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PERILS

OF THE

CHURCH

IN THE

WORLD OF TO-DAY.

A Series of Four Sermons

By E. L. POWELL,

THE PERILS OF THE STAGE.
THE PERILS OF THE DANCE.
THE PERILS OF SOCIETY.
THE PERILS OF BUSINESS.

DELIVERED IN THE

Fourth and Walnut st., Christian Church,

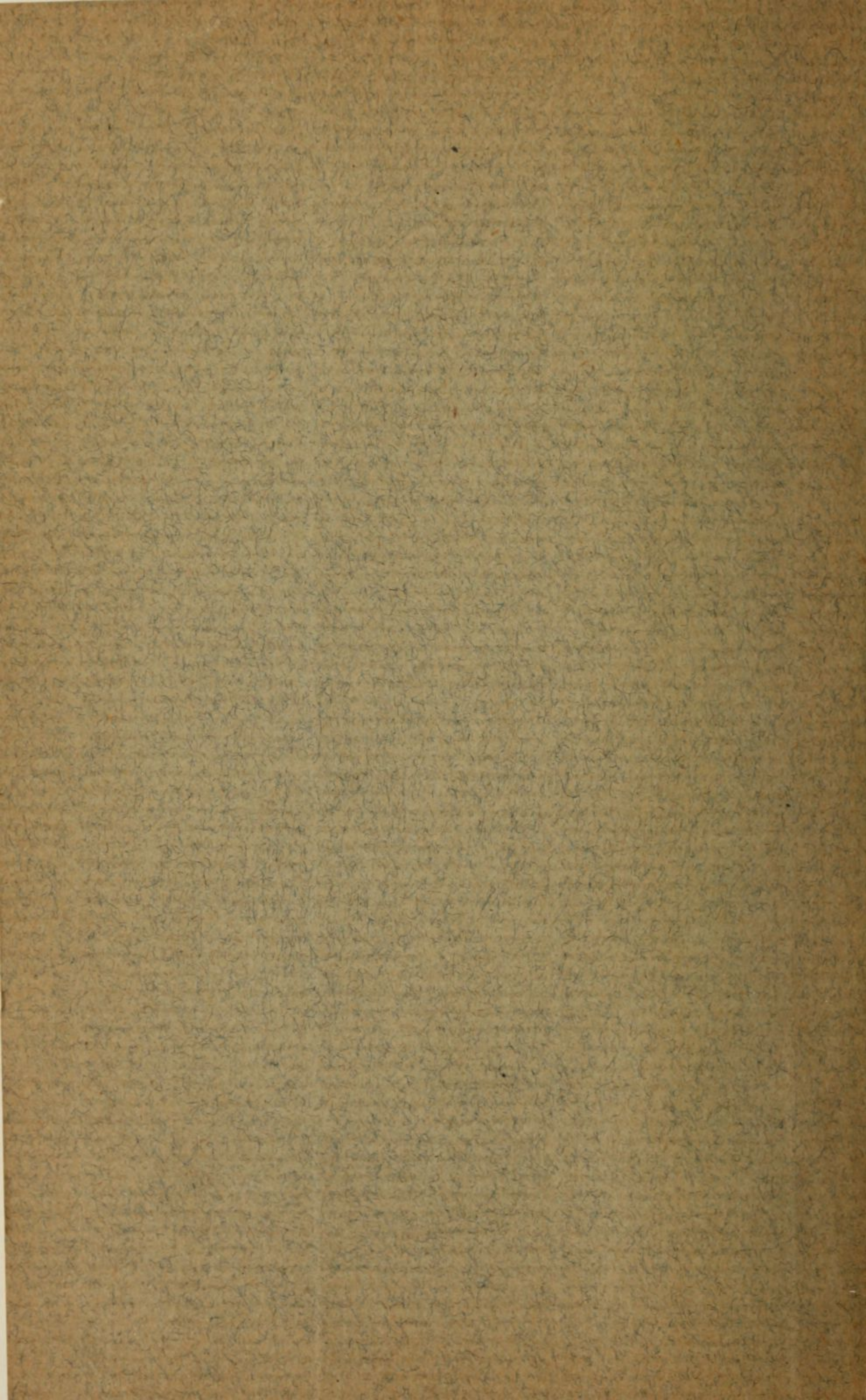
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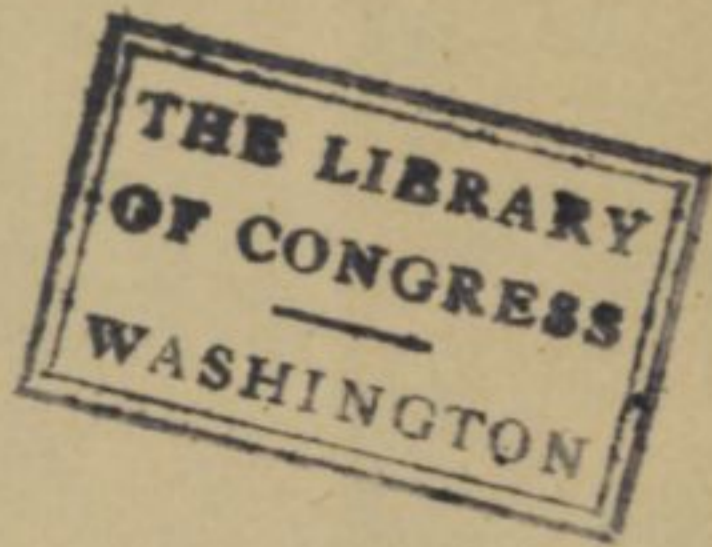
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LADIES RELIEF UNION OF FIRST CHRISTIAN
CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY.

PERILS OF THE STAGE.

It is interesting to read the history of the theatre. This institution, extending as far back as the days of the immortal Aeschylus, in whose time the first theatre was hewn in the rocky side of the Acropolis, has descended to us crowned with years, but not with honor. It can boast of a most antiquated and eventful history, but a history by no means entitling it to apotheosis. Some of the most brilliant names in literature are connected with the theatre, but the lustre of their fame has failed to dignify the stage whereon were enacted their glorious productions.

That the drama occupies an important place in the world of letters will not be denied, but its prominence does not make useless a discussion of the moral tendency of the theatre.

In the consideration of this question, we do not wish, under the influence of prejudice, to deviate from the truth. While admitting all that can be truthfully spoken in favor of the theatre, we

wish candidly to bring before you opposing arguments, and you are called upon to decide in the light of the facts thus submitted. Let it be understood that we are to discuss the moral tendency of the theatre—studying its drift as it is made known to us both in the past and present. The stage has been an existing institution for over two thousand years. All favorable influences for its developments have, at different times in its history, surrounded it. Genius has brought its most costly offerings and laid them on its altar. It has been patronized by wealth and learning. While it has met with opposition, it has had free course to run and be glorified, if worthy of glorification. What results has it achieved in the moral world? What has been the almost uniform influence which it has exerted? What spiritual conquest has it ever made? Where are those who will affirm that their characters have been made more true, beautiful and good, by being its patrons? Let us turn the pages of history, and what are the facts that are brought to our attention?

