

The Cleverness of Rats.

A sea captain tells a remarkable rat story. In a corner of his ship was a box of biscuits open, so that any one in passing might take one if needed. One day, when all was quiet on deck, he saw a few rats at the box, and thought he would watch their game. Ship's biscuits are rather heavier than a rat can carry. Two rats jumped upon the edge of the box, dipped inside and seized one and the same biscuit. When they had got hold of it, the others began to haul away at their tails, and so helped them up with the biscuit, which fell outside the box. At this the rats ran away and disappeared. Stealthily, however, they again assembled round the biscuit. Two lay down at opposite sides of the biscuit and gripped it between their paws. The others then pulled them by their tails. The biscuit was pushed ultimately over the edge of the deck into a hole, and then the rats went below to nibble their prize in safety.

On Keeping Promises.

The sacredness of promises is too carelessly considered. There seems to be a growing laxity in regard to keeping them, and very few realize that a promise made and accepted in good faith, when broken without good cause, comes dangerously near that point where it may be called a lie. The tendency towards broken promises seems to be on the increase, and not many are as scrupulous about keeping their word as they should be. Occasionally one hears a fellow-being who is so reliable that his or her "word is as good as a bond," but such cases are rare, and in most instances it is safest to know the character of the one concerned, most thoroughly before trusting too much to either his veracity or his sincerity.

Much of this indifference to keeping promises is the result of early training. Children have their sense of truth dulled by the too frequent habit some parents have of promising what they never intended to do. Unwise mothers in their haste, promise or threaten their children, even from the cradle, with rewards and punishments which they never mean to give, and at so imitative a period the children can hardly fail to be impressed by such examples. Many teachers follow the same line of conduct until, in almost every treatise on school government the would-be successful teacher is warned not to threaten or to promise without fulfilling.

Dishonesty of purpose is painfully common in every grade of social and business life. There is no security in buying. There was a time when merchants in former years were so faithful to their contracts that the buyer was certain of receiving exactly the thing promised. Now this is changed, and

the purchaser, in general, must keep a shrewd lookout for fear he may be overreached, and even with the closest scrutiny one is never sure that he is getting just what he bargained for.

Insincerity seems to flourish everywhere; persons make contracts and break them with careless indifference. Teachers will contract for a school term and then, for the sake of a better position or for some trivial reason, will resign. Women, in this particular, are special sinners, and it is no uncommon thing for a teacher to give up her school in the middle of the term without a thought of the embarrassment the vacancy will cause. Nor is the case any better in society. This seems to be a field where insincerity finds fertile soil, where "promises are lightly made and lightly broken." Sometimes promises must be broken, hindering circumstances prevent their fulfillment, but this is not often, and in the main they may, with a little effort, be kept. It is well to pay scrupulous attention to even trifling ones, for the habit of neglecting these leads to the neglect of graver ones and thus lowers the moral standard, for broken promises mean broken faith.

If We Knew.

Could we but draw back the curtains

That surround each other's lives,
See the naked heart and spirit,
Know what spur the action gives,
Often we should find it better,
Purer than we judge we should;
We should love each other better,
If we only understood.

Could we judge all deeds by motive,
See the good and bad within,
Often we should love the sinner,

All the while we loathe the sin.
Could we know the powers working
To overthrow integrity,
We should judge each other's errors
With more patient charity.

If we knew the cares and trials,
Knew the effort all in vain,
And the bitter disappointment,
Understood the loss and gain,
Would the grim, external roughness
Seem, I wonder, just the same?
Should we help, where now we hinder?
Should we pity where we blame?

Ah? We judge each other harshly,
Knowing not life's hidden force;
Knowing not the fount of action
Is less turbid at its source.
Seeing not amid the evil
All the golden grains of good;
Oh! We'd love each other better,
If we only understood.

—Anonymous.

The Way They Grow.

A little rain and a little sun,

And a little pearly dew,
And a pushing up and reaching out,
Then leaves and tendrils all about;
Ah, that's the way the flowers grow,
Don't you know?

A little work and a little play,

And lots of quiet sleep;
A cheerful heart, and a sunny face,
And lessons learned, and things in place;
Ah, that's the way the children grow,
Don't you know?

—Ex.

Try Your Wings.

A friend of mine, who told me the story, had an eagle. He caught it when it was young, and had brought it up, as far as he could, like a domestic fowl. Having, in God's Providence, to go to the other side of the world, he was selling off everything. He wondered what he should do with his eagle, and the happy thought came to him that he would not give it to anybody, but would give it back to itself—he would set it free. And he then opened the place in which it had been kept, and brought it to the back green. How he was astonished! It walked about, feeling as if this were rather bigger than its ordinary run; but that was all. He was disappointed, and, taking the big bird in his arms, he lifted it up and set it up in his garden wall. It turned and looked down at him! The sun had been obscured behind a cloud; but just then the cloud passed away, and the bright, warm beams poured out. The eagle lifted its eyes and pulled itself up. I wonder what it was thinking? Can an eagle recollect the crags and cliffs, the reveling in the tempests of long ago, the joyous thundering and the flashing lightnings? Pulling itself up, it lifted one wing and stretched it out—"by prayer and supplication"—and it lifted the other wing—"with thanksgiving"—and outstretched it. Then it gave a scream, and soon was a vanishing speck away in the blue heaven. Anxious, disturbed Christian, you are an eagle living in an old henhouse! Try your wings!—Rev. John McNeill.

A Shot at the Sun.

At the time of the transit of Venus, some years ago now, a British astronomer was in Natal, and among his servants were a number of Zulus. A short time before the planet approached the sun's edge he called the men together, gave them pieces of smoked glass, and asked them to look at the sun. Of course, they saw only a fiery mass. "Now," said the astronomer, "in less than an hour the Queen of England will fire a cannon ball at the sun, and will hit it. Go to your work, and I will let you know when she fires it off." Off they went, and the astronomer waited until Venus was fairly on the sun, when he bade them look. Up went the smoked glasses, and, when they saw the round black spot, a shout of amazement rose, and it was unanimously voted that the Queen was a woman with whom it would be dangerous to trifle.

It is estimated that fifty millions of the people of the United States are non-churchgoers. It seems almost incredible that only two-sevenths of the people give any attention to public worship. It is a condition which may well arouse Christians to more faithful service.—Religious Intelligencer.