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A Word from Mr. Moody

As I have gone through the country, in my evangelistic work, I have been surprised to notice the great lack of good religious reading matter to be had at a price within the reach of the poor as well as the rich.

Principally, to supply this need, displacing the impure literature with which the country is flooded, and to carry the gospel by means of the printed page to the forty millions of people in the United States who never go to Church, the Colportage Library was started.

I want to get an earnest Christian man or woman in every village and town, and many in the cities, to take up the work with these good books. It is the Master's service, and there is financial remuneration for any who will engage in it. I shall be glad to have the name and address of any person who is willing to give a portion or all of their time in this way, sent to A. P. FITT, Supt., or myself, 250 La Salle Ave., Chicago.

Yours in the Master's work,



Written by Mr. Moody in 1896.

Popular Amusements And the Christian Life

BY

Rev. Perry Wayland Sinks

Chicago

The Bible Institute Colportage Association
250 La Salle Avenue

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PREFATORY.

The addresses here offered to the public were prepared and delivered at the prompting of pastoral duty. The problem of amusements and their relation to the Christian life is universal, and is ever recurring in a pastor's experience. It is a fact which the history of evangelistic effort proclaims, that seldom is there a religious awakening in a church or a community that this question is not precipitated with vexing persistency. The author holds that, other things being equal, the pastor of a church is the proper person to discuss this problem, although it imposes special liabilities upon him to do so. Who, in the nature of the case, is so likely as the pastor to preserve the equilibrium of tempered speech and worthy motive in its consideration?

That the larger public will agree with all the arguments offered and the conclusions reached, or consider the discussion of these themes in the regular round of pulpit ministrations wise, the author does not expect. He has spoken upon questions where there exist widely varying and radically divergent views. If his position

seems dogmatic it is because it represents his own deep personal convictions. A man may well be dogmatic when he speaks only for himself.

The aim throughout has been to show that the religious opinions held with remarkable unanimity by the Christian Church upon the subject of popular amusements are, at the least, not grounded in prejudice nor based on fanatical notions. How well this is shown the perusal of the following pages will indicate.

PERRY WAYLAND SINKS.

Painesville, Ohio.

Popular Amusements and the Christian Life.

I

CONCESSIONS AND DISCRIMINATIONS.

Introductory.

Almost everywhere, throughout the Christian churches, the problem of amusement is a persistent and an urgent question. There is great and growing need that thorough and fair-minded consideration be given to the subject.

The three forms of amusement upon which the issue is to be drawn in this discussion are: the dance, the card-table, and the theater. The reason or reasons why the issue is drawn upon these and not with other forms of amusement will be apparent as we proceed. Suffice it only to say at present, that these three forms of amusement have peculiar fascination, and seem, withal, to meet so large a demand of the natural inclinations of human life, that they focalize the whole problem. An amusement, in order to gain and hold the place which any one of these three forms has gained and holds in the social world, must not be so gross as to reveal its tenden-

cies at the first, must be so near to the natural intuitions as to seem right and fitting, and must be so attractive as to awaken interest. All this, these three forms of amusement—the dance, the card-table, and the theater—are, to a preëminent degree, and therefore these constitute, with fluctuations of interest among them, the associated pleasures of an amusement-loving world from generation to generation.

We wish to notice, before proceeding further, the different attitudes of mind and heart which persons may take concerning these forms of amusement. There are at least six different attitudes toward these amusements, each of which has its representatives and advocates:

1st. Those who take the position of entire abstinence.

There are those who propose for themselves, as a fixed principle of life, to abstain from every appearance of evil. They allege, "Whatever view may be taken of these amusements *per se*, they do have the 'appearance of evil,' " and therefore they abstain from them. Personal safety and consideration for those who might be harmfully influenced by their example prompt them to adopt the principle of self-denial of what may be even a legitimate good. These regard amusements not merely in their influence upon themselves, but upon other persons, upon society, upon the world at large, and upon posterity.

Such may be commiserated, may be denounced as fanatics, but surely this attitude toward these amusements is their privilege.

2d. Others are in the attitude of candid inquiry.

They ask, with a sincere desire to know duty: "Is it harm to dance?" "Is card-playing wrong?" "Can I, as a Christian and without damage to my spiritual life, attend the theater?" They crave a categorical answer that will settle all these questions.

These are the questions which are ever coming up in the pastor's experience; and never more frequently than at a time of quickened interest in religious matters. Because no rule in regard to these inquiries can ever be much more than misleading, and because people do not settle these questions in the light of fundamental principles, they will struggle on with their anxious questionings.

3d. Others take the attitude of flippant apology.

"These things which some pious souls eschew as evil," say they, "are no worse than many others, nor so bad as some other things which those who object to these freely indulge in." "It is better to play cards than to slander one's neighbors." "It is not so bad to dance as it is to be self-righteous," etc., etc.

These persons hold that ministers of the gospel place an undue emphasis upon the importance of indulgence in these amusements; that they exaggerate the harmfulness of them; that they are prejudiced, and take a narrow and distorted view of them; and that they forget the essential nature of man, which calls for some sort of amusement.

Besides this, it is declared that many good people indulge freely in these forms of pleasure—dance, play at

cards, and attend theaters. "Church members sanction and sustain these amusements, and it is no worse for us to engage in these things than it is for them," say these apologists.

4th. Others treat the matter with utter indifference.

There are persons who disregard the ethical bearing of amusements entirely; who do not and will not consider this question in a moral light. They say:

"These amusements may be right, or they may be wrong; we are not concerned whether they are right or wrong; it is a small matter to split hairs about, any way. We are going to get all the enjoyment out of life that we can as we go along, and not torture ourselves about distinctions that are mostly visionary. This whole matter is simply one of education, not of morals."

5th. Others justify themselves in a free participation in amusements of all forms.

They hold that amusements are needed and are right; that they meet a demand of the physical and social nature, just as much as the prayer meeting or public worship does of the religious nature—one is just as reasonable as the other. They say, furthermore:

"We are entirely competent to settle the question for ourselves, and want no meddling interference with our rights and privileges by pious grandmothers or fanatical religionists. Because some weak people go to excess in their amusements is no reason why we should deny ourselves of what is lawful and right."

6th. Still others take the attitude of heedless indulgence.

They propose to enjoy the pleasures of life regardless of the consequences. If we were gifted with the power to read the secret thoughts of man, we should doubtless see it written upon many a heart:

“I know that this amusement, to the insatiate pursuit of which I have given myself rein, is not right. I know that it is sapping my interest in spiritual matters; that it is destroying my relish for prayer and Bible study; that it is separating between me and my God. But I enjoy it nevertheless, and I mean to continue in its pursuit, no matter what is said or done.”

It is possible for one to follow his own inclinations in this respect, though the Christian profession be defamed, his character be ruined, his peace of soul be destroyed, Christ be denied, and heaven be lost.

In approaching the subject of popular amusements it is very important, we think, that the metes and bounds of discussion be carefully pre-determined. Much of the objection and many of the ill results which have often followed the consideration of this theme have come from the failure to make appropriate concessions and fitting discriminations.

I.—Important concessions appropriate to the discussion of this subject.

It is freely conceded:

1. That there is a sphere and place for amusements in human life.

The demand for amusement, play, or pleasure, is one

that is natural. There is an appetite of eye, of ear, and of every sense, for the gratification of which—within bounds—God has abundantly provided the material, and laid it accessible to us. Amusement in some form is essential to the harmonious development of our faculties, to the highest enjoyment of life's scenes, and to the right performance of life's duties. "There is a time to play, and there is a play-side to our nature which fits into it. The instincts of the race are not all wrong at this point; and it does not help to the solution of the questions here involved for those who can get on without play to insist that everybody else shall do the same."*

More than this, the demand for amusement is reinforced by the character of the age. The age is one of strain and tension, to an extent never before known. All human activities are set to a high pressure scale. This makes relaxation and diversion both fitting and necessary.

2. It is conceded that there is ground for honest difference of opinion as to the moral legitimacy of particular amusements; as, for instance, those forms involved in our discussion.

Good people candidly differ in their judgment and estimate upon many things, and especially upon matters where the question of casuistry is involved. Good people ought to be able to differ from one another as to what constitutes a "worldly pleasure" without impeaching one another's character.

There is a ground for an honest difference of opinion; for

*Amusements, etc., Rev. H. C. Haydn, D. D., p. 21.

not always have the evil consequences, which it is claimed will follow indulgence in a given amusement, followed; and sometimes the restrictions imposed by persons of severe religious convictions and Puritanic notions have failed to restrain from unbridled indulgence. Children, for instance, who have been taught that the card-table was a dreadful evil and abomination have afterwards come under its attractive power, while other children to whom cards were a familiar amusement have come to have a revulsion of feeling against them. And yet it remains, that exceptional cases of the one sort or the other are no arguments for or against a given amusement. The fact as to the right or the wrong of an amusement is not to be settled by either popular vote or by exceptions to the general rule, but by the common influence and trend. Exceptions do not "prove the rule,"—neither do they disprove it; and the right is not always with the largest numbers. If this were the case then the argument would be against all virtuous conduct and all right precepts, since there are exceptions to the common rule of influence and teaching everywhere.

3. It is conceded that certain forms of amusement, though of questionable propriety as commonly participated in, when properly limited in time, place, and scope, are unobjectionable and even beneficial.

The intemperate, unbridled surrender of one's self to almost any form of amusement will transform what may have been a healthful recreation into harmful dissipation. "It does not follow that because amusement is lawful and good, everything that amuses is lawful and good."³

Nor does it follow that an amusement that is lawful and good, when limited in time, place, and extent, is always and under all circumstances lawful and good.

4. It is conceded that the arraignment of any particular form of amusement, without indicating clearly the grounds and reasons therefor, will tend to strengthen rather than to impair the hold which that amusement has upon society.

It is demanded, therefore, on pain of impairing his argument, that he who would arraign any form of amusement must base his arraignment upon broad and fundamental distinctions.

5. It is desirable that if these forms of amusement against which the issue is drawn are excluded from the catalogue of commendable pleasures, other forms of amusement—not open to the same, or equal, or greater objections—should be designated.

We do not say that it is essential, but that it is “desirable.” A man who would destroy a religious faith without providing a better is none other than a misanthropist. But the man who would dethrone an amusement from its place of power, because he regards it evil both in fact and in influence, without providing a substitute, is not necessarily deserving the same characterization. Still the desirability of providing a substitute for an interdicted amusement is conceded.

6. It is conceded that the appeal, in the last analysis, must be to Christians, as it is obvious that they only profess to have come into subjection to the law of Christ, whose will in these and in all matters is to such supreme.

It is only or supremely in its relation to the Christian life and character that the question of popular amusements claims consideration.

I I .—Discriminations befitting the discussion.

Certain discriminations will serve to limit and define our discussion. The lack of careful discrimination, or a wholesale denunciation of amusements, is the greatest source of difference in both opinion and feeling upon this subject. We must not let prejudice and fanaticism take the place of reason and intelligence in distinguishing among amusements. The question will persist in coming up, why draw the line where it is drawn, if a line must be drawn? Unless we can show good and sufficient reasons for drawing the line at the dance, the card-table, and the theater, we might as well not enter upon the consideration of this subject. It is because we believe that such reasons can be shown, both for drawing the line and for drawing the line at these forms of amusement, we venture to proceed in the discussion.

We may be reminded at this juncture that prejudice and fanaticism is the sole ground of opposition to the amusements against which the issue is taken. We admit that there is opposition to these amusements based on fanaticism; and, furthermore, that there is ground for prejudice against them, especially to a pastor who sees the sad havoc they make in the flock of Christ. They take people out of church services. They are expensive, and people reduce their contributions to religious work in

inverse proportion to the cost of amusement. They influence many persons never to identify themselves with the church—especially if a church looks upon these amusements with disfavor; and they turn many away from a spiritual life after they have once entered upon it. All this is indeed a ground for prejudice to a pastor, but must be ruled out of consideration in the discussion, for it must be based upon broad and fundamental principles of discrimination.

Let us note some of these principles.

1. The distinction between games of chance and games of skill is to be recognized.

This distinction is perhaps not so obvious as some others, but it exists. The principle involved in this distinction is that games of chance, in which "luck" is an element and in which deception and trickery play an important part, are more likely to lead to gambling, and are therefore more needful of restriction, than games of skill. Games of skill are upon an incomparably higher intellectual plane than games of chance. It has passed into a maxim: "A fool for luck."

If it is said in rejoinder, "Cards is a game of skill, and thus ought to escape severe restriction," we answer that cards are most in favor in games of chance also. The truth is that it is this combination of chance and skill that makes cards in favor by both gamblers and excellent people.

A better illustration of this distinction is the dice-box and the chess-board. The interest in the former game rests entirely upon the element of chance and deception,

while in the latter it rests entirely upon skill without possibility of deception.

2. The distinction between amusements that are healthy and those that are in violation of the laws of health is old, but universal and valid.

Some forms of amusement, such as croquet or tennis, in the very conditions under which they may be participated in, are adapted to promote health and vital powers; other forms of amusements, such as the public ball, in the very conditions they are participated in, are adapted to impair health and vital powers. A sound test, therefore, of the commendable amusement is its conformity to hygienic laws. Whatever amusement is indulged in violation of the laws of health cannot secure the sanction of science, ethics, or religion.

3. The distinction between recreation and dissipation, between the lawful and the unlawful use of things innocent, is to be maintained.

We must recognize that certain amusements, when properly limited in time, place and scope, are comparatively harmless, but when not so limited become a snare and peril. Dancing in a parlor, either sex separately or brothers and sisters together, and for a short time only, is one thing; dancing in a public ball-room, promiscuously, in an over-heated and illy-ventilated atmosphere, and for half a night, is quite another thing. A billiard table in one's own home, for the use of one's family and guests, is one thing; a billiard table in a hotel or pool-room, with the open bar inviting to the indulgence of appetite, is another and a very different thing.

We are not advocating either the parlor dance or the

billiard table, but are distinguishing between things that differ.

4. A distinction must be made between those amusements an indulgence in which tends to excite, and in fact does excite, the grosser passions and those which are purely vivacious and intellectual.

Set it down as truth—truth as incontrovertible as the ten laws of Sinai—that any form of amusement, no matter how long and how favorably received, which is built upon and which thrives by the element of sex, has not and cannot have a moral defence.

We do not say that there are such forms of amusement; we are not now concerned with facts. We are merely making discriminations which are to govern us in our discussion.

5. It is important, likewise, to distinguish between the effects of indulgence upon the person who engages in an amusement, and its effects upon other persons who are influenced by his example.

The Christian—and it is to the Christian conscience that the final appeal must be made—is bound under the highest moral law to consider his conduct in the light of its influence upon others. For any one to say: "I propose to do as I please, and to follow my own wishes regardless of my influence," is, to say the least, to exemplify a selfishness of spirit which finds no warrant in the example of Him "who pleased not Himself." Not selfishness but self-denial is the law of Christian service. The influence of our example must be taken into the account in any impartial consideration of this great and perplexing subject.

II.

SEVEN INDICTMENTS AGAINST THE MODERN DANCE.

We propose to discuss the subject of the modern dance earnestly, yet not dishonestly nor intemperately—with strong convictions, surely, but without unreasoning prejudice. We shall hardly be able to consider it with the fullness and plainness we intend without criticism both as to our method and motive. Our vindication in this attempt will be, not in saying just as little against the modern dance as we can and thus satisfy our conscience in having considered the question, but in making the strongest possible arraignment of this specific form of amusement. For if we advocate this case in a spirit of apology, as though after all this were a matter of little moment, we shall lay ourselves open to the double criticism—for speaking at all, and for speaking apologetically or evasively.

Such a consideration of this theme as is called for, has its perils, inasmuch as the strongest arraignment of the modern dance can be made only at the risk of offending the chaste and refined sensibilities.

Let us understand at the outset the precise question for discussion.

It is not of the origin or the antiquity of dancing. That dancing as an amusement has been known from the early ages of human history is not contested.