1. Consider the origin of the institution. The two great divisions of dramatic literature—literature, that is, intended to be represented by action—

are tragedy and comedy. This division was the creation of the ancient Greeks. Notice how tragedy and comedy were born. "In the festivals of Bacchus, the wine-god, which consisted of licentious dances and songs round his altar by persons disguised in goat-skins as fauns and satyrs (being half-man and half-goat) we must look for the earliest phase of tragedy. From the dress of those who composed the chorus, or because a goat was sacrificed, or a goat-skin of wine was awarded to the poet who wrote the best ode for the occasion; such ode was called a tragedy or goat-song, and the name was afterwards extended to the whole department of dramatic poetry to which those rude hymns gave rise." As to comedy the same classical author thus writes: "Comedy was elaborated from the village songs rife during the gala days of the vintage, when companies of noisy revellers, their cheeks stained with wine-lees, went about from town to town, plunging into all kinds of excesses, and garnishing their songs with jokes at the expense of the spectators." The very word comedy is from a Greek word, meaning a band of revellers. From these Bacchanalian orgies sprang the theatre. It is most certainly bad in its origin. I

do not deny that tragedy and comedy were subsequently improved and refined, but I do affirm that the tragedy and comedy of our modern theatre are more suggestive of their origin, taken in connection with their accompaniments, than of any subsequent improvement they have undergone.

The modern theatre may well be dedicated to Bacchus. Tragedy and comedy alike have still their vulgar and indecent accompaniments. The licentious dance, as a part of theatrical machinery, still survives. The habitue of our play-houses will not deny that revelry is still a feature of the expected program. I do not affirm that every tragedy is bad; every comedy impure, or that every stage has enacted on it immorality. We speak of the theatre as a totality, and claim that as it exists to-day, it is suggestive of its immoral origin. You have but to examine the bills as they are posted about the streets of our cities to be assured of the truth of what has been said. "The dead walls are covered with flaunting pictorial representations of scenes and of actors in full dress (or of no dress at all); and many of these are of such disgusting indecency that they deserve suppression by the public authorities. If the pictures be so shameless, what

must the originals be? ” From an extract published in the *Courier-Journal*, taken from *The Theatre*, a dramatic paper of New York, I quote the following: Mark you, this is from a paper professedly dedicated to the interests of the stage. The author is tracing the influence of the theatre on our social life. He says: “It is easy to see, is it not, how powerful can be the effect of stage immorality, and it is not to be wondered at that men of literature and learning, of wide and liberal knowledge, whose mission it is to warn and guard, declare in this art an evil which is fostered there simply because this art is prostituted for selfish purposes. We have no public censor in this country. The only method of determining the immorality of a stage performance is to see it for ourselves, but unhappily that is where the mischief is done.

It is only a few years ago that parents would not think of allowing their daughters to witness a ballet-piece like the ‘Black Crook.’ But that time has gone by, and young men and maidens sit together and witness almost nudity, without the droop of an eyelid. The Grand Opera during the last few seasons, has given more utterance to immorality in the auditorium

and on the stage than anything else, for its effect has been among those who had not yet become fully acquainted with this." No wonder that even a secular paper like the *Courier-Journal* should say, "It is a shame to the age." Born in sin, the theatre exists to-day in iniquity.

2. But you are ready to say, it may be, the history of the theatre is not altogether evil. Let this be granted, nevertheless I am prepared to maintain that its history has been more frequently stained with immorality than brightened with virtue. The first theatre was erected, if I read correctly, at Athens. Under its favoring skies the drama soon advanced to perfection. From the time of Aeschylus until the Peloponesian war deprived Athens of her supremacy, may be considered the golden age of dramatic literature. Then Aeschylus gave to the world his immortal "Prometheus Bound"; Sophocles his "Oedipus," and Euripedes his "Medea." Then Aristophanes brought to perfection Grecian comedy, and "Nature broke the mould in which he was cast." Admitting the high order of this literature, although of the comedy of this age, it has been said that it was "always personal and sometimes scurrilous in its attacks, too often

course and licentious in its tone"—admitting that the stage was a moral educator—admitting all this we must exclaim as we take the next step in its history, and certainly as we view it to-day—"Now is the fine gold become dim." From the Greeks the Romans copied their theatre, but certainly it was not so high-toned or dignified in its representations, for we read: "The first stone theatre among the Romans was pulled down when nearly finished at the instance of Publius Scipio Nasica (755 B. C.) on the score of public immorality." A writer on Latin literature says: "Certainly in the time of Scipio and Hannibal—the time of Livius Andronicus, the first Roman author, the stage had not become a safe moral educator of the people." Nor could it be when the plays of Plautus and Terence were enacted. Of Plautus it is said: "The tone of his drama is far from elevating, his humor tho' bold and sprightly, is coarse; and his Greek pictures of imbecile fathers, dissipated sons, intriguing slaves, jealous husbands, hungry parasites and disreputable female characters, had their effect in undermining the stern old Roman virtue." It would appear that at Rome from the very beginning the profession of an actor was held to be

dishonorable. Julius Cæsar punished Labienus, a writer of epigrams and farces, by forcing him to appear on the stage, when he was sixty years old, recite a play and act a comic piece. The stage was but the preparation so far as Rome was concerned for still coarser amusements. Rome was no genial home for the tragic drama, and both tragedy and comedy began to languish. With Terence the glory of the Roman theatre expired. Rope-dancing, buffoonery and the games of the circus offered superior attractions, and as the Republic lapsed into the Empire, the degenerate taste of the people sought gratification in the sports of the arena, where gladiators fought together or with wild beasts hardly more of brutes than themselves." If this was the best to which the theatre could educate them, we may not speak a word favorable to the theatre. I need not trace the history of the theatre in England. Having a religious origin, beginning with the "mysteries" or "miracle-plays," intended for the strengthening of the church, then introducing the "Moralities" or ethical plays, and finally reaching a consummation in the "Interludes" or plays of social life—it has deviated ever since from all relig-

ious influences and surroundings. Not only has the stage drifted farther and farther away from its religious origin, but also from common morality and decency. To read the history of the English stage is to have brought before you a picture of corruption that no one need wish to retain in his memory. My proposition is, therefore, substantiated—the history of the stage has been more frequently stained with immorality than brightened with virtue.

