the German universities lead the world! The upper ranks have a pry under them in the privat-docenten, and the privat-docenten in the hope before them. A more shrewd scheme was never devised than this to stir the intellectual life of a nation.

We have been slightly approaching something of this kind in the system of fellowships now extended at certain institutions. But it fails far short of what the German idea accomplishes. We can do nothing of the sort so long as it is made obligatory that instruction shall take place under the "regular" faculty, rather than that the examinations shall be acceptable. That something of the German order would infuse a life into our higher educational life such as it has never known, is beyond dispute. In direct instruction, possibly to some extent in literary activity, the same result could measurably be reached if boards would refuse to appoint or retain inefficient faculties. The imposition of the German system, with all modifications needful, would produce a result both painful and ludicrous; painful to see the infirm displaced, ridiculous to see what oil-consuming labor would, for the first time in years, be indulged in.

The mere statement of the case precludes any moralizing upon the public benefit to be derived from turning our colleges and universities into hives of literary activity, of stimulating endeavor, of that kind of genuine teaching which was exemplified by Mark Hopkins, the enthusiastic character-making Dr. Charles W. Bennett and others —precious souls known and worshiped, here a man and there one, by every graduate of the University of Illinois.

Three Classes Keeley Can't Cure.

Chicago Post.

"There are three classes now attending there who are not benefited. There is the wealthy class, who go there and are cured, and then they find themselves out of business. They have no intellectual pursuits and no longer see the enjoyments of the race course or club, so that in some instances they have resumed their old habits. Another class is composed of those afflicted with a sort of species of insanity. They are usually intellectually brilliant, or have been, but there is scarcely enough brain force left to build upon in an effort to change their mode of life. A third class is the thoughtless young man or boy, who usually belongs to the wealthy class, and is there, as he says, to 'please the old man.' These look upon it as a vacation, and go away from Dwight in some instances only to return. 'I'm here again, Doctor,' remarked one on his second visit. 'The boys said I could not drink, and I thought I would show them I could.' But the doctor told him to go home again; that he could not and would not waste his time on such patients."

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

One of the Mysteries.

The Epoch.

"I don't see why they call this a situation," said the horse-car driver, with me a-standin' all day long.

Unremitting.

The Epoch.

Trotter (Yale, '95)—You say your father writes to you with unremitting regularity?

Camper (Yale, '94)—Yes, a letter every week, but no cash.

Palmistry.

Puck.

Kitty Winslow—They say you can tell a girl's character by the way she holds her hands.

Tom De Witt—H'm; I can tell more about it by the way I hold her hands.

She Had Read the Papers.

Greensburg Sparks.

"Papa," said young Mrs. Hunker, "won't you please give George and me $10,000?"

"What do you want that much money for?"

"We want to build a $5,000 house."

From Different Stand-Points.

The Epoch.

Rev. Dr. Primrose—I hear your husband is dangerously ill. I hope he's prepared if the worst should come?

Mrs. Surface—I'm happy to say he is. Pa insisted upon his taking out the policy before he married me."

Two Demned Democratic.

Puck.

Mr. Goodsell (on vestibule train)—But what do you think of our palace-car service? Isn't that nearly perfect?

Lord Howlong—I think it's an infernal nuisance. It always makes me uncomfortable to see other people as comfortable as I am.

Quite a Surprise.

Texas Siftings.

A little girl, very much excited, rushed into the parlor, which was full of company, and exclaimed:

"Mamma, just think of it!"

"Think of what, darling?"

"Our cat has a whole lot of twins, and I didn't even know she was married."

Innocent Reparter.

New York Press.

"Do horses go faster with shoes or without them?" asked the wife, looking up from the pages of Black Beauty.

"With them, I should say," answered her husband.

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, I've notived that a hen always goes faster after you shoo it."

A Useful Proverb.

New York Press.

"She was so much attached to her first husband that she would not marry again till she went to his grave and asked his consent."

"How foolish! Of course she couldn't get any reply."

"No, but she married again, nevertheless; she remembered the proverb, 'Silence gives consent.'"

Patience No Longer a Virtue.

Atlanta Constitution.

Old Subscriber—I called to pay you that $6 I owe you.

Editor (loftily)—There was no hurry. You needn't deprive yourself.

Old Subscriber—In that case I'll defer it, as I really do need the money badly.

