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CHILDREN'S COL

Nine Men's Morris.

This interesting little game is played by two persons on a board marked as the diagram here shown, and beans or grains of corn of two colors be used as men. Each player has nine pieces, none of which is on the board at the opening of the game.

The players take turns in placing their men, one at a time, at the points where

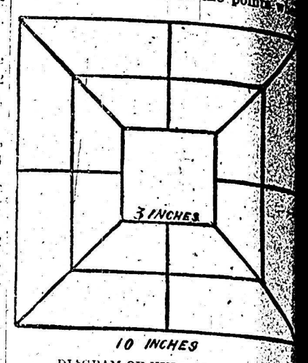


DIAGRAM OF NINE MEN MORRIS.

the lines meet each other and after all have been put on in moving them from one spot to the next in any direction along the lines. Each player's object both in placing the men and moving them, is to form a row of three of his own pieces, and whenever this is done he may take from the board one of his opponent's pieces, but he must not disturb a row of three if there is any other that he can take. He who takes off all the hostile pieces wins. Sometimes when a player has lost all his men but three he is allowed to "hop"—that is, to place his man to any vacant spot on the board. The player must avoid crowding his men together and try to place them on or near the corners of the board, at the same time trying to block his opponent as well as to get his own men into line. When possible, it should be arranged to make more than one line in successive moves, when by moving one man backward and forward two lines can alternately be made and broken.—Chicago Record.

A Brave Little Cripple.

A cripple boy looked up with brightness as the surgeon and the hospital nurse, followed by a group of young medical students, approached his bed. He knew what they were going to do. His weak, wasted, twisted leg was held rigid by a plaster cast. He saw the bowl of new plaster and the big basin and the sponge which the nurse was placing near the bed, and he saw the fresh bandages and the surgeon's glittering scissors and needles. His lips closed tightly for a moment.

"You're going to change my leg again, doctor?" he piped in a thin voice.

"No, not your leg, my boy," said the surgeon cheerily; "only the plaster, for we're going to save your leg, you know. We won't hurt you much, so be brave now. It will soon be over."

"All right, doctor. Go ahead," said the boy. The lady who was visiting the hospital reached out and took his hand in hers.

"Is the operation very painful?" she whispered to the nurse. The nurse nodded.

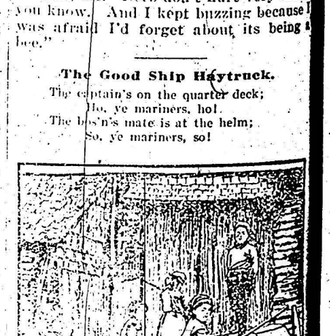
The surgeon ran a sharp knife through the cast and peeled off the plaster in great flakes. The yellowed, tightly clinging linen was removed. The pitifully thin leg was sponged, and fresh bandages were drawn around it, the surgeon all the time keeping up a flow of kindly, encouraging words. The little sufferer did not stir or wince once during the operation. He gazed fixedly at the ceiling and made a continual buzzing noise with his mouth.

After the surgeon and his attendants had left the bedside the lady visitor said to the boy: "How could you bear it so bravely? It must have hurt you dreadfully."

"Well, yes'm, it did hurt," he replied, "but I just made believe that a bee was stinging me. Bees don't hurt very much, you know. And I kept buzzing because I was afraid I'd forget about its being a bee."

The Good Ship Haytruck.

The captain's on the quarter deck;
Ho, ye mariners, ho!
The boson's mate is at the helm;
So, ye mariners, so!



The wind is blowing sou'-sou'west;
To quarters pipe the crew
And cast the good ship Haytruck off
For countries strange and new.
—Good Housekeeping.

How Snakes Spend the Winter.

We usually think of snakes and reptiles as so cold blooded that the bleak weather matters little to them, but they feel the frosty nights and take them as a warning to go to their winter quarters. Now and then a snake creeps out and coils upon the warm rocks, but soon the cold nights will drive them underground where they will knot themselves into a tangle until spring, oftentimes in large numbers. Few snakes are to be seen after Thanksgiving day.

The Game of Blind Child.

