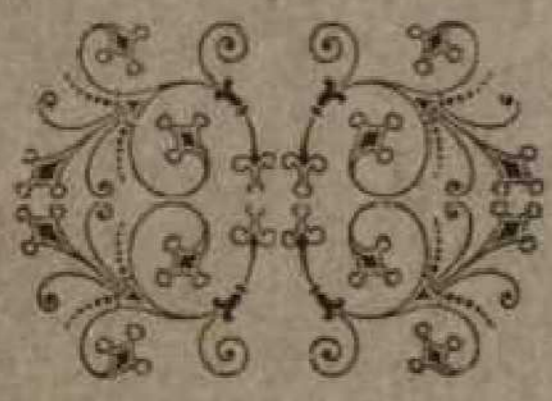


T. G. Thompson

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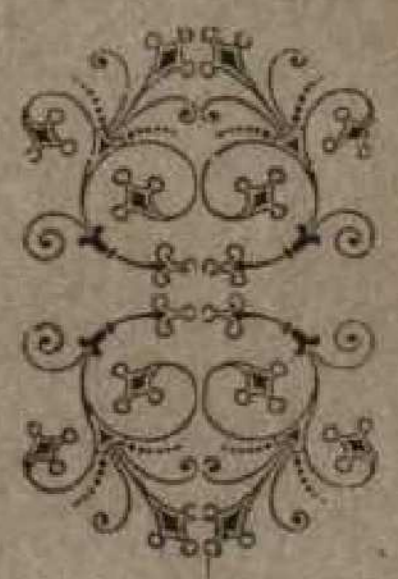
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History and Mystery
of the
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THE
HISTORY AND MYSTERY
OF THE
DANCE.

BY
Rev. S. M. HAMMOND,
OF THE NEW YORK EAST CONFERENCE.

“And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.”—
EZEKIEL XLIV., 23.

NEW HAVEN.
TUTTLE, MOREHOUSE & TAYLOR, PRINTERS.
1883.



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PREFATORY NOTE.

Much of the matter contained in the following pages was given by the author a few years ago as a sermon to the congregation of which he was then pastor. In response to a vote of the officary of the church, and a call from the public, the sermon was published in the local paper, and had a considerable circulation, some hundreds of extra copies of the periodical being sold and distributed much beyond its usual limits. Communications relating to the discourse were received from far and near, all of them, except one or two of the inevitable anonymous ones, heartily endorsing both the truth told and the wisdom of telling it. But the most striking result came in the form of voluntary testimony from many, that what I have called the "Mystery," or the point of power in the dance—the real animus and soul of the thing—is here given with exact truthfulness, according to their own experience.

Since that time, and to some extent by means of the publication of the sermon, material for an extension and completion of the work has accumulated on my hands. The strongest of this material cannot be published from press or pulpit. Let it be remembered that the most damning testimony against the dance must be suppressed because it is of a nature unfit to be given in open court.

I send out the little book as a matter of duty. I know it seems chimerical—like an effort to push back a river by a single hand—to throw so puny a thing against a custom which assumes to be well-nigh universal in what is technically called "society;" but right does not ask what odds antagonize, and truth is mighty because God goes with it, and must triumph at last because HE must reign.

S. M. H.

NEW HAVEN, CONN., 1883.

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THE DANCE.

“WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT.”

THAT all-embracing rule for human conduct delivered by inspiration, “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,” appeals equally to the rational as to the religious faculty, when it is remembered that God is glorified in the development and manifestation of a perfect manhood; so that everything glorifies Him which truly benefits us.

Bringing amusements to this unchallengeable law, it at once appears that such are to be approved and practiced as tend to develop mind or body healthfully; while those are to be condemned and discarded which are found directly or indirectly to injure the body, the mind, or the morals, of the individual or his fellows.

The Dance is no ephemeral pastime like many that might be named, which catching the tune of the times, have their brief season of popularity and then die and are forgotten—it is an institution; it has come down to us from the gray old centuries, has passed through mul-

titudinous forms, in some of which it has been practiced in all countries; it has made its record; and the principal part of my task in this paper shall be to call it to judgment before that record.

Before proceeding to the discussion let me emphasize a few **EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS**.

1. I do not condemn those who dance; nor do I condemn the dance itself as a sin *per se*. Indeed there are very few human actions that are sins in themselves.

Obligation is measured by intelligence, and one who for lack of opportunity or other justifiable cause, has not observed the drift of an indulgence may do quite innocently a thing which if persisted in will prove ruinous to himself, and injurious to society.

For example: a hundred years ago the people thought alcohol "a good creature of God;" called it "Aqua Vitæ," and drank of it till the appetite mastered them, and descended a fatal virus in the blood to blight their children; yet they did it innocently.