Editor (rising)—John, look the door, and if he makes a break for the window knock him down with the mallet. Now, shell out that $6!

He Was "Fly."

Philadelphia Press.

"Isn't your husband at home, Mrs. Bender?" asked Mrs. Ballard, as she was making a morning call.

"Oh, yes! he's in his aviary."

"In his aviary! Why, I didn't know you had a collection of birds."

"I have not. But Mr. Bender came home early this morning on one of his customary larks and went to bed with it. I have not seen him since; so I presume, as I said, he is still in the aviary."

"Oh!"

Among the Elite.

Texas Siftings.

Mr. Madison Square—Allow me to congratulate you. I understand that your son Charles has engaged himself to Miss Bondclipper. It's a brilliant match, isn't it?

Mr. Knickerbocker—I should say so. She is one of the richest girls on Fifth avenue. She has $3,000,000 in her own name. Besides, she is handsome, splendidly educated, and knows how to play on the piano. Charley is so dead gone on that girl that I believe he would marry her if she only had $2,500,000.

A Definition.

Chicago Tribune.

"Can any one in the class give a definition of the word 'parasite'?" asked the teacher.

There was no response, and she proceeded to define it herself:

"A parasite is a creature that lives on its fellow-creatures. Now remember, children. What is a parasite?"

And a little boy with a thoughtful, Emersonian cast of countenance stood up and said:

"A parasite is a cannibal."

Jersey's Female Ticket Agents.

Philadelphia Times.

At several points in New Jersey women are employed as ticket agents by the railroads. Miss Middy Morgan, long famous as live-stock reporter for a New York paper, has charge of the station at Robinville, but her duties are not onerous, as they are performed by a deputy, and a train rarely stops at that point. Mrs. Reid, at North Elizabeth, has to handle much more business, and is very popular with passengers, particularly since the day of the great blizzard, when she made a crowd of blockaded men and women welcome to her hospitable home, and warmed and fed them until they could get away.

But one of the best known of the female agents is Mrs. Marion Soper, who "runs things" for the Pennsylvania railroad at Menlo Park. She is only twenty-two years of age, but has developed a great aptitude for the business. Her husband is a telegraph operator in the employ of the corporation, and the two get on as "snug as bugs in a rug," to use Mrs. Soper's expressive description of their felicity. She is under $1,000 bond and gets $30 a month, besides house, fuel and light. Her husband has a larger salary, and on their combined income they manage to live "just splendid." All the women working for railroads in New Jersey are said to give satisfaction, and one line is reported to contemplate an increase in the number of its female employes.

Couldn't Stand Shrimps.

Notes and Queries.

Ideas as to what is "good for food" come simply from use and habit. I remember, about thirty years ago, when "the harvest of the sea" did not come far inland, my father, who was staying at Weymouth, sent some shrimps to the parish clerk at home in Warwickshire. But afterward, on being asked how they were enjoyed, the old man bashfully owned that "they looked so like crickets that none of the family could bring themselves to eat them, so they were buried in the garden."

A Sensible Mother-in-Law.

Philadelphia Record.

While a New York young lady was being married to a well-to-do young farmer of Long island a few days ago, her mother stood outside the church and wept. It was explained that she had seen the bridegroom walking about his farm in his bare feet, and had thus taken a dislike to him.

The Oldest Inhabitant Defined.

Texas Siftings.

The good die young. The bad live to lie about the weather and are spoken of as the oldest inhabitants.

SECURING THE CONTRACT.

A slender girl about twelve years old, with dark hair and eyes, was watering some thirsty morning-glory vines, which she was trying to train up the sides of her dugout home.

"Callie!" called a man's weak voice from within.

Dropping the basin of water, she entered the dugout. On a home-made bed in one corner lay a man of about thirty-nine years, his thin face flushed with fever.

"Do you want any thing, papa?" she asked, approaching the couch, and stroking the dark hair away from the hot brow with her cool, damp fingers.

"It's almost time for you to go and drive up Bossy, isn't it?" he asked, looking up tenderly into his child's face.

"Yes, papa. How are you feeling now?"

"A little easier. The fever is going down slowly. You may give me a sup of water, then go and get Bossy."

She gave him a drink in her own little tin cup, the best drinking vessel which their humble habitation afforded, then she ran out back of the dugout to where the horses were larieted on the rank prairie grass.