All the children stand in a ring but one blind child, who has been chosen by counting out and blindfolded. The others join hands and skip around the circle while she counts ten slowly, when all stand still while she advances and touches one. She tries to guess the name of one touched by feeling her dress, etc. The one whose name she first correctly guesses becomes blind child.

"IT IS THE LAST TIME."

The Rev. Dr. Talmage Preaches a Timely Sermon.

A despatch from Washington says:—Rev. Dr. Talmage preached from the following text:—"It is the last time."—I. John ii. 18.

John is here enforcing certain truths by the consideration that the people to whom he writes have come to the closing dispensation of the world, and says, "It is the last time."

I am standing in the last Service of the Sabbath of the last month of the year. Four more ringings of the city clock and the year, with all its joys, griefs, and achievements, will be done. It is the last time, and so I shall speak to you of last things.

I. My hearers are coming nearer their last business day. You move in routine. You rise at seven o'clock, breakfast, start for the store, enter your counting-room, read your letters, and give consequent orders. Yet a day is not far distant which may seem to be like all the others, but shall be entirely different. It will have two twilights—that of the morning and that of the evening. There will be a meridian. You will go to business—you will come back. Yet it will be, in the calendar of eternity, as marked a day as though it had no twilight; as though every hour the sky rang a fire-bell; as though faces looked out from the clouds; as though the wind had voices; as though every hour an angel shot past your store door. It will be your last business day. Unknown and unexpected by yourself, you will terminate all your business engagements. You will shut your cash-drawers, will close your portfolio, will slam shut the money safe, will take your hat and go out. Nothing that ever happens in the store can take you back again. Good-bye to the store! Good-bye to all your business friends! It is the last time.

II. I remark that men are coming nearer to their last sinful amusement. A dissipated life soon stops. The machinery of life is so delicate that it will not endure much trifling. As the herdsman throws a peck of corn under the swine's snout to be craunched and devoured, so dissipation is throwing the bodies and souls of men, by the score, into the maw of death. They think they can stand night carousal; are as well satisfied to retire at one o'clock in the morning as at ten at night; feel as safe in drinking wine as water; work without compunction with the unclean. But they will soon be undeceived. The time comes, when, with flush of countenances they will turn back from the gaming-table, or come reeling from the midnight debauch, and, wrapping themselves about them sin as a garment, will stagger on, and, striking their foot against the corner of their own tombstone, will fall flat into hell.

III. Again I remark that men are coming nearer to their last Sabbath. The week seems to me like a Red Sea, tossing, tossing; the Sabbath like a path cut through it, where we may walk dry shod. God lifting his hand again above the waters, all our cares and annoyances are whelmed in the flood.

Where did you pass your boyhood Sabbaths? With some of you it was the Scotch kirk, or the English chapel, or the city church. Somehow ever since then you loved Sunday to come. Its sunrise seems more golden; its noonday more bright; its evening more suggestive; and although you feel, before God, that many of your Sundays have been wasted, you still say, "Sweet, Sabbath!" Messenger from God! Pillow on which to put the aching head! Day fragrant of all sweet memories! How I love thee!"

IV. Again, we come near the last year of our life. The world is at least six thousand years old. Six thousand years may yet come, and the procession may seem interminable, but our own closing earthly year is not far off. Fifteen hundred and forty-six was a memorable year, because in it Luther died. Eighteen hundred and fifty-two was a marked year, because in it Lord Wellington died. Eighteen hundred and fifty-six was a marked year, because in it Hugh Miller died. Eighteen hundred and fifteen was a memorable year, for in it Waterloo was fought. Eighteen hundred and fifty-nine was a memorable year, because in it Solferino was fought. But there will be a more memorable year to us, and that will be the year in which we fight our battle with our last enemy. The spring grass may be cleft of the spade to let us down to our resting-place; or while the summer grain is falling to the sickle, we may be harvested for another world; or, while the autumnal leaves are flying in the November gale, we may fade and fall; or the driving sleet may cut the faces of the black tasseled horses that pull us out in our last ride. But it will be the year in which our body and soul part; the year in which for us, time ends and eternity begins. All other years are as nothing. The year in which you were born, the year in which you were married, the year in which you began business for yourself, the year in which your father died—all of them are of less importance than this last year of your life.

