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THE FAMILY STORY

A BLESSED MORTGAGE

Mrs. Munroe was in ecstasies of delight. She had secured a new cook at the most ridiculous wages. Of course, she had not told the new girl, but it was quite true that she paid her not half what she had been compelled to pay the cook who had just left her. But when Almira Pollers, a fresh, pleasant-looking young country girl, had applied for the place and had accepted Mrs. Munroe's offer of \$2 a week to start with, her new mistress did not think it necessary to mention that the proffered sum was very low indeed.

"Of course, you shall have more as you improve, Almira, but you know so little about fancy cooking I scarcely feel able to pay you more at the start," Mrs. Munroe had, smiling sweetly on Almira, who did not know that very little of the fancy cooking was ever done in that household. And so Almira took up her burden, and for the first time in nineteen years of her life began to earn wages.

The Pollers had always been farmers and owned their own place, but Almira's father had somehow managed to get behind and a mortgage had been fastened upon the farm. The man who held the mortgage was very well satisfied to receive a good interest every year and renew Peter Pollers' note, but it came to pass that it was hard to pay even the interest. This particular year the crops had mostly failed. It lacked but a few weeks until the interest was due, when Almira, the eldest of the flock—there were ten in all—made up her mind to go out to service. Her determination created a great commotion in the family. None of the Pollers women had ever worked out, and the idea was very distasteful, but Almira eventually carried the day. Had her education been thorough enough she would gladly have taught school, but the little Pollers had appeared at such frequent intervals that Almira was obliged to stay at home most of the time to assist her mother, and her education was limited.

So, not without some inward struggles, she had decided that the only way she could help along would be by exercising her chief gift, cooking. Mrs. Munroe's advertisement in the *Weekly Gazette* had caught her eye, and she was very happy when she secured the situation. The wages were not large, but she could save all the money for her father, and there would be one less to feed at home. That counted for something.

Mrs. Munroe's family consisted of herself and a brother. Mr. Munroe had died several years before and his widow was quite wealthy. Her home, situated in an aristocratic suburb of the city, although small, was handsome and well appointed, and she had sufficient income to keep it up well. Mrs. Munroe liked to call herself economical, and we cannot deny she was in some things. She dressed elegantly and gave largely to her church, but there never was a closer woman in some respects than she. The shop people dreaded to see her come in, for although she always purchased the best, she invariably bargained at the price until she got the goods for less than their marked price. At the groceries it was the same way, and woe to the servant who wasted a scrap of anything or presumed to eat more than the mistress thought necessary. After the first table Mrs. Munroe removed any delicacies she considered unnecessary for a servant's coarse appetite without the slightest compunction. Her brother Tom, who paid a handsome sum for the privilege of sharing her home, once saw this performance and remonstrated with her, but to no avail.

"It would be casting pearls before swine," she remarked to his intense disgust, as she replaced a dish of lemon jelly in the closet and substituted a saucer of molasses.

Tom Birney was one of those big-hearted convivial fellows who, left with more money than they needed, succeeded in getting rid of it in different and unprofitable ways. He was not really bad, but he drank a good bit and never had done anything useful in his life. He had been put in his father's office, but he was extremely weak in his arithmetic, and succeeded in mixing up the figures so badly that it took an expert to untangle them. After that his father had not tried to make a business man of him, but said that as Tom had been cut out for a gentleman he should be one.

But this was exactly what poor Tom was not cut out to be—that is, if we agree to the accepted meaning of the word—a man of refined manners. He loved horses and enjoyed the society of horses; liked better to hear a robust German girl sing funny songs

at the garden than to hear Patti at the Grand. If he ever yielded to his sister's importunities to accompany her to a dancing party he was sure to step on his partner's toes, to tear their dresses by his awkwardness, and drink too much champagne at supper. In fact Tom, although kind-hearted and honest, was very ill at ease and out of place at society, and at last, after making himself very conspicuous at a New York dance, his sister vowed she would never ask him to go with her again. She told him this very emphatically the morning after the ball, as she left him to eat his late breakfast alone.

Tom was feeling very badly and indulging in a severe case of "katznjammer," the result of too frequent visits to the punch bowl, but looked up when Almira came in with his breakfast and noticed that she was looking pale.

"What is the matter, Almira?" he asked.