Slipping the lariet rope off Dolly's neck, Callie put a bridle on the gentle creature's head, led her to the side of a ravine, jumped lightly to a seat on her back, and dashed away across the prairie.

The sun was just setting when she found the cow and started her toward home. As she emerged from a little thicket, fringing a stream, a horseman drew rein before her.

"Hello, sissy!" was his coarse greeting.

He was a tall, stoutly built, middle-aged man, with a burly face and red bristling hair and beard. He was coarsely dressed, and wore immense spurs attached to the heels of his heavy boots. Altogether the man presented anything but a pleasing appearance; and it was very evident from the expression which flitted across Callie's countenance that the encounter was a disagreeable one to her.

"Good evening, Mr. Simmons," she returned a little coolly, starting her pony around him.

"How's your pap?" he inquired, keeping after her.

"He's having the chills and fever again," she replied, shortly.

"It can't be very healthy on your claim. I'd try to persuade your pap away if I was you. You'd better leave the claim anyway."

"But I guess we won't, for we like our claim," she returned, with flashing eyes. "Papa says he will have better health when he gets used to the climate. Go on, Bossy!" she said to the cow that had stopped to graze.

Without looking behind her she hurried away toward the dugout, leaving the man gazing after her with an evil light in his yellowish gray eyes.

"Thet gal's a smart one, an' will be a hard one to head off, I reckon, for a small one. But her dad's bein' sick gives me a good time to strike, if I can only git Jim Dawkins to help me. I'll go an' see him," and he rode rapidly away in an opposite direction.

Abel Norris and his little daughter Callie, the only remaining member of his family, had come from Iowa that spring. The long journey had been made in a large covered wagon, and they had settled on a claim in southeastern Kansas.

This was in 1869, just after the famous Joy land excitement, and parts of the country were entirely new and unsettled.

They had some trouble with Bill Simmons, a quarrelsome character, who lived on Thunderbolt creek, and was known as one of the worst agitators among the anti-Joy settlers. He asserted a prior claim to the land taken by Mr. Norris. But there was not the slightest evidence of former occupancy, and Simmons being unable to show a title to the land, Mr. Norris refused to give up the claim. Unheeding the threats of Simmons, he went to work and constructed a dugout in the bank of a deep ravine.

When Simmons saw that the new settler was not easily scared off by false statements of former ownership, he had declared that he would organize a gang and set Norris and his child out. But the man from Iowa was a brave one, and paid no attention to the threats.

When Callie returned to the dugout she milked the cow and prepared a little supper. After her simple household duties had been attended to she sat down by her father's couch and fanned him until he fell asleep.

Then, going to the door of the dugout, she looked out. Night had closed in over the prairies, and a thousand stars from the deep blue vault above her seemed smiling and coquetting with the myriads of wild flowers all around. A soft wind stirred the morning-glory vines by her side, then died away among the wild indigo and rosin weeds down the ravine.

"Poor papa!" she said, pityingly, as she gazed at his thin face, looking so pale and death-like in sleep. "I must get some fresh water before I go to sleep, so he can have a good, cold drink when he wakes up."

So saying she took a small tin bucket and quietly stole from the dugout, about three hundred yards from which a clear little spring issued from the rocky side of the ravine.

She reached the spring, and had just filled her bucket with the cold, delicious water, when she heard horsemen approaching up the ravine.

A child's natural timidity caused her to dart behind a thick clump of bushes and wait for the riders to pass.

Instead of riding on, however, they halted by the spring, only a few feet from Callie's retreat, and began talking. Peering between the leaves of her covert, her keen eyes could dimly make out the outlines of two men. She was not long in recognizing them. They were Bill Simmons and Jim Dawkins, men who were not friendly to her father.

Why were they on her father's claim that night? They could mean no good to him she felt certain.

Callie would have gladly escaped to the dugout could she have stolen away without being seen. But that was impossible, so she crouched behind the bushes, hearing every word of the dialogue between the men.

"I tell you this claim's mighty valyble," Simmons remarked to his companion.

"I like the looks of it," returned Dawkins. "You're sure there's coal here?"

"Yes; I've prospected all along this ravine before old Norris come out to this kentry. I tell you, Jim, for a fact, the whole place is underlaid with coal. There's a fortune in it for the owner, an' the railroad's comin' near here, an' will make easy transportation," assured Simmons.

"Does ole Norris know there's coal on his claim?"

