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## CONVERSATION.

## Motto for the Week:

"Everywhere in life the true question is,  
not what we gain, but what we do."  
[Carlyle.]

## A Strange Disease.

A new disease is reported to have broken out in Japan. You are walking along, feeling perfectly well and suspecting no evil, when suddenly you are seized with violent cramps. You fall down, experiencing, however, no particular pain; but when you have leisure to examine yourself you find, to your horror, that a slit an inch or an inch and a half in length, and about an inch deep, has opened in your arm or your leg. In a short time the wound begins to bleed and becomes very painful. You are in no especial danger of your life, it appears, but the mysterious wound is very difficult to cure, and you will be lucky if it heal in six months. The people naturally attribute the malady to malignant spirits, and the European doctors are unable to give any more satisfactory explanation of its cause, the efforts at prevention are at present confined to the making of incantations, the burning of fragrant incense, and the scolding of the patient. These are not reported to be very efficacious.

## The Real Jack Horner.

Jack Horner of the Christmas pie really said, though whether he deserved the title of "good boy" is exceedingly doubtful. He was, however, a fortunate rogue. When Henry VIII. suppressed the monasteries and drove the monks from their nests, the title-deeds of the Abbey of Mells were demanded by the commissioners. The Abbot of Glastonbury determined that he would send them to London, and, as the documents were very valuable, and the road infested with thieves, it was difficult to get them to the metropolis safely. To accomplish this end he devised a very ingenious plan. He ordered a savory pie to be made, and inside he put the documents—the finest filling a pie ever had—and entrusted this dainty to a lad named Horner to carry up to London to deliver safely into the hands of the commissioners. However, the boy broke off a piece of the pie and beheld a parchment within. He pulled it forth innocently enough, wondering how it could have found its way there tied up in pastry, and arrived in town. The parcel was delivered, but the title-deeds of Mells Abbey estate were missing. The fact was that Jack had them in his pocket. These were the juiciest plums in the pie. Great was the rage of the commissioners, and heavy the vengeance they dealt out to the monks. But Master Jack Horner kept his secret, and when peaceable times were restored he claimed the estates and received them.

## Facts About Flies.

"The popular notion that house flies walk on the ceiling by the help of the suckers on their feet is a mistaken one," said a man of science to a reporter. "Notwithstanding the testimony on this point of many old and respected authors, the fact that the fly has no suckers on its feet at all, but each of those six members ends in a pair of little cushions and a pair of hooks. The cushions are covered with ever so many knobbed hairs, which are kept moist by a exuding fluid. Thus a fly is able to walk on a smooth wall or ceiling or window-pane, and apparently defies the law of gravitation by the adhering power of the moist hairy pads. You will understand the theory of it if you will touch the moistened end of your forefinger to the window glass or any smooth surface and perceive the perceptible adhesion. For walking on rough surfaces the fly's foot cushions are of no use, but the insect is provided with the twelve strong hooks mentioned to us the rough travel with, clinging by them to any such surface as a whitewashed wall or cloth.

"Another prevalent fallacy is that the smaller flies seen in houses are young ones. As is the case with the insects, the fly's growth is accomplished in the larva state; it ends with the issuing from the pupa and the expansion of the wings. Individual flies differ in size or maturity, just as in the case with man and other animals. Every house fly that you see was once a crawling maggot. The eggs laid by the female fly are usually deposited in warm manure or in decomposing vegetation. Each stable in summer that is not kept remarkably clean is a hatching and propagating place for flies. Within 24 hours after the eggs are laid they are hatched out into footless maggots, which in the fifth they are born in for a week, and then contract to little brown objects called puparia. Within this hardened skin the maggot is transformed into the perfect fly, which crawls out of the puparium five days later, already grown to full size, and wings its way to share your luncheon. A fly lives about three weeks. When the cold weather comes the flies nearly all die; but a few vigorous females remain torpid in nooks and crannies, thus surviving the winter and continue their species."

## Fifteen Minutes a Day.

[Christian Union.]  
An excellent amateur pianist was recently asked how she had managed to keep up her music. She was over and had had a large family. She had never been rich, and she had had more social burdens to carry than fall to the lot of most women.

"How have you done it?" reiterated her friend, who had long ago lost the musical skill which she had gained at an expense of years of study and thousands of dollars.

"I have done it," replied the other, "by practicing fifteen minutes a day, whenever I could not get more. Sometimes, for several months together, I have been able to practice two or three hours each day. Now and then I have taken a term of lessons, so as to keep up with the times; but, however busy and burdened I have been, unless actually ill in bed, I have practiced at least fifteen minutes every day. That has 'tided me over' from one period of leisure to another, until now I have still my own talent, at least as well improved as it ever was, with which to entertain my friends and amuse myself."

It is amazing to those who have tried it to see what can be accomplished by laying aside even a small portion of time daily for a set purpose. You find your habits of religious devotion wavering. "The cares of this life are choking out the better growth." Seize a fraction of your time and lay it aside for reading the Bible and for prayer. If you take it as soon as possible after breakfast you will be sure to get it. Do not curtail your sleep for any purpose. The duty of sleep is just as binding as the duty of prayer. Women will never amount to anything in any department until they learn that the care of their health is a sacred duty.