The question is not what the Bible teaches concerning dancing. Dr. Lyman Beecher summarized

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY

upon the subject, in the following propositions:

"1. Dancing was a religious act, both of the true and also of idol worship.

"2. It was practised exclusively on joyous occasions, such as national festivals or great victories.

"3. It was performed by maidens only.

"4. It was performed usually in the daytime, in the open air, in highways, fields, or groves.

"5. Men who perverted dancing from a sacred use to purposes of amusement were deemed infamous.

"6. No instances of dancing are found upon record in the Bible in which the two sexes united in the exercise, either as an act of worship or an amusement.

"7. There is no instance upon record of social dancing for amusement, except that of the vain fellows devoid of shame; of the irreligious families described by Job, which produced increased impiety and ended in destruction; and of Herodias, which terminated in the rash vow of Herod and the murder of John the Baptist."

The question is not one of the mode of dancing. No doubt there is a gradating harmfulness all the way down from the social "parlor dance" through the old-time "square dance" to the more modern "round dance," but

it is not our purpose to make distinctions as to the relative hurtfulness or harmlessness of each or any of these modes of dancing.

The subject is not one of dancing *per se*. That we may not be misunderstood, we freely admit and claim that dancing, in itself, as an exercise, is both innocent and lawful, and when practised as a means of physical culture, it may be a beneficial exercise. The act of dancing, in itself, has no more moral quality than the exercise of running or walking has.

Nor is the question one of what the dance has been in the past, and under certain limiting, modifying, or restraining conditions; nor is it what the dance might be, under some limiting or modifying circumstances now.

The question we propose to discuss concerns a social institution, with its approaches and belongings, and as it exists to-day. That institution is the modern dance. Against this institution, as it has been developed in society, and as it now holds sway in the social world, we make seven indictments.

FIRST INDICTMENT.

The modern dance violates, in all its appointments, well-accepted and universally recognized laws of health.

The dance was not originated for the promotion of health; it was never designed to be, and, in fact, never has been, promotive of health. Viewed as an exercise, as at present conducted, it is in violation of the soundest

nygienic laws. The exercise of dancing, under limiting conditions of time, place, scope, and participants, might be eminently healthful. Such it might be as an element of the gymnasium curriculum. But the dance of to-day is not conducted for the purpose of promoting health and longevity. Viewed as an exercise, leaving out of account moral considerations, the dance, as an institution of society, violates the laws of health.

Could a gymnasium, which (in the common use of the term) is an establishment devoted expressly to physical culture by means of physical exercise, and which is sanctioned by all moralists and physiologists—could a gymnasium either gain or hold the support of physicians by reproducing the appointments of the modern dance? We believe it could not.

What if it should be announced by the proprietors of a newly equipped gymnasium, that its hours of exercise were to continue from ten o'clock at night until two or three o'clock in the morning, that the exercise would be participated in amidst an atmosphere heated and corrupted by fires and a crowd of moving guests redolent of perfumes, that the participants would meet together under the rigorous demands of fashion, and that the clothing worn should be such as to repress respiration and embarrass natural ease of motion? And what if the rules of the establishment should be such as to compel the unnaturally heated participants to make their transition, while thus doubly exposed by over-exertion and insufficient clothing, from these appointments to contrasted conditions?

What, we ask, would be the sober estimate by candid people of such a system of physical exercise in relation to health? Could rheumatism, neuralgia, pneumonia, or consumption, be regarded as "providential" under such a curriculum of exercise? A physician who cared anything for his honor or for his patients would not recommend any such a system of exercise as an aid to health and as promotive of longevity.

We will dismiss this indictment with a quotation from the valuable treatise of Dr. H. C. Haydn: "Proverbially, the dance seeks the cover of the night. Dancing assemblies are seldom well under way till it is time they were dispersed, and often do not end till the small hours of the morning. The simple fact that dancing assemblies seek, not recreation, with a due regard to freshness and vigor the next day, but satiety, ignoring the laws of health and rest ordained for us by the Creator—ranks dancing, as ordinarily pursued, among the dissipations which both the moralist and the physician are bound to proscribe. They have no choice in the premises. They are bound to do so."

SECOND INDICTMENT.

The modern dance has contributed greatly to the emptiness, aimlessness and selfishness of the social life of the times.

Considering the general aims and ambitions which hold sway in what is called "society," can any one say

that, on the whole, a lofty, generous and broad-minded spirit pervades and animates it? Can any one who candidly considers the ambitions that dominate therein, say that emptiness, moral aimlessness and selfishness are not large elements of the modern social fabric? The possibility of higher and nobler aims and ambitions is set aside by a subjection to those which are lower and sordid. Says Sir John Lubbock:

“If we exclude sympathy and wrap ourselves round in a cold chain armor of selfishness, we exclude ourselves from many of the greatest and purest joys of life.”

There are tendencies in modern society, and in the United States, toward a revival of the hated caste and class distinctions of the old world; only in our day and in this country it is the distinction of “sets” and “cliques”—an aristocracy of pretence rather than one of birth. We need inquire for the causes of the growing class and caste distinctions in society, distinctions to which even the Christian church affords no exception. Doubtless there are many causes for the development of this spirit. We believe that the modern dance, in its approaches and belongings, in its aims and spirit, has contributed greatly to this development.

The principles that govern in the dance throughout are thoroughly selfish and utterly ignore the claims of human society as a whole. Even a graver charge against the dance may be sustained, that it has exerted a powerful influence to make moral convictions and religious scruples “out of caste” in polite and conventional society. Examples are to be found in every community

of persons, otherwise fitted for admission, who have been completely ostracized by the so-called "society," and in other respects than in matters of amusements, simply by reason of their conscientious convictions touching the dance. Society is fast coming into that state wherein it will not brook nor tolerate the piety that dares to take issue with social customs.

To how many men "social life" has no other meaning than that of enjoyment—enjoyment of the senses, of the passions, of the appetites! To how many women it has no other application than to dance at the next ball, to flirt at the next party, to see the next play, to long for the next "season"! "In a world full of activities, full of intricate economies, throbbing with interests that reach out to every hand capable of work, and to every mind capable of thought, who dares fritter away life in a whirl of sportive pleasure?"

THIRD INDICTMENT.

The modern dance assails the highest intellectual improvement of its votaries, and of society, when given rein.

In the rush and hurry of modern life most persons have all too little time—beyond what must be devoted to the stern realities of life—to devote to intellectual concerns and to the movements of human history. Is it not a shame to us that the golden hours, all too few at most, in which we might exchange with each other

the thoughts inspired by noble themes and to mutual profit, should be squandered upon a laborious bodily exercise, "in which," says one, "monkeys might be trained to display greater agility than we, and bear a statelier gravity"?

To say that rational beings, possessed of all the advantages with which the state has kindly endowed the young of this generation, supplemented, in many instances, by scientific and technical study, cannot possibly get on for an evening without the vigorous movement and sundry gyrations of body at the sound of music, is a confession of "cranial vacuity," despite opportunities which make this age preëminent in all history. We may well raise the question, To what advantage the intellectual privileges of the age, if the beneficiaries of them must resort to the dance as a refuge from the awkwardness of silence in spending an evening together?

To be sure, we are reminded that "we must have recreation, and that the mental activity recommended is not recreation but work, the very thing we would escape from." True, but it is demanded that the recreation of rational beings, made in the image of God and with a capacity to enjoy Him forever, should not be secured at the expense of intellectual stultification. And surely those who find it out of the question to make an evening's entertainment pass off respectably without the dance to take the place of conversation—one of the greatest of God's good gifts to mortals—or some other intellectual diversion, will not claim to be

of the number whose health demands periods of entire mental repose, such as it is claimed the dance supplies. The dance certainly does not induce vigorous mental activity—before, accompanying or succeeding participation. In whatever estimate the dance may be held *per se*, one thing will be admitted, and that is, that participation in it does crowd out all opportunity for intellectual conversation, and is not promotive of mental vigor.

As to the grace of manner and culture which (it is alleged) the dancing school provides in the training of children, we answer in the words of another:

“Compare, if you choose, the manly walk of an ingenuous youth who has caught his steps from the promptings of a conscious rectitude and high purpose, with the mincing tread of a brainless fop whose grandest achievements are wrought in the ball-room. Compare the natural grace of a pure girl, taught by a pure mother, and by a native sense of delicacy, with the disgusting affectation and brazen effrontery of a pert miss who has been trained by a foreign dancing master not to blush, and you can judge for yourself whether there is any force in the oft-repeated plea that children should be sent to the dancing school to learn manners.”*

Daniel Webster being once asked by a trim dandy why he did not dance, replied:

“Sir, I never had the ambition nor the talent to learn the art.”

*May Christians Dance ? p. 22.

And surely it is no exalted art or surpassing accomplishment to be able to excel in physical movements which are more nearly on the level of untutored savages or of the lower species than on that of beings made in the image of God.

And yet, if there were no more serious charge against the dance than that set forth in the terms of this indictment, if intellectual desuetude were the gravest complaint against the dance, no word of arraignment would ever have come from the speaker. While we may not demand that the amusements we seek shall be intellectually stimulating, we must require that they shall be morally healthful.

FOURTH INDICTMENT.

The modern dance exerts a positive influence in withstanding the Spirit of God calling the human soul to a Christian life.

It was one of the promises of Jesus that, on His departure from the earth, He would send the Holy Spirit, who should abide in the world to reprove or convince mankind with respect to sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16: 7-11). The Holy Spirit has been doing this from the day of Pentecost to the present time. It is our belief, based on the promise of our risen Lord, that every human soul under Gospel influences realizes, sooner or later, this convincing, reproofing power; but, whatever it is and however it comes, it exerts no controlling power over the human soul; it

leaves man possessed of the capacity to "negative his own most blessed end,"

"God but persuades; almighty man decrees."

This indictment is sustained by the testimony of living witnesses, who declare that the seductive influences of the dance was for years the very stronghold of their resistance to the Spirit of God. All who have had experience in evangelistic work of any sort have had frequent evidences of the truth of this indictment supplied to them. A number of cases have fallen under our own observation, in which the thought that the Christian life involved the surrender of the dance as an amusement restrained from entering upon it. There are many persons in every Christian community or congregation to whom the question of their entrance upon the religious life or the service of God has been definitely negatived or indefinitely postponed by a determination to seek the life of pleasure in which they believe the dance is a leading attraction.

We presume that this indictment may be regarded as a not very serious one, the correctness or incorrectness of which being unworthy of sober contention. But from a Christian standpoint no arraignment of the modern dance can be stronger than this. For, from a Christian point of view, no interest of this world can compare for a moment to that which centers in the attainment of a Christian character through yielding to the voice of the Spirit of God calling to repentance and to the religious life.

FIFTH INDICTMENT.

The modern dance operates, both in the individual and in the church, in retarding the growth and stabilization of Christian character, and in hindering the greatest efficiency and success of Christian effort.

We need not dwell upon this indictment at great length, as it is so palpably true that it does not need any special pleading. It states a law or rule which, we think, will not be strenuously contested.

There may be exceptions to the rule; probably there are. There may be Christians who are spiritual, who are awake to the dangers of perishing souls, who are alert to communicate the Gospel message, who are faithful in the Sunday-school and church prayer meetings—attendance at which is thought by some to be a criterion of the spiritual life—who are ready to join hands heartily in efforts to secure the reviving of the church and the salvation of men, who are glad to open their purses wide to the cause of missions, who are careful to train their children to love virtue and truth above all outward grace or adornment, to whom the law of the Lord is increasingly a delight—we say, there *may* be Christians who bear all these marks of spirituality and yet are known as dancing, card-playing and theater-going persons; but they are exceptions. The rule is that those who do and follow these amusements habitually are not among those who are most spiritual-minded. They are not those who are first called to the bed-side of the dying to point the way to the Lamb of God, or to offer spiritual solace to hearts breaking

in sorrow. These things do not fit and qualify for a spiritual ministry.

On the contrary, the common and almost universal fact is that in the proportion and to the extent that the dance—or any other form of amusement is yielded unto and followed habitually, to that extent and in that proportion, the spiritual life suffers harm and impairment. The exceptions to this rule, if there are such, do not overthrow it.

Furthermore, the influence and power for good which such Christians exert is not and cannot be what they would be if they did not yield to nor follow these forms of amusement. The Christian's influence for good is usually in inverse proportion to the degree of his indulgence in all of any of these amusements.

The impression seems to be gaining ground continually that we are living in an era of low spiritual life in the churches. This is lamented by Christian workers in all religious communions, and in almost all parts of Christendom. It is particularly true of those parts of the world where the Christian religion has hitherto been most firmly established, and the churches have enjoyed the greatest prosperity. Anxious souls are everywhere asking, "What is the occasion for this decline of spiritual life?" While perhaps we cannot affirm that it is so, we are nevertheless warranted in believing, from what we know of its effects upon individual Christians, that the low spiritual life so general at present is an outgrowth or development of insidious and soul-destroying worldliness which has found a place among the children

of God, and of which the absorption of so many Christian people in worldly pleasures is an unmistakable symptom and the ample explanation. One thing is certain, and that is, that worldliness, of which the dance and other forms of amusement are symptoms, is retarding the growth of Christian character and is rendering religious effort inefficient.

The restrictions imposed upon the social life during the Lenten season by some branches of the church proclaim the intrinsic antagonism of the dance and other social festivities to special religious devotion and to the highest spiritual concerns. Will you give any Biblical or rational grounds for believing that what is held to be incongruous to devout piety through Lent is any less incongruous to devout piety at any and all other times of the year? Are righteousness, purity of heart, love of God, fidelity to truth, and regard for conduct matters of special times and seasons? In other words, do not the admissions and concessions proclaimed by the Lenten restrictions carry the essential truth of this fifth indictment against the modern dance, that it assails the Christian character and hinders the greatest efficiency of Christian effort?

SIXTH INDICTMENT.

The modern dance is inimical to the highest enlightened Christian consciousness, as voiced by a consensus of opinion from the Christian church, including the Roman Catholic, and from earliest times.

Since this indictment involves only facts of history, it will be enough to set forth the historical grounds for

the indictment as they exist in the admissions and deliverances of the great religious communions, and in the utterances of officials and dignitaries of these communions.

The Baptist and the Congregational churches, being independent in government, have no official deliverances which can be exalted as laws or rules of the church. It is true, however, that at no time in the history of these churches has their attitude toward the dance been at all uncertain or equivocal. From the pulpit and through the press, so far as these instrumentalities can reveal the general regard in which this amusement is held, these churches give no uncertain utterance.

The Presbyterian church has again and again, in its General Assembly, uttered its solemn admonition against the dance as an amusement inimical to the Christian conscience. Some years ago the General Assembly put itself on record in the following resolutions, which we have no knowledge of having been repudiated:

“That whilst the pleasures of the ball-room and the theater are primarily intended by the ‘dancing and stage plays’ forbidden in the answer to the 139th question in the Larger Catechism, the spirit of the prohibition extends to all kindred amusements which are calculated to awaken thoughts and feelings inconsistent with the Seventh Commandment, as explained by the Saviour in Matthew v: 27, 28.

“That whilse we regard the practice of promiscuous social dancing by members of the church as a mournful inconsistency, and the giving of parties for such dancing

on the part of the heads of families as tending to compromise their religious profession, and the sending of children of Christian parents to the dancing-school as a sad error in family discipline, yet we think that the session of each church is fully competent to decide when discipline is necessary, and the extent to which it should be administered."

The Methodist Episcopal Church, North and South, has embodied in its "General Rules," which every person received into the fellowship of this great communion expresses "willingness to observe and keep," that all persons who desire to continue in the fellowship of this church shall abstain from "all such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus."

This rule has always been interpreted as prohibiting members from attending theaters, circuses, balls, dancing parties, etc. Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church who dance, or even attend dancing parties, not only violate one of the fundamental rules of their church, but they are also guilty of violating a solemn pledge, given on admission to membership, to "observe and keep the rules" of the church. In other words, they expose themselves to discipline by so doing.

We are not defending these restrictions, but merely pointing out the well-known view of this communion.