3. Observe, still again, that the stage has always reflected the *lowest* taste of its age. “Plautus and Terence have been imitated in every land and both were forced to obey the course taste of the savage Romans.” In England the same was true. You have but to study the taste of the people, to ascertain the good or bad influence of the theater. I quote from Taine’s English Literature, and you will see the taste that was gratified by the English stage; “They thought insults and obscenity a joke. They were foul-mouthed, they listened to Rabelais’ words undiluted, and delighted in conversation which would revolt us. They had no respect for humanity. They all blurted out the word that fitted in, and that was most frequently a coarse one. You will see on the stage in Shakespear’s

Pericles, the filth of a haunt of vice. The great lords, the well-dressed ladies, speak Billingsgate. When Henry Fifth pays his court to Catherine of France, it is with the coarse bearing of a sailor, who may have taken a fancy to a sutler. Humanity is as much lacking as decency." "To please the public the stage can not deal too much in open lust and strong passions; it must depict man attaining the limit of his desires, unchecked, almost mad, now trembling and rooted before the white palpitating flesh which his eyes devour." "We hear from the stage as from the history of the time these fierce murmurs. The sixteenth century is like a den of lions." Now while there may have been spasmodic spells of improvement in the theater, its uniform trend has been in the direction of such immorality as Taine has depicted. Our own stage is but an added proof of my proposition. What do our theaters give us? To whose taste do they cater? To that taste which cries for indecent and immoral exhibitions. I need not bring forward evidence. The experiment, as tried in Boston, of so managing a theater as to exclude every indelicacy from the stage, and every notoriously improper person from the audience, ended in pecuniary failure.

The puritanic play-house soon went into bankruptcy.

The chief object of the manager is to make money, and if he can spice his evening's entertainment with a plot that turns on a seduction or a scene of sexual passion, or with a salacious exposure of physical beauty, the temptation is too strong to be very often resisted. Would you have additional proof? I ask you to examine the plays. Look at the titles of some of them: "Russian Honeymoon," "Hot Water," "Tom, Dick and Harry." I read from the *Enquirer*: "Augustus Daly and two detectives escorted the English playwrights, Jones and Pinero, through the dives of New York." We can look for a new melo-drama next season entitled, "Alone in New York." The plays that win, the plays that draw, the plays that put money into the exchequer, are those that cater to a depraved and vitiated taste. And those of you who patronize the theater are aiding in the strengthening of such a taste.

Fourth—I ask you to notice that the lives of actors are notoriously immoral. Those who gave luster to the English stage—a writer says of them: "They were most of them men of liberal education, but of dissolute lives." That

has been almost uniformly true. Do they care anything for the Lord's day? You are acquainted with the fight that has been made in Cincinnati on the above question. Are they patrons of the Lord's house? A converted actor in passing a play house in which he had performed, said: "Behind those curtains lies Sodom." From a clipping of mine I read the following: "When clergymen speak against the theater and express doubts as to the characters of actors they are often charged with bigotry and uncharitableness. Mr. Burnand, editor of *London Punch*, is not likely to be influenced by such tendencies, and he says that if a well brought-up young lady goes on the stage 'one of two things will happen: either she will be so thoroughly disgusted by what she hears and sees that she will never go near the place after the first visit, or she will unconsciously deteriorate in tone, until the fixed lines of the moral boundary have become blurred and faint.' He adds that, 'If among the surroundings of the theater a girl remains pure in heart, it is nothing short of a miracle of grace.'" The population of the show world is estimated at 100,000. You are encouraging a great multitude in lives of immorality.

Fifth—Let us devote the remainder of this discussion to the question: Ought Christians to patronize theaters?

(a) I am told that only in this way can the moral tone of the theater be raised. In answering this suggestion, let me give you Spurgeon's opinion: "The suggestion is about as sensible as if we were bidden to pour lavender water into the great sewer to improve its aroma. If the church is to imitate the world in order to raise its tone, things have strangely altered since the day when our Lord said: 'Come ye out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing.' Is heaven to descend to the infernal lake to raise its tone? Such has been the moral condition of the theatre for many a year, that it has become too bad for mending, and even if it were mended it would corrupt again."

(b) But, we are informed that one should attend the theater in order that he may by seeing vice enacted turn from it with loathing.

"Vice is a monster of such frightful mein
As to be hated, needs but to be seen."

If this were true, we would not have habitual theater goers, The result is, as Pope shows, that the thing which we may at first loathe comes to be loved and then embraced. It is bad

enough to read impurity—ininitely worse to have it stalking before you on the stage.

(c) But, one may say, we have no right to condemn the stage until we have become acquainted with its depravity, and in order to do this we must frequently visit the theater. As well say you have no right to condemn poison until you have taken it. You know the results of poison. Likewise you know the results of the theater. It is the very argument that stage managers make to the world. They say to the preachers, you have no right to condemn before you have seen. Recently the National Opera Company gave an invitation to the Chicago preachers to attend their performances, and then judge of their moral trend. It was but the invitation of the spider to the fly. They knew the iniquity of their scheme, but to give themselves respectability they issued their invitation. Some of the preachers were caught in the trap; they went, and the *Evening Post*, of Cincinnati, thus comments on the affair: "The Chicago preachers who went, by invitation, to see the ballet of the American Opera, went there to satisfy their curiosity and see what it looked like. That's what all the young men

and women of their congregations go there for. They can not consistently exhort their parishioners to refrain from going where they themselves go. The excuse that they desired to inform themselves that they might forcibly condemn it, is too thin." Then follows a description of the ballet, which is too indecent for me to read. Then the writer adds: "Those preachers knew all this before they went there, for it is a matter of conceded, undisputed, universal knowledge. Yet they went there to see whether it was bad or not. Bah!" What a nicely-laid trap! Come and see, before you condemn. Then make use of their example to urge their parishioners to go! O! the cunning of wickedness. The world will seek to win you by this false argument. Remember it is a lie.

But now a few reasons why Christians should not patronize the theatre, if any additional beyond those which have been given, are needed.

(a) The almost uniform voice of the church opposes it. Christianity nowhere approves it. It is heathen in its origin, as we have shown. Tertullian regarded the dramatic art as the "offspring of hell" and the stage as part of the devil's pomp, which the candidate for baptism must renounce forever. Chry-

sostom courageously opposed the theatrical passion of Antioch andConstantinople and declared the stage was the house of Satan and lies, the consumation of unchastity, the Babylonian furnace, which is heated with combustible material of unchaste words and attitudes. Augustine, after his conversion condemned the theatre as severely as he had before patronized it habitually. Nor is the voice of the church less earnest to-day in its protest against this institution.

(b) This opposition is based on serious considerations:

(1) It endangers purity of character. "I'd give my right hand," said a Christian, "if I could rub out the abominable things that I put into my mind when I was a fast young man." Look not on impurity, if you would not have your soul stained.

(2) It is ruinous to piety. Your worldly Christians are found there. Did you ever hear of a regular theatergoer who was a very devoted Bible-reader or very earnest in his Christian life?

(3) It strengthens into a passion. "Like wine-drinking. It becomes an appetite and a very greedy one. To gratify this growing passion for the play-house, tens of thousands of young

people squander their money and their time most profusely. Other and purer recreations become tame and insipid." You cry for the excitement as the drunkard does for his dram.

(4) Then remember the influence of your example. You who have children to save—remember, keen eyes are watching. Be not the agents to send to perdition those whom you love.

Thus I have discussed at length this question. I have not given you my own assertions, but have been careful to back them with authority. You know the peril. I have swung aloft the danger-signal. It remains for you to choose and act for yourselves. God help you to be wise.

PERILS OF THE DANCE.