"Don't think he does. You know he's been sick most of the time since he come into the kentry, an he hain't had much time to look around."

"No, he hain't been here long. But how do you propose gittin' the claim away from him?" asked Dawkins.

"Contract ahead of him."

"Hain't he contracted for the claim yet?"

"No."

"Are you sure, Bill?"

"I've been watching the land office purty close, an' I know Norris hain't got a contract yet for this land."

"Why don't you contract for the claim yourself, without askin' my help?" asked Dawkins a little suspiciously.

"Simply because I hain't got money enough to pay for gittin' the contract," replied Simmons. "I have 'bout half enough, I reckon. But you have plenty of spondulix, Jim, an' kin help me if you will. We kin ride over to Fort Scott an' git a contract writ out for this claim before ole Norris kin help himself. He's down with the shakin' ager, his little gal says, so we have the best chance in the world."

"How soon can you be ready to start for Scott to get the contract? I want to start to Missouri to-morrow."

"I'll tell wot we kin do. We'll start to Scott before sunrise, get the agent to attend to our business early, then you kin go right on to Missoury. I'll ride back to the Thunderbolt an' muster up a gang to help me set ole Norris off of the claim."

"The very thing, Bill. I'm with you, an' will furnish you all the money you need."

They rode away in the darkness, leaving Callie alone by the spring to think over all she had heard.

"He sha'n't get papa's claim!" she cried, her eyes flashing resolutely, as she returned to the dugout. "Papa's been going to see the agent about the contract twice, and both times he has been taken sick. It's too bad!"

On reaching the dugout she found her father awake, so she told him about the conversation which she had overheard between Simmons and Dawkins.

"So this is a valuable coal claim, is it, and Simmons has been prospecting on it?" Norris repeated, when Callie had finished. "That accounts for Bill Simmons's great efforts to scare me off the land. And he and Jim Dawkins are going to take advantage of my sickness and contract under me, are they? Early to-morrow morning! Why, we have no chance at all, Callie. They will get the claim from us in spite of all we can do," he said, despondently.

"No, they won't papa! There's a chance yet," cried Callie, springing to her feet.

"I know it I was able to ride ahead of them to the land office," said Norris, with a groan. "But I am too weak to travel that far if the prize was the whole of Kansas. We'll have to let the villains have it, Callie. A sick man can't fight his enemies."

"But we won't let them have it, papa. I can ride Dolly to the land office and tell the agent about it."

"It is too long a ride for you, my child," said the sick man. "Besides my presence would be necessary to secure the contract; then I haven't money enough to pay down. There's only $250 under that rock."

"I'll tell you, papa," she cried, eagerly. "Let me take that to the land agent, tell him the story, and maybe he'll keep the claim for us till you can pay the rest. Do let me try, papa. It will do no harm, and I may save your claim. I can start on Dolly long before daylight and beat Bill Simmons and Jim Dawkins to Fort Scott. You must let me go, papa."

She was only a little girl, and it was fifteen miles to the land office. It seemed a difficult, fruitless undertaking for her to try to outwit two bold, reckless men, who were so obstinately bent on getting the claim away from them.

Callie went over the situation very carefully with her father. At last, seeing how determined she was on trying to save the claim, he gave a reluctant consent to her going.

She began making preparations for her journey, which were soon completed. Then seating herself by her father's couch, she listened very attentively to his instructions.

The moon came up soon after midnight. Its light would relieve her long, lonesome ride.

Taking the $250 from beneath a large, flat rock by her father's bed, she concealed it in the bosom of her dress. Then, kissing her father and bidding him not worry about her, she left the dugout and mounted Dolly, who stood bridled and saddled, waiting to carry her young mistress on her mission.

She started across the prairie at a brisk trot. The moon shed a deep, golden light over the August-parched grass, and chased away the dark shadows down the lonely hollows that yawned across her path. Her horse startled the birds asleep in the grass, and sent them flitting wildly away in the night.

She started nervously when Dolly shied as a covote ran howling down a rocky ravine. Every sound held a nameless terror for the little girl, but she kept bravely on. The sound of a mocking-bird trilling on a cottonwood by the roadside reassured and encouraged her.

The rosy flush of early dawn was just lighting the hills around Fort Scott as Callie reached the outskirts of the place.

Would she be in time to outwit Simmons and Dawkins?