Let us now note the position taken by the Episcopal Church, which, it is commonly believed, is not at all opposed to the dance. Many able and distinguished bishops of the Episcopal Church, earlier and later, have pronounced upon the dance in unmistakable language.

No severer restrictions can be met with anywhere within the Christian church than is found in deliverances from prominent ecclesiastics within this communion.

Bishop Hopkins, of Vermont, once said:

“In the period of youthful education, I have shown that dancing is chargeable with waste of time, the interruption to useful study, the indulgence of personal vanity and display, *and the premature incitement of the passions*. At the age of maturity, it adds to these no small danger to health, by late hours, flimsy dresses, heated rooms, and exposed persons; while its incongruity with strict Christian sobriety and principle, and its tendency to the love of dissipation are so manifest that *no ingenuity can make it consistent with the covenant of baptism.*”

Bishop Meade, of Virginia, speaking of the evil tendencies and accompaniments of the dance as an amusement, said:

“We ought conscientiously to inquire whether its great liability to abuse, and its many acknowledged abuses, should not make us *frown upon it in all its forms.*”

He expressed his opinion further, that “social dancing is not among the neutral things which, within certain limits, we may do at pleasure, and even that it is not among the things lawful, but not expedient, *but that it is, in itself, wrong, improper and of bad effect.*”

Bishop McIlvaine, of Ohio, once declared of the theater and the dance:

“The only line I would draw in regard to these is that of *entire exclusion.*”

He held that "they are renounced in baptism, that their renunciation is ratified in confirmation, and professed in every participation of the Lord's Supper."

If it be said that these are not recent testimonies, we answer that the truth of and the occasion for such utterances has by no means passed away by reason of intervening years, but remains essentially the same as a decade or a score of years ago. But for the sake of any who may regard these utterances antiquated, we quote from the more recent Lenten Pastoral of Bishop Coxe, of Western New York, who, in speaking of the "enormities of theatrical exhibitions, and the lasciviousness of dances," says that these "are so disgraceful to the age and so irreconcilable with the Gospel of Christ, that I feel it my duty to the souls of my flock to warn those who run with the world to 'the same excess of riot' in these things, that they presume not to come to the holy table. Classes preparing for confirmation are informed that I will not lay hands, knowingly, on any one who is not prepared to renounce such things with other abominations of 'the world, the flesh, and the devil.' * * * It is high time that the lines should be drawn between worldly and godly living; and I see no use in a Lent that is not sanctified to such ends."

This attitude is not confined to Protestant Christianity. The Pastoral Letter from the archbishops and bishops of the Roman Catholic Church of the United States, assembled in plenary council in Baltimore, contains the following admonition:

"In this connection, we consider it to be our duty to warn our people against those amusements which may easily become to them an occasion of sin, and especially against the fashionable dances, which, as at present carried on, are revolting to every feeling of delicacy and propriety, and are fraught with the greatest danger to morals."*

We have purposely reserved the chief indictment against the dance for our final consideration. We have noted, thus far, the relation of this institution to the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual life of mankind; it yet remains to consider the relation of this institution to all individual interests as set forth in human society which it assails.

SEVENTH INDICTMENT.

The modern dance, in its nature, its tendencies and its results, is dangerous to social purity. In other words, for we cannot evade the issue, it is, as at present indulged in, fundamentally and necessarily immoral.

In this last indictment is involved the real issue in the discussion of the dance. If our argument wavers, weakens or vacillates at this point, it would better not have been entered upon, although we realize the perils of the kind of discussion called for, and the extreme care required lest we offend that decorum of speech

*Quoted mostly from "May Christians Dance?" Rev. J. H. Brookes, D. D.

which a chaste spirit of Christian refinement and that "charity which thinketh no evil" have taught us to observe and to demand. But plainness of speech is demanded above all things, if anything is, even at the cost of personal feeling and delicacy. It is impossible to treat the grave question involved in this indictment, if it is to be sustained, and do otherwise.

While we believe that this indictment is true, we distinctly assert that we do not believe that the modern dance is consciously immoral to all, nor, perhaps, to most persons who participate in it as an amusement. There are young men who claim that they are not conscious of any unchaste or impure imaginations while moving in the "mazy circles of the dance" to "music's voluptuous swell." Now, while these are not "sworn witnesses on the stand," and while, if they were, it is a well-known principle of law that they could not be compelled to give testimony that would tend to incriminate themselves, yet we freely accept their witness to the uprightness and purity of their thoughts and impulses. But all are not like these, else the terrible responsibility for lives ruined through the dance would rest entirely with the opposite sex; and no one is so much a poltroon as to make such a charge. Precisely the opposite thoughts and emotions are acknowledged by many men, older and younger, and confessed to be the very ground of their interest in it.

In the very nature of the dance, as it is now conducted, it permits and provides for, and could not exist without permitting and providing for, liberties and familiarities

which would nowhere else be tolerated by respectable society. Under this law of "liberty" the pure-minded woman who places herself in the perils of such a situation, receives familiarities of touch and contact of person which, under any other conditions, would be regarded as pollution. In no other public place than the ball-room would such liberties be tolerated without conscious insult. Would a lady with a spark of self-respect, at any other place than in the dance, lay her head upon the shoulder of a man not her husband, place her breast against his, and allow him to encircle her waist with his arm, place his foot between hers and clasp her hand in his?—which, according to an ex-dancing master and former proprietor of a dancing academy, is the position assumed in waltzing.

Said Gail Hamilton, "The very pose of the parties suggests impurity."

It was this "pose of the parties" which prompted a Philadelphia army officer to say, on first beholding a "round dance,"

"If I should see a man offering to dance with my wife in that way, I would horsewhip him on the spot."

This inclination of the officer, says Dr. Haydn, "is the natural instinct of unsophisticated men and women everywhere."

It is the liberties and familiarities which belong to the dance, and which are inseparable from the dance of modern society, that prompted such a large and liberal-minded man as Dr. Horace Bushnell to say, of the modern forms of the dance,

“They are the contrived possibilities of license, which belong to high life only when it runs low.”

The very dress or costume of the dance challenges impure thoughts and impulses. A writer in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, in an article on *Papua*, says:

“A New Guinea queen, attended by her prince consort, and surrounded by her dusky maids of honor, all clad in native costume, and with calabash and chewing betel-nut, would, in all probability, shock the proprieties of any civilized assemblage outside of a ball-room.”

Why not the proprieties of a ball-room as well?

We come now to this question: What is the center and source of the dance's attractive hold upon modern society? What is the secret of its power?

We are not alone in saying that the center and source of this power is the element of sex. “It mingles the sexes in such closeness of personal approach and contact as, outside of the dance, is nowhere tolerated in respectable society” (Wilkinson). “Its chief fascination lies in the relation of the sexes” (Dr. Brand). “Take sex out of the dance, and it would lose its fascination for most of those now captivated by it” (Dr. Haydn).

It may be said that these statements are gratuitous assumptions, having no foundation except in prejudice. If these statements are called in question, then let us ask:

Why is it that the dance alone, of all the favorite diversions of modern society, requires the association of the two sexes to make it tolerable?

If it is answered, "Why, the pleasure of social intercourse, whatever the form, is always heightened when both sexes participate in it," our rejoinder is that the point of the question is missed entirely; for the question is not, Why is the dance enjoyed more when men and women participate in it together; but the very different one, Why must men and women execute it together to enjoy it *at all*?

Gentlemen and ladies meet separately for an evening together at the card-table, and the enjoyment does not cloy by reason of the isolation of the one sex from the other. What bachelor club or ladies' sorosis anywhere devotes an evening to the dance with its own members? But why not, if sex is not the very center of the dance's power? Which one of the secret societies, composed of men exclusively, ever gave an annual ball to those of its own sex only? If they were to do so, who would put himself out to accept the invitation? A dancing assembly of men apart from women would be "a novelty not likely to ever be seen." And how long would dancing as an exercise, be tolerated, if men were to whirl alone, or if men were to dance with men and women with women? Why is it that the Christian girl, who waltzes with her brother only, soon gets tired, and goes home before midnight? It is even as Professor Amos R. Wells, of *The Golden Rule*, has said:

"Dancing—like all Gaul—is divided into three parts: one-third is esthetic, one third is physical exercise, one-third is sensual. * * * Every honest investigator of the dance, as now practised in America, will agree that

the third part into which this heathen Gauß is divided is stronghold of the province.”

RUINED LIVES.

That this fact of sex is the source and center of the dance's hold and power accounts for the fearful havoc of ruined lives which follow in its train, as shadows follow the clouds that trail across the sky.

Said the late Dr. Howard Crosby: “The foundation for the vast amount of domestic misery and domestic crime which startles us often in its public outcroppings, was laid when parents allowed the sacredness of their daughters' persons and the purity of their maiden instincts to be rudely shocked in the waltz.”

The Presbyterian Board publishes the following: “The dancing school, instead of being called a school of easy manners, ought rather to be styled a place where girls are taught to substitute the finesse of the coquette for true feminine delicacy, and where boys take their primary lessons in the arts of seduction.”

“Women of virtue or self-respect,” wrote Mrs. Gen. W. T. Sherman to the author of “The Dance of Death,” “will now blush to have the dance named to them. An amusement which leads, in any case, to such results as you have pointed out should be forever discountenanced.”

An ex-dancing master, Mr. T. A. Faulkner, once proprietor of the Los Angeles Dancing Academy and ex-president of the Dancing Masters' Association of the Pacific Coast, gives it as his deliberate conviction that

"two-thirds of the girls who are ruined fall through the influence of dancing."

The matron of a home for fallen women in Los Angeles, declares that "seven-tenths of the girls received here have fallen through dancing and its influence."

Of the 2,500 abandoned women of San Francisco, Professor LaFloris testifies: "I can safely say that three-fourths of these women were led to their downfall through the influence of dancing."

And, crossing to the other side of the continent, the chief of police of the City of New York is authority for the statement that "three-fourths of the abandoned girls of New York were ruined by dancing."

And Archbishop Spaulding, of New York, is reported as having said that "nineteen out of twenty of the fallen women who come to the confessional have ascribed their fall from virtue to the influence of the dance."

We dismiss this subject by saying, in view of these facts and observations, that the Christian pulpit has something more than prejudice and fanaticism for the ground of its opposition to the modern dance. We believe, with Dr. Crosby, that here is a vice upon which "no minister of Christ must utter an uncertain sound."

III.

THE CARD-TABLE AND CULTURED SOCIETY.

The statement of the topic we are now to consider limits our discussion to a single and clearly defined issue. As in the consideration of the preceding topic, so we would now say of the card-table, that we are not concerned with the history of its development. We are not disposed to draw distinctions as to the relative harmfulness or innocency of the various kinds of games played with cards. We do not hold that the playing with cards, *per se*, or the handling of decorated pieces of cardboard of certain dimensions, and after certain rules of the game, is an unpardonable sin, or a sin at all necessarily. Nor would we invade the domain of personal rights or the customs of families in providing the attraction of cards for amusement in the home, except incidentally, and then only in so far as the custom relates to the influence of personal example and parental sanction upon the outside and after life.

The subject for present discussion concerns an institution of the social life. That institution is the card-table, which has come to be regarded as almost essential to polite and cultured society.

I. —The card-table as an institution of modern society.

1. In some localities the card-table is held to be

essential to the existence of cultured society. Admission into society is a term almost synonymous with gaining entrance into some card club, whose favor is thought to be the supreme attraction of social life. The term "society" has almost come to designate the card-playing portion of mankind; all others are regarded as mere "nothings." It matters little how much talent in other directions, how many other accomplishments, what range and versatility of powers, how much character one possesses, or what broad and lofty spirit controls the life; all these count for little or nothing in making up the qualifications for admission into polite society. The card-table is considered by many as the plane of cleavage between the higher and the lower walks of life.

2. The process of exclusion and seclusion which holds sway at the card-table is justified by the social code that governs in cultured society. The card table and its accompanying social code is often argued for on this wise:

"The need of recreation is universal, a demand of our nature. We are not conversationalists. The engrossing cares and duties of life do not permit us to keep abreast of the literary movements of the times, and we are not Socratic nor Shaksperian. We have had a surfeit of religious meetings, sermons, and the like; and concerts, lectures, and church sociables are dry and dull. Cards, on the other hand, furnish an easy, and an easily accessible and entertaining means of passing a social hour or two, or an evening—indeed, what else can we engage in

that will be of so little trouble, so universally acceptable, and so available for amusement as in games of cards? A game of cards is not so high as to bar off any one of even moderate attainments, and it is not so low as to be objectionable to any whose opinions we care for. It provides a sufficient intellectual stimulus as not to appeal to a low motive or principle of recreation, and it is of such an interest as not to cloy to the taste, and, at the same time, it relieves from the engrossing cares and anxieties of life."

All this, no doubt, may be said in favor of the card-table.

A new and somewhat novel argument for the card-table recently came to our notice. A traveler on a belated Atlantic steamer, about which much anxiety was felt at the time, tells of an incident which, in his judgment, did more than anything else to allay the fears of the passengers on board the crippled steamer. That incident was the spectacle of half a dozen men passengers playing poker in the most unconcerned manner in the smoking room. In other words, the *nonchalance* of the poker-players in the presence of danger or delay was reassuring to the passengers, in the discomfiture of detention and misfortune:

This incident suggests whether it might not be an admirable plan for the captains of all vessels at sea to enlist the card-playing fraternity as a complement of the ship's forces, in order to inspire timid passengers with courage in times of danger, real or imaginary.

It has sometimes turned out, however, that the card-

playing contingent has been the first to move toward an informal prayer meeting, or the life-boats, in times of real danger, so that it could hardly be depended on in an emergency.

3. There are apologists for the card-table;—those who profess that they cannot see why they should ever, under any circumstances, refrain from participating in what is right and fitting for them to participate in, on account of the whims or prejudices of such persons as pretend to have a regard for exemplary influence above that of personal right. There are those who say: "It is better to play cards than to be engaged in talking about and slandering one's neighbors," etc., etc.

Nobody would dispute this; only this is no justification of card-playing. It is no doubt better, at least it is no worse, to do a great many things which are objectionable than it is to do a great many other and more objectionable things; though this is not a justification for doing any unworthy thing. This much at least is true, that the apologists for the card-table of one generation become its patrons and patronesses in the next.

II.—The arraignment of the card-table.

We arraign the card-table at the bar of reason and conscience as an institution of unenviable history and of pernicious influence. Five separate allegations make up our arraignment of this institution: that it is a fact, a habit, a spell, an evil, and a vice. We will pass hastily over the first three allegations.

1. The card-table is a fact—a tremendous fact—of modern society.

There can be no ground of controversy as to the truth of this allegation. A few facts will sustain it.

A half-million packs of euchre cards are made in England every year. The United States government derives a large revenue annually from the tax on the sale of playing cards. The columns of the newspapers everywhere witness to card-parties and prize-contests, among the social events of the community. Many members of society attend from two to five card-parties every week, throughout the social season. Whist and euchre receptions are among the most conspicuous announcements of the local press everywhere. There is a national organization of card players with meetings annually.

2. The card-table is a habit—a powerful habit—of cultured society.

We mean by the card-table all that it stands for; and we allege that it represents in itself the card-playing habit. We do many things through force of habit. Attendance upon the church prayer-meeting is a habit—a strong habit—with some persons. In the same sense the card-table fastens a habit upon its votaries, a habit which in many instances becomes controlling in the life.

Life is made up largely of habits. "Three-fourths of life," says one, "is habit." Habits are either good or bad, in their relation to our life. When the habits of our life cease to be controlled by reason and conscience, they

contribute to our harm; then they become a power to negative the highest end of our existence. All habits not brought under the control of reason and conscience are bad—in fact, in influence, and in results.

What shall we say of the card-table when the pursuit of its pleasures becomes a controlling habit? Is it helpful or harmful? Does it contribute to one's highest well-being, and does it enlarge one's conception of his relation and obligation to the world, or is it the contrary?

We believe that there can be but one answer to these questions, and that in the negative.

