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THE COMMONWEALTH.

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THE EDITOR'S LEISURE HOURS.

Points and Paragraphs of Things Present, Past and Future.

The action of the middle-of-the-road Populists in putting out a national ticket at their convention in Cincinnati last week for 1900, was somewhat premature. One of the things they wished to emphasize was their indignation against Marion Butler. There was a special plank in the platform denouncing him as chairman of their national committee for "attempting to drive the Populist party into the Democratic party."

It is not too late for THE COMMONWEALTH to repeat what it has said before about the Clark-Kilgo squabble, namely; that both of these gentlemen would come out of the fight badly scared. And they have. Although the Board of Trustees decided in Dr. Kilgo's favor, he has already seen his palmist days in North Carolina. So has Judge Clark. Neither one will stand as well with as large constituency in the State as in times past.

In 1790 Ben Franklin, well known as "Poor Richard," left a fund of \$5,000 for the town of Boston "to be managed by the select men of the town, and the ministers of the oldest Episcopal, Congregational and Presbyterian churches." The Supreme court has declared the city of Boston trustee of the fund, which now amounts to half million dollars. It is yet an open question as to what the city will do with the money. There has been some talk of establishing trade schools with it.

It is charged by some that certain commissioned officers have interfered with the mustering out of certain regiments from the army, because said officers have such fat places—so much better than they ever had before. This is very wrong. If the boys who enlisted for the war desire to return home now the war is over, they ought to be allowed to do so. A Wilmington boy writing to his father charges substantially the same as referred to. It only shows how cheerfully some men will sacrifice others for the sake of money.

The lessons learned so dearly in front of Spanish guns which used smokeless powder, is to have its good results. A dispatch from Washington a few days ago gave out the following information:

Washington, September 8.—Probably the navy has fought its last war with black powder. Bids were opened to-day at the Navy Department for supplying the new warships with 1,000,000 pounds of smokeless powder, a quantity sufficient to supply at least the secondary batteries of all the ships in the service, and this supply will be augmented from time to time until within the course of a year or two all black powder will have been retired, except, possibly, some that will be retained for saluting purposes.

From what we have seen of the reports from schools that have already opened for the fall seasons, it appears that there is reason to believe that the high schools and colleges will be well attended this fall. And with all this there are many boys and young men not entering schools now who ought to be much more intelligent a year hence than they are now. Just one hour set apart every day for careful study or systematic reading is worth more than anybody can calculate. Then, when the long winter evenings come along there is abundant opportunity for almost any boy or young man to devote some time to close study. With the extravagant notions of dress that have fastened upon many of the young men of the land; and other tendencies to spend money and time without stint, it is needful that some of our young men and young women be studious, else within a few decades we may not, as a people, keep abreast in intellectual developments with other developments for which the age is striving.

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WHEN EZRA SANG FIRST BASS.

ONE OF THE SECRETS OF THE CHOIR.

Taking Cold Scientifically.

BY LEON MEAD.

Saturday Evening Post.

The shutters of Jenkins' grocery store had been up an hour or more, and the little, red whiskered proprietor had been hinting as openly as he dared to half a dozen of his customers, who were sitting around the stove, that he would like to go home. But his ostentatious preparations—the slamming of covers on open barrels and the extinguishing of the lights down to a solitary lamp—made no visible impression on them. For the squat, little stove still radiated a hospitable glow, and the air of the room was comfortably blue and fragrant with the smoke of many pipes.

The conversation, which had languished while there had been an occasional customer to soothe the nervous proprietor, suddenly became brisk. From chickens it naturally drifted to poultry diseases, and thence to the uncertainty of life. That suggested religion to Tom Hicks; and religion, revivals; and revivals, sinners. So, by an easy transition, the church choir came up for discussion.

Then it was that old Uncle Ezra, who had been silent through it all, unimpressed ponderously, as properly befitted a great gun of the village.

"Reckon I never told ye 'bout the time I was a bass singer?" he threw out.

A respectful chorus of "Noes," and "Tell us about it, Uncle 'Ez," answered him. Each member of the party settled back into his chair with a sigh of relief, and the unhappy Jenkins sat down on a cracker-box, for Uncle Ezra, as a man of wealth and position, was not to be interrupted nor hurried.