Do you find your mental furnishings growing rusty and dim? By reading a good book fifteen minutes each day, you can effectively renew your mental vigor.

You cannot master an art by working fifteen minutes a day upon it; but the fruits of years of study in literature, music, or painting can be conserved through busy

months by the devotion of even a few minutes daily, if you can get no more time, to hard practice. Then the health can be greatly benefited by even a short stroll in the open air when it is impossible to take longer ones. It is like the proverbial saving of the pennies and gathering up of the fragments. The results are simply astonishing.

## Whimsical Texts.

[Christian at Work.]  
Of whimsical texts a notable one has come down to us from the days of Frederick the Great. One of his chaplains died, and the King decided to test the readiness of the candidates for the appointment. So he sent word to one of the applicants that he would supply him with a text the next Sunday, from which he was to preach an extempore sermon in the royal chapel. The news of this novel probation soon spread, and the chapel was crowded to excess. The King entered at the end of the prayers, and as the candidate ascended the pulpit, one of his Majesty's aides-de-camp gave him a sealed paper. He opened it and found a blank. With perfect self-possession, however, he turned it over from side to side, and said: "My brethren, here is nothing and there is nothing; out of nothing God created all things; whence he proceeded to deliver an admirable discourse upon the wonders of nature. Sermons upon such things with nothing in them are common enough. A sermon upon nothing with something in it is a rarity."

Texts which are not in themselves peculiar often acquire a novel force by the circumstances under which they are used. Real life has not seldom been enriched by the appropriate character. A preacher who took the offertory bags contained less silver than the collection plates, announced for his text, "Alexander the oppressor," and drove the monks from their nests, the title-deeds of the Abbey of Mells were demanded by the commissioners. The Abbot of Glastonbury determined that he would send them to London, and, as the documents were very valuable, and the road infested with thieves, it was difficult to get them to the metropolis safely. To accomplish this end he devised a very ingenious plan. He ordered a savory pie to be made, and inside he put the documents—the finest filling a pie ever had—and entrusted this dainty to a lad named Horner to carry up to London to deliver safely into the hands of the commissioners. However, the boy broke off a piece of the pie and beheld a parchment within. He pulled it forth innocently enough, wondering how it could have found its way there tied up in pastry, and arrived in town. The parcel was delivered, but the title-deeds of Mells Abbey estate were missing. The fact was that Jack had them in his pocket. These were the juiciest plums in the pie. Great was the rage of the commissioners, and heavy the vengeance they dealt out to the monks. But Master Jack Horner kept his secret, and when peaceable times were restored he claimed the estates and received them.

## Sothern's Practical Jokes.

Sothern's inveterate love for practical jokes is well known. Here is one of them, less audacious than many he was guilty of. When playing in America, under the management of Mr. Abbey, the two had a wager together, the stakes being two silk hats. Sothern was the winner, and Mr. Abbey wrote an order to the principal hatter in New York, asking that they be sent to the box office of the theater. Writing this order quickly, he had left a blank space before the figure two, and when his back was turned the moist hairy inserted in front of it a six. The order was duly posted, and in course of time the 62 hats were delivered, together with the bill and a letter from the hatter, expressing his satisfaction at being favored with so large an order. Mr. Abbey happened to be out when the hats arrived, and his amazement on his return at finding the box office filled with the 62 hat boxes was great. The man also brought back the order, which was written in pencil, and Sothern, who was on the look-out, quietly rubbed out the six, so that the astonished and indignant Mr. Abbey read it as he had written it, an order for two hats.

"What does he mean?" he asked, showing the order to Sothern.

"Poor fellow!" said Sothern, shaking his head. "I really thought he would leave off, but I fear he's at it again."

"Oh, it is only a joke," said Sothern. "You had better send the hats back with some sound advice concerning his too-reckless habits, and pay the bill."

## GLAD TIDINGS.

It is the report of Mr. Kasambhai, native missionary laborer at Satara, in the Marathi (A. B. C. F. M.) Mission, India: "I have never before seen the people of Satara so friendly to Christians and so favorably disposed to listen to the Gospel message as during the past year. Many of the educated natives have convened large gatherings to discuss social and political questions, and have sent invitations to me and to others to join them. By attending these meetings I had opportunities of forming friendly relations with some of the influential as well as most orthodox of the Hindu community. The religious prejudices of the Hindus are now so much modified that they have admitted me even into their most sacred temples, where no native Christians were ever before allowed to go." Sir Charles Aitchison, K.C.S.I., affirms, after 30 years' knowledge of that country, that since the middle of the present century Christianity is growing in India at a rate more than five times as fast as the population is growing.