3. The card-table is an absorbing spell to a portion of society.

Experience and observation show that the habit of card-playing, when once it is formed, readily grows into an absorbing passion and a very craze. It is the nature of the card-table to absorb the interest and to engross the mind; and to such as have come under its seductive spell, evening after evening will be given over to the indulgence of what is no longer a habit merely, but what becomes an absorbing passion. The habit of card-playing grows with what it feeds on, until time's flight is unheeded and life's obligations are ignored, under the spell which it throws over its votaries.

When the card-table reaches the stage of a spell, or an absorbing passion, its votary becomes its victim, whose only hope is in its utter and perpetual abandonment.

4. The card-table is an evil—an evil of insidious and far-reaching proportions.

Several separate counts make up this allegation. It

is charged in the arraignment that it is an institution of pernicious influence. In what respects is its influence pernicious?

(1) Its indulgence leads to a waste of time. "A whole evening, to a late hour, given up to cards, as to dancing, by sensible, not to say Christian people," says Dr. Haydn, "is a questionable use of precious time and immortal powers. It is almost certainly to carry recreation over into dissipation, which is sinful." There is little reason to question whether the waste of time is evil; it is, for many people, one of the greatest evils of the age.

(2) It panders to and develops selfish ambitions. If people were only to stop and analyze the ground of their **absorbing interest in the card table, and consider the rules which govern it as an institution of society,** they would see that three-fourths, or more likely nine-tenths of that interest has its origin in a selfish spirit. But let this pass.

(3) It may, and we believe it often does, entail hereditary infirmities and latent propensities to gambling upon posterity. The great doctrine of heredity is bringing ever-increasing light upon the origin of disease and infirmities which hitherto were thought to be wholly the products of habit or personal indiscretion. Heredity teaches that other things than a love of drink may be, and are, transmitted from parent to child. A prospective mother may come under the spell of card-playing to the extent of stamping upon her offspring a love of games so strong that her offspring, if a son, will hardly escape a life of gambling. As the laws of life are coming

to be better understood, it may be believed, and upon scientific grounds, that the passion for gambling is in many instances one which comes as an inheritance from even Christian parents. It is most difficult to account for the fearful spell of gambling, which, so often, hurls its victims on to their doom, on any other hypothesis than this.

We are well aware that some Christian parents feel that they must set this amusement before their children as a safeguard against gambling later on. They argue:

“It is far better to allow it in the home than to drive the children to its clandestine enjoyment away from the home.”

This would be deemed a “heroic” method if applied to any other form of amusement. As a matter of fact, such a method has more frequently resulted in feeding a growing taste than in imparting a nausea for this sort of amusement. Such a theory of education would have us to expect results contrary to those which the means employed are adapted to produce. The legitimate and natural results of the “temperate” use of wine is to develop and foster the love of strong drink, exceptional cases notwithstanding. All amusements are to be considered in the light of their common and legitimate tendencies and results, not in the light of fine-drawn theories and exceptional results. Dr. Haydn expresses the true estimate of such a theory of education when he says that he finds it impossible to have more respect for it than he could have for “the practice which once prevailed among Scythian mothers of throwing infant chil-

dren into a running stream of cold water, that only the sturdy—those able to survive the test—might remain on their hands to be reared and educated.”

(4) It often proves a snare to enthrall the life in impiety; it ministers to dissipation; and it is an attendant of degradation. It is allied with the beer and whisky glass in the saloon; with the thief in his hiding-place; with the pirate on ship-board; and with the debauchee in the brothel. These are, and always have been, so to speak, its native associations. “No wonder, then, that many are never able to see a pack of cards without associating it with the devil.” Certainly the devil has used it to recruit his dominion.

(5) It induces religious leanness and destroys spiritual usefulness. It withers at the touch the impressions which the Holy Spirit makes upon the heart that they may be nourished unto the soul's growth in grace. It is the testimony of many and many a pastor—east, west, north and south—in whose church “progressive euchre” holds sway among its members, that this amusement is killing the spiritual life of his church in the proportion that it is indulged. In many instances the pastor dares not so much as lift even a moderate caution lest it may cost him his relationship, or reduce his popularity, and so affect the parochial revenues. An excessive devotion to card-playing proclaims the world's dominion over even the believing soul and creates a distrust of one's piety.

Dr. Brand declares: “It acts as a blight upon the moral health of the young.”

Said the late Dr. Holland, of Springfield, Mass.: "I have all my days had a card-playing community open to my observation, and I am yet unable to believe that that which is the universal resort of the starved soul and intellect, which has never in any way linked to itself tender, elevating, or beautiful associations, the tendency of which is to unduly absorb the attention from more weighty matters, can recommend itself to the favor of Christ's disciples. The presence of culture and genius embellish, but can never dignify it."

It is not claimed by any one that the card-table was invented and is sustained as a means of grace, or that it has ever been regarded as a spiritual institution. It does not bring, and never has it been known to bring, a spiritual fruitage. It has never been honored by the Holy Spirit in promoting a revival of religion, or as an aid to piety and devotion. But on the contrary, it has often been used by the devil to dissipate spiritual concern and to block the chariot wheels of salvation. Its influence always and everywhere is, both directly and indirectly, destructive to religious devotion and spirituality. It cannot be entered upon with prayer, nor participated in with the witnessing approval of the Holy Spirit. We have heard of the "prayer test" for the sick; let me suggest a prayer test for legitimate amusement or pleasure.

As it is the fact that Christian people constitute or compose a proportion of most gatherings at the card-table, suppose one of these should ask the privilege of opening the game of "progressive euchre," or "progress-

sive whist," with the following prayer—it ought not to be considered out of place, considering the people present:

"Lord Jesus, many of us here present are Thy disciples; we have acknowledged Thy Lordship over us in all things; we have no other object in living, as supreme, than to glorify Thee! We are now about to enter upon this game, which we believe to be lawful and right, for Thy glory and to advance Thy kingdom through the help we hope to obtain by means of this recreation, from the burden of our daily cares and arduous duties. Bless Thou this game of cards to our growth in grace, and hasten, through it, the universal dominion of the truth! Amen!"

The Christian can pray this prayer, with fitting modifications, before entering upon any entertainment, amusement, literary or intellectual feast, appropriate for his participation. If he cannot pray this prayer before entering upon a game of cards, the game itself is incongruous to piety and spirituality.

Now we do not say that one cannot be a Christian and play at cards. We do not say that some card-playing Christians may not be better persons despite this evil than many who do not play at all. And we do not lose sight of the fact that there are very few, if indeed any, perfect Christians. Probably we all offend in some things. Nevertheless we need to remember that a perfect standard has been set before every one who owns the name of Christ, and that the divine law of Christian living is never modified or abridged at the demand of

polite and conventional usage. Christ Himself is the standard, the great Example, for Christian conduct. And the law of God declares that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Whose spirit governs at the card-table? Is it the spirit of Christ? And what code of ethics prevails there? Is it that contained in the Sermon on the Mount? The "world" does not hesitate to say that the spirit of Christ and the law of Christ do not govern at the card-table; and that it is an amusement inimical to the highest type of piety and to the deepest spirituality.

5. The card-table is a vice—a vice of ungainly dimensions.

We would again distinguish between the act of playing a game of cards and the card-table. The card-table indeed stands for card-playing, but for card-playing as it has become a habit, a spell, an evil—in a word, an institution of fashionable society. Surely this distinction is a valid one. What, then, we ask, are the elements which go along with the card-table, which make it what it is, and which are inseparable from it as it has gained a place in cultured society, that warrant us in characterizing it as a vice—a vice of ungainly dimensions?

Here again in our arraignment several separate counts make up the allegation.

(1) First of all, it is charged that dishonesty, tendencies to take unjust advantage, and cheating, are inseparable from the card-table as an institution of cultured society.

There are those who habitually attend card-parties

who would scorn to take the least unjust advantage of their fellow players. Perhaps the majority of those who play do so with the strictest integrity of intentions. But this does not relieve the card-table from the force of this allegation, since there are peculiar temptations to violate the principle of the Golden Rule in every game played either for a prize, or for the coveted honor of winning. There are many ways in which persons who have no refined scruples against taking petty advantage may promote their interests in the game, such as a sly wink or nod or negation of head, the accidental (?) disclosure of a card, the furtive word across the board (provided against in the rules of the game, but not overcome), etc., etc.

Moreover, there are proficient card players in nearly every community who have the reputation in the clubs for taking unjust advantage, and apparently without compunctions. These persons are known to, and have this reputation among, their associate card players. That cheating is an accompaniment of many or most of the games of cards in which a prize is a consideration is freely conceded by many who play. In one community with which we are acquainted, in which whist was the favorite game at the card-parties of one season, it was acknowledged by those participating that seldom or never was there a game free from the vice of cheating, in some form or other. Recognizing this degrading tendency, one of the whist clubs of the community referred to, voted to abolish prizes. And so far good. Another of the clubs in this same community voted to suspend all

games and card-parties during Lent. We have no reason to believe that the community referred to is exceptional. In that community, as everywhere, professing Christians and church members constituted a proportion—a not insignificant proportion—of the card-playing fellowship.

(2) Another count against the card-table is that indulgence in this amusement leads to the neglect of duties, personal and general, private and public. This follows from the absorbing interest that the card-table claims from its votaries and the time worse than wasted—for it is consumed to moral injury—in this amusement. But this count in the allegation is of small concern as compared with other counts yet to be specified.

(3) The card-table is productive of jealousies, contention and envy, and leads to alienations, bickering, and strife.

While some of these results cannot be affirmed against card-playing in itself, yet they may all be affirmed of the card-table as an institution. Because their introduction assails the good order and discipline of members, it is the rule in the United States navy that no cards shall be allowed. It is said to be the fact that proprietors and managers of lumber camps in the north-west, men who are themselves infidels, have forbidden the introduction of cards in those camps on penalty of immediate discharge from service. And why? Because it has been found that, introduce the card-table, and neglect of duty, contention, disorder, strife, gambling, and brawls are its invariable accompaniments.

Cultured society has the art of concealing the petty

jealousies, envy, and alienations that rankle as the natural results of this institution, but they exist there nevertheless.

GAMBLING.

(4) Another and a graver count against the card-table is that it incites to the growing vice of gambling. To many a person the card-table arms temptation to gamble with almost resistless power. And this is true though the card-table be domiciled in the home. Said the wife of a man who had passed through the hell of a gambler's career, after his reform,

"We have no cards in *our* home."

It is the undeniable fact that there is a frightful prevalence and an alarming increase of gambling at the present time and in this country. Mr. W. B. Curtis, editor of *The Spirit of the Times*, said in the *Forum*:

"It is safe to say that there never was a time in the history of the world when gambling was so rife among all classes of people as at present. * * * That betting is both heavier and more widespread than ever before is proved by its literature. A few years ago there were in the United States but four or five newspapers devoted wholly to sports, and these were all weekly or monthly publications. Now there are forty weeklies and one daily. * * * The United States, too, is the garden spot of gambling. We gamble more universally, more persistently, and for higher stakes, than the people of any other country."

Mr. Anthony Comstock says: "This nation is fast earning an unsavory reputation because of gambling propensities. Moral and religious influences seem to have no effect in checking this degrading passion."

Gambling is a great fountain-source of crimes of the gravest character. Mr. Comstock, as the agent of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, made a synopsis of the crimes having their origin in gambling, as recorded in the newspapers for a single year. One hundred and twenty-eight persons were either shot or stabbed over gambling games; six attempted suicide; twenty-four committed suicide, and sixty persons were murdered in cold blood; while two were driven insane. Sixty-eight persons were ruined by pool gambling and betting upon horse racing. Among the crimes committed to get money to gamble with were two burglaries, eighteen forgeries, and eighty-five embezzlements, while thirty-two persons holding positions of trust in banks and other places of mercantile life absconded. The enormous sum of \$2,898,372 is shown by this record as the proceeds of the embezzlements and defalcations, as published in the newspapers for a single year, besides all those crimes which never came to the public gaze.

The estimate of Mr. Chauncey M. Depew is in harmony with this fearful record. "A considerable proportion of failures in business, and ninety per cent. of the defalcations and thefts and ruin of youth, among people who are employed in places of trust, are due directly to gambling." (*Public Opinion*, Vol. 17, p. 574.)

We need to raise the question, Where does the life of

gambling begin? What is the starting-point of the gambler's career? Is there any connection between this black record of crime, the product of gambling, and a "friendly game of cards," or the card-table?

We dare to assert that the starting-point in a large proportion of cases of gambling is the card-table; and in not a few cases it is the card-table in the home. The tendencies of the card-table are invariably toward the vice of gambling. So much is certain. And while the criminal harvest that is the result of gambling is not to be ascribed to the card-table, yet not a small proportion of it has its inception and incentives in the respectable, social game. As private theatricals incite to a love and a choice of the stage, so the social, respectable game of cards, and the card-table of cultured society, is the inception and the incentive to many a gambler's career of vice and crime.

There are examples illustrating and warning of this truth in almost every community.

Mr. John Philip Quinn, the converted Chicago gambler, who had kept a gambling house for twenty-five years, denounces card-playing in the home, as making the home a "kindergarten for the gambling saloon."

Mr. John Bigelow, writing on "gambling," says: "Nine people out of ten, when they for the first time accept an invitation to join in a game of whist or poker have no more suspicion of the passions they may be about to nurse, than the maid of sixteen when she engages in her first flirtation. The result in all these cases (different stakes and ventures) depends upon their action

when they do discover the sinister passion that is brooding—whether they go on, or make a timely retreat. The taste for play may be the trial of our faith, and one of the innumerable means under Providence for making us aware of our weaknesses and unhallowed propensities.” (*Harper's Monthly*, Feb., 1895.)

(5) Finally, the card-table, as its pleasures are often indulged in even by cultured and so-called Christian society, is nothing less than gambling. Gambling is not a whit less gambling because it is pursued by respectable or Christian people. Gambling is not less gambling because it is pursued in the name of the church and for the sake of parochial revenues. That which transforms a game of cards into the vice of gambling is not the amount or the value of the stake played for, but the fact of a stake at all.

Gambling is a heinous crime in the different states of the Union. In Ohio the playing for any stake whatsoever is a crime punishable by fine or imprisonment, or by both fine and imprisonment. The law in this state is: “Whoever plays at any game whatsoever, for any sum of money or other property of any value, or makes any bet or wager for any sum of money or other property of any value, shall be fined not more than \$100, or imprisoned not more than six months nor less than ten days, or both.” According to any reasonable construction, nay, according to the very letter and the spirit also, of this law, whoever plays at cards for any stake, whether “any sum of money or other property of any value,” has violated a law of the state, and that act comes under the

designation of "gambling," as defined by this statute. Is it any wonder that, in the wholesale disregard of law by fashionable society, a spirit of lawlessness is spreading from shore to shore, and that crime is "as a rising tide to which there is no ebb"?

If the element of gambling, to the extent of "costs for drinks," or "suppers," or a "prize,"—whether a diamond pin, a volume of poems, or a bouquet of flowers—be brought into the amusement of the card-table, then a vicious principle is added, concerning the moral obliquity of which there can be no question by any fair-minded person. We have no fears that his conclusion can be shaken. "Reputable gambling," to quote once more from Dr. Haydn,—“if we allow such a thing, because respectable people indulge it, in a small way—ought to have no immunity that we are unwilling to concede to the worst, and which the state visits with the penalty of the law.”

IV.

THE THEATER.

The theater is linked with the dance and the card-table as the associated pleasures of an amusement-loving age. We would begin our present discussion, as in the associated topics, by making certain distinctions which will save us from the charge of wholesale and indiscriminate arraignment of the theater.

We do not propose to discuss the history of the stage; we are concerned with its history at all only so far as the facts of history may serve to show the influence which it has exerted upon the moral life.

The question for discussion is not one that pertains to dramatic literature, except as it is related to theatrical performance, and even then it has to do chiefly with the place of performance.

Nor is the issue one of inherent and essential objection to all histrionic art. It is not that we are opposed to the presentation of literary compositions—sacred, moral, or secular—upon the stage.