"Nothing, Mr. Tom," replied Almira, moving toward the door quietly.

"I say there is something wrong; go with it, Almira," continued Tom, wishing to help her if she was in trouble of any kind. Almira made no reply and Tom sprang up and obstructed her way.

"Say, you're working too hard, and Sister Eleanor pays you beastly small wages, I'll be bound. Maybe it's a new gown or a bonnet you're grieving after—eh, Almira? Here, take this and get it." And before Almira could speak the impulsive Tom had plunged his hands into his pockets, brought out a lot of coin and pushed it into her hands.

"How dare you?" she demanded, so choked up she could scarcely articulate. "Have I ever given you any reason, Mr. Tom, to treat me with such disrespect?"

"Disrespect?" repeated Tom, very red and astonished. "Do you think I meant any disrespect to you, Almira? I swear I respect you more than any other woman I know; I only thought you were pining for some of the pretty things most girls like, and why shouldn't I do some good with my useless money?"

Almira saw that he was honest in his speech and was appeased, but when he asked anxiously, "If it isn't a gown or hat, what in heaven's name is it?" she burst into tears, and forgetting that she was Mrs. Munroe's servant-girl and that Mr. Tom was her brother and a rich man, forgetting all save the trouble that was wearing on her and making her pale and thin, she poured out her woes into his sympathizing ear.

She told him about the mortgage on their farm, how it had been renewed from year to year when the interest was paid. They had grown so accustomed to that they had never thought of losing the place until Mr. Pollers, on taking the interest so hardly earned and increased by Almira's savings, had been informed that his creditors needed the money and must have it on the farm.

The blow had fallen like a clap of thunder from a clear sky. The thought of leaving the old homestead was insupportable, and yet where could Peter Pollers expect to raise the money to cancel the mortgage?

Almira told her story, punctuated by sobs, and Tom listened attentively. When she had finished, he asked, "Is it a large sum, Almira?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Tom, \$2,000!" she said, sadly.

"Hum!" said Tom, pulling his mustache and looking very hard out of the window. "Couldn't your father get some one to pay the man and take up the mortgage?"

"Suppose—suppose—I take it up, Almira?" ventured Tom, still looking out of the window and getting very red again. Astonishment and rapture appeared on the girl's face at his words.

"Do you mean it, Mr. Tom? Oh, you are too good!" she cried.

"Bosh!" said Tom, brusquely. "It's simply a good investment. Don't accuse me of being good, Almira; I'm incurrably bad, I am. But" (hearing footsteps approaching), "run on. I'll drive out and see your father to-day and get the mortgage." And without giving her a moment to express her thanks, he hurried on.

Not long after this Almira noticed that Tom was drinking steadily. He took what meals he ate at home alone, Mrs. Munroe declaring she would not and could not lend him her countenance.

The girl, as she waited on him, felt a great deal of pity for this man, who seemed so alone and was wasting health and fortune in dissipation, and at last one morning when he was looking unusually red and his hands

were trembling so that he could hardly hold his cup she again forgot the difference in their stations and spoke out. "Mr. Tom," she said, "I'm sorry for you."

"What! Sorry for me? What do you mean, Almira? I'm having a jolly good time. A short life and a merry one—that's my motto."

Almira shook her head and looked at him steadily. "Do you never think how much good you might do instead of throwing yourself into little better than a beast?"

"Humph! That's pretty strong language, I must say," he growled.

"But it's true, Mr. Tom, if you keep on you'll sink lower and lower—oh, it's dreadful to think of it." Almira shuddered as she picked up her tray and left the table.

"Hold there," said Tom, "you don't understand it, Almira. It's got such a hold on me. How can I shake it off? I've got no one else to help me if I try, and, weakened and unnerved as he was, the tears started to his eyes. "Tell me what to do."

"You can get down and pray to God to help you," said Almira, solemnly, "and you can go to the cure. They say it's wonderful what they can do. Be a man, Mr. Tom, and try it," she urged.

Tom sat irresolute for a moment, then rose and grasped her hand. "I will try it," he said, "and if I come out ahead it will all be owing to you. But it will be hard, Almira, I know, for I tried once, only I couldn't stick it out. But I'll try again, if only to show you—!" He stopped abruptly and rang her hand and rushed out of the room.