This sermon is not intended to be a diatribe. The form of speech known as philippic is not at all suited to the purpose of such an address. I have invited you to hear me on the question announced, not that I may use this pulpit as a "coward's castle," from which to hurl abuse, but for the sole purpose of considering with you, calmly, dispassionately and honestly the perils of a well-known amusement, than which none is more seductive and fascinating. Perhaps I can do no better than, in the outset, to give you a quotation from a distinguished preacher of our own day—expressing as it does my own feeling in relation to the subject before us. He says: "I am not ready to excommunicate all those who lift their feet beyond a certain height. I would not visit our youth with a rigor of criticism that would put out all their ardor of soul. I do not believe that all the inhabitants of Wales, who used to step to the sound of the rustic pibcorn, went down to ruin. I would give to all our youth the right to romp and play. God

meant it or he would not have surcharged our natures with such exuberance. If a mother join hands with her children, and while the oldest strikes the keys, fill all the house with the sound of agile feet, I see no harm. If a few friends, gathered in happy circle conclude to cross and recross the room to the sound of the piano well played, I see no harm."

I feel sure that the majority of Christians will indorse the sentiments of this distinguished preacher. "Motion is one of the universal sources of pleasure among mankind," says a writer who is defending the art of dancing. This we believe to be true. We admire motion in "the heaving swell of the ocean," or "in the grand procession of the clouds," "in the sweep of an eagle's flight," or "the dazzling movements of the humming bird." There is a charm about orderly movement which none will dispute. Dancing, we are told, is 'rhythmical motion'—the poetry of motion; and, further, it is affirmed, "that since nearly every nation and tribe upon the face of the earth has its dance," is evidence of the innate love of the human race for 'rhythmical motion.' Certainly, I have no desire to deny any one of these statements. There is no harm in motion *per se*, but, remember,

that motion can become a destructive power in the turbulent river as it rushes on in its mad career, or in the thundering avalanche which buries beneath its awful weight precious human lives. So, I believe there is no harm in 'rhythmical motion,' if only it be kept in the bounds of propriety and decency. There are certain forms of dancing to which I see no objection, so long as they are freed from accompaniments and associations which in themselves are hurtful—so long as they are freed from the dissipations of the ballroom. I can see in such dances—those, I mean, in which there is nothing antagonistic to the most refined modesty—no impropriety. If our young people would only be satisfied with what the "dancing-master," from whom I have already quoted, terms "the morality of motion;" with such motion, that is, as can only in its very nature be productive of physical health, then, as it appears to this speaker, no harm would come from such simple exercise. It is when these dances—unobjectionable in themselves—are connected with immodest dressing, the flow of wine, late hours, ill-ventilated and crowded rooms, and the introduction of other enjoyments that are of questionable propriety—it is then that

the voices of good people are heard in condemnation of them. Here we have the abuse of that which is innocent in itself. We must not consider the almost irresistible impulse to keep step to the stirring strains of a military band or to beat time with the foot when some noble song floods our soul with melody as proof of our right to convert a natural instinct into an opportunity for gratifying our fleshly nature. This is what we do when we take those forms of the dance that are innocent and place them in the midst of surroundings that can be only productive of evil.

I have said this much to assure you that I am not here to condemn indiscriminately. To be just in public speech is by no means an easy matter. My sincere desire in this series of sermons is to keep strictly within the lines of truth—to deal in perfect candor and fairness with the subjects which shall come under our consideration. We are not concerned to-night with the innocent side of this amusement. We have before us the more serious task of pointing out the perils of the dance of modern society—that dance which stands *facile princeps* among the dances. I allude, of course, to the round dance. On the authority of Mr. Dodworth,

who has written a book on dancing, and who favors 'rhythmical motion' in all its manifestations, we learn that the polka—one form of the round dance—was taken from the peasants of Germany in 1840, and adopted by the fashionable society of Paris. From Paris it was disseminated all over the civilized world. Can any good thing come out of Paris? I bethink me that some of the most damning literature of this century has come to us from this gilded Babylon. The dance which Paris has given us is, alas! too suggestive of the tone of its immoral and indecent novels. But, the author proceeds to say: "From Paris, it was disseminated all over the civilized world, with consequences little anticipated at the time; for the introduction of this dance had a serious effect in lowering the respect formerly given to good motions and manners." If this were the only serious effect, there would be no need for tears. To the dancing-master, "a deterioration in the general tone of motion and manner"—this seems to be the essential matter to call forth regret. To the moralist and Christian, the introduction of such a dance is to be regretted, because it brought with it, and has kept with it, lax notions of propriety and modesty.

As with the polka, so with all forms of the round dance. Alike, they are to be condemned on the ground of their utter failure to even suggest delicacy or refinement. They are throughout Parisian in tone. They all smack of their low origin—be the movements never so bewildering, be the curves and turns never so graceful. We behold in them the poetry of motion prostituted and debased. Surely you do not mean to use such strong language in regard to a dance which “so fully gratifies the sense of rhythmical motion as the modern waltz, with its poetic time and phrasing?” Mr. Dodworth, our author on dancing, grows eloquent in his description of the waltz—that “culmination of modern society dancing,” “the dance, which has for fifty years resisted every kind of attack, and is to-day the most popular known.” “What is so charming,” he joyously exclaims, “as to see a couple of our young people, just blooming into manhood and womanhood, gliding about, here and there, in perfect accord of motion, rhythm and sentiment, with the strains of one of those exquisite compositions of Strauss or some other master, the ever-varying melody and harmony of the music suggesting to the dancers ever-changing expressions of motion. At first a legato

movement; smooth-flowing and gentle; a beautiful bud, as it were, promising a glorious flower. The dancers glide over the floor in subdued joy, scarcely yet awake to the full meaning of their pleasure. A burst of harmony, changing the key and introducing a more vigorous thought in the music, the dancers, in delighted sympathy spring about with more and more action.

“See how like lightest waves at play
The airy dancers fleet,
And scarcely feels the floor the wings
Of those harmonious feet.”

This description itself suggests, it seems to me, the evil tendency of the waltz. Read between the lines and beneath the surface of the letters. Bring the picture clearly before the mind. Glittering chandeliers, fragrant flowers, bewitching music, white throats resplendent with blazing gems, the rustling of silks and the far-off hum of conversation, like the drowsy drone of a beetle. In the midst of this splendor—this scene appealing to eye, ear and sense—the young couple begins to thread the intricate mazes of the dance—now bounding, now gliding, each responding to the motions of the other, interlocked in a fast embrace. Is it strange that the cheek is flushed, that the very atmosphere is tremulous with excitement? I dare to say that

the atmosphere of such a room is surcharged with the fire of passion. In it slumbers the thunder of danger. Truly it has been said: "The tread of this wild intoxicating, heated midnight dance, jars all the moral hearthstones of the city." The round dance is essentially immodest. This is the ground on which we rest our emphatic condemnation of it. Do not understand me to affirm that all who participate in it are immoral. I believe that there are young ladies—it may be the greater part of them—who indulge in such dancing with no other thought than the pleasurable excitement connected with its various movements. They delight in the exercise, the bounding joy of it. I believe that there are young women who participate in the round dance whose souls are guarded by pure thoughts that, like sentinel angels, stand with flaming swords to keep back evil imaginations and suggestions. But your habitual male dancer—the habitue of the ball room—will not plead ignorance as to the secret of the fascination which such dancing has for him. If these pure young women could hear the remarks that are made by young men—after the dance is over and the dazzling scene gives place to darkness—the hot blood would mantle their