During the past year how many have gone into the next world? About five million five hundred thousand souls. It was their last year. Some of them may have expected it, but the great majority of them, if foretold that this would be their closing year, would have laughed outright and said, "Is not my arm strong? Is not my eye clear? Is not my lung sound? Who can skip, or climb, or lift, or run better than I? The doctor of the 'Life Insurance Company,' pronounced me sound. All my friends congratulate me on my healthy appearance. Begone with your evil prophecy! I shall see my threescore and ten!" Yet those five million five hundred thousand have gone. No more motion in their heart than if it had never pulsated. No more brightness in their eye than if it had always been blind. The earth sails on—a great hearse containing thousands, millions, billions, trillions, quadrillions of the dead. I beat the seconds with my hand! At every stroke a spirit flies. There goes one, another, and another. It was the last time!"

V. Again I remark that we are coming nearer the last moment of our life. But it will be a dark moment if we are unfitted for it. When we get in the last two minutes of our lives, there will be no time left for anything. You might as well try to strike a match and get a light on a ship's deck in the midst of a hurricane as to prepare for eternity when the winds of death are in full blast. It is a poor time to start to get your house insured when the flames are bursting out of all the windows, and it is a poor time to attempt to prepare for death when the realities of eternity are taking hold of us. Fortunately for those who stay behind, the remorse of those who leave the world unprepared is not usually observed. In the exhausted physical condition nothing is especially evident. But I suppose the soul flies around terribly, and tries to hold back, and flutters its wings like a captured eagle, and writhes, and turns, and tries to batter itself loose from its pursuers. If you come to a precipice, and look a thousand feet down, you get dizzy and want to hold fast. How then must the unprepared soul feel when it comes to the brink of this life and looks down—further than a stone could drop in a thousand years, and irresistible forces are pushing it to the verge, and it knows that there is nothing to clutch, nothing to brace itself against! The soul says, "The last minute has come. No time to pray, or to rehearse the past or to cry for mercy. Everything done, and irrevocably done. Here I stand on the dividing line between two worlds. Shall I jump? Which way shall I jump? Shall I fly? Which way shall I fly?

So there are those whose entire life is made up of poverty and misfortune. When success comes it comes too late and they cannot enjoy it. But, glory to God! the path of tears has a terminus. The storm will not blow on for ever. Child of God, you are not far off from the last disappointment and the last groan. The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall lead you to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

To others my subject brings arousal. Just as the Book closes tonight at twelve o'clock, it will be until the archangel wrenches it open. The recording angel is this moment writing the last sentence of the tremendous volume. It is the last time. Holy Spirit, fly away! Angels, cease to hover! Sword of truth, be sheathed! Gate of heaven, clang shut! Done! Done! It is the last last time!"

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S WORK

Few people have any conception of the work of the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs. The number of despatches arriving runs into four figures every week. Fifty years ago they were 17,000 a year; when Lord Granville succeeded Lord Palmerston they were double that number; in 1870 they had more than doubled again; and when Lord Salisbury first held the dual position of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary despatches were received at the Foreign Office at the rate of nearly 100,000 a year. Lord Palmerston used to say that his work as Foreign Minister occupied him exclusively eight hours a day.

ENCOURAGING.

Bighead—You are too set in your opinions to be a good reasoner.

Thickhead—I don't see how you can say that. I hold myself open to conviction even when I know I am right.

THE S. S. LESSON.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON, JAN. 6.

"Jesus Anointed at Bethany." Matt. 26. 1-6. Golden Text. Mark 14. 8.

PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 6. When Jesus was in Bethany. During the first visit he had made since his most wonderful miracle. The The house of Simon the leper. A man concerning whom we know nothing; Simon was a common name among the Jews. John tells us that the incident we are now about to study occurred in a house where "Martha served" and "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him." The house may have borne the name of a former owner, and the leper may long have been dead, or, as is more pleasing to conjecture, Simon may have been a relative of Lazarus and his sisters, and possibly had been cured by Jesus. It would almost seem that this "supper," made in our Lord's honor, was in commemoration of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

7. There came unto him a woman. Mary the sister of Lazarus. It is hardly to be supposed that Matthew and Mark did not know the name of this woman, which, however, John only gives. Some have supposed that the early spirit of persecution made it necessary for Matthew and Mark to conceal as much as possible facts concerning the family at Bethany. Probably when John wrote, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary were all dead. An alabaster box of very precious ointment. A cruse or flask which derived its name from Alabastron, a town in Egypt, whence the hard and brilliant stalactite known as alabaster was brought. The contents of the cruse were evidently liquid perfume, an attar, or fragrant oil. As a great luxury such cruses were sometimes so made that their contents could be poured forth only when they were broken. Dr. Adam Clarke, however, translates a clause of Mark 14.3, "she brake the seal." He reasons that it was customary in ancient Asia to seal such bottles with wax; argues against the likelihood of so precious an article as a carven alabastron being willfully broken by Mary, and suggests that the breaking of it would be apt to hurt both the head of our Lord and the hands of Mary, and that it would be almost impossible to separate the oil from the shattered fragments of the cruse. We presently read that the woman poured the perfume on his head, as he sat at meat. This, Dr. Clarke believes, she could not have done had she broken the bottle. John tells us that she poured it on his feet also.

8. When his disciples saw it, they had indignation. In John 12. 4 the murmuring is attributed to Judas. But the other disciples, without the base and sordid motives of the traitor, were nevertheless easily swayed in their moral judgment. He was wicked; they were weak. It is startling to note that the word for waste in the Greek is the very word which in John 17. 12, where Judas is characterized by our Lord, is translated perdition.

9. This ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. Mark and John tell us for how much—three hundred denarii—as much as a laboring man would earn in a whole year. John tells us plainly that the proposition to give it to the poor was hypocritical, for Judas was a thief. The measure of a man's beneficence is not to what object he gives, but from what motive. Only a loving heart can properly estimate another heart's expression of love.

10. Why trouble ye the woman? Mark says they were bitterly reproaching her. Her sensitive soul shrank from the imputation of unworthy motive and silly performance. "It troubled Jesus that his friend should be troubled. She hath wrought a good work upon me. A noble, generous work, not measured by its utility, but by the feeling it expressed." Bengel remarks that most good deeds are either greater or less than the doer thinks; "Hero was no waste at all—no waste as regards the poor, for there were abundant opportunities to help them; no waste as regards the disciples, for they could help the poor at any time; no waste as regards the woman, for this deed would be told for a memorial of her; no waste as regards the Lord, for he was pleased to regard it as a burial gift."

11. Ye have the poor always with you. Our Lord Assumes the honesty of the critics like Judas; he uses a word which specifies the employed poor, who depend on daily bread. He does not teach that we must always have this to deal with in society, but simply asserts a painfully obvious fact. We have, not always, but in a condition which your gifts can relieve. Dr. Clarke thus paraphrases the thought: "Ordinary benevolence is to be the habit of our life, but extraordinary cases demand extraordinary relief. Is not the poor man's house, family, and property, all my property? Is not the poor man's cause my cause? Is not the poor man's God my God? Is not the poor man's Christ my Christ? Is not the poor man's heaven my heaven? Is not the poor man's hell my hell? Is not the poor man's eternity my eternity? Is not the poor man's salvation my salvation? Is not the poor man's Bible my Bible? Is not the poor man's duty my duty? Is not the poor man's interest my interest? Is not the poor man's life my life? Is not the poor man's soul my soul? Is not the poor man's body my body? Is not the poor man's all my all? Is not the poor man's nature my nature? Is not the poor man's weakness my weakness? Is not the poor man's sin my sin? Is not the poor man's sorrow my sorrow? Is not the poor man's need my need? Is not the poor man's poverty my poverty? Is not the poor man's misery my misery? Is not the poor man's death my death? Is not the poor man's hell my hell? Is not the poor man's eternity my eternity? Is not the poor man's salvation my salvation? Is not the poor man's God my God? Is not the poor man's Christ my Christ? Is not the poor man's heaven my heaven