The question is not one of the relative merit or demerit of opera, drama, comedy, vaudeville, or the "variety." The opera has commonly been regarded as standing at the head of all histrionic performances, but no distinctions can be made which will exempt the opera from the

common influence of the theater; for the opera is usually presented in the same place, with the same scenic effects, with the same environment, and with much the same patronage as the other performances of the theater. No doubt there is a gradating demerit all the way down from the opera to the "variety" show, as there is a gradating harmfulness all the way down from the social parlor dance to the public and promiscuous ball; but the main objection against the theater, as we apprehend it, is not against specific performances but against the institution itself.

Nor, once more, is the question to be discussed one concerning what the theater has been, or might be, but what it actually is. We have to do with the "actual, not the imaginary theater"—the theater of to-day, not that of yesterday nor that of to-morrow. Still it is true in general that what the theater was yesterday, it is to-day; and what it is to-day, it is likely to be to-morrow.

We are to consider the theater as an institution of the social world, as it exists to-day, and from a Bible standpoint—not from a business, a social, an esthetic or artistic, but from a Christian standpoint. Or, in other words, the task we have proposed for ourself is to examine into the relation and influence of the theater as an institution, with what it means and stands for, upon the moral and religious life of mankind. We are to discuss this subject from "a Bible standpoint," because the Bible is regarded by Christian people as the fixed and ultimate standard of teaching upon ethics and the Christian religion. While it is true that amusements in

general, and the theater in particular, as such, have no place in the specific teaching of the Bible, yet we greatly err if we regard the ethics and principles of Christianity as having no relation and bearing to the whole complicated problem of amusement. "If you search the Bible through," says one, "you will find no list of duties, of pleasures, of contingencies to which its ethics, its maxims, its principles may be applied. Why? Not because it is not adaptable to all, but because it is a spirit, a temper, a quality, a ruling principle, intended to pervade everything, rather than a code of rules which may be nailed against the many doors of our life's outgoings and incomings." In other words, the principles and ethics of the Bible are of universal application and can never become obsolete—"they are for one long, eternal PRESENT, the infinite NOW, the everlasting TO-DAY."

I.—The theater and Christian ethics.

We say "Christian ethics," not that we confound ethics and religion, for they are not identical, although they have much in common; but so far as our present discussion is concerned it will be broadly within bounds for us to use the term Christian ethics. Most certainly there is no Christian religion without morality, and the morality which is coming into universal recognition is assuredly Christian. We would ask, therefore, what is the relation of the theater, as an institution, to Christian ethics, or to morals and to the Christian religion?

1. *A brief historical survey of the theater in relation to morals.*

The theater has been known to the world for more than twenty and a half centuries. Its relation to ethics in all these centuries is well understood. History alone can settle the question concerning its influence upon the moral life of mankind. And history does settle that question. Such Greek and Roman writers as Plutarch, Xenophon, Plato, Socrates, Tacitus, Seneca, Ovid, and others, regarded the theater as antagonistic to morals. Some of these writers denounced it as exerting a corrupting influence upon the Greek and Roman mind. At Athens the theater was suppressed by law. The Lacedæmonians would not tolerate it. On the whole, it was condemned by the best minds of that age. Rome borrowed and debased the performances of the Greeks. Instead of the tragedies and dramas of the Greeks, the Romans turned their attention to comedy and public shows. The arena and gladiatorial combats supplanted dramatic representations. Gross exhibitions, licentious buffoonery, and female indecencies became the common rule of the play. Dr. Schaff, speaking of the time after Augustus, says: "The Roman theater became more and more the nursery of vice, and deserved to be abhorred by all men of decent feeling and refined taste." With here and there an exception, the general tendencies and influence of dramatic representations toward immorality and licentiousness continued to be the common drift, even after Christian influence had suppressed the gladiatorial combats.

The "moral" and "mystery" plays of the Middle Ages, while they came under the patronage of the Church, ran the same course downward, and, according to Mr. Lecky, brought about the degradation of both the Church and all religion. (Rationalism in Europe, vol. 2, p. 294.)

The results which followed the introduction of the theater in England were in no wise different from those which have always followed the stage. Macaulay says: "From the time the theaters were opened, they became the seminaries of vice." This was said of the English theater. And Sir Walter Scott said of the theater in his day: "It was abandoned to the vicious. The best portions of the house were set apart for abandoned characters." "It may almost be said," adds Dr. Haydn, "that nothing but the genius of William Shakspeare saves the English stage from the contempt of good and pure men."

The theater has stood all through the ages of history as a menace to morals and thus to good government, for there can be no good government—nor long any government at all—independent of morality. It was this conception of the theater as a menace to good government which prompted the *American Congress*, soon after the Declaration of Independence, to adopt the following preamble and resolution:

"WHEREAS, True religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness; *Resolved*, That it be and is hereby earnestly recommended to the several States, to take the most effectual

measures for the encouragement thereof, and the suppression of theatrical entertainments, horse-racing, gaming and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation and a general depravity of principles and manners."

The verdict which this brief history gives is that the theater is an institution "which has within itself the seeds of corruption, and which exists only under a law of degeneracy." "History," says Dr. Herrick Johnson, "is all one way in testifying to the worthlessness of the stage as a school of virtue, or a means of rational and elevating amusement." (Plain Talks about the Theater, page 13.)

2. *The theater as it exists to-day.*

The theater as an institution has grown to colossal proportions. There is no disagreement upon the proposition that the theater is a tremendous fact of modern society. A writer in *Harper's Weekly*, a few years ago,—the statements probably fall short of the facts to-day—said: "There are at present in the United States and Canada 3,410 theatrical towns—places, that is, in which theatrical performances are habitually given. Distributed through these towns there are 5,212 theaters, not every one an especially equipped theater, but every one adapted for theatrical business and customarily used for it. The number of actors in this country is 2,527; the number of managers is 365; the number of stars and combinations that were last year on their professional travels through this land is 249; the number of persons directly and indirectly employed in the industry of the

stage is not less than 50,000; and it is safe to say that the persons who continually derive pleasure in various forms, and sometimes intellectual benefit, from the theater, may be numbered as millions." The theaters of New York alone are valued at about \$10,000,000; while, according to *The New York Times*, the annual expenditure in the theaters of that city is about \$6,500,000.

Without controversy the theater is an important industry and fact; it represents thousands of persons and millions of money. It is the importance of this fact and industry which makes the theater the tremendous power for good or ill in social life that it is. And it is no vindication of the theater's right to exist to contend that "it is here to stay." Nor is the Christian's policy toward the theater defined by the fact that this institution has perpetuated itself for so many centuries. Other institutions, notoriously iniquitous, have existed and flourished from the dawn of history. What the Christian's relation or attitude toward the theater should be is determined solely by what the character of the theater actually is. Recognizing the fact that the theater is a tremendous power making for good or ill, the main question yet remains: Is the theater a power for good or ill, which? The Christian's attitude must be determined by the answer to this question. But to answer this question necessitates an analysis of the general purpose or object for which the theater exists.

The theater as it exists to-day is made up or consists of three factors—the management, the performers, and the patrons. The character of this institution, whether good

or bad, cannot be ascertained independent of these three elements which make up the theater of to-day.

(1) The *management* of the theater.

This includes the owner or proprietor of the place where theatrical performances or exhibitions are given, and in whose financial interest the business of a play-house is conducted. We are led to ask, therefore, what is the paramount object or purpose for which the enterprise of a theater is conducted?

We maintain that the paramount, indeed the sole object for which a theatrical establishment is conducted, is MONEY. Apart from this object few theaters would ever be constructed, equipped, or operated. When the theater ceases to be a money-making enterprise it will disappear.

This fact as to the paramount object of the theater, does not make it an immoral institution; for this may be a legitimate object for which an enterprise is conducted. This is the object, doubtless, for which many, or perhaps most, enterprises exist. Doubtless the object for which the butcher, the grocer, and the dry-goods merchant conduct their business is to make money. The butcher, the grocer, and the dry-goods merchant aim to render a fair equivalent for the money they receive in patronage. The manager of a theater claims the same thing for his enterprise, only the equivalent in his case is amusement. Amusement, it is claimed, is the "value received" for the money paid in at the ticket box. Even this may not be an unworthy object, since the need of amusement is one of the recognized demands of our natures.

There is this vital distinction between the business of conducting a playhouse and the business of the butcher, the grocer, and the dry-goods merchant, in that each of the latter must comply with the general laws of morals governing in the commercial world on pain or penalty of a loss of patronage. Let it once be understood that either of these latter enterprises is being conducted unscrupulously, and the enterprise is bound to fail in the long run. But the management of the theater may pander to a vitiated and ignoble moral sentiment, and help to make it, in order to operate his business at all with profit to himself.

The butcher, the grocer, the dry-goods merchant, each relies upon natural demands for the life and success of his business; the manager of the theater relies largely upon artificial demands, and which he helps to create, for the life and success of his enterprise. It is freely conceded by proprietors that the theater, to succeed as a money-making enterprise—the paramount object for which it exists—must yield to the tastes and demands of its patrons. And it is boldly declared by theatrical managers, in their supposed vindication, that, when anything improper is presented on the boards, it is the fault of the demanding public, whose tastes and wishes, vitiated though they are, the theater is bound to respect. In a word, it is proclaimed that, if the public demand immoral presentations upon the stage, the management of the theater will and must give them, that it simply follows the general economic law of supply and demand. In the lines of his epilogue at the opening of the old Drury Lane

Theater, David Garrick embodied this demand—a demand greater now than then,—

“Hard is his lot that here by fortune placed,
Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste,
With every meteor of caprice must play,
And chase the new-born public of a day.
The drama’s laws the drama’s patrons give,
And we that live to please must please to live.”

The commercial world is coming to recognize, more and more, that all business to be truly and permanently successful must be conducted on Christian principles; that strict morality in business pursuits, other things being equal, is the sure stepping stone to final and abiding success. But the business of operating a theater can not be conducted on Christian principles.

Is the proof of this sweeping assertion called for? Then we submit as the proof of this assertion the fact that the theater is not conducted on Christian principles. If it is replied, “That is only assertion, not proof,” then we ask you to consider the character of the plays which are put upon the stage, in nine cases out of ten and in all the theaters of the country, as proof of the assertion that the theater is not conducted on Christian principles. It is a well known fact that a strictly moral play (to say nothing of the character of the performers), is very seldom taken by the management of the theater. *Query:* Are the other sort taken because they are preferred, or because they are more profitable, which? If the management of the theater puts immoral plays upon the stage because it prefers such, the management is not upon Christian principles. And if the management

places such plays upon the stage, knowing them to be such—as it assuredly does know the character of what it selects—even at the demands of its patrons, as it is alleged and as we believe, it is still not conducted upon Christian principles. You may take whichever end of the dilemma you prefer; in either case the management is immoral.

But the question here raised turns upon fact, not logic; therefore we inquire as to the moral character of the generality of plays which are advantageous from a business standpoint for managers to engage. Dr. Herrick Johnson, a few years ago, made a merciless analysis of the plays put upon the boards of the confessedly cleanest theater of the city of Chicago, and shows, from the testimony of the newspaper reporters of the stage, that the great mass of the plays there presented were of “the foulness of filth.” Probably no one who has had even a moderate acquaintance with the stage, would deny that the vast majority of the plays acted in the theaters are debasing and demoralizing. It is found to be exceedingly difficult to make even pure drama, with the highest talent for the leading parts, successful financially without dragging in elements offensive to chaste and refined sentiment.

It is a startling comment—startling and lamentable because it is known to be true—that there is not a theater in the United States to-day which is sustained, or which can be sustained, and made profitable to the management thereof by pure drama, or by morally unobjectionable productions alone. Even Shakspeare’s

matchless plays fall flat as financial ventures, except when an actor of world-wide reputation has been the attraction which has carried these plays into deserved but only moderate success for the management, and that too for only brief engagements, and in centers of intellectual and artistic tone.

The Century Magazine, after calling attention to the fact that "managerial ignorance, vulgarity, and greed are more largely responsible for current theatrical evils than all other causes put together," continues: "It will be understood, of course, that this arraignment does not apply to the four or five managers in the United States (there are no more of them) who live up to a creditable standard of literary and dramatic excellence, but to the illiterate and only partly civilized speculators who, by their commercial enterprise, audacity, and astuteness,—admirable qualities in their way,—have secured control of nearly all the theaters, and conduct them upon the principles which in better days were confined to the music-hall and the circus. * * * The nature of the entertainment is to them a matter of the most profound indifference. They are ready to deal in theatrical goods of any description, from a Shakspearean revival to the lowest type of melodrama, from the Passion Play to the coarsest of French farces or the most idiotic variety-shows, if only somebody has made money out of them somewhere else." (August, 1895.) That is just it.

Dr. J. M. Buckley's personal examination of no less than sixty different plays of the best theaters of New York city during three seasons shows that at least fifty

of these plays are to be condemned as actually immoral, while the balance, with three or four exceptions, were of a low order of merit. Professor H. M. Scott, writing of the moral condition of Germany a few years ago, says: "The favorite dramas of Germany now come from France, and 99 per cent. of them hinge upon matrimonial infidelity. One vile play called 'Paris Life' has been given some years over 300 times in Berlin." (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 42, p. 71.) And some of the cities of our own land have almost out-Parised Paris itself in disgraceful plays, as they have out-Londoned London in the matter of the degrading "Living Pictures" exhibitions. The introduction of immoral plays and their accompaniments has accelerated the fast youth of this country in a whirlwind of immorality which is truly appalling. Our American cities are little if any behind London, Paris, Berlin, and other European cities which have long borne a reputation for lewdness and immorality they justly deserve. The main reason for this state of things is that theatrical filth is profitable to the play speculators and mongers of pleasure.

But even granting that the immoralities which find recognition in the theater are in answer to the demands of the public and in harmony with the economic law of supply and demand, as it is held, this concession by no means saves the management of the theater from the charge of conducting an enterprise without regard to Christian principles. In the management of the theater the motive of money-getting leads to the adoption of any means the laws will tolerate adapted to that end. The

motive of money-getting has impelled the management of many theaters to put upon the boards the outrageously disgraceful "Living Pictures," which have recently met with such universal condemnation by even the secular press. And yet, from a financial point of view, these infamous exhibitions of the all-but-nude female form before an audience composed exclusively of men and boys, redolent with fumes of tobacco and drink, and with a flow of vile epithets from the gallery—from a financial point of view, such exhibitions are justified upon the double ground of managerial success and the "demand of the public" to which the theater must cater. And what stamps the management of the theater as generally immoral, and utterly wanting in the moral sense, is the fact that the succeeding attraction, to be given in the same place and with the same appointments, may be the "strictly moral" performance, or the high-toned opera.

Another fact marks the generally immoral character of the theater's management, and that is the reciprocal relation which this institution is known to sustain to the drinking evil and to the vice of licentiousness. The theater is commonly flanked on either side with liquor saloons, the windows of which are freely utilized for billboards, pernicious pictures, and theatrical announcements, on the score of reciprocal patronage; tickets are gladly supplied to attendants at the theater to pass out to a saloon, provided there be no bar on the premises, in the intervals between the acts of the play. It is known, too, that brothels and gambling places are within easy

reach of the theater, and in some instances, as with lower grade theaters, they are operated as a kind of "annex" to the show business, just as the sale of intoxicating liquor is. Recognizing all these facts, can it be argued for a moment that the theater is or can be conducted on Christian principles?

(2) *The performers* of the theater.

The performers are those engaged in making theatrical exhibitions or presentations of any kind or grade upon the stage. What may be said of the business of the actor in relation to Christian ethics?

This much at least is certain, that, if the management of the theater is in general what we have indicated,—if it is a business conducted without supreme regard for Christian principles—the avocation or occupation of the actor is one of extreme peril in a moral point of view, for the actor is subjected to even greater exposure in his moral nature than is the proprietor of the theater. The theater being as it is, it cannot be otherwise.