cheeks and flush to their ear-tips. Let us grant all innocence to the fair women—the hope and stay of the world—which can be granted consistently with truth, and even then, we ask: Is it right for such women to permit the touch (much less the embrace) of a man to whom they have just been introduced? Yea, is it right to permit such liberty on the part of any man? O, woman! next to Jesus Christ, the best gift of God to man, endowed with all those fine qualities which make your sex the glory of creation, you were not made to adorn a theater, upon whose glistening boards stalk the spectres of unholy imaginations and foul suggestions. Such spectres are upon the boards which are trodden by waltzing feet. You may not see them—God grant that you may never see them—but none the less true is it that they are part of the *dramatis personae*. Notice the elements of the waltz, as given by the authority on “Dancing,” to which several references have been made. This authority says: ‘Taking the waltz as a type of all other round dances, we observe that it consists of six elements: attitude, grouping, precision, flexibility, accent, expertness.’ It is with the first two elements that we have to do. Attitude and grouping are

the elements entering into this dance to which we file serious objection. Our authority says: "Attitude in each dancer should be such as to show familiarity with the requirements of good taste. Grouping of the two must accord with the dictates of modesty and propriety."

We ask, however, in all seriousness: "Can the attitude be harmonized with the requirements of good taste? Can any such groupings as this dance requires be made to "accord with the dictates of modesty and propriety?" It is a physiological impossibility. The very nature of the attitude and grouping is an offense against modesty and propriety. Even Mr. Dodworth, my oft-quoted authority, says: "The idea of one holding the other should not be too strongly entertained. To dance together in sympathetic time and motion should be the dominant thought." He seems to recognize the peril. But would round dancing be so popular, think you, "if the idea of one holding the other" were eliminated? It would be the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out. But our dancing authority goes further. Mr. Dodworth says under the title, "Holding Partners": "Among the vulgar, uncultivated and vicious certain methods prevail, and we

naturally suppose that those methods are the result of the habits and feelings caused by the surroundings of those so unfortunately placed; but when like methods are found in cultivated society (mark, if you please, the admission. Such methods then of holding one's partner are found in cultivated society), among those who have had every opportunity to improve their taste, it is unquestionably a shock to a thinking person." If the patron of the round dance and an instructor in its mysteries informs us that such methods are found in cultivated society, and that when found there, they are a shock to a thinking person, you will not be surprised that the voice of condemnation is heard from the pulpit. Please to remember that the "new and enlarged edition" of Mr. Allen Dodworth's book on "Dancing and Its Relation to Education and Social Life"—the edition of 1888; a book published for the purpose of telling you how to dance, and written in defense of this institution—this author in his book admits that vulgar and indelicate methods as to the manner of "holding the partner" are found in cultivated society. Is not this a sufficient reason for at least lifting a voice of warning? You may say it is the abuse of attitude and grouping that

brings the evils you deplore. That is true, but it is also true that the attitude and grouping in themselves, however careful one may be in following directions in relation to them, are utterly indefensible. "Evil to him who evil thinks," I hear some one saying. It is puerile thus to defend an institution that has connected with it so much admittedly worthy of censure. If it be true that such dancing is evil only to those who evil think, then enough evil is born of it (allowing the largest possible margin of innocence) to damn it forever. Dr. G. F. Pentecost is my authority for saying that the chief of police in one of our largest Eastern cities told him "that seven-tenths of all the girls who came to a bad end, were tempted to their fatal step through the seductions of the modern dance; that the destroyers of girls could not prosper in their nefarious business without the help of this alluring agency." Pardon these plain words. As God is my judge, I have no other desire than to sound an alarm. Those of you to whom I speak to-night may pass the falls without loss—having all the excitement incident to such adventure; but how many, alas, in making the dangerous passage, sink to rise no more! No one can afford to run the

risk. The passage is too perilous. Allow me to call your attention to another fact in regard to "attitude" and "grouping" in the modern waltz. Would any one attempt to defend the propriety of such attitude apart from music and motion? Dr. Pentecost, from whom I just now quoted, gives the following clipping. As it is part of a letter from Miss Olive Logan to one of the New York dailies, I am sure you can take no offense from my reference to it. She says: "I heard of a rather amusing reply, given at a ball the other evening by an American girl in London society, who had strayed away from the ball-room. Her mother subsequently found her in a remote nook with a gentleman, who had his arm around her waist, while she rested the tips of her pretty little fingers on his manly shoulder. "Daughter, what does this mean?" exclaimed the irate mamma. Saucy cheeks looked up calmly and replied: "Mamma, allow me to introduce Capt. X—— to you. I had promised him a dance, but I was so tired that I could not keep my word, and I am giving him a sitting-still waltz instead." Is there a mother who is willing that her daughter should grant a "sitting-still waltz" to any young man of her acquaintance? But if the

attitude is harmless, surely no objection can be offered consistently to such a waltz. If the attitude is improper under such circumstances, it is equally improper with the accompaniments of music and motion. It seems to me impossible to defend the round dance of our modern society. Do you ask is it right for Christians to indulge in such dancing? Let your own conscience answer God forbid that we should attempt to rob young Christians of any legitimate pleasure. Who does not love to behold sparkling eyes, beaming countenances, fullness of life in every step and motion? Who would make the bounding blood of youth flow less quietly? Who would drop the severity and austerity of winter into the lap of spring? Who would check the outpouring melody of the feathered songster who wishes to tell the story of his gladness? No, we wish for every young man and young woman all the innocent mirth which a responsive nature can receive. "Let joy be unconfined." But do not, I beg you, participate in those pleasures that will blunt the edge of modesty; that will make you less keenly alive to the spiritual; that will subject you to criticism, the truthfulness of which you can but feel; that will interfere with your religious development; that will

make you love less your church and the communion of saints; that will make Bible-reading irksome, prayer a burden and attendance on the Lord's house a weariness unto the soul. Just such results flow from the round dance, set in the midst of its usual surroundings. You can not afford to be its patron. It threatens social purity. It is a menace to any progress in the divine life. "Have the white, polished, glistening boards ever been the road to heaven? Who, at the flash of those chandeliers, hath kindled a torch for eternity? From the table spread at the close of such midnight revelry, who went home to say his prayers?" It endangers health. A writer on this subject says: "There is but a short step from the ball-room to the graveyard. There are bad consumptions and fierce neuralgias close on the track. Amid that glittering maze of ball-room splendors, diseases stand right and left, and balance and chain. A sepulchral breath floats up amid the perfume and the froth of death's lips bubbles up in the champagne." It is not conducive to the development of strong characters. Great men are not developed out of ball-room material. It imperils our homes, giving large opportunity, as it does, for hasty and ill-advised marriages, and

besides leading so frequently to the neglect of domestic duties and responsibilities.

