

GEO. W. WAGENSELLER, Editor and Proprietor

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Italy had under operation last year 8800 miles of standard-gauge railways, 790 of narrow gauge and 1770 of street railroads.

Much interest is taken in French naval circles in the discovery of a composition which is alleged to have the marvellous property of rendering vessels invisible beneath the rays of electric searchlights. It is stated that at the naval manoeuvres off Brest torpedo-boat No. 61, representing the enemy, succeeded in traversing unobserved the luminous zone produced by the electric projectors, having been coated with the new composition.

Many inquiries are being made as to the possibility of getting into the Klondike country during the coming fall and winter, states the New York Tribune. The answer may be unhesitatingly given. It would be folly to attempt to get in at such times. Those who are now on their way may get in, though it is believed that not more than half of them will. To attempt the trip after this month would be almost as hazardous as a journey to the North Pole.

The new Dutch Cabinet is composed of statesmen whose names can only be described as singularly appropriate to their respective offices. Thus, the Minister of War rejoices in the patronymic of Van Dam; the Minister of Justice is a Professor Drucker ("drucker" being the Dutch for some one who presses down heavily); the Minister of Finance is a Baron Goldstein, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs goes by the peculiar name of Van Oldnailer; the Minister of Canals and Waterways is a Mr. Lily; the Minister of the Interior is a stout nobleman of the name of Jonkheer van Roll; the Minister of Marine is a Scotchman, an Admiral Macleod, while the Premier rejoices in the exceedingly English name of Pearson.

The Committee of Ten from the great colleges, which is appointed to consider standards of requirements in entrance English, and to secure, if practicable, uniform entrance examinations in that subject recently appointed, to further its work, a sub-committee of fifteen, headed by Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler. This committee, in order to ascertain the opinions of well known English masters on the best books for additional reading in English, sent out a list of forty-three books, to which was appended this request: "Please mark with a cross the books in the following list that you have found desirable, with a double cross those that you have found especially desirable, with a circle those that you have found unsatisfactory, with a double circle those that you have found especially unsatisfactory."

Those who received this list replied readily, and as a result this committee has indubitable expert testimony on the best books for preparatory reading. The balloting resulted in the ranking of the books as follows: 1, Merchant of Venice; 2, Julius Cæsar; 3, Vision of Sir Launfal; 4, Sketch Book; 5, Silas Marner; 6, Ivanhoe; 7, Evangeline; 8, As You Like It; 9, Sir Roger de Coverly Papers; 10, Macbeth; 11, Lady of the Lake; 12, Bunker Hill Oration; 13, Ancient Mariner; 14, Courtship of Miles Standish; 15, Marston; 16, L'Allegro; 17, Il Penseroso; 18, House of the Seven Gables; 19, Conciliation With America; 20, Twice-Told Tales; 21, Essay on Milton and Addison; 22, Vicar of Wakefield; 23, Princess; 24, Midsummer Night's Dream; 25, Comus; 26, Life of Samuel Johnson; 27, David Copperfield; 28, Paradise Lost, Books I and II; 29, Sohrab and Rustum; 30, Lycidas; 31, Tales of a Traveler; 32, Twelfth Night; 33, Essay on Burns; 34, American Scholar; 35, Last of the Mohicans; 36, Pope's Iliad; 37, Woodstock; 38, Second Essay on Chatham; 39, The Abbot; 40, Life of Nelson; 41, Flight of a Tartar Tribe; 42, Palamon and Arcite; 43, History of the Plague.

Of these books Merchant of Venice alone received no unfavorable ballot. The History of the Plague ranked lowest in favorable ballots, and at the same time received 123 double crosses, the largest number of negative ballots cast for a book. The low ranking of the Second Essay on Chatham, which always seemed to be a favorite with the masters, will no doubt surprise many.

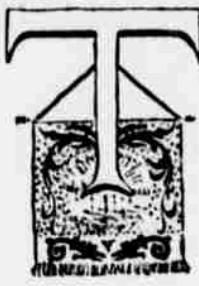
If you pay your debts promptly, you are entitled to more credit than a man who is charitable, or a woman who is literary.

THE DREAM TOWN SHOW.