With strangely throbbing heart the little girl, tired and pale from her sleepless night and long ride, urged Dolly forward down the smooth, dusty road.

Some men were already at work, breaking rock to repair a bad place in a deep, ugly hollow, across which one of the leading streets of the growing town must pass.

Halting Dolly, she inquired the way to the land office. The men exchanged peculiar glances, but one of them pointed out the building where the land agent had his office.

Thanking him for the information, she rode on, but found the agent not yet in his office.

The man who served as janitor, noticing the little girl's look of disappointment, and guessing that her business was very important, kindly offered to take her to the hotel where the agent boarded.

The agent had just finished his breakfast when they reached the hotel. Escorting Callie to the parlor, he listened with sympathy to her simple story.

"Papa said I couldn't get the contract," she said, finishing her story; "but I thought maybe you'd take this money and hold the contract for us—for papa, I mean. Do, please, keep our claim for us, and don't let those bad men get it. Both times papa was coming to see you about the claim he was taken down sick with chills and fever. He will have more money to pay you in a few weeks. He sold a lot of cattle back in Iowa, before we moved to Kansas."

Taking her back to his office the agent wrote out a receipt for the $250, saying: "Here, you keep this receipt, and take it to your papa, and as soon as he is able tell him to come to town to see me. Do not worry. Your brave ride has secured the claim to your father."

Callie had just taken the receipt from the agent's hand when Bill Simmons and his ally, with flushed faces and polluted breath, rushed into the office. As they stalked toward the agent's desk neither of them noticed the little girl who shrank away with fear and loathing.

The agent, with a queer smile on his face, made a pretense of respectful attention as Simmons started his business.

"There," said Simmons, laying a roll of bills on the desk, "is the spondulix to pay for the contract. Fix it up as soon as you can, for there's a mean feller from Iowa, who's tryin' to git the claim away from me an' my pardner here."

"You state there are no improvements on the claim," remarked the agent.

"There's no improvements, 'ceptin a little dugout where me an' Jim here lives," returned Simmons.

"I have been informed differently," replied the agent.

"Whoever has told you different from my account lies, that's all!" Simmons cried, hotly.

"I happen to be a pretty fair judge of human nature, and I would be willing, were it necessary, to stake the entire State of Kansas on the truthfulness of my informant."

"Well, now, who informed you?" demanded the half-intoxicated Simmons.

"She!" and the agent pointed to Callie who stood in the farthest corner of the office, almost fearing to stir. Having outwitted her father's enemies, her strength seemed to have suddenly forsaken her.

"The dickens!" cried the surprised Simmons. "It's ole Norris's gal," and he let fall a horrid oath.

"Yes," returned the agent, his queer smile broadening, "you are too late. This little girl told me her story first, and has secured the contract for the claim in question. You are outwitted, and I may as well assure you right here that our county is not in need of your citizenship. I wish you good morning, gentlemen!"

With mock dignity the agent dismissed the chagrined plotters, who stalked out of the office with discomfited looks, mounted their horses and rode rapidly down the street.

Callie reached the dugout safe, under the escort of a man sent by the agent to inspect a piece of land near her father's claim.

Callie's dauntless courage and triumph acted as a powerful tonic on the sick man, and he recovered his health rapidly.

When he received payment for the stock sold before leaving his former home, Abel Norris went to the land office and brought back a title to the claim.

Simmons and Dawkins left the country and took up their abode somewhere in the Indian Territory.

Norris's claim proved valuable for its fine coal deposits and brought him a snug amount of money.

Callie, now a refined, educated woman, lives in southeastern Kansas in a comfortable home of her own; but she has not forgotten the old dugout and the night she rode to Fort Scott to save her father's claim.

—A. H. Gibson, in the Independent.

Alleged Childish Definitions.

Pall Mall Gazette.

Here are some quaint definitions given by children and collected by the Rev. W. F. Crafts:

"What does backbiter mean?" "Please, sir, it may be a flea."

"Blacksmith shop?" "The place where they make horses. I saw a man nailing on the last foot of one."

"Horse?" "An animal with four legs; one on each corner."

"Ice?" "Water that went to sleep in the cold."

"Little sins?" "I didn't break any of the commandments, but I guess I cracked some of them."

"Nest-egg?" "The one the old hen measures by."