2. That Christians of immature experience who have been trained to consider dancing an essential part of a polite education, dance and do not forfeit the favor of God is probably true; yet doubtless it is as true that it nevertheless lowers the tone of their spiritual life, blunts the fine perceptions of their higher nature, and proves dis-

astrous as a vicious example upon society. If those professed followers of the Redeemer who now see no harm in dancing, really wish to know and do all and only the will of God, and will seek in humility that it may be revealed to them; and in connection will study the effect of the dance on themselves and others, nothing is hazarded in the prophecy that their dancing days will be very few.

Another point of primary consequence in this and all similar discussions, is the following: The Christian and the non-christian are both bound here and everywhere by the same rules. What is right for one is not wrong for the other; God has no double standard, no partition walls in the Bible; no one set of laws for one class, and a modified set for another. If there were a difference it would certainly seem that the Christian should have the greater freedom, for in respect of privilege, the child takes precedence in the household of the Father; and if it were a privilege involving danger he has greater safeguards than any other. What a Christian then can not do safely, the non-christian will do at his peril.

I hold myself as a minister of our Lord Jesus Christ, at the widest liberty to engage in any recreation that is permissible and proper for mankind at large.

3. I am painfully aware that the frank and full analysis of this subject is beset with peculiar embarrassments. Indeed the weakness of the arguments against the dance

is that they are too strong. Almost every other amusement or indulgence except this, can be discussed in detail; we can define the beginnings of tendencies and trace them on to their end even if that end be in dishonor, ruin, and death; and no hand is lifted to stay our course; but this, the most dangerous and misleading of all the so-called popular amusements—aiming steadily at, and if tendencies be followed, and natural growth allowed, moving surely upon the citadel of defence that guards the highest and most sacred elements of manhood and womanhood, this thing of evil hides itself under a shield of assumed delicacy and claims immunity from exhaustive investigation.

For myself I can only say, I not only claim the privilege, but recognize the duty to speak plainly and strongly as I may upon all questions that bear upon the moral welfare of men. My answer to criticisms at this point is, if any of these questions prove in any of their aspects too unclean for a very genteel handling, I have no responsibility for the fact, but I have under a Divine commission a responsibility to take the mask off if I can and make the fact appear.

I shall speak of the dance as it is, and everybody will be supposed to know that I am not considering the mere keeping of time with the feet to music; nor a dance of one individual by himself or herself, nor of any number of individuals of the same sex dancing together,

any more than the religious dance of the ancients, or the war dance of the Indians; but the common pleasure-dance of modern society in which the sexes meet and move together with less or greater freedom of personal contact, according to the style of the figure that is being performed.

Let us inquire, what does the dance claim for itself? What on the ground of utility? What are its apologies; what its DEFENCE?

In connection with this question I ask your attention to a remarkable fact. Notwithstanding the popularity of the dance, and that it is, and for ages has been under perpetual arraignment, it seems to have found but few if any systematic and public defenders. We have books in any number devoted to explaining and advocating other amusements, base ball, croquet, the theater, and so on *ad infinitum*; but the dance, which is more patronized than any of them, which is assailed more freely than any of them, which has been challenged a thousand times, which has had the bitter morsel thrown in with the challenge that to describe would be to condemn it; the dance seems to be utterly without a champion in any public arena. I confess I have not made an extensive search, but I have never happened on a book or even a public lecture defending the dance, and I have made some inquiries for productions of that kind, but without results.

Has any one succeeded better? Who is the author or whose the treatise that makes careful and candid efforts to lift the libels from the dance; that describes the relative postures of the dancing partners; their general movements and particular motions; that analyzes the pleasurable sensations it induces, and then proves or endeavors to prove it is good for the body, improving to the mind, or refining and elevating to the moral nature. Hundreds of books have been written—thousands of sermons have been preached against it, but in the field of public discussion its enemies have everything their own way. Again we ask, why is this? Does not so singular a fact give broad intimation that the default among its friends is not for lack of ardor but of argument—that there is something in the nature of the dance itself, which will not bear close scrutiny under a strong light.

Whatever may be the reason, the fact remains that its apologetics are almost exclusively colloquial and confined to the social circle. Here it is not entirely without its claims, but they are as few and offered as unassumingly as its worst enemies could desire. This seems strange too, for its spirit is audacity itself. With genuine itinerant zeal, it will take its stock in trade and set up business for itself in the parlors of the conservative church member, piling up his furniture and shuffling away his best carpets in the most wanton way

with scarcely so much as saying "By your leave, Sir." It will do worse than that. It will go to the young and inexperienced Christian, and by dint of excessive persuasion strive to overslough his conscientious convictions, and if successful in getting him on the floor, will not infrequently be in haste to blazon the fact the next day, as an example of the inconsistency of a "professor of religion."

But it is modest enough when it comes to the specific work of setting forth its formal claims for recognition as a useful art.

