



Faithfully yours,
J. M. Herbert.

DANCERS *AND* DANCING

*A Calm and Rational View
of the Dancing
Question*

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DANCERS AND DANCING



On both sides of the dancing question we have had an abundance of extravagant declamation, illogical writing, and senseless talk. Before permitting ourselves either to condemn or to defend dancers and dancing, we should take a calm and rational view of the question in all its bearings.

Hearing both
sides fairly.

I. LET US FIRST CONSIDER CERTAIN THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN SPOKEN AGAINST THE DANCE.

Some persons seem to think that the bodily exercise of dancing is devilish in itself. Why so? None regard it Satanic to walk, hop, leap, jump, race, wrestle, or to engage in other similar sports. And wherein do the physical exercises of the dance differ morally from these others? Is it orthodox

"An evil
bodily
exercise."

to use our limbs and muscles in certain bodily movements which we call "athletics," but heterodox to use the same members and muscles in essentially the same manner, simply because this latter exercise takes the name of "dancing?" Is it the name that makes the difference? The good Lord has given us no manual of physical exercises, and are we not at liberty to bend our limbs and work our muscles at our own sweet will?

Some object to the dance, not on account of the bodily exercise as such, but because of its accompaniment of music. If there be

harmless bodily exercise and
 "Wicked music." harmless music, surely these

two harmless things are not converted into evil by the mere fact of one's becoming the accompaniment of the other. It is as natural as breathing for a child to go prancing and capering over the floor when the music sets up, and for the old man to keep time to the notes of the music by thrumming with his fingers on the table or the rounds of his chair.

Dancing is a sinful waste of time, it is said. It is certainly a duty to employ these few fleeting days of earth to the best possible advantage, and we should not let our

time run to waste. But every hour of one's existence cannot be filled with strenuous effort, and seasonable relaxation brings gain, instead of *"Time wasted."* loss, to life's occupations.

That they keep unseasonable hours, is charged against dancers. A business may be imprudently conducted, and yet the business itself be unobjectionable.

If we condemn every occupa- *"Late hours."* tion in which late hours have been kept, what trade or calling will remain? We read that Paul once preached until midnight, and we know that religious services in our day are sometimes unreasonably protracted.

It is said that the dance runs into excesses in the way of exposure, fatigue and exhaustion. Often true, doubtless, and frequently true also of innocent child's play and man's work. Farmers *"Hurtful excesses."* and mechanics sometimes go to killing extremes in labor; but from this we would not argue that it is wrong to engage in agricultural or industrial pursuits.

Dancing is condemnable, say some, because of its adjuncts of undue excitement, over-heated and badly-ventilated rooms, ex-

travagant and immodest dress. But are these essential parts of the dance? And do we not often find the same things in approved and sacred places, and in connection with the holiest exercises? We frequently preach and pray in churches that are suffocating by reason of extreme heat and diabolical ventilation; and in the sanctuary it is not uncommon to see an extravagant display of silks and jewels; revival meetings are not always free from excitement and fanaticism; and many parlors and social circles are not one whit behind the ball-room in a vulgar and indecent style of dress.

Giving full force to these and all other like objections urged against the dance, we cannot regard them as conclusive. It is often found that the argument lies against the abuse of things only, and not against their use. Many customs and institutions, harmless in themselves, have unfortunately had some unnecessary bad surroundings, associations, or connections. In such things, if we can retain the good, divorcing it from the evils incidentally attendant, we should do so, following the apostolic injunction,

"Excitement
and immodest
dress."

These
objections not
conclusive.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." So we must still further prosecute our inquiry.

II. LET US NEXT CONSIDER SOME THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN SPOKEN IN FAVOR OF THE DANCE.

None can deny that the dance may afford beneficial exercise for the body. Paul's "bodily exercise profiteth little" is not to be taken as a general hygienic maxim. It was the word of "Good for health." advice needed in a particular case where a zealous and sickly young preacher had vainly expected his open-air activity to do the work of rest and medicine. The importance of seasonable and proper physical exercise in the preservation and promotion of health cannot be too greatly emphasized, and dancing has its value in this direction.

It is also a good means of acquiring grace and agility in bodily movements. The dance is well called "the poetry of motion." It is a most praiseworthy feature of our schools, that they are "Lends gracefulness." now giving large place to physical culture, and one object to be always kept steadily in view is the cultivation

of ease and grace in all bodily activities.