There is an island in Slumber sea Where the drollest things are done, And we will sail there, if the winds are fair, Just after the set of the sun. 'Tis the loveliest place, in the whole wide world. Or anyway so it seems, And the folks there play at the end of each day In a curious show called "Dreams." We sail right into the evening skies, And the very first thing we know We are there at the port and ready for sport Where the dream folks give their show. And what do you think they did last night When I crossed their harbor bars? They hoisted a plank on a great cloud bank And tattered among the stars.

WEASER TAN.

By MARGARET JOHANN



HE teacher stood by the blackboard reviewing with Ralph Burrows a problem in algebra. Most of her pupils were from the lower walks of life, rude in dress and manner, and backward in intelligence. The schoolroom was a relic of an ancient educational regime, with broken, begrimed walls, curtainless windows and backless, splinter-fringed benches, whose present incumbents could, upon the clumsy "forms" before them, carve their initials side by side with those of their fathers, or imprison flies in dungeons gouged out by the jack-knives of their grandfathers.

This pupil in algebra was the sole representative there of the township aristocracy. The teacher was very proud of him. He had already passed the entrance examination for the high-school in a distant city. He showed what he could do when she had material to work with, she thought, and she was fond of showing him off when the trustees made their prescribed "two visits a year." The boy had an earnest though merry face, and he bore with good-humored indifference the distinction of being the best-dressed and most scholarly pupil there.

It was a raw January day. The wind made the old schoolhouse quake, but for pity of the children, it piled protecting ridges of snow about the casements. For the comfort of the smaller children benches were drawn close to the stove; but at the forms the older ones wrung their hands to dispel the numbness of their fingers, and sat upon their feet to keep them warm.

A little girl with stringy, yellow curls, a lace-bordered apron, torn and dingy, and a soiled ribbon around her neck, tugged at the teacher's gown. "Th' me and Weaser Tan do home?" "Weaser Tan" (Louisa Rutan) by her side, hung her head bashfully and pulled; her mouth awry with her fingers. There was no attempt at fiery in Weaser Tan's costume. She was an ugly child, with part of her unkempt hair gathered into a short, tapering braid and tied with a bit of thread, and the rest of it hanging in strings about her eyes and ears.

The teacher hesitated. "Me and Weaser Tan" will freeze on the way, Miss L., said Ralph, good-naturedly turning from his problem, "they have nearly as far to go as I have."

Miss L.—stepped anxiously to the window and surveyed the road. "If 'Me and Weaser Tan' will wait till school's out I'll take them home on my sled," continued Ralph.

The teacher looked relieved. "If you'll do that, Ralph," she said, "you may go right away; for the storm's getting worse every minute." The boy was delighted to get out of school so early. "Proof that a good action is never thrown away," he said, with roguish familiarity. Then he slammed his books into place, put on his warm overcoat and tied a bright home-knit scarf around his neck, and the little girls pinned on their threadbare shawls. They went out into the storm together, and he seated them a-tandem upon his sled.

"Put on your mittens, Weaser Tan," he said, for the child's hands holding to the sides of the sled were chapped and red.

"She ain't got none," said Grace, pulling at the wrists of her own and giggling self-consciously.

"Put these on, then," said he, throwing his own into her lap. She drew them on shamefacedly. The little girls lived in adjoining cabins; and when he left them in front of their door he said:

"You may keep the mittens, Weaser Tan; mother'll knit me another pair. They're not so gay as Grace's, but they're warm."

Ralph Burrows, home on a college vacation, came out of the woods behind the Rutan cabin with his gun upon his shoulder. His dog had run on ahead and Ralph came upon him eagerly lapping water from a trough in front of the house. Grace and Weaser Tan were there, the latter with her hand upon the handle of the pump, from whose nozzle a stream of fresh water was falling gently for the animal's enjoyment.

her and laid his tawny head against her. She spoke gently to him, fondling his silky ears. "He seems to be an acquaintance of yours," said Ralph, by way of being sociable.

"Sh'd think he ought to be," giggled Grace. "She's always saving bones and things for him."

"That's very kind, I'm sure," said the young fellow, turning toward the game which Grace was inspecting. "That blue-jay was an accident—I didn't mean to shoot him."

"You might give me his wings for my hat," said Grace, saucily. "His wings? with pleasure," and, taking out his knife, he cut them off.

"One for Grace and one for—Weaser Tan," he said, giving one to each and laughing at the recollection of the old childish name.