1. It has asked to be considered a promoter of health, but every one who knows the dance as it is, knows that the violent, long continued exercise; the heated rooms; the rich unseasonable suppers; the general overstimulus of the occasion; and then the sudden change when nature is exhausted and the system relaxed, to the chill air of the midnight or early morning, produces anything but healthfulness; and if any doubted, the late rising, the sallow, half-sick dancer's appearance the next day, would file a very positive testimony in rebuttal of the claim. And if this were not enough, the early death of victims whose graves can be pointed out in many of our cemeteries, would give demonstration. A friend of mine calling at a house a few days since, was told by the mother that her daughter was lying on the borders of death from the effect of a cold taken while returning from a dance.

2. It is claimed that dancing gives an easy, self-possessed bearing in society. Unquestionably it does in *dancing* society; but if it give anything in the line of manners that cannot be better gained in non-dancing circles where ladies and gentlemen meet for the exercise and enjoyment of each other's thought and wit and fancy, it can be nothing else but that peculiar assurance which comes of the too free license that the dance allows. Heaven save us from much manners of that sort.

3. Its advocates plead for the dance that it trains to gracefulness of physical form and movement. Doubtless to some extent it does, yet certainly no well-bred lady or gentleman would choose elsewhere to pattern after the characteristic movements or manners of the dance-room.

4. Some of us are more or less familiar with an argument of this sort: "Young people must meet together, and as many are not qualified to spend much time in conversation, dancing is almost a necessity." We have said the claims of the dance to usefulness are modest ones, but this falls below the base-line of modesty, and is positively abject. Is it really meant that young people or others when they dance, tacitly confess that they lack the knowledge or the wit to entertain each other, and out of sheer paucity of brain power are forced to betake themselves to the exercise of their lower extrem-

ities? If so, let the thing be avowed frankly; if not so, let the argument be more fully explained or let it be withdrawn.

These are but beggarly buttresses for so imposing an institution, but few and feeble as they are, I know of no others.

But there are plenty of apologies. We are cited to the Scriptures, are told that David danced; that Solomon says, "there is a time to dance," &c. I shall refer to David's case a little further on. It will be enough for the present to say that David danced before the Lord when he had offered his burnt offerings and peace-offerings, and "blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts," at the time when the sacred ark of the covenant was being conveyed from the house of Obed-edom to the temple. So the dance of David was not the "dance as it is," and consequently not the kind we are considering.

Solomon said, "There is a time to dance;" he also said there is a time "to kill," "to cast away," "to hate," "to make war." These are amplifications of the statement of the preceding verse—"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven;" and may mean that there is a time, or opportunity while men are on the earth, for them to show their nature by doing what they desire to do. If, however, any think he intended to justify the dance of which

he speaks, it will be necessary to show that he did not mean the religious dance, and did mean the pleasure dance "as it is."

Every one has heard the expression kept in stock by the apologists of this amusement, "Better dance than slander your neighbors." Perhaps so. First prove the dance to be a veritable remedy for the vice alluded to, and no doubt all reasonable people would unite in recommending that so soon as the itching ardor to slander one's neighbor comes on, the patient would do well to retire to some secluded spot and dance with all needful vigor until the vicious symptoms abate. Of course, however, there could be no need of "partners," and equally of course none need take the remedy except the victims of the morbid malady.

Some of us have also met with this: "Better dance than engage in the silly kissing plays" which are more or less popular in certain extremely rural sections. Again, probably so; if the remedy meets the case, which seems not unlikely on the homœopathic principle, "*Similia similibus curanter.*" But it may not be amiss to remind our friends of the other part of the theory, viz: the necessity of infinitesimal doses; since obviously a dose in excess would have a fatal tendency to aggravate the disease.

The apologist generally endeavors to hold our investigation closely to the dance in its almost ideal, and

certainly least common form; and asks, what harm there can be in little children dancing; or brothers and sisters in the home; or a few intimate friends in a neighbor's private parlor?

But we query, why little children—brothers and sisters—private parlors? If the thing is right and clean, as we are assured it is, why these implied restrictions? Our suspicions are aroused. This pet of the parlor would seem after all to be an animal needing careful watching and rather close confinement for a pet, to prevent his doing some sort of mischief. But really the dance can not be confined. If little boys and girls dance, when they become young men and women they dance still, and if brothers and sisters and cousins dance together, they soon get mixed up with the brothers, sisters and cousins of other people, and the exhilaration is immensely enhanced thereby; and the parlor ceases to be in any special sense "private" when filled with dancing guests, and a dozen somebodies crave the privilege of introducing their particular gentleman friends to their particular lady friends, and this means and is understood to mean that the gentlemen expect the honor of dancing with these ladies, and everybody knows that to refuse them on the ground of a too brief acquaintance would violate the very foremost decree of etiquette, and turn social pandemonium loose on the company.