Love for the dance becomes, in many instances, a passion—almost supreme and over-mastering. I knew a cultivated woman who left her sick child (in a few days it died) that she might attend the ball. An extreme case, you say. This may be, but it shows how the influence of the dance—its fascination and charm—may result in forgetfulness of the most sacred obligations. Dr. Talmage, who is extravagant in many of his utterances, spoke soberly when he said in connection with this evil: “Many of our brightest homes are being sacrificed. There are families that have actually quit keeping house and gone to boarding that they may give themselves more exclusively to the higher duties of the ball-room. Mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, finding their highest enjoyment in the dance, bid farewell to books, to quiet culture, to the amenities of home. The father will, after a while, go down into lower dissipations. The son will be tossed about in society—a nonentity. The daughter will elope with a French dancing-master.” And so the curtain will be rung down on the brilliant scence. Is the enjoy-

ment to be obtained from dancing sufficient to reimburse you for the loss of higher and purer enjoyment which it incurs? You remember the fable of the sirens. These sirens dwelt in certain pleasant islands and "when from their watch-tower they saw any ship approaching, they first detained the sailors by their music, then enticing them to shore, destroyed them." Ulysses proposed to pass these islands without danger, by commanding his crew to stop their ears close with wax and directed that himself should be tied fast to a mast of the ship. Orpheus, without resort to such means, escaped all danger by "loudly chanting to his harp the praises of the gods." The latter method should be the Christian method of resisting those siren pleasures, which seek the destruction of body and soul. Instead of relying on external restraints, instead of trusting simply and solely to the strength of your will, sing the praises of godliness, chant the beauty of holiness, make sweeter music for yourselves out of all that God has provided you than can possibly come from the abode of any siren, however bewitching and seductive. As Lord Bacon says, "the most excellent remedy, in every temptation, is that of Orpheus, who by loudly

chanting and resounding the praises of the gods, confounded the voices and kept himself from hearing the music of the sirens, for divine contemplations exceed the pleasures of sense, not only in power but also in sweetness."

Give to yourself some worthier pursuit than whirling away life's precious hours; a pursuit more in accord with the dignity of your nature—and the happiness which comes to your soul then will be of so much higher and purer quality that you will prefer to tread the simple round of duty to having all the excitement of ball-room dissipation. In this way love of the dance will be supplanted by a higher and diviner love; the music of heaven will be more ravishing to your souls than any of the siren strains on earth.

PERILS OF SOCIETY.

In the beginning of the discourse, let us understand clearly the nature of our task—what we mean to do, and in what fixed limits our investigations are to be confined. Society is a comprehensive term. It is that commingling of rational beings by means of which the possibilities of the race are realized; that action and inter-action of individual souls, without which there could be no education, no development, and no fulfillment of the purpose for which we were created. Certainly it is not our aim to describe the circumference of so large a word, and thus foolishly essay the task of pointing out the perils of mankind. There is no difficulty, however, in understanding the term “society,” as popularly employed. We know what it represents, although we may not be able to fix it, within the confines of a definition. “Modern Society” is the euphonious phrase which we use to designate that company of our fellow-creatures who, because of distinguished birth or titled position or commanding eminence in some depart-

ment of human affairs, or wealth, or a combination of circumstances, arranged generally by the skillful manipulator who is seeking "admission," have been introduced into a certain sphere of social activity, entitling them to the free and full enjoyment of its privileges and immunities. In this favored circle (if favored you choose to regard it) are those who flatter themselves that they are "in" by virtue of their descent; those who are invited to enter because of recognized influence; those to whom the barred door opens when touched by "golden keys," and finally those who "crook the pregnant hinges of the knee," until after long humiliation, success follows fawning. You perceive, therefore, that this thing called "society" is composed of diverse elements of life. It includes good, bad and indifferent. On the principle that like attracts like, various "sets" are formed, naturally within the circumference of this greater circle. There are those who, having an appearance of genuine elegance and refinement, stripped of tinsel and gew-gaws, come together on that basis. There are those who are drawn to each other by having a common taste for art or literature. There are those who unite on the basis of gayety and dissipation.

Others there are who, agreeing to use their wealth to secure social patronage, form a distinct and well-defined class. "Bab," in one of her spicy letters to the Courier Journal, says: "Now is the time of year when you read about the "swell set," the "swagger set," and the "literary set," and the people who don't know any of them sigh and wonder how to get into society." These various classes or "sets" which I have enumerated, constitute what is known as "society." On prominent social occasions representatives from them all are assembled. By many, however, society is regarded as a charmed circle, in whose sacred area only the privileged few are permitted to tread—a circumscribed territory in which reside the *creme de la creme* of social life, enshrouded in an atmosphere too refined to be inhaled by ordinary lungs, clothed with rights and privileges which may not be accorded to the "madding crowd"—an Olympian height where dwells a favored coterie "curtained about with mists that blot our common ways out from their knowledge." From what has been said you readily recognize this picture as altogether fanciful—a very pretty dream; entirely lacking in any basis of reality. Since society is not clothed with the charms

which the highly-wrought imagination sometimes accords it, but it is an altogether ordinary and very natural institution, I may be permitted, without the charge of presumption, to discuss some of its perils. Of course what I shall say will not be applicable to all who are "in society," but only to those "sets" within the "circle" which will be recognized from the language employed. I am under the necessity, however, of using the general term "society," with the reservation, as already indicated, that what is true of a part is not necessarily true of the whole.

First—I mention, first, the danger connected with the basal principle of society—exclusiveness. The principle itself is necessary; the wrong use of it is perilous. We see at once how any conception of society, save that which is founded on the universal brotherhood of man, must necessarily admit exclusiveness. Dr. Holland very truly observes that if we shut up in a parlor "a Marquis, a savant, a Croesus, a farmer, a merchant, a tallow-chandler, a blacksmith, an Irish hod-carrier, a stage-driver, a dancing-master, a fop, a fool and a fiddler" there can be no social enjoyment. There is no community of tastes, pursuits or habits of thought.

Like attracting to itself like involves the exclusion of that which is unlike. Distinctions in society are, therefore, unavoidable. It is the danger of exclusiveness to which your thought is invited. Occupying a circle of social life that excludes by necessity others from sharing it with you, there springs up pride of position, and pride of position too frequently results in the non-recognition of your kinship to the race. On the part of the more sensible, while accepting easily and gracefully the position which is theirs necessarily in harmony with the law of affinities, the relation which they sustain to the wider brotherhood is not lost sight of. They honor manhood. They respect genuine worth wherever found. They recognize the common blood of the race pulsating in their veins. In their association with the poor and unfortunate they do not carry about them an air of condescension. There is no thought of superiority—other than that which has come to them as the result of superior education and advantages. They do not look upon themselves as beings of another order. Their relations with all whom they meet are natural, cordial and sincere. But with most of the "sets," it is quite different. They pride themselves on their separation from the

“common herd.” They pray the prayer of the proud Pharisee. “I thank thee O God, that I am not as this Publican.” They talk contemptuously of their kind. No true relation of fraternity is established between themselves and the great outlying world. Such society might drive to the house of Zaccheus and send the coachman to inquire if any service could be rendered, but to “abide in his house,” as did the blessed Master, until the sorrows of the poor man were really and truly shared—this they would consider unworthy of their position. The sin of contemptuousness is one of the crying sins of what is known as the “upper circles.”