"Just twenty-five years ago, when I was in my prime," he began, after a preparatory cough, "the Methodist church was built, and John Tate undertook to organize the choir. They called him the 'percentor,' or something of that kind. 'Tany rate, they were stuck for a bass singer. Every one they invited to try for the position failed. At last they mentioned my name, and John came to me and asked me to jine 'em. At first I stood out right and said 'no,' not flattering myself that I could fill the bill 'tall. I knowed one tune from another, and I told him so; but my voice was weak and anything but deep; besides, at that time I had a little tech of asthma once in a while."

"None of you young fellers never knowed John Tate. He was killed by the Injuns after he went West, but he was the most convincin' man I 'out ever see, and he got me to come to church that night and try over some of the tunes. I remember I had a terrible cold that day; it was deep set, and my voice was below zero, so to speak."

"Well, seein' as I had promised, I went down to the meetin' house, as we called it in them days. Matilda Savory, now the widow Plunkett, was there, and George Delameter, who was to be the tenor, and Rachel Sliter, now deceased, and Susan Black, who I had galvanized round with considerable, and had a slinkin' sweetness for. There was a few others I don't just recollect this minute. We first attacked that hymn runnin'—"

"'There is a fountain filled with blood,' 'I put my whole soul into it, and all the wind I could muster. They was all surprised to find out I had such a good voice, and I laughed in my sleeve because no one seemed to notice that I had a cold. We tried several pieces, and, after finishin', some one was sure to say to me, 'Why, Ez, I had no idee that you had such a splendid bass voice,' and another would say to the one sittin' next, 'We couldn't get along without Ez; don't his voice chort in nice?'"

You can believe I was honored, and what made me feel the best was the kinder suppressed look of pride on Susan's face. For the time bein' I really thought I could sing like a—blackbird. Yes, that was the comparison I made to myself. You see, I was thinkin' of Susan; her rear name was Black, as I mentioned before.

"This was on a Monday night. John Tate told us to meet on Saturday

evenin' to practice, so's we'd be able to make the new church ring with devout song on the followin' day. On Tuesday, my cold was disappearin', and my normal up-grade voice was comin' back.

"I now had a chance to consider that I had made a mistake in joinin' the choir, for when time should come for me to make a public exhibition of myself my voice would be pitched entirely too high. Still I felt that this opportunity to become popular with the church folks was too good to be lost. I was a young man, anxious to be a success in business and get some of the custom which went to Andrew Yates, who also kept a grocery. And so I made this resolve: that, if necessary, I would catch another cold on Saturday rather than resign or run the risk of singin' in no set voice on the comin' Sunday."

"Saturday mornin' arrived, and I hadn't even blowed my nose since Wednesday, just afore I went to bed. So I throwed off my coat and vest and scrambled down cellar, which was just the place to get what I wanted. I hired a little boy to tend to the store and I set for nearly an hour on a hog-head of molasses, sneezin' away, but determined not to give up until I'd caught a first-rate cold. When I came upstairs I called out to the boy just to see how my vocal organs was fixed, and they put me in mind of a big bass drum that I heard once in a circus."

"That night I was on hand punctual and received many more compliments, and went home with Susan, chipper as a butterfly. For fear I wouldn't be hoarse the next morning, I set in the open window of my chamber with my coat and vest off, gazin' at the stars thinkin' of Susan while I grew hoarser every moment."

"On Sunday mornin' my voice was in good trim, and it was one of the most triumphant moments of my life as I stood up and let it swell out, while all the people down below looked up and watched us with admiration and envy. My throat was rather sore and my chest felt tight, but I paid no attention to them."

The choir agin met on Monday night, and my voice held its own. During the rest of that week I laid in a stock of soothing syrup and camphor and other medicines, which I used pretty lavishly, and with good results. But Saturday come, and I found myself hesitatatin' whether to go down cellar agin or sever my connection with the choir forever. I had observed that trade had picked up wonderfully within a few days, and the minister himself had dropped in and asked for credit on a pound of cheese, some clothes pins and one or two other articles—I don't recollect just this minute. The Superintendent of the Sabbath-school also came in for the first time and bought a ham and a gallon of sperm oil. It this thing continues, thinks I to myself, I can afford to catch cold for a few weeks until they can get a natural bass singer, and down cellar I went, leavin' the same little boy to tend the store."

"Well, a year went by, and I was still holdin' forth in the Methodist choir. My business now as flourishin', and although Mr. Yates was a Christian, the church people patronized me as much as they did him; for durin' this time they had a tremendous big revival down at Jericho Centre, and I had experienced religion. By being in the choir I had many chances to see Susan home, which would not have happened otherwise, and I valued this circumstance; for my regard for her had gradually deepened into sincere and unmitigated affection."