Let us now briefly as we may consistently with thoroughness, examine the Dance along the line of its HISTORY.

What has been its repute before those wise, and thoughtful, and philanthropic men who have stood in ages past, or who now stand as the guardians of public morals?

The Scriptures refer to two entirely dissimilar and distinct institutions under the common term of "dance." The first was a religious exercise, or, more properly, a peculiar method of expressing religious emotions. Miriam, the sister of Moses, and other women celebrating the miraculous passage of the Red Sea with timbrels and dances—David's dancing before the Lord when the ark was returned to its place in the Temple—and probably also the lame man who was healed by Peter and John, entering into the temple, "walking and leaping and praising God," are instances of "dancing," as it is called in the Bible when exercised under a religious spirit.

It appears to be the case, that in a very simple state of society people under strong religious feeling, sometimes express the exuberance of their emotion by a measured and more or less vehement movement of the body, either in time to music or without it. Those who

have witnessed the worship of the negroes of the South have an exact illustration of the matter. In the Bible this dancing is mentioned simply as a matter of fact without either approval or condemnation.

The other form is the pleasure-dance, illustrations of which are given in Job—where, as an exhibition of the contumacy “of the wicked” it is said, “they send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance;” and in the New Testament the dance of Salome, the daughter of the licentious Herodias, before Herod; who as a reward for the pleasure she gave him, at her request presented her the bloody head of John the Baptist.

This kind of dance is generally mentioned with condemnation, either direct or implied.

The dance is rebuked in the writings of the early Church Fathers; and even the great councils of primitive Christian times considered it of sufficient evil consequence to issue decrees against it. Single churches also passed edicts prohibiting it utterly. Such a document is or recently was in existence, emanating from the Church in Geneva some three hundred years ago; the reason for the prohibition given in the matter of fact style of the times being, that in the dance, “The men vexed the young girls by lewd posturings.”

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Waldenses and Albigenses considered indulgence in dancing a “Cardinal sin,” and called it “The devils’ procession.”

Among the churches of modern times, the General Assembly, the highest ecclesiastical authority of the great Presbyterian Church, adopted a report in 1876, affirming "the deliverances of the previous assemblies of both branches, deploring the practice of promiscuous dancing as a manifest inconsistency and regretting the giving of parties for such dancing by members of Christian families, as involving a compromise of their religious profession."

The law of the Methodist Episcopal Church in its book of discipline is stated in these words: "In cases of dancing, attending dancing parties, or patronizing dancing schools; first, let private reproof be administered by a preacher or leader, and if there be an acknowledgment of the fault and proper humiliation, the person may be borne with. On a second offense the preacher or leader may take one or two faithful friends. On a third offense let him be brought to trial, and if found guilty and there be no signs of real humiliation, he shall be expelled."

The Congregational Church, as represented by the best and wisest of its pastors and people, is fully up with the Presbyterian in its opinions and utterances upon this subject.

I said to a Baptist minister recently, who has a larger acquaintance among the churches of his denomination than any person I know: "What is the general senti-

ment in your church, ministry and membership, in regard to the dance?" With a very vigorous utterance he replied: "Most decidedly against it!"

The voices of many of the leading minds of the Protestant Episcopal Church join in this condemnation. Says Bishop Coxe in a late address to the clergy and laity of his diocese of Western New York:

"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 our 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."

A yet more impressive and pointed rebuke is administered by the Rev. Dr. Addison, in a paper on Christianity and popular amusements, read before a Church Congress held a few years since, and reported in the *Church Journal*. He says:

"I have spoken of the deposit in the soul of a divine life through Christ. I have to speak of what I may call another sacred deposit. It is not mental, nor spiritual, nor purely corporeal. It is perhaps the holiest thing that has survived the fall. It colors our earthly existence. It is the inspirer and enchanter of human life. It transfigures the hard world. It is the magical mistress of energy, poetry, and heroism. Shall I call it Love—the sacred affection that glorifies the relationship of man and wife? It is a great mystery; so the Holy

Ghost designates it. God created and blessed it in Eden. He has thrown around it the shield of law. Christ forbids violence to it even by a glance. All Scripture says: 'Keep it sacred; let not even the breath of an impure thought touch it.' It is veiled in the inmost recess of our being. It is a sort of holy of holies. At the entrance, God's voice, all the enginery of providential punishment, all the wrath of coming judgments are arrayed, forbidding the intrusion of impurity as the very 'abomination of desolation.' I bring this charge against dancing—that it is the desecration of this holy mystery. This is a serious charge; and if it be true, constituting it a sin, a monstrous sin. Let me define the dancing of the day. A woman, improperly dressed, pressed against the person of her partner, whirling around a room. This is only a definition of the visibility, the outward aspect. It is no reply to this to say it is descriptive only of excess. The excess is now the fashion, and fashion is imperious, inexorable and irresistible. The square dance cannot be kept square. Preach and moralize as we may, it will be rounded off by the waltz. Put the old modest style on the floor of the ball-room to-day, and just as surely as the loosened rock of the precipice will fall into the chasm below, will it fall into the arms, and be pressed against the bosom of the German."