It is a means of recreation. Toilers need amusement and relaxation. "All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy." With its accompaniment of sweet music, the dance is capable of giving to many people a genuine rhythmical enjoyment and delight.

"Affords recreation."

The social feature of the dance is to be mentioned. Our social instincts impel us toward company-keeping with our fellows, hence all these dinings and parties and receptions, and the numberless social gatherings known in polite society. The dancing circle also presents opportunity for gratifying these innocent social impulses.

"Gratifies social nature."

The dance has another merit worthy of being catalogued. It is an expedient very serviceable to ignorant and stupid people who have not intellectual resources for entertaining one another otherwise. Men, like sheep, have gregarious instincts, and they will go in flocks. And when people get together in a social way, what shall those do who have not the intelligence and information necessary to sustain a conversation?

"A substitute for knowledge."

They soon run through with their budget of neighborhood gossip, and what then? Being together, perhaps, for a long evening, and having nothing profitable or entertaining to talk about, they resort to the dance as relief from their dullness and embarrassment. This form of amusement has been a great boon to many handsome young men and beautiful girls who have nothing in their heads, but are very graceful with their heels, surpassing, in this respect, Daniel Webster, who, when asked why he did not dance, replied that he "had not sufficient talents to learn the art." This plea for the dance doubtless appeals to the experience of many.

The dance is regarded by not a few as a good school of manners and etiquette. It is desirable that our young people should be free from stiffness and awkwardness, and should learn to carry themselves properly in giving and receiving society introductions, making their polite society bows, entertaining their company, and discharging all required social functions; and doubtless many a child has been sent to the dancing school from the commendable desire that it should

"A school
of manners."

be improved in gracefulness and manners.

But when these good features of the dance, and all others that may be claimed for it, have been fairly weighed, we are still

Further
inquiry
necessary.

short of the data necessary for reaching a final conclusion as to whether dancers and danc-

ing should have our approval or our disapproval. Not everything with good in it is deserving of our praise and patronage. What evil without its good? The great Chicago fire and the Charleston earthquake and the Galveston hurricane, which make the nation mourn in disaster and wail for its dead, bring good to some. In the restoration of a destroyed city thousands of people find employment for the earning of their bread. The epidemic in the community has in it the good of profiting nurses and doctors, apothecaries and undertakers. And murders and assassinations bring jobs to idle and hungry grave-diggers. What ill wind can we imagine which would blow good to

The proper
test.

nobody? In order to pass correct judgment upon any matter, we must inquire as to

both the good and the evil involved, and then decide which preponderates. We must

always look to the sum total of the good and the evil connected with a custom, object, enterprise, or institution, in order to determine what our attitude shall be toward it. Things must be investigated as to their nature and tendency, their relations, influences, and consequences, before we can render intelligent and just judgments concerning their claims to the support of society. In this broad and fair view of the matter, let us ask the following question:

III. IS PROMISCUOUS ROUND DANCING BETWEEN THE SEXES A THING THAT CHRISTIANS MAY PRACTICE, PATRONIZE, ENCOURAGE, OR TOLERATE?

Note well the limitations of the question. We are not discussing the ancient religious dances of the Hebrews, such as were indulged in by Miriam at the Red Sea, and by David before the ark of the Lord. We are not considering the war dances of savages. We are not concerned with the solitary dance, such as is practiced by the man who gives the Scotch jig for the amusement of the youngsters, just as Dr. Lyman Beecher used to gratify his children by exhibiting for their astonishment and delight the won-

Limitations
of the
question.

ders of the double shuffle, which he had danced on the barn floor at corn huskings, when he was a young man. We are not just now inquiring whether members of the same family may dance together, nor whether men may dance with one another only, and women dance to themselves. (Just here it may be given as the opinion of many observing people, that if there were, henceforth, no dancing except that practiced by the two sexes apart from each other, this new regulation would of itself so effectually solve the dancing question that it would cease to be discussed.) Observe also that we are not now to discuss the "square dance" (which rarely stays *square*, usually becoming *round*), but what is generally known as the "round dance," the "german," the "waltz," etc. Be it furthermore borne in mind, as we proceed, that the subject announced does not involve the inquiry, whether the dance is better or worse than certain other things which might be mentioned, such as cards, theaters, wine, usury, gossip, scandal, etc. Whatever else may be good or bad, our verdict at present is to be rendered solely on the question which has been stated.