He went whistling out of the grate; and Grace, with each hand grasping a picket of the rickety fence, watched him out of hearing. He drew a long breath as she turned away.

"Gracious, ain't he handsome!" she said, "and, Wease, you like him awful good."

For answer Wease splashed her well with water. Then Grace went crying into the house, and Wease, in the covert of the high pump, softly stroked the jay's wing and watched the giver out of sight.

"Room in our town for another physician," wrote distant relatives, and there Ralph Burrows went fresh from an extended course of study and travel abroad. He opened his office in the heart of the town; his home was with his relatives on hills that overlooked it. Business came to him laggingly, but love came on smooth, swift wings.

Marguerite, heir of beauty, wealth and goodness, sat on the veranda, fieldglass in hand. A dozen times a day she focused it upon Ralph's office in the town below. A few moments since she saw him lock his door and set out upon the homeward road. Now he was hidden from view, but she knew just what landmark he had reached (she had timed him so often).

To speed the minutes she took up a magazine and scanned an article that essayed to settle for all times and for all people the question: "Is life worth living?" When he came she met him at the foot of the terraces, and with his arm around her he led her back to the veranda.

"What's in it?" he asked, tossing the magazine aside to make room for them both upon the willow settle. "Oh, Ralph," she cried, archly, "is life worth living?"

He took her face between his hands and looked unutterable love into eyes that paid him back his own.

"Is life worth living? And with Marguerite? A thousand, thousand times, sweetheart, and forever and ever!" He kissed her rapturously.

"For shame," she whispered, looking rosy foolish and happy. "there's Louise; she must have heard and seen the whole performance. And, by the way, Ralph, when you write your mother, thank her again for solving for us the servant problem in so far as a waitress is concerned. This Louise Rutan has been with us two months now, and we find her all we could desire; only (with a little deprecative shrug) her face is so stolidly sorrowful. I'm so lappy myself, Ralph, that when anyone else is sad I feel a sort of remorse—almost as if I were responsible."

"Well, poor girl," he said, "I've known her ever since she was—three feet high, I suppose, and she's had pretty hard lines. She'll brighten, never fear, in the atmosphere of this home."

"Louise," said Marguerite next day. "I believe I'll let you drive me into town; you're accustomed to a horse, aren't you?"

"Not very; but I'm not afraid," was the reply; so they went. Marguerite had made her purchases, had achieved a merry consultation with Ralph in front of his office, and they were upon a homeward, uphill road that lay along the bed of a little stream. The queer, reticent girl by her side was a study for Marguerite. Throughout the drive she had tried to make her talk; but, baffled, she had by now lapsed into a silence akin to pique. A new thought came to her.

"Louise," she asked, "is life worth living?" "For you it must be, Miss Marguerite."

"My good girl," she said, "you wage-earners make a great mistake in thinking that wealth brings happiness. All of us, rich and poor alike, meet with disappointments, and we can either make the best of them and be happy or make the worst of them and be miserable. Now, here are these gloves that I've just bought. I couldn't get the color I wanted; these are fully three shades too dark, but I'm not going to fret about them; I'm going to be happy in spite of circumstances."

"Yes, ma'am," said the girl, apathetically. "You have health, a home and plenty to eat and to wear, Louise, and I have no more than that."

"Yes, ma'am"—but there was reputation in the tone. Marguerite recognized it, and went on, a softness stealing over her glad, flower-like beauty.

"Of course, I have Ralph; but some day, Louise, some honest-hearted young fellow will come to you, and will love you as his life, and then, Louise, if your heart responds" (her voice weighed with the sweet mystery of love dropped into rhythmic cadence) "you will be blest indeed."

"Yes, ma'am," said the girl again, but feigned an interest in the landscape and leaned forward to hide her homely face from the gaze of the beautiful and blest.

Suddenly the feigned interest became real, for she half rose to her feet, grasping the dashboard. "Whoa!"

She threw the reins into Marguerite's lap; and, springing to the ground, pressed into the thicket of blackberry and cabbrier that upon one side bordered the road. Parting the tangle with her bare hands, she took one look through the opening she had made. The next instant she had loosened the traces and was leading the horse out of the shafts.

"Why, Louise"—began Marguerite; then she got down and went to her with a face full of astonished inquiry. The girl's fingers were flying from buckle to buckle along the harness.