The ecclesiastics of even the Roman Catholic Church in many sections have forbidden round dances among their adherents.

Possibly some may say, "After all, these are but the straight-laced notions of puritanical religionists; and we don't propose to submit to any such sanctimonious dictation, but to assert and enjoy at our discretion a larger liberty."

But wait, my friend, the testimony is not all in.

Our next witness shall be Cicero, the most distinguished of Roman statesmen and orators. While we recognize that the social conditions of his times were very different from those of ours, yet it is quite relevant to our theme that we learn from him the status of the dance in his day from the avowal he makes of the moral status of the dancer. He is defending a Consul from various indictments.

“Cato calls Licinias Murena a ‘dancer.’ If this reproach be well grounded, it is a weighty accusation; but if false it is an outrageous calumny. Wherefore, M. Cato, as your authority carries so much influence with it, you ought never to snatch a charge from the mouths of the rabble, or the slanderous language of buffoons: nor ought you to call the Consul of the Roman people a ‘dancer’ but to consider how many other offenses a man must be guilty of before that of dancing can be truly objected to him; for nobody ever dances, even in solitude, or in a private meeting of friends, who is not either drunk or mad. Dancing is the last act of riotous banquets, gay places, and much jollity.”

The great Roman who gives us this has not escaped criticism for imperfections of life and character, but the charge of austerity of morals has never been predicated of him.

Dr. Butler, who was for many years a resident of India, and who has given the world the results of his observation, experience and study in his book, “The Land of the Veda,” thus treats the question before us:

“No man in India would allow his wife or daughter to dance, and as to dancing with another man, he would forsake her forever as a woman lost to virtue and modesty, if she were to attempt it. In their observation of white women, there is nothing that so much perplexes them as the fact that fathers and husbands will permit their wives and daughters to indulge in promiscuous dancing. No argument will convince them that the act is such as a virtuous female should practice, or that its tendency is not licentious. The prevalence of the practice in ‘Christian’ nations makes our holy religion—which they suppose must allow it—to be abhorred by many of them, and often it is cast in the teeth of our missionaries when preaching to them. All the dancing they desire, on occasions of festivals and ceremonies, they hire from the temples and bazars. Four or five women, tricked out in all their finery and jewelry, and tinkling ornaments on arms, necks and feet, will for four or five dollars, dance and jest, and sing India’s licentious songs for hours: but even then they don’t dance except with their own sex. They are prostitutes.”

Medical men volunteer scientific evidence from their standpoint. Here is the testimony of Dr. Mank concerning the influence of dancing on children, which has been considered quite free from reasonable objections:

“One unhygienic result of dancing, is the premature development of the passions. These are latent up to a certain age, and are designed to take their proper place in the regular order of development. In this, nature is often frustrated by the intervention of artificial means, to hasten the process, when irreparable damage is done. Dancing is not one of the least of the means that are employed to accomplish this end. There are enough things that tend in this direction without any assistance from a passion-provoking process like dancing. In a

ball-room there is a promiscuous crowd. Many are strangers to each other. The 'sets' are formed, the music strikes up, and the dance begins. The pantomime that now commences is of such a nature as to express the emotional language of the passions. *All may not be able to interpret its true meaning, but the effect is the same.* Again, in the waltz, liberties are taken that would be regarded as highly improper under any other circumstances. It allows the gentleman to clasp his partner about the waist, when he holds her in a close embrace through a long series of rapid evolutions, until she is glad to rest upon his shoulder, from sheer exhaustion. The effect of dancing in this respect may be altogether different when practiced in the home circle between members of the family, but *even here* there may be a taste formed in the young that amounts to an infatuation, which soon seeks gratification in a more public place. No greater misfortune can befall a boy or girl than to be subjected to such a forcing process. It causes them to become developed in advance of their age, and being naturally impulsive, they are easily led beyond the bounds of propriety and into sin."

Gail Hamilton says of the dance :

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

The most outspoken book of the century against the waltz, is written by one who gives no evidence of being a member of any church, but who is most evidently an educated man of the world, who has seen a great deal of life in this country and in Europe. He claims that both pulpit and press have failed to do their duty and that hence "a layman must speak or the

stones will cry out against him." This book, before whose scathing and tremendous onslaught, the strongest things I have said or shall say, are weakness itself, is published with the eulogistic endorsement of thirty-seven newspapers, nearly all of them secular; and of thirty-eight individuals, with but very few clergymen among them, but professors of colleges; lady and gentlemen principals of high schools; one mayor; officers of the army and navy; and prominent business men, who "speak that they do know, and testify that they have seen."