1. *Is it not strong presumptive evidence*

against the dance, that it has never been countenanced by people of the best society? That the better classes have always stood aloof from it, is very significant indeed, and casts upon it a dark suspicion. Some may be inclined to resent the assertion that the dance is not patronized by the best people; but this is certainly true. Who constitute the "best society?" The answer to this depends upon the standard we erect. If the standard be wealth, then only the rich are of the best society. If the standard be learning, only the scholarly are first in society. But all must agree that piety is the true standard. Those are best who please God best. They constitute the best society of this world, who are most in prayer and in communion with God, and whose brains and hands are busiest in the service of the Lord, and whose rule of life is, to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. Enoch and Abraham, Moses and Samuel, Ruth and Hannah, Elijah and Isaiah, and all such, were of the best society in their day. Paul and Barnabas, Silas and Stephen, Lydia and Phebe, Dorcas and Priscilla, were of the best society of their times.

Who constitute "best society?"

Frances Havergal and Frances Willard, Florence Nightingale and Clara Barton, Moody and Sankey, and others like them, have been society's best. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. These are of the royal house; they are children of the King; they are the first of the land. And it is well known that such as these have never found time or inclination or freedom of conscience to patronize the dance. This attitude of the better classes of people toward it forces us to suspect that there is in the dance something wrong. In these best circles of human society it has been weighed in the balances, and found wanting.

2. *The solemn deliverances of Church courts earnestly condemn the dance.* The pastoral letter addressed to the Roman Catholics of America, by the Baltimore Council of Bishops and Archbishops, gives admonition against "the fashionable dances which, as now carried on, are revolting to every feeling of delicacy and propriety, and are fraught with the greatest danger to morals." The position of the Episcopal Church on this question is indicated by the pastoral letters written by Bishops Coxe,

Hopkins, McElvaine, and Meade. It is sufficient to quote the following from Bishop Coxe, as the other Bishops express the same sentiments: **Episcopalians.**

"The gross debasing waltz would not be tolerated for another year if Christian mothers in our communion would only set their faces against it, and remove their daughters from its contaminations, and their sons from that contempt of womanhood and womanly modesty which it begets. Alas! that women professing to follow Christ and godliness, should not rally for the honor of their sex, and drive these shameless dances from society." The discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church classes "dancing parties" and the "patronizing of dancing schools" as amusements "obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency," and directs that church members who persistently refuse to heed admonitions against such practices shall be expelled. The discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, forbids "the taking of such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus," and the General Conference declares: "Amongst the in-

**Methodists
and Congrega-
tionalists.**

dulgences which cannot stand this solemn test is the modern dance, both in its private and its public exhibition, as utterly opposed to the genius of Christianity, as taught by us. When persisted in it is a justifiable ground of judicial action by the church authorities." In a judicial case carried up by appeal, all the Bishops of the Southern Methodist Church concurred in the decision, "that it is contrary to the spirit of the discipline and of the New Testament to teach the art and science of dancing anywhere, or to practice promiscuous dancing anywhere." The General Council of the Congregational Churches of America passed a resolution, declaring, "That, in the opinion of this Council, the practice of dancing by members of our churches is inconsistent with their profession of religion, and ought to be made a subject of discipline." The General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian Church has said: "We

Presbyterians. regard the practice of promiscuous social dancing by church members as a mournful inconsistency, and the giving of such parties for such dancing, on the part of the heads of families, as tending to compromise their religious

profession; and the sending of children, by Christian parents, to the dancing school is a sad error in family discipline." The General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church says: "The Assembly has uniformly discouraged and condemned the modern dance, in all its forms, as tending to evil, whether practiced in public balls or in private parlors." The General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian

Church has spoken as follows: Cumberland
Presbyterians.
"Resolved, by this General Assembly, as expressed by former Assemblies, that the practice of promiscuous dancing, as an amusement, by professed Christians, as well as attendance upon such places of amusement, is hereby declared to be inconsistent with the Christian profession and the pure and sacred obligations of our holy religion, and that presbyteries and church sessions are advised that members persisting in such practice are proper subjects of discipline." Similar ecclesiastical deliverances might be given, as showing that the same sentiments are held by Baptists and Disciples, and by other denominations.

