

SATURDAY NIGHT TALKS

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A BONFIRE OF BOOKS.

International Bible Lesson for
Aug. 15, '09—(Acts 19: 18-20).



The city of Ephesus in Paul's day was as full of magicians and necromancers as New York city is of fortune tellers. And one of the most ludicrous spectacles imaginable of the attempt of the sons of Sceva to cast out a spirit from a demoniac is recorded in the story of today. They came into the presence of the patient and went through their incantations, pronouncing the name of Jesus as Paul did. But to their consternation the man cried out, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" and he pitched into them tore their clothes off from them, and kicked them into the street. And the whole city laughed.

Not only so, but a serious moral effect was produced also. A conviction settled upon the whole community that Paul was right, and the wizards and black-art professors were wrong. Chagrined and ashamed at their failure, the dealers in forbidden arts themselves admitted their hypocrisy, deception and fraud, they turned from it in genuine repentance, brought all their books and implements of wickedness, started a bonfire in the market place, dumped the literature into the flames and kept stirring them up till the last leaf of the last volume went up in smoke. That was a remarkably thorough disinfection of the moral atmosphere in the streets of Ephesus. Those people literally burnt up property in the public street to the amount of about ten thousand dollars.

First Thoughts Best.

Now the first lesson is this: When men are convinced that reformation is necessary they ought to act instantly. Many a man sits cogitating so long over the question of duty that the eggs of his resolution are addled before he makes up his mind. We should not only strike while the iron is hot but make it hot by striking. If those Ephesian wizards had slept over the question of destroying their books, I very much doubt if they had done it. To say of any matter like this, "I will think it over," is usually to find a good many excuses for not doing it. He who hesitates is lost. Good resolutions are much like rare game; the wise hunter does not wait for the flock to settle, but takes it on the wing. First thoughts are best thoughts, and need no reconsideration. One would suppose to hear some people talk that the race is so determined on doing right, so bent and inclined heavenward, so liable to storm the portals of light and stampede into glory, that it is very essential to screw the brakes down hard, lest we should become righteous overmuch. There is not the slightest danger in that direction. Most of us need a spur more than we do a check-rein. There are plenty of brakemen on the heavenly train; what we need is a few more freemen to shovel fuel and attend to keeping the steam up.

Burn Your Bridges.

And the next thing is: Make thorough work of the reformation. Many a man goes back to his old ways because he makes the way of return so easy. When God took the children of Israel out of Egypt he put the Red Sea between them and their old home as speedily as possible. He got them away from the vicinity as quick as he could. He knew that the leeks, onions and garlic, would have a mighty fascination to the Hebrews as long as they stayed in the neighborhood, and he put them on a different diet the moment they began to get hungry, a plan which kept their attention till they got so far away they couldn't go back. That was a wise general, who, on landing his troops in an enemies' country burnt his ships in the harbor. The soldiers realized then that it was victory or death, and the knowledge made every man a hero.

These Ephesians made it impossible to return to their old ways by burning their books. I have heard of a woman who felt that it was sinful to wear flowers and jewelry, and she took all her personal finery—and gave it to her sister. No! If it is not good enough for you, it is not good enough for anybody.

For if the gambler only puts his cards on the upper shelf, and takes them down now and then to dream over the games he used to play, he will end by going back. And if the drinking man only puts his decanter a little farther back on the shelf, and occasionally takes it down to hold it up to the light, and to smell of it, he will go back to drinking as sure as fate. And if the slave of tobacco keeps taking down his pipe and mourning over it, he will soon be burning the fragrant weed.

The only safe course, the only radical and thorough course, is to imitate the example of the Ephesian converts and make a glorious bonfire of the things of which you would be free.

KILLED IN HIS CAVE THEATRE

William Hicks, Amateur Showman,
Cuts Live Electric Wire and
Drops Dead.

Kansas City, Mo.—The boyish romance that goes with the digging of a cave turned to tragedy here when William Hicks, 14 years old, was killed by a shock from an electric wire which he was endeavoring to sever with a pair of nippers. It had been a summer of much interest for William and his three playmates, Nathaniel Fleming, Dan Davidson and Otto Smith. There was nothing to do except play and live, without the thought of grammar or geography. The boys were interested in electricity, a nickel motion picture show being the inspiration.

The boys began operations in a barn in the rear of Fleming's house, operations that were a thing of mystery to the other kids of the neighborhood, and about which the four boys told little but hinted much. Then opening day came. The "mystery" was a magic lantern show with an admission fee of six pins, and with all the improvements of any of the "avenue" theatres. There were electric lights, which the boys had wired there, and the slides were shown by the same process.

Business was so prosperous that the boys decided they needed an "office." An idea of a cave was romantic and suggestive of coolness, and with spade and pick the four worked hard in a vacant lot until the cave was made large enough for their needs. Then came the question of illumination. An electric light would be just the thing. Wires were strung from the barn, and the work of illuminating the cave began. The wire needed cutting, and, believing the current had been cut, young Hicks endeavored to sever it. He pressed the nippers against the deadly copper thread and penetrated the insulation. A scream followed, the boy's hold on the wire relaxed and he fell to the floor of the cave. The other boys ran for aid, but when Dr. Z. Nason reached the cave the lad was dead.

TRIPPED BY HIGH HEELS, SHE FALLS OUT OF WINDOW.

New York City.—High heels and a kimono of sheer silk nearly cost Mrs. A. W. Teele, wife of a well-known public accountant, her life. During



Tripped by High Heels.

the night she went to the window of the music room of her home, No. 422 West End avenue, to pull down the blinds. The sill of the window was only a foot above the floor, and as she leaned over, her heels slipped out from under her on her kimono and she fell headlong to the sidewalk.

Mrs. Teele's head struck the concrete pavement outside, and her physicians, Dr. H. Lyon Hunt, Dr. W. G. Hoag and Dr. Roy Baum, feared that her skull was fractured.

Mr. Teele, who assisted District Attorney Jerome in the Metropolitan traction inquiry, and was the chief aide to Comptroller Fitch in the exposures which marked Mayor Strong's administration, was in Washington when his wife was hurt. He returned early next morning.

RHEUMATICS GO UNCURED.

Police Refuse to Allow the Afflicted to Walk Barefoot on Oiled Streets.

Chicago.—Walk on freshly oiled streets in your bare feet and cure your rheumatism. This is the latest fad in Oak Park, but it struck a snag.

Several of the residents who objected to the presence of the unshod on the thoroughfares registered a complaint at the police station. Policemen were stationed at several corners and the barefoot folk were told gently but firmly to go to their homes. They were also told that oiled streets did not possess curative properties for rheumatism.

Dr. A. F. Storke, the village health officer, received many inquiries during the day regarding the fad. To all he answered that there was no healing power in the kind of oil used on the streets of Oak Park.

Says Ministers Will Anoint with Oil.

Chicago.—"In about three years, perhaps, ministers will be given authority and orders to anoint with oil," said Bishop Fallows a few nights ago. "It is true that some ministers would probably not be as efficient as others," he added, "but we see this difference in skill in the men who follow all the arts and professions. The cures which have been effected by anointing with oil have been unprecevalent."

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