"Seasons." A teacher inquired of the members of a class of children if any of them could name the four seasons. Instantly the chubby hand of a five-year-old was raised, and promptly came the answer, "Pepper, salt, vinegar and mustard."

"Stars?" "The eggs the moon has laid."

READING FOR SUNDAY.

An Offertory.

Oh, the beauty of the Christ-child,
The gentleness, the grace,
The smiling loving tenderness,
The infantile embrace,
All babyhood he holdeth,
All motherhood enfoldeth,
Yet who hath seen his face?

Oh, the nearness of the Christ-child
When, for a sacred space,
He nestles in our very homes—
Light of the human race.
We know him and we love him;
No man to us need prove him,
Yet who hath seen his face!

—Mary Mapes Dodge, in the Christmas Century.

International Sunday-School Lesson for Dec. 20, 1891.

THE RISEN CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES. (John xxi, 1-14.)

Golden Text—If ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (Col. iii, 1.)

HOME READINGS.

M.—The risen Christ and His disciples.....John xxi, 1-14.
Tu.—Peter restored.....John xxi, 15-22.
W.—Thomas convinced.....John xx, 19-29.
Th.—The walk with disciples..Luke xxiv, 13-24.
Fri.—Made known.....Luke xxiv, 25-35.
Sat.—A real Christ.....Luke xxiv, 36-44.
Sun.—The parting words.....Mark xvi, 12-20.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON.

The Independent.

Peter was right to go a-fishing. Grief is no good reason for not attending to one's business. Work is the best sedative for pain. It is a good order of nature that after we have lost our dearest friends we cannot stop and waste our days in tears, but must go to work as before.

Obedience to Christ's commands brings blessing. Here it did even though they did not know it was He; much more will it bring blessing to us when we recognize the Lord's voice and obey.

Love has quick eyes. Love means sympathy. Love is better than activity and zeal. It was John who first recognized the Master. We get here a beautiful contrast between love and zeal, between John and Peter. John first recognized Jesus, but he did not leap into the sea and leave his work. It was a perfect satisfaction that Christ was there, and that he would very soon stand by His side and talk with Him. But Peter, whose duty it was more than any one's else to attend to the fishes, splashed into the sea to hurry to Jesus, as if he feared that He would escape. But Peter's haste was no more pleasing to Christ than John's quiet faith.

Jesus did not do more miracles than was necessary. He had been broiling His own fish before they came, but He let the disciples catch their own fish and take them out and cook them, instead of providing a miraculous meal.

Why were the disciples still afraid of Jesus? It is not clear. Peter had just been too eager to stand by His side, but they all now saw His miraculous nature, which could appear and disappear at will, and this frightened them.

It is an important study to find out how many times Christ appeared to His disciples, ten or a dozen times in all.

The purpose of these appearances was that which John had in view in recording them, that the disciples "might believe that Jesus was the Christ." If He appeared after death He was divine. All His claims were justified. If Christ be not risen we have no sufficient evidence of resurrection and the future life. Christ's resurrection brought life and immortality to light. The early Christians made a great deal of Christ's resurrection, perhaps more than of His death. We make too little of it, because we take the future life to be a thing assured, and that does not need special proof.

Of General Interest.

The gifts of Bishop Warren and family to Denver University are said to aggregate about $160,000.

Plans have been made for the most elaborate ceremonies to be connected with the episcopal jubilee of the Pope, which will occur Feb. 19, 1893. Pilgrimages will be organized from all parts of the world, and a central committee has been formed to make arrangements for them.

New statistics of the Lutheran Church in America have recently been collected. According to these the grand total is now 61 synods, 5,028 pastors, 8,328 congregations, and 1,187,854 confirmed or communicant members. This is an increase in twelve months of 200 pastors, 205 congregations, and 34,642 communicants, the ratio of increase being something less than it has been for several years past.

The people of Wales rejoice that Prof. Llewellyn J. Evans, D. D., of Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati, O., has accepted the call to the chair of Hebrew and Old Testament literature in the Calvinistic Methodist Theological Seminary, at Bala, North Wales. The father and grandfather of Dr. Evans were ministers of the Welsh Calvinistic Church, and his two grandfathers signed their names to the articles of incorporation of the body in Wales.