Now, what is signified by this positiveness and this unanimity of opinion in church

courts? Who are these men, clergy and laity, that solemnly pass resolutions of this character? Men of their intelligence and dignity and seriousness do not waste time on trifles; and they are not misanthropes, jealous and envious of other people's happiness and enjoyments. They are society's safest counsellors, the family's best friends, and cordial well-wishers to individual success and pleasure. These are men who do not regard it as the province of churches or church courts to intermeddle with innocent domestic pastime, and nothing short of a profound conviction that the dance is a great evil could prompt them to frame such deliverances.

It may be said, "These good church fathers are sincere, but they are incompetent judges." On the contrary, they have the

Are preachers
competent
judges?

highest competency to render correct decisions upon all such questions. In any matter of

investigation we rely with most satisfaction upon the testimony of professionals and experts. Whose occupation is it to make constant and careful observations and inquiries as to the moral and religious tendency and effect of our social customs and institutions?

This is the study and the business of these archbishops, bishops, pastors, and other church leaders. Concerning the proper care of sheep, who is better qualified to speak than shepherds? As to what affects Christian life helpfully or detrimentally, who is the better prepared to speak, dancing masters or the leaders of these Christian flocks? These ministers and other church officials and Christian leaders are divinely appointed unto watchfulness in the care of souls, and of their stewardship they must solemnly give account, and their affectionate admonitions and counsels touching the influence of the dance upon the Church and upon society, none can afford to disregard. Let us heed this judgment of the many, for "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

3. *Is not indulgence in the dance, on the part of church members, contrary to church vows?* Into whatsoever church one has entered, he has come by assuming, expressly or impliedly, certain solemn obligations. Certainly one of these vows is, that he will be subject to the order, regulations and discipline of the particular communion with

Breaking
church
covenants.

which he thus voluntarily affiliates himself. "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses." It has already been shown that the several Churches of the land have made emphatic pronouncement against the dance, declaring that those who participate therein are the proper subjects of ecclesiastical discipline. Is it good faith for one to disregard the obligations of his church covenant, and still seek to retain his place in the church?

Three young
ladies.

There was, at least, consistency in the act of a young woman who wrote the following note to the officers of the church with which she stood connected: "Having of late fallen into the habit of dancing, and expecting to continue the practice, and knowing that this is in violation of your rules, I hereby respectfully submit my resignation as a member of the church." At one of our fashionable seashore summer resorts, a grand ball had been announced, and a member of Congress was soliciting a certain young lady to become one of the ball managers, when she informed him that she could not accept the "honor," nor could she attend. "May I ask why?" said he. She replied: "Certainly. Being a member of a

Church that condemns dancing, it would be a breach of my sacred church covenant for me to lend my influence to the dance."

A young lady having declined to join with a young man in a parlor dance, was tauntingly asked if it was because she did not know how to dance. She answered, "No, not that. Possibly by very diligent study and practice I might learn; but, being a disciple of Jesus and a church member, I consider dancing altogether incompatible with my profession." Would that all our church members had a conscience in the matter of keeping their church vows. "Better it is that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."

4. *Can any true disciple of our Lord disregard the anti-dancing argument which is founded upon Christian love?* It is that which is commonly known as Paul's meat argument. Paul Paul would eat no meat. had no scruples whatever about eating the flesh of animals which had been slain for use as sacrifices in idolatrous worship. To him an idol was "nothing in the world," and what did he care if the meat before him had been associated with heathen priests and altars? The vain ceremonies of

idolatrous worshipers did not defile the flesh so used, and Paul had so little care about the matter, so far as he himself was concerned, that he was accustomed to eat the meat set before him, asking no questions, "for conscience sake," as to whence the meat had come. But if some of his brethren had scruples in the matter and their consciences were offended by Paul's conduct in thus eating the meat offered to idols, then he would no longer use his liberty to the wounding of his brethren; he would put his beefsteak and mutton chop from him, and under such circumstances he would "eat no flesh while the world standeth." Now, there can be no question as to the large number, the high character, the perfect sincerity and the earnest conviction of those who regard the dance as exceedingly hurtful and reproachful to the cause of Christ. And, hence, there can be no doubt as to what Paul's course and counsel would be, under such circumstances, whatever might be his own inclination and his ability to indulge himself without his being subject to personal injury.