W. D. Howells represents one of his characters as saying: “Arbuton thinks there are persons of low extraction in heaven, but he does not like the idea.” “If Arbuton could have been a divinely-commissioned apostle to the best society and been obliged to save none but well-connected, old-established and cultivated souls, he might have gone into the ministry.” Here is portrayed that spirit which has only smiles and sweet words for one of a particular “set,” and has to do with all others mechanically, or as one who graciously condescends to grant a blessing. “Are you sure,” says another of

Howells' characters, "that you are not doing more to help Miss Harkness, because she is a lady of fallen fortunes, than you would do for some poor girl who was struggling up and trying to support inebriate parents and pay a younger brother's way through college? Are you sure that her being visited by a lord has nothing to do with your beneficent zeal? Are you certain that at the best you are seeking anything better than the self-flattery that comes through the ability to patronize a social superior?" Any social class which is foolish enough to suppose that position—however exalted it may be—entitles one to look down with contempt upon a fellow-creature; which with a toss of the head and a sneer speaks of the "rabble," the "common herd," the "vulgar populace," which arrogates to itself, by virtue of the possession of wealth, literary taste, refined manners and what not, the right to pass by as unworthy of recognition or respect any true soul or which notices such an one with an air of condescension—any such social class is deserving of the righteous indignation of all sensible people. Let such (alas! that any such can be found!) understand that there are human beings in this world besides one's

self and one's set—human beings whom to despise is but to show that the meaning of life and its relations has never dawned upon their darkened vision. You may not associate on terms of intimacy with all (this would be to ask an impossibility), but do remember that you must honor, yea, reverence, all life—the mighty federation of man—as being grander and diviner than any small department of it.

Second—But it is in the sphere of what is known as “fashionable society” that most of the evils we deplore are to be found. Of this society, fashion is the ruling, governing principle. One is not in “fashionable society” unless he be “in fashion.” Conformity is the law of its life. From conformity spring its sins. The great question of such society is not what is right, but what is fashionable. With it “good form” is better than morals. To dress *a la mode* is of infinitely more importance than to form a character according to the pattern given by the Lord Jesus Christ. “Oh, yes; it's the thing, you know,” and to conform to “the thing” is esteemed of greater moment than “to be transformed by the renewing of one's mind, that he may prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God.” To do as others do; to

render unquestioning obedience to the requirements of certain social leaders; to do all things according to the pattern given from the sacred mount where fashion holds her council—this is the spirit and genius of the society we are now discussing. A “non-conformist” may be “in society,” but not in “fashionable society.” The phrase itself excludes all who do not bow to the scepter of Fashion. Behold the reigning Queen! She is the representative of Fashion. Her ways are Fashion’s ways; her paths are Fashion’s paths. Her favor is life; her frown is death. From her court go forth laws that are as binding as those of the Medes and Persians. Of her one says: “She’s the very tip-top of the English here; she has a whole palace, and you meet the very best people at her house.” A young lady is to sing before her majesty and the assembled court. Listen to a description of the scene: “I was afraid when you were singing, Lydia, that they would think your voice was too good to be good form—that’s an expression you must get; it means everything—it sounded almost professional. I wanted to nudge you to sing a little lower, or different, or something, but I couldn’t, everybody was looking so. No matter. It’s all right

now. If she liked it, nobody else will dare to breathe." What a magnificent triumph! Fashion approves and all is well. Perhaps Milady is an admirer of foreign literature, of European manners and customs. So long as she sways her queenly scepter in Fashion's Court her taste must be gratified. On being invited to share her royal smiles, a young man says: "If I go to her house, to be like her other friends and acquaintances, I should have to be just arrived from Europe or just going; my talk should be of London and Paris and Rome, of the *Saturday Review* and *Revue des deux Mondes*, of English politics and society; my own country should exist for me on sufferance; I ought to have recently dined at Newport with poor Lord and Lady Scamperton, who are finding the climate so terrible," and so on *ad nauseam*. You perceive that conformity to the reigning power—that individual or coterie who are Fashion's representatives—is the essential, basal principle underlying the brilliant structure of fashionable society. "Hear, O heavens; give ear, O earth," for the mighty and most well-beloved Empress of the "glorious Four Hundred" has evolved from her royal brain for the delectation of her leal and loyal subjects a new style of

tea, a Cleopatra gown or a classic phrase to be added to her rich vocabulary. Forthwith a whole troop of "fads" spring into life and the fashionable world joyously welcomes these children of their Queen. But enough and more than enough in this direction. Who does not see that individuality withers in such an atmosphere? Who does not feel a contempt for such servility? Who does not know that all the show and glitter of this world of fashion can not atone for the loss of manly and womanly independence? I recognize the fact that a certain degree of conformity is necessary to the existence of polite society. In dress and manners it is eminently proper that a consensus of the good taste of many should be embodied in our books of etiquette and a reasonable compliance with recognized standards of propriety should be expected from all who lay any claim to respectability. But the slavishness of our fashionable society—its servile subjection to trivialities—is indeed a sad spectacle. But the worst evils of conformity result from being brought under the influence and dominion of the spirit and habits of this fashionable world. What is its spirit? Can we read its soul?

If conversation and action are interpreters of this inner life, we may exercise at least some of Bishop's mind-reading power. An ambitious spirit is certainly one of the marked characteristics of this realm of which we are speaking—not an ambition to achieve great and useful ends, but an ambition none the less as intense as ever inspired Cæsar or Napoleon. Each is ambitious to be a leader in social circles, to be thought the belle of the season, to chronicle the most notable social event, to outvie all others in the magnificence of the entertainments furnished, to have advertised most extensively a society triumph. What is the result? The concentration upon trivialities of a soul made for great things. Ambitious to succeed, all the energy of womanhood is brought to bear upon the trifles that will secure success. A vigorous writer says: "This gilded sphere is utterly bedwarfing to intellect and soul. This constant study about little things; this harassing anxiety about dress; this talk of fashionable infinitesimals; this shoe-pinched, hair-frizzled, fringe-spattered group—that simper and look askance at the mirrors and wonder, with infinity of interest, 'how that one geranium leaf does look;' this shrivelling up of

man's moral dignity, until it is no more observable with the naked eye; this taking of a woman's heart, that God meant should be filled with all amenities, and compressing it until all the fragrance and simplicity and artlessness are squeezed out of it; this wrapping up of mind and heart in a ruffle; this tumbling down of a soul that God meant for great upliftings!"