The "Bayliss" fund "for the assistance of children of Methodist ministers in obtaining an education in the Ohio Wesleyan University," has been instituted by a noble gift of $1,000 from Mrs. J. H. Bayliss, of Evanston, Ill., widow of the late Dr. Bayliss, editor of the Western. The fund is to be available for daughters of ministers, as well as for sons, and President Bashford hopes that other contributions will be made to increase the fund, so that its usefulness may be widely extended.

The annual report of the board of trustees of the Children's Aid Society of New York City, recently issued, shows that in the five lodging-houses 11,770 boys and girls were fed, sheltered and taught during the year at a total cost of $36,354.24. The total number placed out by the society in Eastern and Western homes during the last year was 2,825, and the total cost for railroad fares, clothing, food, salaries, etc., was $28,106.77. The industrial schools during the year received 10,000 children, with a daily average attendance of 4,348.

The statistics of the Reformed Episcopal Church show that the number of communicants is 9,969, a growth over the preceding year of about 600. There are 11,734 Sabbath-school scholars, with 1,156 teachers. The contributions are $193,691, an advance of about $16,000 over last year, though the figures do not rise as high as in 1877-78. The property owned free of debt is worth $1,496,712, exclusive of the theological seminary endowments, representing $75,000 additional, and the capital fund of $400,000 for church extension trusts. The total is thus nearly $2,600,000.

Thoughts for the Day.

Real glory springs from the silent conquest of ourselves.—Thomson.

We can do more good by being good than in any other way.—Rowland Hill.

Doing good is the only certainly happy action of a man's life.—Sir Philip Sidney.

There are no moral blanks; there are no neutral characters. We are either the sower that sows and corrupts, or the light that splendidly illuminates, and the salt that silently operates; but being dead or alive, every man speaks.—Chalmers.

Faith is the subtle chain
That binds us to the Infinite: the voice
Of a deep life within.

—Elizabeth Oakes Smith.

Presidential Hats.

Washington Post.

President Harrison does not wear his grandfather's hat. This is an authoritative statement, though not official. It should lead to the disappearance from cartoons of the big head covering, which may have given some gullible inhabitant of the country an idea that the chief executive goes about in a big white hat, with short fur starting in all directions, and of a style a half a century ago. He does nothing of the kind. He wears the latest style of silk hat, and the exigencies of the presidential office, such as overland trips to the South, to the Pacific coast and Vermont, prevent his getting behind the style, as they make it necessary for him to renew his headgear three or four times a year. Of course, he does not wear his silk hat when he goes on a ducking expedition to Bengies. A soft hat of some sort is his companion then, and in wet weather he wears a black derby.

His size is 7½ full, the same as that of Mr. Cleveland, though there is a slight difference in the shape of the brims. It is interesting to note the sizes of the hats worn by some of the Presidents of the United States during the past thirty years or more. Buchanan's was 7⅝; Lincoln's, 7⅛; Grant's, 7⅜; Hayes's, 7⅛; Garfield's, 7⅝, and Arthur's, 7¾. What have become of the many hats the Presidents wore will probably not be known until a century hereafter, when some antiquarian will produce one which will be authenticated as having been hung up in the hall just before Mr. Harrison signed the McKinley tariff bill, which Mr. Cleveland wore the second day of his honeymoon, or Mr. Hayes removed when he took the oath of office.

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90 cents per pound.
50 " " ½ "
25 " " ¼ "
15 " " ⅛ "

VAN HOUTEN'S COCOA.

PLEASE READ THIS.

90 Cents a pound for VAN HOUTEN'S COCOA ("Best & Goes Farthest") seems to be high. Let us compare it with the price of Coffee:

1 lb. of good coffee costs at least 30c., makes 31 half-pint cups.
3 " " " " " therefore 90c., " 93 " " "
1 " "V. H. Cocoa" also 90c., " 150 " " "

Which is the Cheaper Drink?

90c. = { 93 cups of Coffee, 150 " "V.H.Cocoa!

Sold by every Grocer. 188

FASHION HINTS.

Yellow was never more popular than at present. While chamois is an especial favorite, all tints, from a pale lemon to deepest orange, are in vogue.

The peasant waist of the moment is really a perfect-fitting corselet, which is nearly straight at the top, and pointed back and front, and hooked invisibly on the left side.

Not the slightest objection is offered to repeating upon the head-cover every hue of the costume with which it is to be worn, no matter how varied or gorgeous they may be.