But we hear that it is "a pitiful weakness in people thus to raise objections to the dance." The proper reply to this we have

in Paul's letters to the churches of Corinth and Rome: "But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. . . . But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. . . . It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

5. *Is it not true that the dancing habit is an enemy of personal Christian piety?* Remember Aristotle's keen and just aphorism, that a thing is to be judged, not only by what may be seen Aristotle's aphorism. of its nature, but also by what is known of its tendency. The tendency of the dance is not toward divine contemplations and the discharge of religious duties, but is toward the world, which forgets God. It has ever proved fatal to a fervent type of piety in those church members who have become its patrons. It weans the affections of its votaries from the cross of Christ, and sets their thoughts upon the vanities of life. It chills the warmth out of Christian hearts,

it causes the disciples of Jesus to forsake their closets of prayer and to neglect their Bibles. It is a deadly foe to the prayer meeting, and leads its votaries to regard lightly their church vows and religious obligations. It has a strange fascination for many minds, rendering them incapable of serious thoughts or duties. There is a legend to this effect: A certain ancient city was very strong in its large number of valiant armed men. But it was conquered and captured in a strange way. The people of this city had trained their horses to stand on their hind feet and with their fore feet to keep time whenever a certain tune was played. One of the city's minstrels, having been ill used, deserted, and went over to the enemy and told them of this custom of the dancing horses, and the enemy's minstrels diligently practiced the same tune. And then in time of the next battle, the enemy's minstrels began to play the dancing tune, whereupon the city horses forgot the serious business of battle, and stood on their hind feet and began to dance, so that they became an easy prey to the enemy. This story well illustrates what our experience has been with dancing church members. Just at the time

they should be earnestly engaged in Christian warfare and religious worship, Satan sends out his minstrels with their instruments and waltzing tunes, and then these worldly saints are on their dancing legs, and forget the serious business of the church. Now, whatever object or influence produces these effects, is to be dreaded by pastors and church leaders. These sad fruits are not seen in the same degree in all dancing church members, but the tendency is unmistakably ever in the direction of a religious decline.

But some will declare that they "cannot understand why the dancing habit should produce these ill effects upon Christian piety." Well, amid the stern realities of life we often come upon very practical proofs of facts which we had not previously known. We have learned by observation and experience that in the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink, there may be deadly germs and poisonous gases which cannot be detected by our senses or by any instrument or process of analysis known in the laboratory of the chemist. And so by experience and observation we come to form

Learning by
experience.

our judgment of the dance. Though we might not be able to answer the challenge to "point out specifically and definitely wherein the dance is wrong," yet we have had abundant proof that there is "death in the pot," for we know of the ill effects of the ball-room atmosphere upon Christian piety, as certainly as we know of the effects of swamp malaria on the human body.

6. *The promiscuous round dance is an offense against the modesty and propriety that should ever be maintained and cultivated between the sexes.* Must this not be admitted at once by all who have any knowledge of the dance? It has been suggested that the dance would be harmless if confined to those who have wooden legs. It might more pertinently be said that it should be restricted

Position of
dancers.

to those who have wooden arms, or those who dance with their arms tied behind their

backs; for it is well known that the position of the dancers on the floor constitutes at once the chief attraction of the dance with many who practice it, and the chief objection to it on the part of those who oppose it.

On the occasion of my making a pastoral visit in a certain home, where I was seated

in the parlor, in conversation with a mother and her daughter, both members of my church, the young lady brought up the subject of dancing, saying that she practiced dancing, and saw no harm in it, and challenged me to point out its evils. I rose and said, "Please come and show me the position you take with your partner in the ball-room, and then I will give you my opinion." She sat as still as a stone, and began to blush in great confusion, and I then added, "Very well. If here in your own house, and in the presence of your mother, you are unwilling to take the dancing position with your pastor, a married man, and for years your father's fast and intimate friend, and thus show me how you dance, I assume that it is unnecessary for your question to have further answer." A few days later, that bright and thoughtful young woman said to me: "Referring to your last visit to our home, I want to say that I had never before seen the dance in its true light, and I assure you that the whole thing is now repulsive to me, and that I am forever done with it." How strange that the vibrations of a fiddle-string or the tooting of a horn can so bewitch peo-

Music's
strange power.

ple as to make them utterly oblivious of propriety and decency. Talk of the wonders of Aladdin's lamp! More marvelous things are wrought by catgut, for the music of the violin so transforms men that they amiably permit their wives or daughters or sisters or lovers to throw themselves into the arms of other men, who are thus taking liberties which, under other circumstances, would be quickly and hotly resented as offensive, insulting and criminal.