I have yet more damaging testimony in a bit of "states-evidence" which has come to hand. I take the following from the *S. S. Teachers' Journal*.

"In the city of San Francisco, Madam —— was a French teacher of dancing. She kept a dancing hall, to which respectable people went. In the parlance of society it was considered 'the thing' for very nice people to go to M ——'s dancing hall. One day the lady remarked to Mr. ——, a most reliable church-member in the city, 'Don't let your daughter dance. It is a step to ruin. I have seen,' she continued 'young women and young married women of the most respectable society, take their first downward step in this hall.' Madame spoke these words with much earnestness, and the gentleman to whom they were spoken, repeated them to the writer during his recent visit to California.

The *New York Journal of Education*, a purely secular paper, says :

“A great deal can be said about dancing; for instance, the Chief of Police of New York City says that three-fourths of the abandoned girls in this city were ruined by dancing. Young ladies allow gentlemen privileges in dancing, which, taken under any other circumstances, would be considered as improper. It requires neither brains nor good morals to be a good dancer. As a love of the one increases the love of the other decreases. How many of the best men and women are skillful dancers? Alcohol is the spirit of beverages. So sex is the spirit of the dance. Take it away, and let the sexes dance separately, and dancing would go out of fashion very soon. Parlor dancing is dangerous. Tippling leads to drunkenness, and parlor dancing leads to ungodly balls. Tippling and parlor dancing sow to the wind, and both reap the whirlwind. Put dancing in the crucible, and apply the acids, weigh it, and the verdict of reason, morality, and religion is, ‘Weighed in the balance and found wanting.’”

The captain of the police district in the city of New York in which the largest number of brothels is found, recently made a statement to a minister of my own conference exactly corroborating the testimony of his chief.

In some cases, and I believe this to be one, it is admissible for the plaintiff to take the stand.

I could give many examples of the pernicious results of the amusements we are considering, but for brevity's sake will mention but one. I remember a young and lovely girl, the playmate of my early childhood, our families sometimes visiting each other. She was brought up under genuine Christian nurture, and became a most promising youthful Christian. At the proper age she

married a young man of good character who was also a communicant of the Christian Church. After marriage he thought they had been living with needless scrupulousness, and induced her to go into society where dancing was thought not to be improper and was practiced. She soon became infatuated with it, and in a very few years she lost her child, by neglect the neighbors said, engendered by her love of dancing; then her marriage vow, administered by my own father, who is now with God, was violated; then came jealousy, and separation without divorce; and that child of carefulest Christian culture has since lived with a paramour. And mark, it was not in the ball-room or public hall, but at the "social" among friends and neighbors, dancing in their own "private parlors," where the mischief was begun.

We close the evidence for the prosecution here, not for lack of witnesses, however, and defer our summing up for the present, only calling attention to the fact that in all nations, and through all times, the pleasure-dance has been associated with immorality. Can we, dare we believe or say that the connection is a bare unphilosophical coincidence? Does not everybody know that in the technical parlance of the day, a "dance house" is a place into which virtue seldom enters, and from which it never returns? A place whose front windows admit the sunlight and where the bait is spread for the unwary; but whose back chambers open out into the stench, and gloom, and infamy of hell?

Now, let us take a step further. We are far on the way; we will find the center of this thing if we can. We want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Let us make the *descensus ad inferos* unflinchingly, once for all, and drag to light the MYSTERY.

What is the point of power in the dance?

Evidently it is something common to human nature, for we find it in savage and civilized nations, and in ancient and modern times. Dancing, at the lewd worship of Astarte and Baal in old Phœnicia, and at the Greek and Roman festivals in the degenerate days of those nations; of the Ghawazee of Egypt, and the Nauch girls of India; the wild licentious revels of the islanders of the South Seas, and the aborigines of Colorado; the fandango of Spain, and the can-can of Paris; the social dance of the country neighborhood; the "grand hop," in the gorgeous parlors of our great cities; the ballet in their theatres, and the nightly whirl in the *dives* of their slums, are at infinite divergence at many points, but they have something in common. What is it? What do people dance for? Is it to emulate the example of David, or to verify Solomon "that the Scriptures may be fulfilled?" Is it to gain grace of motion, or ease of manners; or is it to forestall the tendency to "slander one's neighbors," or to turn the edge of a temptation to osculatory improprieties? Let us be serious.

Is the enjoyment intellectual? There is no opportunity for literary exercises, nor even for an exchange of ideas in conversation. In the clatter of confusing sounds, the shuffling of "fantastic" toes, the whisking of ladies' skirts, the music, and above and through all the monotonous *blare* of the high-priest of the revel "calling off," etc., etc., there is nothing for the brain but jar and jostle, and whirl and dizziness.