"Go home as fast as you can go, Miss Marguerite," she said. Her voice was steady, but her hands shook. "What do you mean, Louise?"

The girl dragged the harness off: "For you," she said, "life is worth living; for me"—she backed the horse to the carriage-side—"death is worth dying."

From a hub she vaulted to the horse's back. "Go home!" she shouted, fiercely; for by now she had lost control of her voice.

"I believe you are insane," said Marguerite, half in anger, half in fright. To the quivering girl the suggestion was an inspiration. She waved her hands wildly:

"Go!" she shouted, jerking the horse upon his haunches, "start, or I'll ride you down!" Marguerite fled in terror. Once she looked back. No one was in sight, but she heard the horse's hoofs clattering downward into the town.

A catalla, little and old and scarred and only of late protected from vandalism by a box, stood in front of the doctor's office. A horse wheeled under it, and Ralph reached the sidewalk as the rider slipped to the ground.

"What's wrong, my girl?" he asked, with forced professional calmness. Her breath came pantingly.

"Go home," she gasped, with tense, white lips, "they want you." He sprang toward his office, but she clutched his sleeve. She was not fierce now, but her tone was an agony of pleading.

"Oh, go!"—for the first time in her life she looked full into his face—"don't stop for anything—she's dying, I tell you—Marguerite—she's bleeding to death by the roadside—above the dam."

She pressed the bridle into his hand, but he tore away into his office. He was out again like a flash, hatless but his emergency kit in hand. He snatched the bridle and the next minute the woody, up-hill road plucked horse and rider out of her sight.

Almost fainting, she held to the tree-box. The street was nearly deserted, but two women, talking earnestly, came round a corner. She clutched the gown of the nearer. "The dam," she whispered, "there's a leak!"

The woman started and gathered her skirt closely about her. "Poor creature!" she said to her companion, "rum is the curse of this land," and they turned nervously into the nearest street.

Then Weaser Tan's strength came again. Two boys tore past her in a wild game of chase. She seized the foremost by his shoulder, his companion grabbed him at the same instant, and both wheeled stumblingly in front of her.

"Run for the hills!"—she shook the boy as if to awaken him from sleep—"the big dam is giving way! Don't stand and stare! Alarm the people!"

She flung them from her, and they plunged ahead—one shrieking like a maniac, the other dumb with terror. The girl herself dashed after the two women. Ahead of her and on the opposite side, upon a bank of the "branch," was a factory. In its second story young girls were working; they could see them through the open windows.

gled with the whir and clatter of the machinery. "Run for your lives!" They rushed to the street and fled their various ways. One, half paralyzed, clung to Weaser Tan. "The railroad bridge is high and very strong." From both sides people were crowding upon it. Only a moment—but in it, to that struggling cityful, terror enough to freight eternity—and Louise, her arm around her fainting charge stood upon the bridge. Then the dam surrendered its last defense and pandemonium plunged into the valley.

The work of rescue was going on. The young doctor had not lain down, they said, for two days and two nights. He was everywhere, directing, commanding, executing. Some sixty rods below where the bridge had been was a wooded knoll, for which the branch in its peaceful days had turned tranquilly aside. A mass of drift was piled there now, sand and soil; trees, cattle and the wrecks of homes; stone buttress; brace and girder and stanchion of steel and human flesh and blood—wisps of straw flipped aside by the torrent, the discarded playthings of a moment.

Gangs of men were sorting it over. A bit of blue cambric caught Ralph's eye. He knew it, for his mother had worn it once. "Careful there, careful," he warned, pressing in among the laborers, "take away that piece of roofing. Not your axe, man! For heaven's sake don't use that! There's a young girl lying just beneath! Help me lift it, half a dozen of you—so—that will do."

He scooped away some debris with his hands and wiped the soil from the dead face. "Thank God, there's no mutilation. That iron beam there twisted like a thread—it confines the arm. Set your lever just here. Steady—steady; that will do."

"Now, some one help me carry her. Not you, Van Courtlandt; some one with an awful sorrow tugging at his heart. You'll do, McCall."

"Gently, my man, tenderly as you'll lift that little girl of yours when you find her. Lay her here, McCall."