If Mrs. Munroe had known that her brother set such value on Almira Pollers' good opinion she would have been horrified. She reported that brother Tom had gone to a sanitarium because she had lectured him into it, and was quite satisfied as the weeks lengthened into months and Tom still remained there.

In truth he was having a terrible fight with the demon who had so nearly claimed him as his own. But at last he "came out ahead," as he himself explained it.

When he returned home he walked straight through all the handsome rooms down to the kitchen, where Almira was alone at work. The look on his face even before he spoke, told her that he had conquered.

"Oh, I'm so glad," she faltered, putting her toll-worn hand into the one he held out. "I knew you could do it."

"You had faith in me, did you, Almira?" he asked, still holding her hand and looking curiously at her beaming face. Almira nodded assent.

"Well, I'm cured now—wouldn't touch a drop of it if there were gallons and gallons of the very finest flowing around me. But will it last? I can't tell, and I've got to have somebody to help me if that dreaded thirst comes on again. I've got to have a wife who will love and believe in me and keep me from falling. You're the only one who had faith in me, Almira, and you're the only one I want for a wife. Say yes, Almira."

"Oh, Mr. Tom," she cried, trying to draw her hand away, "you can't mean it—why—I'm—only your sister's cook."

"That has nothing to do with the case. You're the noblest girl I know, and I want you and only you. Can't you try to love me enough to marry me, Almira? I'll try to be a good husband, I swear."

"How can I help loving you," murmured Almira. "I've nearly worshiped you since you lifted that heavy load from my poor father's shoulders, and if you think I am good enough for you—"

"Put on your bonnet right away and we'll find a license and a parson. Mrs. Munroe might say some things—unpleasant things—to Almira Pollers that she would not dare to say to Mrs. Tom Birney." And in spite of Almira's remonstrances she was marched off, and so expeditious was Tom that inside of an hour they were married.

Mrs. Munroe, when she was notified of the happy event, gave full sway to her rage in the privacy of her own room. When kind friends offered condolence she sighed and wiped a few imaginary tears with her handkerchief.

"Brother Tom was always the black sheep of the family," she said. "We never could make a gentleman of him. I suppose we should be thankful he's done no worse. The girl is really quite capable and may be able to keep him straight."

The usual order of things was reversed when Mrs. Tom Birney on her wedding day made her father a present, and it was nothing less than the mortgage on his farm. And Almira said, as they all drew around the fireplace and watched it turn to ashes, that it was a blessed mortgage after all, for it led her indirectly to her Tom.—*Toledo Blade*.

Tommy—Say, Mollie, I wish I had 10 cents to get some candy with. Mollie—Go and ask father who Socrates was and what is meant by the differential calculus. He's got company, and I shouldn't wonder if he gave you a quarter.—*Boston Transcript*.

"Do you have a telephone in your house?" "No, I sometimes have to work at the office at night, and if I had a phone at home my wife would call me up every thirty minutes to see if I was there."—*Chicago Record*.

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

THE PREACHER TALKS OF HUMAN KINDNESS.

It is a Means of Defense as Well as of Usefulness—Enemies May Be Conquered with a Soft Tongue—Sympathy Is Potent with Sinners.

Help of a Kind Word.

In these days, when satire and retort and bitterness fill the air the gospel card of this sermon will do good to all who read and practice it. The text is Proverbs xxv, 15, "A soft tongue breaketh the bone."

When Solomon said this, he drove a whole volume into one phrase. You, of course, will not be so silly as to take the words of the text in a literal sense. They simply mean to set forth the fact that there is a tremendous power in a kind word. Although it may seem to be very insignificant, its force is indelible and unmitigable. Pungent and all conquering utterance, "A soft tongue breaketh the bone."

If I had time, I would show you kindness as a means of defense, as a means of usefulness, kindness as a means of domestic harmony, kindness as best employed by governments for the taming and curing of criminals and kindness as best adapted for the settling and adjusting of international quarrel, but I shall call your attention only to two of these thoughts.

And, first, I speak to you of kindness as a means of defense. Almost every man, in the course of his life, is set upon and assaulted. Your motives are misrepresented or your religious or political principles are bombarded. What to do under such circumstances is the question.