Wearing a corsage bouquet has become, like most feminine fancies, merely a matter of taste. A single bud may nestle among the fair one's laces or one side of the sweet bodice be half buried in a mass of exquisite blooms.

Tan-colored gloves are still favored both for day and evening uses, partly, in the former case, because they go well with almost any colored costume, and partly because it is the natural hue of the undyed skin, known as suede.

Fashion continues to make use of two shades in a costume, but when the wearer lacks height, this fashion is apt to emphasize her brevity. On the other hand, a tall woman dressed wholly in gray, head-gear included, looms largely indeed.

If you wish to lengthen last year's cloth gown it can easily be done by facing it upon the outside with some one of the new cloth materials barred with camel's hair. The material must be cut on the bias, and should be in tone with the fabric of your dress.

In many of the simple day dresses the side forms in the back are omitted, and the regular French form substituted. The skirts on some of these are sewed to the bodice permanently, making the gown in one piece, and as easily put on and off as a princesse dress. On some of the dress toilets the waists are slightly rounded in front and pointed at the back.

Moreen petticoats are largely sold in place of silk. The latter are now lined with flannel for winter wear. Moreen, as most people know, is a watered woolen fabric. It is dyed in various colors and should be lined with taffeta silk. Skirts of moreen sold ready-made are finished with a deep flounce trimmed with ribbon. The silk-lined skirts rustle slightly as the wearer moves, and are wholly free from that objectionable propensity to cling to the limbs uncomfortably.

Black silk, fringed and pleated, is much used on black silk gowns for demi-dress uses, and white silk, finely pleated, is a very pretty substitute for lisse frilling and no more expensive, since a yard of silk cut into bias bands and then fringed makes many yards of frilling. This trimming is also very effectively used as a heading to lace garnitures, both on bodice and skirt, and, on pink-silk ball dresses, huge rose and cabbage ruches, cut very wide and thickly pleated, cover entirely the deep hems of the sheath skirt.

It is next to impossible to avoid iteration in describing the fashionable dress-skirt for the promenade, for almost every gown of this description worth mentioning is bordered near the edge or directly upon it with narrow bands of fur or its imitations. Many dress patterns are sold with very good imitation Astrakhan, beaver, or other close-napped or shaggy fur intended to edge the skirt. As the short train prevails, one can only think of these borders with a sensation of disgust, for they act very effectually the part of revolving brushes in sweeping up the dirt.

Brilliant taureau-red gowns and millinery are conspicuous. Some of the costumes are very rich and showy, but not a few women of the best taste dislike the color in the street in large masses, and not one man in five hundred has a word of praise for a brilliant red costume for promenade uses. There is a bright cerise red which, used artistically and carefully, brightens a toilet wonderfully, but the dull purple reds are dowdy and hideous, and as they only combine with black they are not as cheerful looking as many quieter colors which are worn without the admixture of black.

Garner's Monkey Talk.

New York Letter in Philadelphia Inquirer.

"Please give me another piece of carrot, mister." It was no poor, half-starved human child who used these words to-day, but they were spoken by a monkey to Robert L. Garner, who is able to talk, even if only a very little, with the simians. At first Mr. Garner didn't know what the words meant, but soon he grasped their meaning, and then had new words for his vocabulary.

The Professor went out to Central Park, this afternoon, and had a chat with the monkeys. He repeated the words that mean food, and, as a result, he had them all in a good humor at once. Then he set his phonograph to work and captured a stump speech that one long-tailed ape was making, which he will deliver to an audience of African simians.

Finally he held up a carrot to the bars of the cage of one of the monkeys. The simians nibbled a piece of it, and then whined for more. He repeated the same word over and over again, and Mr. Garner caught it in the phonograph. He couldn't pronounce the word after hearing the monkey say it, but says he will recognize it if he hears it again, and hopes in time to be able to twist his tongue around it. It sounds something like "w-w-wh."

After Professor Garner left Central Park he said to me: "I start for Africa in a month. I expect to go to London, then to Marseilles, then to the Canary islands by sailing ship and thence to the west coast of Africa in some trading vessel."

Empress Eugenie's Noble Act.

New York Recorder.

A pretty story is now current in Paris concerning the ex-Empress Eugenie, who, notwithstanding all her faults, possessed that redeeming virtue which, according to the Bible, is superior to all others, namely, charity.

It appears that one morning General De Montebello, the aid-de-camp for the day, entered the