In the first place, the life of an actor is a fictitious one, being made up of the personation of other characters, often gross and immoral, even diabolical. It is a subtle law which governs in all histrionic art that one must have sympathy for the role he plays or the character he paints in his acting; hence the danger of personating evil characters. The damaging results of impersonating evil or base characters has been pointed out from the early Grecian times. It was condemned by Plato in the severest terms. He said:

"When any one of these clever multiform gentlemen;

who can imitate anything, comes to our State, and proposes to exhibit himself and his poetry, we will fall down and worship him as a sweet and holy and wonderful being; but we must also inform him that there is no place for such as he is in our State—the law will not allow them.” (Jowett’s Plato, vol. 2, p. 221.)

Familiarity with the immoral sentiments an actor is often obliged to express in the plays that are written, the positions and acts he is called upon in his role to represent which would be considered “compromising” and would be condemned anywhere off the stage,—unless in the ball-room—and the intimacies essential to the play which are exhibited on the stage by men and women,—these can not possibly take place without moral contamination. Nothing short of a miracle could prevent it.

More than this, the same motive as that which governs in the management of the theater, money-getting, with the added and piquant one of applause and notoriety, operates in multitudes of cases in leading to the abandonment of all moral consideration when the occupation of an actor is chosen as a pursuit in life. In fact, this is the common rule, the exceptions to which do not destroy its force and significance.

There have been and are men and women who have adopted the stage as an avocation and have remained pure and upright despite the prevalence of evil about them, but they are so exceptional in point of number as to make scarcely any impression in modifying the estimate of the theater’s generally immoral character. The words of Dr. Haydn are confirmed by an induction from

the whole history of the theater: "Take the centuries together, how few, comparatively, are the names and the works associated with dramatic art which the sober verdict of history will consent to hold in honor. Of by far the greater part, judged in the light of their own time, there is little to save them from utter reprobation." It is a matter of common notoriety that many of the actors and actresses—some of them known on both sides of the Atlantic—are utterly dissolute in morals.

The fact is that moral character is not a condition of admission to the theater—in proprietor, performer, or patron. There is no avocation, considered reputable, open to the young to-day where moral character counts for so little as that of the stage. Even glaring immoralities of life and conduct are little if any barrier to admission to the stage. We are not wanting in instances in which vice has come to be at a premium on the stage. We indorse the opinion of Dr. T. L. Cuyler: "I do not affirm that every popular play is immoral, and that every attendant is on a scent for sensualities. But the theater is a concrete institution, it must be judged in the gross, and to a tremendous extent it is only a gilded nastiness. It unsexes womanhood by putting her publicly in male attire—too often in almost no attire."

The retort is sometimes made that there are impure men in the pulpit, and always have been. Alas, it is true; but let the impropriety of the minister be made known, and how quickly his fate is sealed! About the only resort for him, in his disgrace, is the stage. That is never closed against one on the ground of immorality.

(3) The *patrons* of the theater.

If, as it is alleged, the stage but reflects the public demand, the patronage of the theater is, even more than its management and its performers, a witness to its generally immoral character. The patronage is a kind of "commonalty," or "third estate" of the theatrical dominion, and this "third estate" helps to determine the character of the dominion.

The theater is a great leveler; but it levels down, not up; so that it is the descent, not the rise of the "third estate." The theater throws the virtuous and the pure-minded into a common association with the vilest characters of a community, and provides the same fare for all. The distinction as to position in the house, or as to cost of seat, does not neutralize or nullify the bad effects of immoral contagion, of impure sentiments and gross speech, and of pernicious exhibitions, which together make the theater the teacher of vice. The plots of the stage, in the great majority of instances, consist of assassinations, illicit loves and intrigues, domestic discontent, libertinism and divorce, and insanity and drunkenness ending in suicide or murder, all of which are gilded with an unreality that tends to inflame and incite to kindred passions. We must agree with the estimate of Dr. Herrick Johnson, that "corrupt tastes are formed at the theater—false views of life are inculcated, false standards of honor"; and that "what can not be done without a tendency to moral harm can not be seen without a tendency to moral harm." "The evil of a vicious suggestion," says Dr. Haydn, "does not depart

when the bell rings down the curtain." On the contrary, it then often begins to operate as the incentive to a vicious consummation.

"How do you explain it," asks *The Watchman*, "that some men will consent to their daughters' hearing in theater things for which they would think themselves justified in shooting a man who should say them in their daughters' presence in any other place?" Are these things less harmful to their daughters' character because they are spoken to a crowd?

All that is said in justification of the theater about its being "true to nature," and its "holding the mirror up to nature," is merest twaddle and nonsense; for everybody knows that the theater is not true to nature and never has been, and that it oftener holds the mirror up to vice which it does but reflect, perpetuate and augment. The theater is a great de-naturalizing power; it paints both virtue and vice in distorted colors and in exaggerated proportions. The estimate of *The New York Press* is worthy of candid consideration:

"There is entirely too much nastiness and immorality in real life to make it desirable to reproduce them upon the stage. The stage was meant to portray human nature in its better moods, for if the better mood is not the fitly surviving mood then human nature perishes into brute nature. The drama of the hour is artificial; it panders to the passions, to nervous greed for excitement, to eroticism. Instead of teaching a moral, it mocks our tested notions of morality. Instead of teaching humanity that good is preferable to evil, it makes light of virtue

and places vice in an alluring light of epigrammatic raillery. And yet, no one is to blame for such a state of affairs but the public." (*Public Opinion*, vol. 18, pp. 479, 480.)

Of the quality of the teaching which the theater gives concerning life, Henry Ward Beecher gives this estimate: "There is scarcely an evil incident to human life, which may not be fully learned at the Theater. * * * There one learns how pleasant a thing is vice; amours are consecrated; license 'is prospered; and the young come away alive to the glorious liberty of conquest and lust." (*Lectures to Young Men.*)

The cost, too, or the money expended in the patronage of the theater, claims at least a passing notice while considering the "third estate" of the theatrical dominion. In the single city of New York \$7,000,000 were spent annually on public amusements, the churches of that city costing \$3,000,000. More recent statistics, procured by *The New York Times*, make the expenditures for the churches and the theaters nearly equal—about \$6,500,000 each, annually.

Now, it is undeniable that a proportion of the theater's patronage is professedly Christian; it is so claimed by theatrical managers; and not an insignificant proportion. Says Dr. Haydn, "Just so far as the Church of Christ links its influence to swell the receipts of costly and dissipating amusements, she squanders the Lord's money and fails to realize what stewardship means." And, after referring to the receipts of operatic and theatrical companies and of various theaters in leading

cities, he continues, "In other cities of the second or third class in size, it is no uncommon thing for a week of opera or tragedy to draw from the purses of members of the church sums that would be thought astonishingly liberal if given by these same persons to help redeem Africa's lost millions and lift a continent up nearer to God; and this in the last quarter of a century of missions such as the world never saw before." (Amusements, etc., pp. 52, 53.) Yes, and this, we may say, in the half-decade preceding the Twentieth century, at a time in which all the missionary societies, of all the denominations, are prevented from entering wide-open doors, and, in many instances, are even compelled to shut doors of opportunity for the extension of the Kingdom of God from the lack of funds, which, if not expended upon an institution that is worldly and immoral, would send the Gospel of the Son of God bounding on its way to the earth's remotest climes.

But great as is the cost of theater-going, and misapplied as we regard the money devoted to this pleasure, we have no right to say one word—from the standpoint from which we are viewing this subject—except to those who have solemnly and voluntarily promised and covenanted with one another and with God at the altar of their consecration to Him, to hold subject to His will all they possess. This is the obligation expressed or involved in the covenant of every Christian church. The Church of Christ is not praying the prayer her divine Lord taught, "Thy kingdom come!" she is not responding to the fervent hope of the early disciples, "Even so,

Lord Jesus, come quickly!" so long as she has thousands to expend in the pursuits of selfish pleasure and only hundreds to hasten the universal dominion of the truth as it is in Jesus.

This inquiry into the character of the theater—its management, its performers, and its patronage—convinces us that it is, as it exists to-day, essentially immoral, and that it is an enterprise which is not, and (as at present organized) cannot be conducted on Christian principles.

II.—The attitude of the Christian moralist toward the theater.

There are four different attitudes of mind and heart which may be taken by the Christian moralist, or by the Christian and the moralist, toward the theater as an institution of the social world. Each of these general attitudes has its advocates and defenders.

1. There are not wanting those who argue for the theater, as it is, and while recognizing its perniciousness.

Who are they? Managers; actors and actresses; newspapers, which receive large financial returns for advertising; many of the theater's patrons, among whom are professing Christians; and the representatives of the associated evils, the dram-shop and the brothel.

"Oh, but there are many church people who argue that the theater is all right."

So there are; and they are the same ones, as a rule, who hold that the liquor saloon, the dance-house, and the card-table are "all right." "That is," they go on to

explain, "these institutions are evils—or some of them exert an evil influence—but they are to be regarded as necessary evils; they are evils which have always existed, and which always will exist; they are to be deplored, indeed, but it is useless to undertake to suppress them." They say, furthermore: "A certain amount of exposure is essential to the development of character; in reality, there is no such thing as probity without opportunity to do evil, without temptation; the character of that person who has never been exposed to the maelstrom of temptation is of the 'hot-house' variety." Their advice is, "Let the theater, the saloon, the gambling-hell, the brothel, alone; they are provisions for the development of character, and some of them in answer to a demand of human nature; and they will exist when self-appointed censors and religious bigots and fanatics have passed away and been forgotten."

We have nothing to say in answer. We fear nothing can be said that can stand against a defence of the theater and kindred evils of this columbiad caliber. The wisdom of the Lord Almighty, in His legislation of four thousand years, is ignorance itself as compared with this logic.

2. Others say that the thing to do with the theater is to reform it.

According to this view, it is conceded that the theater is not what it has been, nor what it is wished it were, and hence that its reformation is desirable. There are many friends of the theater who are compelled to recognize its generally pernicious character and degrading influence, and who argue that it ought to be reformed. They do

not altogether agree as to who should undertake the task of reforming the theater, or whether the reform should come from without or within this institution. They are agreed only in this, that reform is greatly needed, although they can see no signs of its coming. At a meeting, composed of patrons, actors, and professional critics, recently held in Boston to consider the state of the theater, the audience agreed, according to one of the most experienced and able dramatic critics who reported the meeting, "that wherever the English language is spoken to-day the theater, on the whole, is in a mean condition." And the chairman of the meeting declared: "Our people are tired to death of plays, even of a high literary excellence, with plots that turn on a sickening and degraded past that brings the hospital and the charnal house into the sanctities of our homes, and of that noisy horse-play that confounds vulgarity with wit and distortions of face with artistic expression."

Some, like *The Century Magazine*, recognizing and protesting against the degenerate stage, which exerts a corrupting influence upon society, would hold that the theatrical management, being mostly to blame for the present decadence of the theater, should set about for its elevation. It says: "Nobody with any knowledge of the facts will deny that the American theater, considered merely as a rational means of entertainment, without reference to its relations to literature and art, is in a most forlorn and debased condition"; and concludes, "The real reformation of the theater must begin at the top, with the managers." (August, 1895.)

Others, holding still that the theater is corrupt, take the view that play-writers and actors may assist in the needed reform. A prominent actor of this country is reported as having said, recently: "In all my experience of the stage I have never known the taste for such nastiness to last as long as it has this time, and it seems to me there is no way out of the situation except through coöperation on the part of actors, and a steadfast refusal on their part to speak such lines or play in pieces of such immoral tendencies as most of the plays popular for the past season or two."

And others seem to hold that it is the obligation of the general public to work the reform—from the outside. But it is to be remembered that reforms do not come from the outside.

The history of all previous attempts to reform the theater do not offer much encouragement that present desires in this direction will have any practical realization. The church of the Middle Ages tried to reform the theater when it sanctioned and established the "moral" and "mystery" plays, but it failed, and itself suffered degradation instead. Hannah More tried to reform the theater; she wrote plays, as she says, "in the delusive and groundless hope that the stage, under certain regulations, might be converted into a school of virtue." Later in life she confessed, to her utter disappointment, and came to consider comedy wholly indefensible, and tragedy as producing impressions "irreconcilable with Christian temper." David Garrick and Mr. W. C. McCready tried to reform the theater, and failed.

Edwin Booth in New York, and Henry Irving in London, in the metropolises of the Old and the New Worlds, tried to reform the theater; but with all their brilliant powers and commanding influence their attempts met the same results as those which followed the attempts of all who preceded them; they failed. And if they failed, it is hardly worth while to hope for the reform of the theater, much as it is in need of reform.

3. There are still others who, recognizing the power and the influence of the theater, and desiring that that power and influence should conserve the public good, suggest that latest and more philosophical method, viz.: *discrimination*.

The argument briefly is this: "Let the moral and religious classes of the community give the theater their patronage whenever, and only whenever, it furnishes what is moral and refined; thus it will soon become to the interest of proprietors to furnish nothing else, as these classes would then supply the largest share of the theater's support." It is held, furthermore, that "for good people to refuse to attend the theater, no matter how unexceptionable the entertainment, they thereby render it to the interest of the theater to pander to the tastes of the evil and the vulgar, who, in that event, constitute its patrons." In other words, it is an argument for discrimination in the attitude that should be taken toward the theater.

This is a very plausible position to take. It is no doubt philosophical. There is just one supreme and insuperable obstacle in the way of its Christian and

moral endorsement—it begins at the wrong end. It asks the support of the Christian public to enable the managing Hercules to clean out the Augean stables and make them fit for the coming of the moral and religious classes. Moreover, this is a task the management of the theater will not be likely to undertake so long as they continue to have the patronage of the moral and religious and the immoral classes alike, and indiscriminately. The theater, as it is, and becoming constantly more and more degraded, enjoys already and increasingly (say the managers) the patronage of Christian people, and yet this increasing Christian patronage has had no influence whatever in lifting the moral tone of the theater or in withstanding its precipitation toward deeper and grosser immorality.

It is further argued for this principle of discrimination: “Suppose the management of the theater, in direct recognition of Christian and moral sentiment, puts a clean and commendable play on the stage one night in ten, even; why should not the moral and religious classes patronize that one night’s performance, while they abstain from the other nine?”

There are two or three difficulties in the way of such a discrimination.

One is the great difficulty of finding out, beforehand, what the clean and wholesome plays are. The standard of judgment among people in general, and among managers in particular, differs very greatly in respect to what is clean and wholesome, as any one who has had much to do with lecture and entertainment bureaus has learned.

sometimes to his mortification and regret. The public is asked to accept the estimate of interested parties in determining the question of cleanness and wholesomeness. More than this, there is always abundant opportunity of foisting into the most moral play certain corrupting and immoral elements for the sake of yielding unto and augmenting a vitiated and debasing taste. This may be done in even "sacred dramas" and high-toned operas.

Another difficulty is suggested in the fact that moral and religious classes are asked for one night in ten to sustain an institution which, according to the principle of discrimination, is confessedly conducted the other nine nights out of ten without regard for moral and Christian convictions. The money obtained from the one night goes into the same till as that from the other nine nights. In other words, the money paid in by the moral and religious patrons goes to sustain an institution which, according to the argument, is operated nine-tenths of the time without a regard for Christian principle. The enlightened Christian conscience can never agree to any such use of the money held subject to the will of Christ.

There is still another difficulty in the way of any such discrimination; it is the fact that Christian people have a prior engagement. They are already committed, in their relation to their Master, to the tremendous responsibility of the world's conversion from sin and with the obligation to sustain, in large measure, the educational, benevolent, philanthropic, humane, and religious forces and institutions which are represented in the Christian

church, and they can never be prevailed upon to turn aside from the greater, more needful, and prior obligation in such numbers, and to devote the money in such quantity as will ever make it at all likely that managers of the theater will find it profitable on a financial ground—the only ground upon which the theater is conducted—to yield to Christian sentiment, and by this means elevate the theater to a place of commanding influence. The Christian public may answer this latest and more philosophical appeal of a degraded and degrading institution in the words of Nehemiah, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down”; and may ask with him, “Why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” To leave the divinely commissioned work of the world’s reclamation, in order to assist in lifting up an institution whose whole history has been corrupting and demoralizing, and which is conducted on principles offensive to Christian teaching, to a place which it never in reality occupied, and merely to put money in the pockets of its proprietors, assuredly this would be a tremendous “coming down.”