A remarkable tribute has recently been paid to the influence which Zenana missions are exercising in India. A manifesto has recently been put forth by a number of leading Muslims and extensively circulated among Mohammedans. It accuses the adherents of Islam of being asleep and forgetful of the great deeds of their fathers, while Englishwomen, as Christian missionaries, under pretense of educating and teaching handicraft, are going about as spies and beguilers, leading the women-folk in every house away from the faith and inducing them to become Christians. Special warning is given against the work done in schools, whereby "tender, innocent, underage girls of Hindus and Mohammedans are being seduced by the crafty and blasphemous words of their hearers." It is pointed out that these Mission Englishwomen do not act under the authority of Government, which interferes with no one's faith, and that, therefore, the people are free to decline their services. The Manifesto has issued a "fatwa," or promulgation by religious leaders having the force of law, to the effect that the unbelieving women of another faith is as a strange man, so that it is not lawful for a Mohammedan woman to show herself to such a woman, and that it is a sin for the

faithful to admit such a woman into their houses.

The sum of \$825 has been placed in the hands of the trustees of the United Society of Christian Endeavor to be used for prizes for essays on the following topics: 1. How can Christian Endeavor Societies promote and stimulate the systematic benevolence of young people for missionary purposes? 2. How can Christian Endeavor Societies promote the introduction of religious journals and other wholesome reading into all the families of the congregation with which they are connected? 3. The Christian Endeavor Society: Its adaptability to all denominations in promoting (a) the fellowship of young Christians; (b) their allegiance to their own churches; (c) their activity in all branches of Christian effort. These essays not to be more than 5,000 words in length; to appear in the columns of some religious paper before April 1, 1891; the judges to be eminent clergymen and others of different denominations; the successful essayists to be announced at the international convention in Minneapolis July 10, 1891.

## The Sermons now?

Just what sermons are wanted now? The question is raised in many religious journals. Well, for one thing sermons are wanted now which are interesting and will do execution—sermons which grasp and make bare, and wield some mighty idea, holding it up and turning it around, and repeating it, if need be, as does Demosthenes the one main point in his oration on the crown, until it becomes a palpable thing, and the audience feels its form and pressure—sermons having the "agonistical" the wrestling, the earnestness, the earnestness calls it—sermons put together on the principle that "force in writing consists in the minimum of words," whose sentences are rounded together until they crack, and where figures, trope, allegory, metaphor, antithesis, interrogation, anecdote—anything that can awaken interest and deepen impression is resorted to—sermons supported and sinewed with the "thus saith the Lord," and then charged with living truth, and aimed directly at the conscience and the heart, singling out each hearer, and saying, "Thou art the man, and I have a message from God unto thee," and then making pursuit after that man, in clear, rapid, concentrated utterances, and pressing upon him, and narrowing his way, and hemming him in, and smiting him down with terrible volleys, until, quivering and breathless, he crouches "between the land that coudemns and the cross that saves."

Items of The "Extra-cent-a-day" plan is interest. A scheme originating with Mr. S. F. Wilkins, a Boston (Mass.) bank cashier, to enlarge the amount of contributions for missionary funds, and it is being pushed by its originator with some vigor in Congregational circles.

A dispatch from Paris says that Bishop Leveque has arrived at Marseilles from Zanzibar. He reports that the Uganda missions are in a prosperous condition, and that the country has become one of the places in which the slave trade, he says, will meet with a gradual death through the decrease in the demand for slaves.

How sharply defined in the heathen conception is the idea that the gods are malign beings, is seen in what one missionary in India writes of one of his servants who was proposing to sacrifice to a god—"Because," he said, "the idol has done no harm to me for a whole year." One needs to live face to face with the men who hold this theory in regard to divine beings, to understand how far above the teachings of all other religions is the teaching of the Bible that "God is love."

## WORDS THAT BURN.

THE NOBLE NATURE.  
It is not growing like a tree  
It is the idea that the gods are malign beings, is seen in what one missionary in India writes of one of his servants who was proposing to sacrifice to a god—"Because," he said, "the idol has done no harm to me for a whole year." One needs to live face to face with the men who hold this theory in regard to divine beings, to understand how far above the teachings of all other religions is the teaching of the Bible that "God is love."

IF IT BE TRUE THAT ANY BEAUTEOUS THING  
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THE GIFTS OF GOD.  
When God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessings standing by,  
Let us, said he, pour on him all we can;  
Let the rich man, then, be rich, and let the poor,  
Contract into a span.

So strength first made a way:  
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honor, pleasure;  
When almost all was out, God made a stay,  
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure  
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should, said he,  
Bestow this jewel also on my creature,  
He would adore me with his gifts, and love me  
And rest in nature, not the God of nature;  
And both should loseers be.  
Yet let him keep the rest,  
But keep them with a ripening senseless greed;  
Let him be rich and wise, that at least,  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to my breast.  
—George Herbert.

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Yarmouth.  
CHAS. PLUMMER.

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Professor of Chemistry of the Stevens Institute of Technology.

PIERCE & WATSON, Ph.D., F.C.S.,  
Professor of General and Applied Chemistry, Rutgers College and New Jersey State Scientific School.

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