But does the power-point lie in the music? To some extent, no doubt; but people cannot be kept *all night*, to listen to the most entrancing orchestras, and here there is often but the banging of a piano, or the squeaking of one poor fiddle. They tell us of the poetry of motion, of the rhythmic cadence in the blood that leaps to the measure of the music; but why for the enjoyment of "music"—"poetry of motion," and a' that and a' that, is it a never-varying necessity that a man must hold a woman's hand and clasp a woman's form? No, these are but accessories, and garnishings of the real banquet. Our question is open still. Let a noble woman who consents to speak out for the good she hopes to do, answer it from her own experience. I quote from a little book called "The Dance of Death," before alluded to. The author says:

"Shortly after I determined to publish a protest against the abominations of the waltz, it became plainly apparent to me that I must, if possible, obtain the views

on the subject of some intelligent and well-known lady, whose opinion would be received with respect by all the world. With this end in view I addressed one of the most eminent women of America. I could not foretell the result of such a step; I hardly dared hope she would accede to my request in any shape. But I knew if she did speak, it would be according to her honest convictions.

This lady generously and freely offered me the use of her name, but I have concluded it would be a poor return for her kindness and self-devotion to expose her to the fiery ordeal of criticism she would in that case have to endure, and withhold it for the present."

The lady writes:

"I will venture to lay bare a young girl's heart and mind by giving you my own experience in the days when I waltzed. In these times I cared little for Polka or Varsouvienne, and still less for the old-fashioned 'Money Musk' or 'Virginia Reel,' and wondered what people could find to admire in these 'slow dances;' but in the soft floating of the waltz I found a strange pleasure, rather difficult to intelligibly describe. The mere anticipation fluttered my pulse, and when my partner approached to claim my promised hand for the dance, I felt my cheeks glow a little sometimes, and I could not look him in the eyes with the same frank gayety as heretofore. But the climax of my confusion was reached when folded in his warm embrace, and giddy with the whirl, a strange, sweet thrill would shake me from head to foot, leaving me weak and almost powerless; and really almost obliged to depend for support upon the arm which encircled me. If my partner failed from ignorance, lack of skill or innocence to arouse these to me most pleasurable sensations, I did not dance with him the second time.

I am speaking openly and frankly, and when I say that I did not understand what I felt or what were the

real and greatest pleasures I derived from this so-called dancing, I expect to be believed. But if my cheeks grew red with uncomprehended pleasure then, they grow pale with shame to-day when I think of it all. It was the physical emotion engendered by the magnetic contact of strong men that I was enamored of—not of the dance, nor even of the men themselves.

Thus I became abnormally developed in my lowest nature. I grew bolder, and from shy glances at first was soon able to meet more daring ones, until the waltz became to me one lingering, sweet and purely sensual pleasure, where heart beat against heart, hand was held in hand, and eyes looked burning words which lips dared not speak.

All this while no one said to me, "you do wrong;" so I dreamed of sweet words whispered during the dance, and often felt while alone a thrill of joy indescribable yet overpowering, when my mind would turn from my studies to remember a piece of temerity of unusual grandeur on the part of one or another of my cavaliers.

Girls talk to each other. I was still a school girl although mixing so much with the world. We talked together and none but ourselves knew what subjects we discussed. Had our parents heard us they would have thought us on the high road to ruin. Yet we had been taught that it was right to dance; our parents did it, our friends did it, and we were permitted. I will say also that all the girls with whom I associated, with the exception of one, had much the same experience in dancing; felt the same strangely sweet emotions, and felt that almost imperative necessity for a closer communion than that which even the freedom of the waltz permits; without knowing exactly why, or even comprehending what. Married now, with home and children around me, I can at least thank God for the experience which will assuredly be the means of preventing my little daughters from indulging in any such dangerous pleasure. I have

not hesitated to lay bare what are a young girl's most secret thoughts, in the hope that people will stop and consider at least before handing their lilies of purity over to the arms of any one who may choose to blow the frosty breath of dishonor on their petals."

No doubt many will cry "shame!" at this, and surely there is something shameful here; but what is it? The frank, brave confession; or, the subtle, deceptive, devilish thing—call it amusement, indulgence, what you will—which with too well affected innocence betrayed into the almost fatal danger, and made the confession necessary as a red light of warning to the millions who are equally exposed.

"But," says a prudent dancer, "you make no distinction between the harmless square dances and the round dances, which we acknowledge to be improper." I answer first, the square dances are unpopular and but little practiced except by beginners; and second, I do make a distinction, but it is between the bad and the worse. The most objectionable is simply lower down the grade, but the grade itself is even, and in a double sense, *easy*. It begins just below the lowermost edge of intelligent propriety and descends through various styles and names to the waltz, the most admired of all; which curvets along the crumbling verge of bald, unblushing immorality. I say the grade is "easy." So easy, that if the dancer is not checked by the thought that "the ice is getting thin"—and this is only less debasing

than to yield to the current—he is about as sure to go from the square to the round, as a hungry man at dinner is to pass from soup and fish, through all the courses, to the nuts and raisins. Let me give a little experience. I have not always been a minister or a Christian. In my dancing days, the first figures on the floor would not usually be *square*, but *long*, and often it was difficult to secure “a set” for the first dance. But the Virginia reel would soon shorten up into the square cotillion, and after supper, when the blood was up, and bashfulness over, the corners of the “square” would round off into something more energetic and less fastidious.