"One moment more, my friend. Here's a pillow, soft and white and frilled, a dainty thing—Marguerite sent it. Put it into place while I lift the head. Now the spread—thank you, McCall."

Weaser Tan lay in her coffin; her face as plain in death as in life, but more serene. Ralph stood and looked at her wonderingly and sadly. His old dog came and, whining, laid his muzzle in his hand.

"Yes, Don, you've lost a friend. She loved you."

Marguerite came softly in. "Here's something else she loved," she said. "They say she would not sleep without it under her pillow."

He opened the little box she gave him, gazed into it for a moment, touched its contents tenderly, then tucked them under some roses that lay upon her breast.

They were a pair of gray yarn mittens and a blue-jay's wing.—Short Stories.

Novel Way to Tell the Time. "The Navy Department clerks have a good one on me," said Senator Jones recently to a Star reporter. "I have had frequent occasion to visit the State, War and Navy Department building during the session of Congress, and somehow always managed to get there about noon each day, though I had no particular object in getting there the same hour each day. But it happened that way. I noticed on several occasions as I passed through the halls of the building that some of the clerks or messengers sang out 'down' as I passed them, and, though I could not understand the reason, I did not connect it with myself. When the thing happened three or four times in succession, it began to make me think. About three weeks ago I had business there, and just as I entered a room looking for a friend, an official, a clerk broke out with the usual 'down,' looking at me straight in the eyes. I got a little hot under the collar at it, and said, 'Young man, there is nothing particularly down about me that I know of, and will you please explain why all of you speak of me as down as I pass through?' The clerk reddened up somewhat and explained that his 'down' had no reference to me whatever; that what he meant by it, as also the others, was that the time ball which is dropped from the flag staff at the top of the building at noon each day had dropped for 12 o'clock; that it was a custom of the clerks and messengers of that building whenever they happened to be watching the ball to sing out 'down,' so as to inform their fellow clerks who were not watching the ball that it was down. Of course, the explanation was satisfactory and that is all there is of it. I admit, however, that the clerks in that building have one on me, and I'll try to even it up some time with them."—Washington Star.

Steel Rails in China. A Pittsburg artificer, Walter Kennedy by name, has taken charge of the steel rail plant at Han-Yang, China, and is turning out rails of standard quality, as good as those of Pittsburg, Bethlehem, Joliet or any of the American or European rolling mills, to be laid down on the new Wo-Sung railroad. The introduction of this new industry, says the New York Tribune, is likely to be of more importance to China than anything which has happened in her history since the days of Confucius. As her guide in this new and momentous industrial departure, the country did well to take an American, and it seems apparent that she has picked out a capable one, who understands his business and is qualified to make the pigtailed understand it also.

SELECT RELIGIOUS READING.

PREGNANT THOUGHTS FROM THE WORLD'S GREATEST PROPHETS.

At Twilight—The Artist Supreme—Evening Prayer—When the Great Transition Comes—The Handwriting of Character—Time Purges Away the Alloy.

From pool to pool on wings of marsh gray The lonely little shifts his rosy rest; In garden trees safe hid from curious quest The tree-frog pipes the hour of dusk away; Above the lawn in tangled maze of play The fire-fly swings his ethereal torch of light, While almost wood-thrushes thrill with songs of delight.

And whippoorwill takes up her evening lay. In matted grass the ebon cricket stirs, And dusty moths flit through the windless air. The lean bat beats the dusk with eerie wings, And rest returns to smooth the brow of care. The hissing pines breathe low a sweet refrain, And homing cow-bells tinkle down the lane.

—Professor B. F. Leggett.

Christ the Artist Supreme.

Bishop Thoburn tells a beautiful story about a picture of his dead child. It seemed a very imperfect photograph, so blurred that scarcely a trace of the loved features could be seen in it. But one day he took the picture to a photographer, and asked him if he could do anything to improve it. In three weeks the bishop returned, and, as he saw the picture in its frame on the wall, he was startled. It seemed as if his child were living again before him. The image had been in the old picture, but was concealed beneath the blurs and mist that were there also. The artist, however, had brought it out in strong, living beauty, until it was like life in its tender charm. In every true disciple of Christ there is the image of the Master. It may be very dim, its features are overlaid by blurs and blemishes, and are almost unrecognizable by human eyes. It is the work of Christ in our lives to bring out this likeness, more and more clearly, until at last it shines in undimmed beauty. This is what Christ is doing in many of His ways with us.