"But then Susan up and married a young justice of the peace, who never attended church, and was a bigger sinner than I ever dreamed of bein'. This took Susan out the choir, and left me desolate. I yowed eternal celibacy, and I didn't care who set the Methodist church afire. That was the last of me as a bass singer. Why, reckon it up, and see how many times I've exposed myself to diphtheria, bronchitis and death, and not a livin' soul was in the secret. I got so scientific about it that I could tell how many sneezes would make me hoarse enough to strike the lowest note in Old Hundred without strainin' for it."

"But one thing's been sorter botherin' me all these years. Suppose Rachel Sliter should meet me in Heaven. The very first thing she'd say would be 'Well, if here ain't Ez Hix! Come here, Ezra. I want you to sing some of those good old hymns that we used to sing in Blackville Methodist Church. That would be just like Rachel.'"

"Well, Uncle Ez," said Tom Hicks, who had been the old man's most respectful auditor, "You could have 'em open the windows and put ice on you when you was dyin', so that you could catch cold and take it along with you and sing for 'em."

Truth wears well. People have learned that DeWitt's Little Early Risers are reliable little pills for regulating the bowels, curing constipation and sick headache. They don't gripe.—E. T. Whitehead & Co.

HIS HEAD IN A HOLE.

TWO CASES OF COWARDICE.

Cowardice Degradin'.

Youths' Companion.

An eye-witness of the Orangemen's parade in New York many years ago, when there were riotous attacks and scenes of blood-shed, gives a curious account of the craven fear of one of the spectators.

All the regiments of the National Guard in New York and Brooklyn had been ordered out to protect and escort the Orange societies. The sidewalks on Eighth Avenue were blocked with men, women and children who had assembled to see the parade.

As the regiments reached Twenty-third Street, the soldiers were fired upon from housetops, windows and sidewalks. The soldiers returned the fire, and the panic-stricken throng rushed for the side streets and for every available place for retreat.

The shops along the route had been closed, the iron shutters rolled down over the windows, and the doors locked. Midway in one of the exposed blocks a shop door was broken down by the excited crowd, and an entrance forced. It was a bakery, with a large room in the rear where a family lived.

The fugitives who rushed in were led by a wild-looking man, crazed with fear. He ran through the shop into the back room, where a woman was sewing at a table. If there had been a door in the rear, he would have rushed out of it, for he had only one idea, and that was to get as far away as possible from the street where the rioting and firing were going on.

His eye fell upon a large stovepipe-hole high above the mantelpiece on the side wall. He seized a small step-ladder near the entrance door, planted it in front of the chimney, and having mounted it, ran his head into the stovepipe-hole.

The eye-witness who describes this strange scene remarks that never before had he been so utterly ashamed of being a man as when he saw this cowardly creature on the step-ladder with his head in the hole. Fear had deprived him of reason and rendered him incapable of looking anybody in the face, although he had escaped from the street, and was in no danger from the refugees who had flocked after him into the shop.

There were similar exhibitions of cowardice in Johannesburg, when the South African mining town was surrounded by Dutch soldiers, and a mob of refugees was attempting to escape from siege and massacre. Men disguised themselves in women's clothing, and sneaked out of the town after nightfall.

One cowardly fellow even went so far as to blacken his face with burnt cork, and to retreat from the town in the guise of a negress. Gamblers bribed the guards to let them pass, and adventurers, who had been in the habit of telling brave stories about their exploits in distant lands, were like rats deserting a sinking ship.

Nothing is so degrading to human character as cowardice. Without courage a man is hardly worthy of being called a man.

Presence of Mind.

Selected.

When General Andrew S. Burt was Colonel of the Seventh United States Infantry he was watching target practice on the range at one of the Western forts, says the New York Tribune. The Colonel was an errant shot. Sometimes he could make a brilliant record, and then he would suddenly become unable to hit the side of a barn.

The private who was shooting plump bullets here, there and everywhere, until General Burt became disgusted. "Here, give me that gun?" he ordered.

The man obeyed. The Colonel took careful aim, let fly and hit the bull's eye squarely.

"That's the way I shoot!" he said triumphantly.

Encouraged by his success, he drew bead and fired again. This time his aim was treacherous, and the bullet never hit the target at all.