SELF-DENIAL.

4. The alternative is open to every Christian and moralist to practise self-denial toward the theater so long as this institution is as it is and what it is—and forever, for that matter.

Mark you, we do not undertake to say what any Christian’s duty is with regard to theater-going. It is

in the power of no human being to tell what another's duty is. The most that can be done—all that we have been seeking to do—is to indicate the great principles which must settle the question in this whole complicated problem of amusements. What may be lawful and right for one may be absolutely wrong for another. This matter of what is lawful and right can not be determined by rule. Circumstances, individual character, educational environment, influence of conduct on others and even on posterity—all these have to be taken into account, in determining the matter of individual duty. But on the other hand, we declare, in the words of the vicar of All Saints', Tufnell Park, in a recent sermon:

“Anything that gives you low motives, low aims, low desires; anything that creates lust, that arouses passion, that suggests impurity, that makes you morally weak, that dissipates your energies, or makes you a fornicator like Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright—that for you is absolutely and everlastingly wrong.”

This much is firm ground, that the ethics of the New Testament make it the Christian's sublime privilege, and in certain exigencies—exigencies which he alone can determine certainly—his duty, to exercise the grace of self-denial of that which to him, viewed apart from other persons, is perfectly lawful and right. Hence we say that it is the Christian's privilege to exercise self-denial. And there are certain considerations which favor self-denial as a fixed principle of the Christian character.

(1) Such a principle, applied to the theater, will afflict no irreparable loss upon him who adopts it.

All intellectual and esthetic advantage which the theater is supposed to stand for is more than offset by the immoral contamination which the theater communicates, and to which many prominent actors bear emphatic testimony.

Said Mendelssohn, of a certain lewd operatic performance: "Yes, all this produces an effect; but I have no music for such things. I consider it ignoble. Therefore, if the present epoch exalts this style, I will write oratorios."

M. Dumas, the younger, wrote plays for the theater. Writing to a friend, he said: "You do not take your daughter to see my play. You are right. Let me say, once for all, that you must not take your daughter to the theater. It is not merely the work that is immoral, it is the place."

Macready left this testimony: "None of my children shall ever, with my consent, or on any pretence, enter a theater, or have any visiting connection with actors or actresses."

Mary Anderson (Mrs. de Navarro), as reported in an interview in which she acknowledged her distaste for the theater, said that she never advises girls to go on the stage, and was glad that twenty or thirty stage-struck girls whom she has known have wisely given up their dreams, after having the whole story of a dramatic artiste's life laid bare before them by her.

Edwin Booth said: "I never permit my wife and daughter to witness a play without previously ascertaining its character."

Mr. Sothorn once said, in a newspaper article over his own name: "In these times entertainments in theaters are so indiscriminate, even in our most reputable play-houses, that I have known some of our best performers who have found it necessary to first attend and see a performance before they would allow their wives and daughters to go. Why was this necessary? Why, because they knew there was very little of cleanness in those places; and who better than they should know?"

From this testimony it follows that he who denies himself the supposed advantages of the theater has not inflicted upon himself any tremendous loss.

(2) Such a principle, applied to the theater, will save a person from acquaintance and contact with one of the least essential institutions of the social and intellectual life of mankind.

The theater is not a requisite to the interpretation and enjoyment of dramatic literature; and the stage, with its entrappings and its tinsel, is not an essential to the artistic rendition of poetic composition—be it cantata, opera, or oratorio. From a purely artistic standpoint, staging, and costuming, and scenic properties are often an inherent acknowledgment of intrinsic weakness. The oratorios are so far superior to the operas that in the oratorio the externalism of the stage may be dispensed with without serious loss.

The theater is, indeed a great leveler; but it levels down, not up; while the great need of human society, to-day, as at all times, is an institution or a power, dynamical in its operation, that will level up, help up,

lift up. This the theater has never done, and does not do. Profanity, ribaldry, coarseness, and impiety, wherever found—and these are found in corrupting and disgraceful frequency in the theater—have no elevating capacity.

(3) The principle of self-denial will prompt the Christian to withhold his patronage and sanction from an institution which is essentially anti-church and irreligious.

The Christian, if ever inclined to cross the threshold of the theater for the purpose of amusement, may well pause and ask himself if his money and influence shall be devoted to help sustain an institution which often profanes the name of God by its blatant irreverence and its brazen ridicule of objects and interests most dear to his heart; countenance an agency which exerts a tremendous power in breaking down a regard for the Christian Sabbath and in withstanding the message of the gospel; and assist in the support of a place which has little or no respect for the Ten Laws of Sinai or the Sermon of the Mount; and which “has been to hundreds upon hundreds the outer circle of a maelstrom, sucking in and down to perdition.”

(4) This principle of self-denial is the ripest and the divinest attainment of the Christian character; and he who comes under the dominion of this principle and law has, in so far as it controls his life, asserted his victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The believer is enjoined: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the

world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The theater answers to this description of what is "of the world"; for the theater, in its whole management, setting, patronage, and influence, throughout the ages, and above all other institutions, has ministered to "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

A disregard for this principle of self-denial—a yielding to the allurements of the theater—exerts, in so far as it has dominion over the heart and mind, a deadening influence upon the spiritual life. In order to be convinced that this is so, it is only required that we ask: What has been the influence and bearing upon the religious life of even infrequent or occasional attendance at the theater? Has it been helpful or otherwise? Has it strengthened the desire and purpose to "rescue the perishing"? As a Christian parent, has it given you an added power for good over and among your household? As a Sunday-school teacher, has it given you a deeper incentive, and shown you better how to reach that wayward member of your class? As a Christian, old or young, has it brought you into closer communion with Him who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," and did you realize His approving presence with you?

But lest we should be accused of drawing sweeping conclusions from limited data, let us appeal to the general influence of the theater upon the spiritual life, as that

influence has been observed in the churches of the country. Rev. James Brand, D. D., has supplied valuable data as to the kind of force the theater exerts upon the general religious character and life. Dr. Brand sent out over eighty letters to prominent pastors of Congregational churches in the leading cities of the country, and asked their judgment as to the effects of theater-going upon the Christian life and usefulness therein. He received between fifty and sixty replies.

In six or eight of these replies the writers take a negative position as to occasional theater-going by Christians; yet these say it is the exception and not the rule where theater-goers are active and spiritually minded.

Two writers approve of the occasional attendance of Christians at the theater.

"All the rest," says Dr. Brand, "believe in the expediency of absolute *total abstinence* for all good people as the theater now is. And every man from whom I have heard, thinks that *habitual* or *indiscriminate* theater-going is a curse."

We will take the space to quote from but two of the many replies given in Dr. Brand's book.

Dr. Henry A. Stimson, pastor of *The Broadway Tabernacle*, New York, says: "My conviction is that it is utterly destructive of spiritual life. The theater, if one may judge it by the sign-boards, is just now in the lowest stage of fleshliness and degradation."

Dr. E. P. Goodwin, of *The First Congregational Church*, Chicago, gives this answer: "The effect of the-

ater-going is unquestionably bad. I believe that invariably it chills and hurts all Christian life. If anything may be called *worldly*, saturated through and through with a spirit that antagonizes the Spirit of Christ and His gospel, it is the theater. * * * After twenty or more years of pretty close observance of their influence, I do not hesitate to say that it seems to me an impossibility to maintain a high Christian standard of either belief or life, and to develop a rounded, rich and potential Christian character, and at the same time to be a habitual or occasional attendant upon theaters. They are of the earth, earthy, and they who are seeking to lead a risen, heavenly life cannot come in contact with them without suffering defilement."

One other instance, and from another religious denomination, and we conclude this discussion. It is the case of a truly marvelous growth in *The Tabernacle Presbyterian Church* of Pittsburgh, Pa. This church, organized Feb. 21, 1894, in less than one year attained to a membership of more than 425 souls. It presents an almost or quite unparalleled increase, and gives evidence, in its marvelous growth, of exceptional spiritual activity. The pastor, Rev. DeWitt M. Benham, was inquired of concerning the place given to "popular amusements," if any at all, in and among the membership of that Christian institution. His answer is:

"Our congregation is not composed of card-playing, dancing, theater-going people. There may be individual instances, but they are certainly few. * * * From my experience as a pastor, I find that these things

hinder the work of the ministry and the perfect development of Christian character. The excitement of the ball-room, the card-table, and the theater, is not conducive to the promotion of earnest work for Christ." We venture the assertion that this is the experience of nine-tenths of the pastors of evangelical churches in this country.

It is an induction which a careful study of spiritual symptoms in the churches of the different denominations will show, that, introduce the elements of the dance, the card-table, and the theater—one, or all, or any—and from that moment you introduce and have to deal with an element which, in proportion as it is indulged in or gains power, is destructive of the spiritual life and becomes disastrous to vital evangelical Christianity. It is this fact and not prejudice against all or any real and true pleasure—this fact and not a mere zeal for fanatical notions—which is the ground of our deep and fervent convictions upon this whole complicated problem of popular amusements.

V.

PRINCIPLES AND TESTS OF LEGITIMATE PLEASURES.

It was conceded at the beginning of these discussions that if existing forms of amusement are to be excluded from the catalogue of legitimate pleasures, other forms of amusement, not open to the same, or equal, or greater objections, should be provided or designated. We were careful to say *desirable*, and not to say *necessary*. We do not admit an obligation; we merely recognize a desideratum.

It is sometimes assumed, however, that if the church would throw disfavor upon these or any forms of amusement, it thereby involves itself in the obligation to supply substitutes for whatever it interdicts. There would be ground for this assumption if the amusements arraigned were of a character to be described as "innocent," or "harmless," or if they were interdicted without cause; but if, instead, they are—as they now exist—morally harmful, in fact and in influence, and if they are interdicted for this cause, then the church is relieved from all obligation to provide substitutes. If they are—as they exist to-day—essentially evil, then there is only one course open to the Christian church, and that is to antagonize and throw disfavor upon them.

The church of Christ can never sanction or make a truce with evil; nor can it meet the approbation of its risen Lord by a mere passive attitude toward existing evils. The church is bound, in the nature of its mission, to protest against the forces which stand in the path of its progress. The church is the eternal and unchanging antagonist of every form of evil, if true to its divine mission.

It was the recognition of this relation to existing or to enthroned evil that prompted our Lord to say, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." In these words He states a universal principle—the truth's antagonism to all evil—rather than a specific or concrete fact. The fact that an evil cannot be easily or immediately abolished, or cannot be abolished at all, is no reason for not antagonizing it, no argument for its continued and perpetual toleration. It is too much, therefore, to ask of the church that it replace or provide an equivalent or substitute for that which it is bound to antagonize, and which, if it were not to antagonize—but always with the means or weapons which the Master has enjoined—would break its trust with the risen Lord. We claim the divine right to antagonize any and all forms of evil; it is more than a right, it is an obligation to do so. We quote a sentence from Mr. Beecher's lecture on Popular Amusement:

"Every parent has a right—every citizen and every minister has the same right—to expose traps, which men have to set them; the same right to prevent mischief,

which men have to plot it; the same right to attack vice, which vice has to attack virtue; a better right to save our sons and brothers, and companions, than artful men have to destroy them."

But while we emphatically repudiate an obligation to provide a substitute for interdicted evils, we do recognize and concede it to be desirable that other forms of amusement—if there are such—against which no objection can reasonably be urged on moral or religious grounds, should be indicated.

Ministers are continually being asked, "Where are the young to go, or what are they to do by way of recreation if the dance, the card-table, and the theater are interdicted? What amusement is left us, if these are given up?"

All that we have said thus far in these discussions, has been said in issue with that conception of the pleasures of life which would limit or circumscribe the field of amusement to a half-dozen specific forms, or, in reality, to three or four forms of pleasure—the dance, the card-table, the theater, and billiards—mainly to the three forms we have discussed.

Before proceeding to the consideration of the present topic we wish to call attention to the astounding assumption which is contained in the question just referred to. The assumption that the dance, the card-table, and the theater, constitute the Alpha and the Omega of pleasures for polite society, is almost too glaring to be believed, were we not everywhere in society confronted with its evidences. For people are everywhere heard exclaim-

ing, as if in horror, when any hint or question concerning the moral propriety or legitimacy of these forms of amusement arises: "If these amusements are denied us, what can we do? If these pleasures are surrendered, what is there left for us?" How many people—and among them Christian people—feel that the interdiction of these amusements leaves them as orphaned children in a world of dull monotony and sober uniformity, and that their condition is like that of exiled Israel at Babylon, and who murmur, in anticipation,—“All our pleasant things are laid waste!”

Listen to this sordid, slavish plea for selfish pleasure: “Must I give up the intoxicating cup? What then shall I drink?” asks the inebriate. Surely, what! “Must I abandon my sumptuous suppers? What then shall I eat?” asks the dyspeptic epicure. Surely, what! “And if I may not attend balls, play progressive euchre, and patronize the immoral theater, what can I do?” asks the worldly Christian. To be sure, what! The assumption set forth in the plea for these specific amusements ought to incline those who make it to hang their heads in very disgust for themselves, as if the realm of pleasure were circumscribed to such narrow bounds.

Virtually, this plea proclaims that all God's vast, unbounded universe is a barren, dead Sahara, with here and there and yonder just three little oases, where one may rest and refresh himself, and all besides is a desert waste! Instead, God's universe is one vast, rich pasture-land, with sparkling lakes and gushing fountains, with flowing streams and fertile valleys, with smiling mead-

ows and shady groves, with waving fields and fruited orchards, where the flock of God—His children—may rove and feast and fatten, and where they may roam at will and lie down in safety, fullness and contentment.

Is it asked, "What is left for us if we surrender these favored pleasures?" Why, there is very much in this world that is pleasureable besides these. There are more than three "salt licks" for the human species. "What is left us?" Physically, the whole field of varied and healthful amusement is left to us. Socially, the whole realm of intellectual and beneficial recreation is left to us. And morally, the whole province of pure and elevating enjoyment is left to us, even after surrendering these against which the issue has been taken, and which are admitted to be "questionable." In reality there is little occasion to preach "self-denial" in connection with this theme, but self-enrichment, rather. We are not disinherited by the surrender of these forms of amusement, rather it is made possible for us to enter upon our real and true heirship thereby.

The best of all literature, science, and art remains for us. The whole realm of music is ours. To us belong the inspiring hymns, the tender melodies, and the sublime choruses. The Elijahs, the Messiahs, the Creations are ours. The all but infinite range of instrumental harmonies is ours. There is left for our enjoyment, after we have surrendered cards, enough of in-door and table games, such as backgammon, checkers, chess, etc., to at least furnish healthful diversion in the home and among children. For the social life of the community, there are

readings, conversazioni, lectures, concerts, character delineations, dramatic interpretations, and a variety of receptions—dinners, teas, suppers—all these open up almost unlimited possibilities for the social life of the community. Besides all these specific opportunities for elevating enjoyment, there is that coöperation which the Christian church, as an institution set in the world "as a city on an hill," is bound to supply in lifting up human society to a higher plane and to a diviner ideal. We are not half alert to utilize for the public good the advantages of travel, special study, and the varied talents with which almost any community is endowed. All special endowments and opportunities could and ought to be made to serve the social life of the community.

Within the realm of out-door sports, more than making good the benefits of physical exercise claimed for the dance, and under better auspices than the dance supplies, there are woodland rambles, tennis tournaments, bicycle and horseback riding, driving, croquet, skating, rowing and yachting, all now happily open alike to both sexes, and the different games of ball which, notwithstanding present tendencies toward betting and brutality, it is possible to keep within the bounds of rational sport and the moral law.