Does not Dr. Theodore Cuyler speak truly, when he says the dance is objectionable because it "permits undue familiarities between the sexes," and "involves promiscuous contacts and caressings of the sexes?"

Caressings in
the ball-room.

It is far more than a mere witticism, when Sam Jones says the round dance is "hugging set to music." That was justifiable satire used by one who, at a ball, was asked if he would not get him a partner and join in the waltz, and he replied to the managers, "No, I thank you. I do not like the violent exercise, nor do I care much for the music, but, if you do not object, I would enjoy the *other part of the performance*, with a partner here on the sofa." Fathers and

mothers cannot but know that this too great freedom, this laxness, this familiarity of the sexes, is evil in its tendencies. It brushes aside those feelings of delicacy and modesty which should ever be guarded and cultivated by the sexes in all their relations and associations. The maintenance of these sentiments of womanly refinement and delicacy, and of true gentlemanly modesty, gives to the home its brightest charms and to society its best safeguard. It is perilous to all for this "middle wall of partition" between the sexes to be broken down. Thoughtful people look with grave apprehensions upon whatever tends to impair and destroy native modesty of demeanor and encourages boldness and laxness of manners, as between the sexes, and they must be blind indeed who cannot see that this is one of the certain influences and results of the dance.

7. *But against the dance can be truthfully framed the still more serious indictment, that it has a tendency toward impurity in thought and immorality in conduct.* This thought was indirectly presented in considering the deliverances of church courts, but let us give it further consideration.

We now approach the most delicate and

difficult aspect of the question before us. And just here I call attention to a remark that is very common with the advocates of dancing. It is something like this: "Oh, I do not want to hear any sermon or read anything against dancing, because so many things are said and written on the subject that shock one's modesty." Is not that frequent remark itself strong evidence that there is something very questionable about the dance? Why expect those who oppose it to say something shocking to modesty? Is it not because the dance is of such a nature that the discussion of it necessarily brings to mind things which are unsavory? And this very fact stubbornly stands in evidence against the dance. I was impressed with the following utterance of a distinguished college professor, who said to his Sunday-school class: "Young gentlemen, some people affect to be ignorant of the wrong in the dance, and are asking to have its evils pointed out, when they very well know what the wrong is, and they know, too, that they have this advantage in the discussion—that the worst things about the dance cannot be plainly spoken before a promiscuous audi-

A delicate
subject.

ence." In this connection, instead of speaking my own words I prefer to use the language of others, and I quote from those whose character and opportunities for observation entitle them to a sober hearing.

Says Gail Hamilton: "The thing in its very nature is unclean, and cannot be washed. The very pose of the parties suggests impurity."

Gail Hamilton.

The wife of General W. T.

Sherman wrote: "I have always given this miserable dance a silent condemnation, by refusing to allow any of my daughters to participate in it, under any circumstances: I

Wife of
Gen. Sherman.

have avoided the evil as something at the sight of which my soul revolted." Speaking from her high position as the

wife of the Governor of Tennessee, Mrs. Novella Marks,

Mrs. Gov.
Marks.

a woman of rare intelligence and refinement, said this: "I think it unnecessary to urge Christian motives, in order to keep church members from dancing. Motives of decency and self-respect are altogether sufficient, it seems to me, to keep a lady from dancing."

Said Dr. Palmer, the venerable divine of New Orleans: "I do not hesitate publicly

to denounce it as undisguisedly licentious." Dr. Theodore Cuyler, in an address before the Pan-Presbyterian Council, declared with emphasis, that the dance is "fraught with terrible peril to personal purity and to Christian character," that it "tolerates unchaste movements and contacts," that it "involves inevitable stimulation of the most inflammable passions." General Albert Pike once said:

"I have never been able to understand how any father could permit his daughter, or any husband his wife, to waltz with another man." Said a certain army

An army
officer.

officer, when first witnessing a round dance, "If I should see a man offering to dance with my wife in that way, I would horsewhip him." Petrarch said: "The dance is the spur to lust—a circle of which the devil himself is the center." I wish that

Petrarch and
Lord Byron.