Lesson From North Carolina.

From the Atlanta Constitution.

The Constitution presents to its readers this morning a comprehensive review of the political and social conditions in North Carolina prepared by one of its staff correspondents, Mr. Frank Weldon, who spent several days there studying the situation.

So deplorable is the state of affairs there that we devote to the subject an unusually large amount of space.

North Carolina has had a glorious past. From Mecklenburg to Worth Bagley her people have been justly proud of their heritage. True, they have seen evil days like their friends in sister commonwealths, but more than twenty years ago, under the leadership of their beloved Vance, they rose in their strength and redeemed their government from the disgraceful domination which they had suffered through the fortunes of war.

Four years ago that same incompetent, conscienceless crew again vaulted into power through coalition with an honest but deceived element who certainly never dreamed what terrible results would follow. For the past two years the administration of state, county and municipal affairs has been almost entirely in the hands of fusion politicians who have scandalized and outraged all decent people. Republicans, Populists and Democrats who respect order, honesty, purity and law have been humiliated and insulted by the shameless regime under which they lived.

Things went from bad to worse with startling rapidity and at last the respectable people, regardless of party lines, and in many instances of color lines, are rallying under one banner and are about to battle for the restoration of Anglo-Saxon supremacy and a clean government.

Just as the people of the Old North State are preparing to throw off this yoke, designing politicians in Georgia are scheming to bring about a similar fusion here. To all who love their State and their homes we commend for study the bitter object lesson presented to them in North Carolina.

Beware of the schemers who propose fusion and offer a division of the spoils.

Not only must the Populist who listens to the whispering of the tempter go counter to his convictions and principles, but he should pause to reflect that he is forging chains which will soon bind him, his family and friends in galling bonds.

Historic Coffee House.

London letter to the Philadelphia Ledger.

Another landmark of literary London has just disappeared. Dick's coffee house having closed its doors. Already the work of demolition has begun, and the quaint little room to which briefless barristers and Bohemian journalists used to find their way for dinner down the narrow passage in the temple leading out of Hare court stands roofless and gaping open to the sky. Dick's was one of the oldest places of public resort in London, for it is said to date from 1680, when coffee houses filled the places of the more gorgeous clubs of to-day. Many generations of literary men and politicians, including, of course, Dr. Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith, have in times past dined there. Of late years much of its quaintness has been lost, and an aspect of second or third rate modernity has done much to chase away the literary ghosts who were supposed to people it. For these, however, to whom the creations of the novelist's brain are a little more real and lovable than creatures of actual flesh and blood, Dick's will always be dear, for here it was that, on a memorable occasion, as lovers of Thackeray's "Pendennis" will not need to be reminded, John Finneane, Esq., of the Upper Temple; Mr. Bungay, the publisher; and Mr. Trotter, Bungay's reader and literary man of business, dined together when discussing the prospects of the proposed Pall Mall Gazette, which was afterward to afford Mr. Arthur Pendennis the means of acquiring fame and moderate fortune. It was then and there that Bungay, after the dinner and a second round of brandy and water, was so overcome by the prospect which the silver-tongued John Finneane and the projected paper opened up before him that he insisted upon paying the bill, and actually gave James, the waiter, eighteen pence for himself. As a matter of fact, the window of this room looked out upon the entrance to Thackeray's own chambers in the temple, and the great novelist himself must have often dined in the dingy room which he made the meeting place of the characters who were the offspring of his genius. Now the room itself has followed the novelist into the shadowy land of the men and things which have been.

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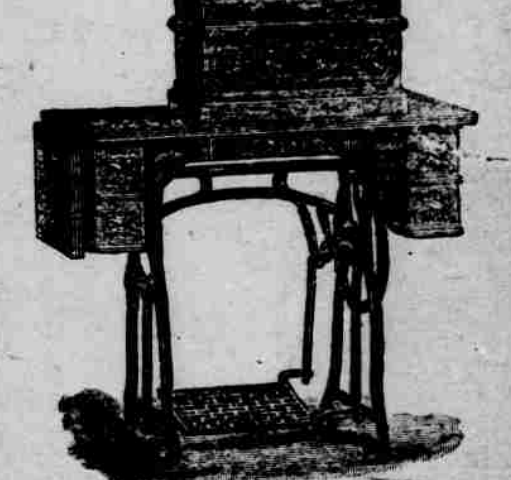
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