The first impulse of the natural heart says: "Strike back. Give as much as he sent. Trip him into the ditch which he dug for your feet. Gash him with as severe a wound as that which he inflicted on your soul. Shot for shot. Sarcasm for sarcasm. An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth." But the better spirit in the man's soul rises up and says, "You ought to consider that matter." You look up in the face of Christ and say, "My Master, how ought I to act under these difficult circumstances?" And Christ instantly answers, "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." Then the old nature rises up again and says: "You had better not forgive him. You have been chastised him. You will never get him in so tight a corner again. You will never have such an opportunity of inflicting the right kind of punishment upon him again. First chastise him and then let him go." "No," says the better nature, "thou shalt love thy neighbor. Try the soft tongue that breaketh the bone." Have you ever in all your life known acerbity and acrimonious dispute to settle a quarrel? Did they not always make matters worse and worse and worse? About fifty-five years ago there was a great quarrel in the Presbyterian family. Ministers of Christ were thought orthodox in proportion as they had measured lances with other clergymen of the same denomination. The most outrageous personalities were abroad. As in the autumn, a hunter comes home with a string of game, partridges and wild ducks, slung over his shoulder, so there were many ministers who came back from the ecclesiastical courts with long strings of doctors of divinity whom they had shot with their own rifle. The division became wider, the animosity greater, until after awhile some good men resolved upon another tack. They began to explain away the difficulties, they began to forgive each other's faults, and, lo! the great church quarrel was settled, and the new school Presbyterian church and the old school Presbyterian church became one. The different parts of the Presbyterian order, welded by a hammer, a little hammer, a Christian hammer that the Scripture calls "a soft tongue."

The Applause of Conscience.

You have a dispute with your neighbor. You say to him, "I despise you." He replies, "I can bear the sight of you." You say to him, "Never enter my house again." He says, "If you come on my door sill, I'll kick you off." You say to him, "I'll put you down." He says to you, "You are mistaken. I'll put you down." And so the contest rages, and year after year you act the unchristian part, and he acts the unchristian part. After awhile the better spirit seizes you, and one day you go over to the neighbor and say: "Give me your hand. We have fought long enough. Time is so short, and eternity is so near, that we cannot afford any longer to quarrel. I feel you have wronged me very much, but let us settle all now in one great hand-shaking and be good friends for all the rest of our lives." You have risen to a higher platform than that on which before you stood. You win his admiration, and you get his apology. But if you have not conquered him in that way at any rate you have won the applause of your own conscience, the high estimation of good men and the honor of your Lord who died for his armed enemies.

"But," you say, "what are we to do when slanders assault us, and there come acrimonious sayings all around about us, and we are abused and spit upon?" My reply is: Do not go and attempt to chase down the slanders. Lies are prolific, and while you are killing one, fifty are born. All your demonstrations of indignation only exhaust yourself. You might as well on some summer night, when the swarms of insects are coming up from the meadows and disturbing you and disturbing your family, bring up some great "swamp angel," like that which thundered over Charleston, and try to shoot them down. The game is too small for the gun. But what, then, are you to do with the abuses that come upon you in life? You are to live them down! I saw a farmer go out to get back a swarm of bees that had wandered off from the hive. As he moved amid them they buzzed around his head and buzzed around his hands and buzzed around his feet. If he had killed one of

them they would have stung him to death. But he moved in their midst in perfect placidity until he had captured the swarm of wandering bees.

And so I have seen men moving amid the annoyances, and the vexations, and the assaults of life in such calm, Christian deliberation that all the buzzing around about their soul amounted to nothing. They conquered them, and, above all, they conquered themselves. "Oh," you say, "that's a very good theory to preach on a hot day, but it won't work." It will work. It has worked. I believe it is the last Christian grace we win. You know there are fruits which we gather in June, and others in July, and others in August, and others in September, and still others in October, and I have to admit that this grace of the Christian forgiveness is about the last fruit of the Christian soul. We hear a great deal about the bitter tongue, and the sarcastic tongue, and the quick tongue, but we know very little about the soft tongue that breaketh the bone." We read Hudibras and Sterne and Dean Swift and the other apostles of acrimony, but give little time to studying the example of him who was reviled, and yet reviled not again. Oh, that the Lord, by his Spirit, would endow us all with "the soft tongue that breaketh the bone."

Kindness Is Useful.