"Who from unsightly bulb or slender root Could guess aright In summer's height Through tremulous shadows voices call to me 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be.'"

An Evening Prayer.

Lord, abide with us, for it is evening and the night is upon us. Give us thy protection in and through the darkness. The darkness and the light are both alike to thee, and we shall sleep without fear, for thou art our keeper. We ask for thy peace. Earth's peace is easily broken by alarms and by troubles that spring up continually; but thy peace is eternal, not as the wind goes and thou goest, and we long to stay our weary hearts on thee. We lay at thy feet the work of this day. Teach us the lesson thou wouldst have us learn from its experiences. What is stained with sin wilt thou graciously cleanse. Correct our mistakes and let them not mar our work nor hurt other lives. We ask special blessings upon our friends. Lead them in paths of thine own choosing. Sanctify our home life. Help us to find the best in each other, and preserve us from criticism, impatience and displeasure. May love so abound in our hearts that all our human relations shall become more thoughtful and tender. Accept our gratitude for the common mercies of every day. Fold us all now in thine everlasting arms, and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon us. Amen.

When the Great Transition Comes.

Some day it may happen that, having made his visit to our neighbors, Death will have a mind to call on us, and we shall go softly about our changed house in sad amazement. Or a fleecy cloud, which only lent a misty softness to the arch of heaven, will suddenly gather into a thundercloud, and lay desolate our golden cornfields. Or a fine passage from the prophets, whose literary grace and felicitous imagery we have often tasted, will fling aside its embroidered cloak and spring upon us, gripping our conscience and heart with grim and cruel shall be taken from the midst of the very tarnish shall be taken off. We have this in alloy, this tarnish, in all of us, and the education of life is to purify it away—by sorrows, by disappointments, by failures, by judgments.

"By fires far fiercer than are blown to produce And purge the silver ore adulterate." —Canon Farrar.

Time Purges Away the Alloy.

"I saw in Rome," says a modern writer "an old coin of silver denarius, all coated and crusted with green and purple rust. I called it rust, but I was told that it was copper; the alloy thrown out from the silver until there was none left within, the silver was all pure. It takes ages to do it, but it does get done. Souls are like that. Some things move in them slowly, till the defilements all thrown out. Some day perhaps the very tarnish shall be taken off. We have this in alloy, this tarnish, in all of us, and the education of life is to purify it away—by sorrows, by disappointments, by failures, by judgments.

"By fires far fiercer than are blown to produce And purge the silver ore adulterate." —Canon Farrar.

Obedience the Price of Progress.

The Bible rings with one long demand for obedience. The key-word of the book of Deuteronomy is, "Observe and do." The burden of our Lord's farewell discourse is "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." We must not question or reply or excuse ourselves. We must not pick and choose our way. We must not think that obedience is in some other particular. God gives us command at a time; if we obey Him, He will flood our soul with blessing, and lead us forward into new paths and pastures. But if we refuse, we shall remain stagnant in water-logged, make no progress in Christian experience, and lack both power and joy." —Rev. F. B. Meyer.

Pure Hearts Make Clear Vision.

Every permitted sin narrows the window of the soul and blinds our vision, and every victory over evil clears the vision of the soul so that we can see God a little plainer. The unholiness man could not see God if he were set down in the midst of heaven; he would see men and women whose hearts are pure, but him in the very commonest walks of life." —J. Wilbur Chapman, D. D.

Slowly, through all the universe, the temple of God is being built. Wood, in the first stage of its construction, is your terrible temptation, you catch the purpose of your being, and give yourself to God, and so give Him the chance to give Himself to you, your life, a living step, taken up and set into that growing wall." —Phillips Brooks.

Do not fancy yourself safe and fortified because you feel no burden. There is a thing as a laden slave sleeping on his feet. The first stage of temptation is to feel no burden; after that the benumbed senses cease to warn. The frost-bitten man is warned by strangers. So is it in the path of conscience. —Frederick W. Robertson.

If we look down, then our shoulders stoop. If our thoughts look down, our character bends. It is only when we look our heads up that the body becomes erect. It is only when our thoughts go to the heights that the body becomes erect. —Alexander McCall, D. D.