

A Night with the Fire Laddies

A night in a fire engine house with a company of prostrate, snoring companions is one of thrills of various kinds. The snoring makes one of them all by itself; the sight in the half light of the great gong whose clanging may on an instant set the snoring humanity into jumping activity is another and the occasional pawing of the restless dumb brutes below is another.

One experiences these thrills because he cannot help lying awake if it is his first night in the sleeping room of the firemen. If he is the guest of engine house No. 1, at Tenth and Q streets, he is appointed a little iron bed built for one and it is not the fault of the bed that he does not sleep. Most of the firemen retire early and the late comers steal to their couches with the silence of mice. A gas light with the shade inverted so that the reflection is cast upon the ceiling at one side of the room affords a semi-gloom that dimly discloses the outstretched forms of the sleeping men on the score of beds in the room. There must be some light all the time for there is no telling when an alarm may come in and the men will have to leap for their clothes, and still there must not be so much as to interfere with sleep.

At the side of each bed stands the jumpers of the men; rubber boots they are, with thick trousers folded down below their tops so that when the bell rings all the fireman has to do is to take a lusty jump, land in his boots, pull the trousers up about his nether portions and clasp himself within, a trick done almost as quickly as thought about. With lining of fleece these garments are warm enough for any man, yet the firemen seldom deign to remove their underclothes for the night, even in the hottest weather.

The hours drag along. Down in the railroad yards the busy engines whistle and ring and the noise, it seems, will never cease. The restive guest turns frequently; figures on a problem to measure the snoring power of men and what royalties he might win could he but patent such a machine; speculates on the name of the man he thinks is snoring most recklessly; wonders at his lung power and calculates idly on his possibilities as a hero in case an alarm comes in the next minute that may mean destruction and danger to some dwelling or hotel. A horse stamps impatiently below and the telephone bell rings. Ah, there is a fire surely. Now for the bell and some suddenly ruptured dreams. A minute, two minutes and no alarm. The guest raises himself on his arms and looks over to the hazy brass gong closely hanging to the wall, soundless utterly. Somebody across the room utters a most astounding snore. Wonder if he is dreaming of the Lindell hotel in flames and himself on the cornice hedged in by fire and with death imminent. Another beastly snore followed with a sort of groan. Perhaps he thinks he is sliding down a stream of water, as a last resort. The guest looks about the room over the ghostly white rectangular figures of the beds with the dark heads of the sleepers pillowed at one end.

Surely in a minute that gong will ring. Why doesn't something happen? The guest is becoming drowsy and he pictures his actions vaguely in case an alarm should sound. Conscious as he is would he be likely to be the first to the wagons? Certainly that would be a triumph, for of many things a fireman takes pride in his speed. He would bounce out to those jumpers that were loaned him, enclose himself in them in an instant, slide down the nearest brass pole and be at the wagons in a flash. Then for a glorious rush out in the night air to that spot whence smoke is rolling, guided by the glow of the flames in the heavens. He would cling to the rushing wagons with a nerve and bravado that would surprise the old timers. The barn odor

grows faint in his nostrils, the whistles in the yards sound more distant and he does not hear the heavy breathing. Crash goes the gong! He dreams he is at the fire just as the walls fall outward. Creaking of doors and voices below rouse him and he hears the bells and a rumbling of wagon wheels down the street. Rubbing his eyes he stares on empty beds, rushes to the window and sees a backward flow of sparks as the fire engine rounds the corner.

To Combat Atheism

State universities are fast becoming bulwarks of agnosticism and atheism according to the opinion of Rev. William Manss, pastor of the First Congregational church of Lincoln. And in order to combat this condition of affairs he proposes to conduct a campaign of regeneration for the rescue of the educated.

During the last few years the state universities throughout the west have made rapid progress, choking out the smaller denominational schools and decimating the number of the students in the smaller colleges. As the professors in the state universities are paid by the people, the funds being raised by taxation, the study of the Bible and consideration of religious question does not enter into the curriculum. Whatever is done for the spiritual welfare of the students is purely voluntary and must be thoroughly unsectarian.

But statistics compiled by Rev. Mr. Manss have filled him with alarm. In the denominational schools one pupil out of every five ultimately enters the ministry. Among graduates of state universities the usual ratio is one to twenty-nine, while in the eastern colleges one graduate out of each group of thirteen becomes a minister.

This is not all, asserts the minister. Only one student out of each eighteen Christians emerges from the portals of the state university with a diploma and religion intact. The study of the sciences and the cold, unsympathetic methods of the scientific investigator are responsible for this state of affairs, he claims. Unchecked the church will soon lack ministers as well as an educated laity.

"This is pre-eminently the age of the laboratory," says Rev. Manss. "Men now emphasize the material side of life. They are struggling to discover first causes. At present they emerge from college totally ignorant of theological questions."

So Rev. Mr. Manss has formulated a plan to combat this state of affairs. At each university he proposes to station a theological teacher who shall have a place on the faculty but shall be paid by private subscription. All biblical studies must of course be elective, but the student will receive full credit for the work done on his college course.

He has secured the consent of the regents of the Nebraska state university where the experiment will be tried in the near future. If the movement meets with favor among the students, the leading Congregationalists of the United States will be asked to contribute toward a permanent endowment fund. Then other state universities will be approached in the same manner.

After a time it may be possible, declares the minister, to build dormitories which will serve as homes for Congregational students. Other denominations will undoubtedly follow suit and the rivalry would be keen and fierce.

Rev. Manss is a young minister of liberal views and advanced ideas on church doctrine. He graduated from Yale in 1892. He is an enthusiastic athlete and during his undergraduate days played as sub end on the Yale football team. Last year he helped coach the Nebraska players, taking personal charge of the training of the second eleven.

The minister has recently announced his plans and will soon begin soliciting funds to put his scheme in operation.

He is not a great poet.
But you confess you don't know what he means.
True, but I can't dismiss the suspicion that he knows what he means.

There are two classes of unpopular men—those who never think before speaking, and those who never speak what they think.

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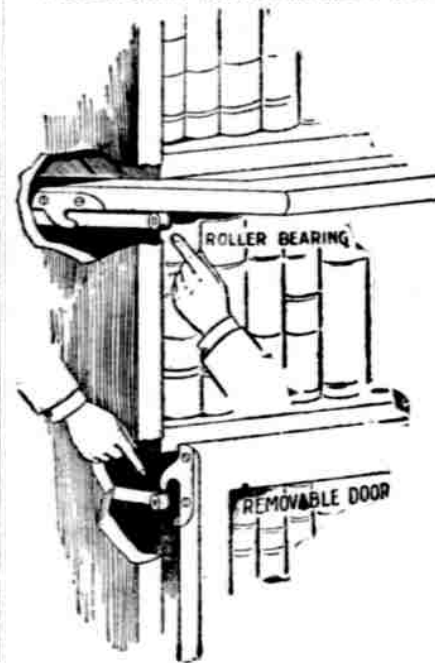
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