Besides, the dancer does not always have the privilege of determining the details of the figure. Suppose the dictator of destiny who rules the hour, in order to “break up the stiffness,” or to magnify his office, chooses to call off, in the very crisis of the “stately quadrille,” “Waltz up and down the center,” or “All hands waltz around the outside.” What will our prudent friends do? Will they simply promenade and get sadly in the way, or will they leave in disgust and break up the dance and scandalize everybody; or will they accept the little joke and like it so well as to forget their scruples and be ready to try it again?

A gentleman advertised for a coachman. At the time and place appointed, several candidates offered themselves. “Well, boys,” said the would-be employer,

“Have you had experience?” They had all had experience. “How near could you drive to the edge of a precipice without endangering the coach?” “I could go within a foot or two,” said one. “I could drive to the very edge, Sir;” said another. “I’d give it as wide a berth as possible, if you please, Zur,” said a third; and a bargain was struck with him at once.

Adventurers in casuistry, practicing in the department of the calculation of moral chances, may endeavor to draw a boundary line across and half-way down the rapids if they will; but the minister of God is engaged in too serious a business to venture any such Quixotic experiments.

“You do not distinguish between the dancing of the higher and lower classes;” pleads the objector again. I beg to answer, I am not discussing people, but an institution. I speak of the dance solely as a thing of tendencies and essentially involving temptations. It cannot be necessary to say, except to forestall invidious criticism, that, excluding *professionals*, it is not doubted that the vast majority of those who dance, and especially the purer sex, are entirely innocent in intention. They enter the dance under the spell of the witching wand of Fashion, thinking no evil; they do not analyze their consciousness, or, if an ugly question intrude, its very grossness causes it to be repelled, and the thought that “everybody dances,” soothes the

conscience to rest again. Who does not know that danger is multiplied a hundred fold when hidden and unsuspected?

Regarding external conditions, I will discriminate as far as you like between the gorgeous parlors and the poor "front room;" the frescoes, and the cracked ceiling; the paintings, and the smoke grime; the silk, and the alpaca; the faultless outfit, and the bad "best suit." I know the soft flutter of the kid slipper on the dancing cloth, over the rich Axminster, differs from the thud and shuffle of the brogan on the sanded floor. As for other discriminations they will be made when the Thrones are set, and the Books are opened, and the unveiling of each *internal* life history reveals which endured most successfully the moral strain of the dance, the cultured, high-browed men and women of "society;" or the common, low-browed men and women of brawn. Till then let high and low who will handle fire and would escape its burning, revise their devotions and pray, "Let us enter into temptation, but deliver us from evil." George Fox once said: "One fact is worth a hundred arguments."

Let me catalogue, in closing, a few facts on the dance:

No other popular amusement bears marks of equal dishonor.

It has been in all ages associated with immorality.

It has been condemned by the wisest and best of men in ancient and modern times.

It has always been, and is, the favorite amusement of the lowest and vilest classes.

In the dances condemned by the sages of antiquity, except among the abandoned, the sexes did not mingle promiscuously, and hence our popular dancing is more objectionable than theirs.

If children are taught to dance, they will be likely to dance when older, and dancing in private assemblies, tends toward public balls.

The voluptuous and profligate are often represented in "private" assemblies.

The chief charm of the dance consists in bringing the sexes into a closeness of contact that would be confessedly improper and shameful without the dance for an apology.

If many young women could hear the confidential talk of many young men after the dance is over, they would never indulge in it again.

Those who avow the lowest estimate of female virtue are generally dancing men.

The professional seducer hunts his victim more frequently and successfully in the dance-room than at any other place.

In Paris, the city of all others in Christendom most

notorious for dancing, *one-third of the children are born out of wedlock.*

THE DANCE IS DAMNED BY ITS HISTORY, ITS MYSTERY IS "THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY."

In the presence and name of Almighty God I have set the seal to the forehead of the Siren; and the testimony of a cloud of witnesses, and the ever-accumulating facts of all times have pressed home the brand. They stamp her a thing of false pretences; a corrupter of the springs of virtue; a profaner of the mystery of marriage; a panderer of divorce; a masked harlot; a procuress of the pit that is bottomless. With wanton ways, and flowing garments, and painted face, and honeyed tongue: "She sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, to call passengers who go right on their ways; 'whoso is simple let him turn in hither;' and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him: 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.' But he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell."