I pass now to the other thought that I desire to present, and that is kindness as a means of usefulness. In all communities you find skeptical men. Through early education, or through the maltreatment of professed Christian people, or through prying curiosity about the future world, there are a great many people who become skeptical in religious things. How shall you capture them for God? Sharp argument and sarcastic retort never won a single soul from skepticism to the Christian religion. While powerful books on the evidences of Christianity have their mission in confirming Christian people in the faith they have already adopted, I have noticed that when skeptical people are brought into the kingdom of Christ it is through the charm of some genial soul, and not by argument at all. Men are not saved through the head; they are saved through the heart. A storm comes out of its hiding place. It says, "Now we'll just rouse up all this sea," and it makes a great bluster, but it does not succeed.

Part of the sea is roused up—perhaps one-half of it or one-fourth of it. After awhile the calm moon, placid and beautiful, looks down, and the ocean begins to rise. It comes up to high water mark. It embraces the great headlands. It submerges the beach of all the continents. It is the heart throb of one world against the heart throb of another world. And I have to tell you that while all your storms of ridicule and storms of sarcasm may rouse up the passion of an immortal nature, nothing less than the attractive power of Christian kindness can ever raise the deathless spirit to happiness and to God. I have more faith in the prayer of a child 5 years old in the way of bringing an infidel back to Christ and to heaven than I have in all the hissing thunderbolts of ecclesiastical controversy. You cannot overcome men with religious argumentation. If you come at a skeptical man with an argument on behalf of the Christian religion, you put the man on his mettle. He says: "I see that man has a carbine. I'll use my carbine. I'll answer his argument with my argument." But if you come to that man, persuading him that you desire his happiness on earth and his eternal welfare in the world to come, he cannot answer it.

A Glorious Sentiment.

What I have said is just as true in the redemption of the openly vicious. Did you ever know a drunkard to be saved through the caricature of a drunkard? Your mimicry of the staggering step, and the thick tongue, and the disgusting hic-cough, only worse maddens his brain. But if you come to him in kindness and sympathy, if you show him that you appreciate the awful grip of a depraved appetite, if you persuade him of the fact that thousands who had the grappling hooks of evil inclination clutched in their soul as firmly as they now are in his have been rescued, then a ray of light will flash across his vision, and it will seem as if a supernatural hand were steadying his staggering gait. A good many years ago there lay in the streets of Richmond a man dead drunk, his face exposed to the blistering noonday sun. A Christian woman passed along, looked at him and said, "Poor fellow!" She took her handkerchief and spread it over his face and passed on. The man roused himself up from his debauch and began to look at the handkerchief, and lo! on it was the name of a highly respectable Christian woman of the city of Richmond. He went to her, he thanked her for her kindness, and that one little deed saved him for this life, and saved him for the life that is to come. He was afterward attorney general of the United States; but, higher than all, he became the consecrated disciple of Jesus Christ.

Sympathy's Loving Grace.

Oh, that we might in our families and in our churches try the force of kindness! You can never drive men, women or children into the kingdom of God. A March northeaster will bring out more honeysuckles than fretfulness and scolding will ever bring out Christian grace. I wish that in all our religious work we might be saturated with the spirit of kindness. Missing that, we miss a great deal of usefulness. There is no need of coming out before men and thundering to them the law unless at the same time you preach to them the gospel. The world is dying for lack of kindness.

These young people want it just as much as the old. The old people sometimes seem to think they have a monopoly of the rheumatism, and the neuralgias, and the headaches, and the physical disorders of the world; but I tell you there are some of these young people. Do you know that much of the work is done by the young? Raphael died at 37, Michelangelo at 51, Grotius at 35, Cortes conquered Mexico at 30, Don John won Lepanto at 25, Grotius was attorney general at 24, and I have

noticed amid all classes of men that some of the severest battles and the toughest work come before 30. Therefore we must have our sermons and our exhortations in prayer meeting all sympathetic with the young. And so with these people further on in life. What do these doctors and lawyers and merchants and mechanics care about abstractions of religion? What they want is help to bear the whimsicalities of patients, the browbeating of legal opponents, the unfairness of customers, who have plenty of fault finding for every imperfection of handiwork, but no praise for twenty excellencies. What does that brain racked, hand blistered man care for Zwingle's "Doctrine of Original Sin" or Augustin's "Anthropology"? You might as well go to a man who has the pleurisy and put on his side a plaster made out of Dr. Parr's "Treatise on Medical Jurisprudence."