There are surely enough diversions to meet all demands of our natures for amusement without our having to avail of those which are at least of "questionable" propriety, and which, with remarkable unanimity have met with disapprobation from the Christian world, at all times. And to say that intelligences having a

divine paternity, endowed with an esthetic and moral capacity to recognize truth and beauty everywhere, and that such beings, having their abode in a world of wondrous attraction—of mountain, woodland, valleys, rivers, lakes, surrounding ocean, and domed heavens—and having the events—social, political, educational, moral and religious—of every day brought to their breakfast table the following morning—to say that beings possessed of such resources, of whom articulate speech is a distinguishing and characterizing faculty, cannot possibly get on for an hour or an evening in association together without cards, or dancing, or something spectacular, is more than an astounding assumption; it is a slander upon human intelligence and an insult to the divine maker. “Great God in heaven—and is it for this that Thou didst make man in Thine own image; for this that Thou didst endow him with wisdom, insight, knowledge, skill? Has Thy purpose in woman been fulfilled in these low aims? Is there nothing higher for man than to be a constant digester of rich food; nothing nobler for woman than to be a walking illustration of the latest fashion? In a world full of activities, full of intricate economies, throbbing with interests that reach out to every hand capable of work, and to every mind capable of thought, who dares fritter away life in a whirl of sportive pleasure?” (Religion in Common Life, p. 155.) “Few of us, indeed,” says Sir John Lubbock, “realize the wondrous privilege of living; the blessings we inherit, the glories and beauties of the universe, which is our own if we choose to have it so; the extent to which

we can make ourselves what we wish to be; or the power we possess of securing peace, of triumphing over pain and sorrow." "Upon this broad earth, purified with flowers, scented with odors, brilliant in colors, vocal with echoing and re-echoing melody," says Mr. Beecher, "I take my stand against all demoralizing pleasure."

If man, as circumstanced in this wondrous world, with all the right and ennobling avenues of enjoyment open before him, is unhappy, he himself must be to blame; "for," in the words of Epictetus, "God made all men to be happy." And shall the right and ennobling avenues of true and permanent happiness be sacrificed for the fleeting pleasures of an hour? Both heart and mind answer no.

There ought not to be, to the Christian moralist, this endless controversy as to what is lawful and right in the matter of amusements and pleasures. There are certain principles and tests which will go far toward determining the whole matter.

I.—Principles which must determine legitimate amusements.

What forms of amusements are lawful and right can be determined only upon broad and fundamental principles, not by concrete and specific rules. Two great principles are available upon this mooted question.

1. There will be preserved, in all reasonable and right amusements, *a due relation between work and diversion*—between the time devoted to pleasures and that taken up in duties.

Christian ethics lay an abiding obligation to work upon every person capable of work. Christ and the apostles plainly teach that "in honest, useful work lies the fulfillment of the Divine purpose." The Decalogue, too, was just as imperative concerning labor as it was touching rest. There is, indeed, a "play side" to our natures; there is a work side, as well. We recognize the pleasure side of our nature; we must recognize the duty side as well. Diversion is a demand of our natures; but diversion must be in relation with labor. Diversion is both meaningless and baneful if pursued as a business, or an end. Dissipation is not recreation. It is often the case, however, that those who clamor most and loudest for "recreation" seldom do much else than "recreate." "There are men and women with whom amusement is the only pursuit, as though the world were a garden planted and tended by angel visitants, and as though the end of human life consisted in sucking the sweetness out of its flowers." (Rev. W. J. Hocking.) "It is more than surmised that those upon whose hands time hangs heavy for lack of regular and constant occupation, make the greatest demand upon the vendors and caterers at the stalls of amusements." (H. C. Haydn, D. D.)

Human life ought not to be all work and no diversion, all duties and no pleasures; neither should it be all diversion and no work, all pleasures and no duties. It is not always possible to preserve the due relation of work to diversion. There is in fact a great disproportion generally between pleasures and duties. It is a

grievous violation of the principle stated that some should have all work and no play, and others have all play and no work. Amusements may be sought; but to what purpose? Not as an end, but that we may be better fitted thereby for the work of life. When pleasures and amusements cease to contribute to duty, or are pursued out of all proportion to the time devoted to work, they cease to be legitimate.

The fact is that if amusements are pursued to the exhaustion of vital resources, if they are followed to the extent of absorbing the time which the work of life demands, they have passed beyond the bounds of recreation; they are then dissipations. There are amusements which send one home late at night not to lie down in restful slumber, but to rise up in the morning with bloodshot eye to pursue the nauseating path of duty. Need anybody be told that such amusements are not recreative? They do not build up, but tear down. "The object of all recreation," says Dr. Dale, "is to increase our capacity for work, to keep the blood pure, and the brain bright, and the temper kindly and sweet." There are right and wrong kinds of entertainments. There are entertainments which give a man "disgust with the drudgery of life, with tools because they are not swords, with working aprons because they are not robes, with cattle because they are not infuriated bulls of the arena." Need anybody be told that all such are wrong? The question of their form has little significance. The vital question is their effect.

The principle is founded in our deepest nature that

no worldly good, no round of pleasure, no form of amusement, can be either well secured or truly enjoyed if sought for its own sake, or as an end in itself. Pleasure, too, is far sweeter to the taste as a recreation than as a business. Says Sir John Lubbock: "We may have many pleasures in life, but we must not let pleasures have rule over us or they will soon hand us over to sorrow; and 'into what dangerous and miserable servitude does he fall who suffereth pleasures and sorrows (two unfaithful and cruel commanders) to possess him successively.'" Therefore, Dr. Horace Bushnell said: "Too much innocent amusement is not innocent, but morally bad." And Charles Lamb incisively declared, "Where all are holidays, there is no holiday."

2. All reasonable and right amusements will be sought *in harmony with man's essential nature*. This is an all-embracing principle.

What is man as to his essential nature and capacity? It is in accordance with the apostolic conception of man's nature (I. Thess. 5: 23) to say that man has a physical, an intellectual, and a spiritual nature, or that man is a triune being of "body ($\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$), soul ($\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$), and spirit ($\pi\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$)."
 In this conception of man's nature; "body" is to be identified with the animal organism, "soul" with the rational faculties, and "spirit" with the religious intuitions. From this conception of man; as a being of body, mind and spirit, it follows that all amusements, to be reasonable and right, must be in harmony with man's triune or threefold nature. **Whatever amusement is out of harmony with this conception**

of man's triangular nature is both unreasonable and wrong.

We do not hesitate to say, and while recognizing the ascending importance of mind over matter and of spirit over mind, that whatever tends to or brings about a disproportionate development of either or any of these elements of man's essential nature—body, mind or spirit—is unreasonable and wrong—wrong in fact and wrong in principle. But any element of man may be developed at the expense of other elements.

(1) The physical may be developed at the expense of the intellectual and the spiritual. It often is done. It is done in the case of many athletes and gymnasts. It is often done by contortionists and danseuses. It is done with all pugilists. And what follows? Invariably this physical development is unsymmetrical and abnormal, and is obtained at the expense of the intellectual and moral, and even the vital, for it is not promotive of longevity, but tends to shorten the length of life.

Let us give some examples in illustration of this truth.

There is known to the medical science a disease called "giantism"—an abnormal or distorted physical development; and it is a well-known fact that giants do not live to an advanced age. A man in an eastern city began the development of his physical strength by lifting a calf on the day of its birth; and continued the process of lifting it, day by day, until he could lift the full-grown cow; and afterwards acquired ability to lift a ton's weight. But he died young. Pugilism, fortunately, is not long-lived. It is stated on good authority that

“the average age of the excessive male dancer is thirty-one years.” The same authority asks, “Did you ever know a lady who danced to excess to live to be over twenty-five years of age? If she does, she is, in most instances, broken in health physically and morally.”

(2) Similar results and ill-effects follow the development of the intellectual nature at the expense of the physical and the spiritual, one or both. Mr. Herbert Spencer declares that “the first requisite to success in life is ‘to be a good animal’; and to be a nation of good animals is the first condition to national prosperity.”

There is a growing recognition of this necessity at the present time in the increasing attention now being given to physical culture in relation to education. A sound body and a trained hand for a sound mind is the great desideratum of the times. There is a growing recognition that intellectual development must go halting and limping without an accompanying physical and moral basis.

On the other hand, we have been slow to learn that any development of man’s nature which leaves out of account the moral and the spiritual is unbalanced and one-sided. But with the constant increase of crime and the flood of intemperance and licentiousness that is sweeping in upon us, threatening the life of the nation, it is high time for us to awake to the importance of providing fundamental instruction in our schools of every grade within the domain of morals. The moral science is commonly relegated to a late place in the college. It ought to be taught, with appropriate adaptation, all the

way up from the primary schools through the high schools, lest merely intellectual training shall take the place of rounded and symmetrical development.

(3) We do not hesitate to say, furthermore, that the development of the spiritual at the expense of the physical and the intellectual—either or both—is out of harmony with the apostolic conception of man's nature. This can be done; but ascetics, fanatics, bigots, and cranks are its products.

The great principle, universal in its application, which ought to control in the whole complicated question of amusements, is the symmetrical development of man in the totality of his being, or in his physical, intellectual, and spiritual natures. Upon philosophical as well as upon moral grounds "the line must be drawn," whenever, wherever, and however an amusement or pleasure assails the triune nature of man. "Draw the line in accordance with the demands of right reason, right faith, right taste, and right morals." "The one thing needful," says Jeremy Taylor, "is the development of positive loyalty to God and goodness." "A Christian's amusements," according to Hannah More, "must be blameless as well as ingenious, safe as well as rational, moral as well as intellectual." The line must be drawn in obedience to the voice of conscience. "Stifle the inner voice of conscience—which is the voice of God—and you may have amusement, but you will be like a ship with all her sails spread to the wind, and with no ballast to steady her, and no helm to guide her, and sooner or later must inevitably be sucked into the whirlpool of destruc-

tion, or driven on to the beetling rocks of ruin." (Religion in Common Life.)

II.—Tests of legitimate pleasures.

FIRST TEST: Pleasures, to be approved on moral and Christian grounds, must be physically recreative.

This test suggests the great and laudable object of amusement, viz.: to give relief from the strain and tension of care and labor, and to build up energies depleted or consumed by work. Thus the extent of a pleasure's recreating, restoring power is the measure of its justification or permissibility.

When dissipation, which is energy consumed without justification, comes in, then legitimate pleasures end. To cross the line which separates between recreation and dissipation to the side of unrestrained indulgence is "to sin against physiological and moral law." The main ground of objection against the dance, the card-table, and the theater, is and must ever be, their inherent, invariable, and universal tendency to dissipation. As institutions of society, their history makes it plain that they never have been kept within the limits of healthful and commendable recreations. Their indulgence, in the great majority of cases, to say the least, is in violation of physiological as well as moral law. Until they are brought within the limits of recreating pleasures, the Christian is bound, under the moral law, to set himself in opposition against them.

SECOND TEST: Pleasures, to be approved by the conscience, must be mentally acquisitive.

We mean by this test that pleasures, through the law of diversion, or a change in the form of occupation, or rest from excessive toil (which is sometimes the greatest pleasure to the tired body or jaded mind), must strengthen rather than impair or deplete the mental capacity of those who seek them. When pleasures debase or sensualize the imaginations of the mind, there is no longer either a moral or rational ground for participation in them.

We live in a world where everything, from a drop of water to the central sun, challenges investigation. Earth, and deepest sea, and highest heaven, are all open and inviting. But the love and pursuit of pleasure, as an end, is fatal to these higher aims and occupations. It is a law controlling the operations of the human mind, a law which the history of civilization confirms, that learning grows puny when waited on by sensual delights; that art, growing either voluptuous or sordid, falls like an angel from heaven; and that eloquence flies from lips that are steeped in pleasures.

THIRD TEST: Pleasures, to be approved of God, must be congruous to spirituality.

All pleasures offensive to exalted religious sentiment, pleasures the participation in which brings about a degradation of the religious life, are to be eschewed as evil. Whatever pleasure leaves a sting behind it, and upon which the Divine blessing cannot be besought, that is forever wrong.

From the Christian point of view, no pleasure is defensible which is procured, or is procurable, at the cost of the moral and spiritual nature of man. This we may fitly say is the great final test of legitimate pleasures. We have arraigned the dance, the card-table, and the theater as incongruous to spirituality. If any fact can be shown from evidence, it is that these institutions, as they exist to-day, are, in the proportion to which they are pursued, destructive to the spiritual life.

This test of legitimate pleasures is based upon the intuitive convictions of mankind, and in all ages, that the religious element or faculty of man is of the highest significance and is of paramount importance. It is at the point of religious intuitions that the greatest differentiation of man from all other animate existences lies. Religious intuition is the element of the human personality which links man to God and which makes man the subject of an eternal destiny. In this conception of the human personality the religious intuition is regarded as the very apex of the triune nature of man, and can not reasonably be scouted, ignored or set aside. Neither the body nor the mind, nor both, constitute man. To live for body or mind, either or both, regardless of the "spirit that is in man," is not to live at all; it is merely to exist.

“ He lives who lives to God alone,
And all are dead beside;
For other source than God is none
Whence life can be supplied.
For life, within a narrow ring
Of giddy joys comprised,
Is falsely named—is no such thing—
But rather death disguised.”

FOURTH TEST: Exemplary influence.

The pleasures of life can not be considered apart from the question of influence or example. The highest Christian consideration lies right here. The Christian is bound, under the highest moral law, to consider his conduct in the light of its influence upon others. From the obligations of this law he can never absolve himself.

This law may compel, it often does compel, the surrender of a personal good or an undisputed right, for the sake of what may only be an unfounded prejudice. But it is the law of Christian discipleship, nevertheless. Christ, the great Exemplar, "pleased not Himself." The apostle Paul enjoined the Corinthian Christians, "Take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak." To the Christians at Rome he said, "If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not uncharitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." And he declared it to be the law governing himself, as a follower of Christ, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." The question asked in the morning of human history, "Am I my brother's keeper?" has never yet had a rational answer in the negative. The unity and solidarity of the human family affirms and proclaims our obligation to all men to the extent of our power or ability to help them or to do them good.

It is a truth that needs reiterated emphasis in our time that the Christian is responsible for his influence as well

as for his words and acts. One's life can not be separated and viewed apart from his influence. We used to hear considerable of that wishy-washy logic that it makes little difference what one believes or does not believe so that his *living* is right—that that is the important thing. But the fact is that belief is a part of living. What we believe and disbelieve helps to make us what we are. Character is made up of thoughts, affections, choices; and of what else? Nothing. Belief, therefore, helps to make character. In the same sense one's influence is a part of his character; cannot be separated from his character. No one exists, or can exist, apart from his influence. His influence must be taken into account in considering the question of duty and obligation.

Many persons, who assume that their example exerts no influence upon others, would be grievously insulted if the preacher were to take them at their word and were to set down the measure of their influence, in the matter of popular amusements, at zero, and they would have reason to be. For no one lives or can live in this world without influence. Says Dr. Macleod:

“That which a man *is*, that sum-total made up of the items of his beliefs, purposes, affections, tastes and habits, manifested in all he does and does not, is contagious in its tendency, and is ever *photographing* itself on other spirits. He himself may be as unconscious of this emanation of good or evil from his character, as he is of the contagion of disease from his body, or, if that were equally possible, of the contagion of good health; but the fact, nevertheless, is certain. If light is in him, it must

shine; if darkness reigns, it must shade; if he glows with love, it will radiate its warmth; if he is frozen with selfishness, the cold will chill the atmosphere around him; and, if corrupt and vile, he will poison it. Nor is it possible for any one to occupy a neutral or indifferent position. In some form or other, he *must* affect others. Were he to banish himself to a distant island, or even to enter the gates of death, he still exercises a positive influence, for he is a *loss* to his brother—the loss of that most blessed gift of God, even that of a living man to living men, of a being who ought to have loved and to have been beloved.”

And if this law of self-denial for the sake of others seems a severe requirement and a burdensome obligation, it is well to remember that it has its compensations. These compensations are not prospective merely, they are not confined to that distant future to which devout faith aspires; but are present, and consist in that grander liberty of self-mastery which adds neither sorrow nor regret. This is victory, and this is life. We have it upon the very highest authority, that “there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

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SPECIMEN PAGE

24

JOHN 6

give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I

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