every advocate of the round dance might read Lord Byron's very realistic poem describing the waltz, in which he characterizes the position of the dancers as a "lewd grasp and

lawless contact." The editor of *Harper's Weekly* once wrote in his paper, that, at a private ball, he had seen some young men looking upon the dance very soberly; and that when he Harper's Weekly. learned they were engaged to certain of the ladies on the floor, he did not wonder that the spectacle of a young woman thus whirling about in a heated room, in the arms of a warm-blooded young man, "induced sobriety on the lover's face, if not sadness in his heart." In the *Philadelphia Press* was published, some time ago, an article written by Prof. James P. Welsh, a dancing master of that city, in which he said: "I have A dancing master. been a dancing master for the past ten years, and have made it a practice throughout that period to observe carefully all the changes in the public taste, and to note the changes for better or worse in my profession. I have watched closely and thought deeply on the subject, and I now have no hesitation in saying that the waltz, under whatsoever name it may go for the time being, is immoral. . . . I am happy to say that there still remain numbers of careful fathers who will not allow their daugh-

ters to dance it, although a vast proportion of the fashionable, and a majority of the others, do not seem as yet awakened to its iniquity."

Do we affirm that all who dance or defend the dance are impure? Certainly not. Many are doubtless altogether sincere in resenting the sugges-
Innocent dancers. tion that the dance is a foe to purity. It is not surpris-

ing to hear an ingenuous manly youth or an innocent-hearted girl say, "I see no harm in it." And many an unsophisticated mother is unable to see why her children may not dance and yet remain pure. It may be freely conceded that some have indulged in the dance and yet kept their souls white from stain in thought or deed, but the fact remains, that in the dance there is peril to all, and that to many it has proved "the dance of death." A sober man has said that the round dance is a satanic flame, through which some pure women may have come uninjured, but that he seriously doubts whether men have ever passed that way without the smell of fire on their garments.

It is damaging evidence against the dance, that some men who practice it, and hence know what it is, are unwilling for the women of their families to participate in it.

*Confessions
of dancers.*

Take these cases, that come within my own personal knowledge. I heard a certain eminent and brilliant lawyer make this remark, as he stood looking into the hotel ball-room of one of our fashionable summer resorts: "I dance myself, and I am willing to see my sons in there dancing; but if I had daughters they should not dance." If his daughters should not, why not? and why, then, will he and his sons encourage other men's daughters to dance? But an eminent politician present replied to this remark of the lawyer by saying: "As to the dance, Mr. S., you must remember the proverb, 'Evil to him who evil thinks.'" "Yes," retorted the lawyer, "but the trouble is, that men all think the same thing when on the floor of the ball-room." A certain young man was heard to remark, "I love to dance with other fellows' sisters, but no man shall dance with my sister, for I know some things!" Yes, doubtless he does! An inveterate dancer seriously objected, "for

good and sufficient reasons," to his niece's learning the art of dancing, declaring at the same time that he "knew enough about the dance not to want a woman for his wife who had breathed the air of the ball-room." Could these frequenters of the ball-room give more convincing proof that they see impurity in the dance?

It is well known that the chief of police in New York City bore testimony that three-fourths of the women in impure houses of that city had begun their downward course in the dance. When a Jesuit priest was asked why his church was so strict on the dance, he replied: "Another argument for the confessional; we at least have the satisfaction of knowing, when our people fall, where they fall and how they fall; and we have found that almost every lapse from female virtue in our communion is traceable to the round dance." With facts like these before us, we can "amen" Cicero's declaration, that "no man dances unless he is drunk or mad;" also Thackeray's remark, "when a man confesses himself fond of dancing, I set him down as a fool."

Damaging
witnesses.

8. I now come to present a consideration

which, though all other arguments were left out of the count, should be altogether sufficient to keep a Christian from dancing, viz.: *Indulgence in the dance will prove exceedingly hurtful to one's Christian influence and usefulness.* There are certain things which, on account of their spirit, associations, and tendency, and the character of their chief supporters, have always been looked upon by the public generally as being peculiarly and distinctively of the world, and of these the dance is one. From the middle ages we have a legend to this effect, that once upon a time a church member died at a ball. Satan came along and took his soul, and was flying off with it, when Saint Peter, finding it out, put after him and demanded a restoration. "He was a Christian," said Peter, "and you must give him up." "Christian!" exclaimed Satan, "why, I found him on my premises, for I got him from a ball-room." "If that is the case," said Peter, "I give it up." This story well illustrates the common notion about the moral latitude and longitude of the ball-room, namely, that it is not located within the boundaries of Christian territory,

