

The Presbyterian College Journal.

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WANTED—SEVERAL RELIABLE ROPE LADDERS.

During its short career the JOURNAL has been extremely gratified to find that suggestions thrown out in its pages indicating desirable improvements in the management and equipment of the institution whose student opinion it seeks to express, have eventually been acted upon with beneficial results. It is satisfactory to be able even thus early to recognize fruits of the midnight work bestowed on our ephemeral publication, and the consciousness that our influence has been not altogether a minus quantity, affords us no little encouragement this month in calling the attention of the authorities to one particularly urgent need which has hitherto been overlooked. We refer to the necessity of some kind of fire escape in our dormitories. This necessity is manifest to all who have inspected the buildings, and noticed the lack of adequate precaution against fire. It is true that the supply of water from the hydrants in the street is not likely to disappoint the demands of the fire brigade; but inside the buildings there are no such conveniences. With the exception, perhaps, of a small Babcock extinguisher, which, in passing, is credibly supposed to be eccentric in its operations, and also leaving out of consideration the tin basins in the washrooms—all of which receptacles, as well as the extinguisher, belonging to the older portion of the buildings—there is positively no provision made for quenching an incipient conflagration; and should such suddenly break out one of these nights, a supposition by no means improbable in a place where so much midnight oil is burned, and should it gain rapid headway, the absence of fire escapes from every part of the residences would place the students in an alarming position, especially those who occupy dormitories in the Morrice Hall and West Wing; for it is not only possible but highly probable that the passages and stairways leading to either of the quarters mentioned would speedily be rendered impassable by flames and smoke. Indeed we have long considered the dark tunnels referred to as features of architecture deserving of the strongest condemnation, for they may one day prove veritable fire-traps. Under these circumstances

great risk is incurred by neglecting precautions which might save the residents from a horrible death. It were superfluous here to remind the authorities of the urgent necessity of immediate action in the matter. They are men of experience, and cannot doubt the wisdom of being prepared for a contingency of which warning is given almost daily, and while we all sincerely trust that our beautiful Morrice Hall may never be reduced to ashes, still it were misplaced confidence to fondly dream that our commendable wishes are incapable of disappointment; it should be remembered that the ruling characteristic of the fire fiend is that he comes when least expected. It would be a good thing therefore, and we believe we echo the opinion of all who are directly concerned, if a sufficient number of reliable rope ladders could be provided for the various flats of dormitories; and in case nothing more elaborate can be afforded, a few strong ropes might even prove serviceable as a means of escape; they would at least help to break the fall from a window to the ground, a feat of no startling appearance in itself, but one nevertheless, which would be attended with serious results to an intrepid acrobat, even did he fortunately tumble into a snowbank. We seriously hope the College Board will give this subject consideration.

CRISPNESS.

It has been suggested, and with some show of plausibility, that the reason why certain classes of literature, missionary biography for instance, receive but little favor at the hands of the general reading public, is the prevalent overstrained effort to *tell everything*. It is a pity that works of this kind should be so marred, for in reality nothing in the page of romance can exceed in dramatic interest the wild episodes that go to make up the life of nearly every foreign missionary; it is only when these adventures come to be recorded for the public eye that their attractiveness is diminished, and often entirely lost sight of, in an unnecessary collation of minor circumstances. Such prolixity is almost invariably fatal to success. It was sober truth that Professor Lowell spoke when he said that the "art of writing consists chiefly in knowing what to leave in the inkpot;" he simply recognized the fact that men nowadays are hard pressed for time, and cannot afford to wade through acres of boggy language before being able to arrive at an understanding as to how, say a community, comes to be just what it is. It is evident that the times demand a style of the utmost conciseness consistent with clearness, and writers who would be popular must avoid the fault of prolonging a composition till impatient readers are forced to cry out upon its tediousness. Brevity is the soul of power, as of wit. It will have been noticed that the *short* articles in magazines and newspapers are usually the first and best read; and the short discourses in the sanctuary are often the longest remembered. Aim then at crispness.