In all our sermons there must be help for every one somewhere. You go into an apothecary store. We see others being waited on. We do not complain because we do not immediately get the medicine. We know our turn will come after awhile. And so while all parts of a sermon may not be appropriate to our case, if we wait prayerfully before the sermon is through we shall have the divine prescription. I say to these young men who are going to preach the gospel, these theological students, I say to them, We want in our sermons not more metaphysics, nor more imagination, nor more logic, nor more profundity.

Lend a Helping Hand.

What we want in our sermons and Christian exhortations is more sympathy. When Father Taylor preached in the Sailors' Bethel at Boston, the jack tars felt they had help for their duties among the ratlines and the forecastles. When Richard Weaver preached to the operatives in Oldham, England, all the workmen felt they had more grace for the spindles. When Dr. South preached to the mighty men and princesses, all the mighty men and women who heard him felt preparation for their high station.

Do you not know that this simple story of a Savior's kindness is to redeem all nations? The hard heart of this world's obduracy is to be broken before that story. There is in Antwerp, Belgium, one of the most remarkable pictures I ever saw. It is "The Descent of Christ from the Cross." It is one of Rubens' pictures. No man can stand and look at that "Descent from the Cross," as Rubens pictured it, without having his eyes flooded with tears, if he have any sensibility at all. It is an overmastering picture—one that stuns you and staggers you and haunts your dreams. One afternoon a man stood in that cathedral looking at Rubens' "Descent from the Cross." He was all absorbed in that scene of a Savior's sufferings, when the janitor came in and said: "It is time to close up the cathedral for the night. I wish you would depart." The pilgrim, looking at that "Descent from the Cross," turned around to the janitor and said: "No, no; not yet. Wait until they get him down." Oh, it is the story of a Savior's suffering kindness that is to capture the world. When the bones of that great behemoth of iniquity which has trampled all nations shall be broken and shattered, it will be found out that the work was not done by the hammer of the iconoclast, or by the sword of the conqueror, or by the torch of persecution, but by the plain, simple, overwhelming force of "the soft tongue that breaketh the bone."

Our Eternal Heritage.

Kindness! We all need more of it in our hearts, our words and our behavior. The chief characteristic of our Lord was kindness. A gentleman in England died leaving his fortune by will to two sons. The son that staid at home destroyed the father's will and pretended that the brother who was absent was dead and buried. The absent brother after awhile returned and claimed his part of the property. Judges and jurors were to be bribed to say that the returned brother and son was no son at all, but only an imposter. The trial came on. Sir Matthew Hale, the pride of the English courtroom and for twenty years the pride of jurisprudence, heard that that injustice was about to be practiced. He put on his official robe. He put on the garb of a miller. He went to the village where that trial was to take place. He entered the courtroom. He somehow got impaled as one of the jurors. The bribes came around, and the man gave ten pieces of gold to the jurors, but as this was only a poor miller the briber gave to him only five pieces of gold. A verdict was brought in rejecting the right of this returned brother. He was to have no share in the inheritance. "Hold, my lord!" said the miller. "Hold! We are not all agreed on this verdict. These other men have received ten pieces of gold in bribery and I have received only five." "Who are you? Where do you come from?" said Judge on the bench. The response was: "I am from Westminster Hall. My name is Matthew Hale, lord chief justice of the king's bench. Off of that place, thou villain!" And so the injustice was balked, and so the young man got his inheritance.

It was all for another that Sir Matthew Hale took off his robe and put on the garb of a miller. And so Christ took off his robe of royalty and put on the attire of our humanity, and in that disguise he won our eternal portion. Now are we the sons of God—joint heirs. We went off from home sure enough, but we got back in time to receive our eternal inheritance. And if Christ was so kind to us, surely we can afford to be kind to each other.

Robert E. Lewis, college secretary of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association, has resigned that office in order to become traveling secretary of the students' volunteer movement for foreign missions in the United States and Canada. In the last eighteen months that he has been connected with the Boston association he has organized and developed the work of the institute of technology, Boston university, university medical school, law school, Harvard medical school and college of liberal arts.