Satan owns
the dance
house.

but is justly claimed by Satan and the world; and hence the church member who becomes known as a votary of the dance seriously cripples his influence for Christian usefulness. He cannot enjoy the full confidence and respect of either

Dancing saints
are cripples.

the church or the world. By reason of the esteem in which he is held by saints and sinners, in his Christian walk he is on lame legs; in his Christian conversation he gives his testimony with stammering tongue; in Christian warfare he fights with sword whose edge has been dulled, and his proud escutcheon has been dimmed; his light, if not under a bushel, has been lowered from its high lamp-stand where it gave light to all in the house; he is as salt having lost much of its savor; his voice in the prayer circle has a feeble accent; at the Lord's table thoughts of his inconsistencies are in the minds of all who witness his handling of the sacred emblems; his reproofs to the wicked fall lightly on the ear, for he himself has chosen the worldly as his companions, kept fellowship with the ungodly, and has been unequally yoked with unbelievers. An unconverted young man lay dying, and he asked for a prayer

at his bedside, and when the name of a friend and companion of his was called, he replied: "No, not he. Send for some Christian with whom I have not been associated in the ball-room." Though a saint might engage in the dance without loss of his Christian affection and zeal, but yet should suffer the loss of others' confidence in his piety and prayers, would he purchase so small a cup of pleasure at so great a cost? The truly consecrated man, in matters which he himself may regard as lawful but are questioned by others, will govern his actions by the high and holy principle announced by Paul when he said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not Paul's maxim. expedient." However harmless the dance may be regarded in itself, and whatever good may be claimed for it, considering that this good may be obtained in ways which are not at all questionable, and seeing that the "dancing Christian" does sadly compromise his power for doing good, surely there is a "sweet reasonableness" in calling upon all genuine disciples of Jesus to renounce the dance, in order that they may the more acceptably and ef-

fectually serve and honor him who hath freely redeemed them with his own precious blood.

In conclusion, let a few lines be written in reply to those who are constantly criticising ministers for presenting what our critics call "a negative gospel." We appear to them to be "always telling the people what they are not to do—not to dance, not to drink from the punch bowl, not to play whist, etc.—instead of presenting a positive gospel, exhorting the people to love God and do good." Will our critics hear a parable? A man owning a farm in the river bottom had two sons, one of whom worked on the levee, while the other plowed the fields. The elder said to the younger, "O foolish brother, instead of plowing, you should come and help me build a high levee along the river bank, for the river will overflow, and a farm under water will yield no crop." The younger brother replied, "O brother, foolish, you should come with me to plow and to plant, for though your levee were mountain high, a farm is of no value unless there be seed in the ground." But the father said, "My sons, ye are both in folly. Each is

A "negative
gospel."

wisely engaged. For not by the levee or by the plow alone can we reap a harvest. Both are necessary: the crop will give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, but without the levee's protection against the wild floods our fields would give no increase." This illustrates the necessity for our presenting both the positive and the negative aspects of the gospel. Does not Church history teach us that neither doctrines nor duties can be safely preached alone? While preaching faith, hope and love, the minister must also point out the evil practices and customs which war against the soul, and give earnest admonition against worldliness and corruption, else "the enemy will come in like a flood." The "thou shalt not" is as important in its place as the "thou shalt." Imagine one of these wise latter-day critics meeting Moses, who is just descending from Sinai, and he asks, "What have you there, Moses?" The

The need for
"Thou shalt
not."

man of God shows the writings which he carries on tables of stone. "Ah, Moses," says the critic, "I see you make the same mistake that the preachers do. You concern yourself with negative and prohibitive

precepts. See the negations you have there on your granite tablets—‘no other gods,’ ‘not make unto thee any graven image,’ ‘not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain,’ ‘not do any work,’ ‘not kill,’ ‘not commit adultery,’ ‘not steal,’ ‘not bear false witness,’ ‘not covet’—nine ‘nots’ in your ten commandments. It is a mistake to frame a negative and prohibitive code: you should give the nation a positive code, telling the people what to do, instead of undertaking to point out the things they are not to do.” Moses makes reply: “Do you know whom you criticise? I am just from the immediate presence of the great I AM, who appeared unto me in Sinai’s heights, and it was God’s own hand that made these writings. I will answer thee that God is greater than man. Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.”

L. & C.