Besides, mean jealousies, petty rivalries, back-biting and the most arrant insincerity are features of fashionable life that scarcely provoke remark. Such ambition as has been indicated necessarily gives birth to them. "I think her airs are detestable," said one young woman of another in her own circle. "She toadies fearfully," or "Such crowding and pushing as she is making ought not to be encouraged." Such phrases are specimens of the kindly feeling which members of the same "set" have for each other. When each is seeking for first place, when competition for honors is so fierce, when a place of prominence at some social gathering is striven for as though eternity were at stake, it is not surprising that you should hear such gentle remarks as those which I have quoted. It is not strange that jealousy should have a throne in the midst of

such surroundings, or that the gleaming eye of envy should look upon the scene. But, by a quick process of veneering, all this ugliness is concealed when these same lovely spirits enter into conversation. One would suppose that they had always "adored" each other, and that the soul of each was the abode of happy thoughts. Is it not a fine piece of acting?

The spirit of such society is utterly ruinous to soul-development. It is productive of all the littlenesses which disgrace human nature. It is wholly opposed to the cultivation of sincerity and truth in our social relations. Envious, hating, spiteful—these "lovely girls" and "fair women" meet each other none the less with the most gracious smiles and the most cordial expressions of good-will. We behold a scene of gilded hypocrisy.

The ambitious spirit which animates our fashionable society is set on fire of hell. I have mentioned only a few of the long train of evils which follow in its course. It is utterly unworthy of any human soul.

I remark, as further indicating the spirit of this society, that its whole environment ministers to vanity. It is a dress parade. It is a spectacular exhibition. It has an eye to stage-effect.

It loves to be admired, not for its character, but for its beauty, its dress, its splendor, its costly entertainments, its equipages. In the language of another: "Society says: Count not a woman's virtues, count her rings. Look not at the contour of the head, but see the way she combs her hair. Ask not what noble deeds have been accomplished by that man's hand, but is it soft and white. Ask not what good sense was in her conversation, but in what was she dressed. Ask not whether there was hospitality and cheerfulness in the house, but in what style do they live." I need hardly say that all this is not promotive of spirituality—that disposition of mind which is self-forgetful in seeking the good of others. Still, again, this society has an amusement-loving spirit. To this there is no objection, if confined within proper bounds, but when amusement becomes the chief end of life, it is indeed perilous to the interests of the soul. Our fashionable society seeks amusement—nothing more. It suffers from ennui when not in the current of social gayety. It has no serious object in life. It simply desires entertainment. Of a certain character in a late novel it is said: "Women of fashion always interested him; he liked them;

it diverted him that they should take themselves seriously." Uselessness as respects their relation to any real work is their curse.

You may have observed, also, a spirit seemingly devoid of any reverence for those fine qualities which are the glory of any character clothed with them. Indifference to any high standard of moral life is exceedingly popular. Said one: "Oh, I would not marry a man unless he had seen the world." Said another: "He is a little fast, you know; but such a charming fellow." Will you permit a quotation from the "Confessions of a Society Man?" "There are few girls in society who do not like to be taken into the confidence of a man of the world. It is always fascinating to the novice to look cautiously over the edge of a precipice, even though she may contemplate with horror the idea of lying crushed to death on the rocks below. When her head becomes steady from experience, it is a pleasure to her to see how near she can go to the edge without falling over. I have, over and over again, seen girls during their first season out, encourage the attentions of men whom they must have known, were leading fast lives, though they found it necessary to snub the few

reliable men they knew while doing so." There is no room in this inn for straightforward, uncompromising purity of character. Who are welcomed into the fellowship of this high society? Men of notoriously immoral lives. Hear again from the "Confession." In describing "one of the boys," the author says: "With us the phrase was used to designate the men who were found at all the balls and parties, who could drink unlimited liquor, game all night and then afford to lie abed in the morning and sleep off the effects." Society excuses such offenses, because the young men are "gentlemen." "There is one noticeable fact about fashionable society which is admirable," says the frank writer in his "Confessions," "and that is, that although while a scandal lasts it is prone to talk it over to a tiresome degree, it is soon forgotten, and those who were connected with the trouble, take their old places, and no one thinks the worse of them." This unblushing patronage of immorality is a sufficient indication of the lack of any real reverence for fineness of soul, for purity of life, for old-fashioned righteousness. Additional comment is unnecessary.

What shall we now say about some of the customs of this high life? What

does conformity to them involve? What think you of this confession from a society man—"I have heard men speaking of going to a lady's house with the deliberately formed intention of drinking to excess. Little is thought of it, however, by the patrons of society, and if a man who becomes intoxicated at one house is invited to the next entertainment, of course, he can see no offense in what he has done."

Again, this refreshingly candid writer says: "While women dislike to have wine at their entertainments, they do not care to bar the men of wealth and station out of their houses merely because they drink to excess." All this is justified on the ground that "the testament of society is a much more liberal one, it must be confessed, than that of the serious church goers." To tell of the wreck and ruin wrought by the wine-drinking custom, I should have to dip my pen in the blood of crushed hearts. Many a young man can trace his downfall in life to a glass of wine handed him by some fair hostess, whose careless banter and bewitching smiles overcame his better judgment.

I need do no more, in addition than to call your attention to the craze for cards, which seems to have taken pos-

session of nearly all our social circles. I know nothing of card-playing, and will indulge, therefore, in no violent invective. I am of opinion, however, that it is a dangerous amusement. Even when there are no stakes, it frequently kindles a passion for play that leads to the gambling table. Do not sport with fire that threatens awful conflagration. I very much fear that many of our social queens are furnishing gamblers for our clubs. In conclusion, permit me to say that I entertain no grudge against "society" organized on a basis which does no violence to morality. It is recognized that social classes are a necessity, but we must see to it that their existence does not endanger our love of humanity. We must see to it that they be founded upon right principles, that they be animated by a spirit which is consistent, at least, with spiritual development, and that they be marked by customs which will not result in the ruin of body and soul. It must be said, however, that the fashionable society of to-day is utterly at variance with Christian living. It fosters no worthy aspiration. Its piety is an affectation. Its atmosphere chills and kills all nobility of soul. It has no tendency to engender healthful thoughts.

It promotes no worthy ambitions. It is such a life as will not bring to old age sweet memories. Its dissipations make death-beds horrible. From its gayeties one would not wish to step into eternity. Its glitter and show are but the trappings and plumes of the hearse which is the receptacle of death. Its energy is expended on trifles. Its strength is wasted in the pursuit of bubbles. It is a threatening precipice, on the edge of which whirls a gay and thoughtless throng; at the base of which are bitter thoughts, vain regrets and ruined lives. It is a gilded show. Unlike the King's daughter, all is not lovely within. I plead for society that is ennobling—society which, if it has wealth, does not parade it; "If its blood is blue, its reputation is white. Its daughters are not advertised in the daily papers as professional beauties, and its sons are not conspicuous among the fast set. It is charitable and kind. Its men are honest and its women are above reproach." I plead for such society as will not bring a blush to the cheek of modesty or leave a stain on the heart of innocence. I plead for society that is characterized by cheerfulness without dissipation, mirth without recklessness, that believes in eternity, and hence will not squander time.

It is worth while for us to remember that God lives, that life has meaning and that character determines destiny. Let our prayer be—"so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

PERILS OF BUSINESS.

Were I called upon to respond to such a toast, relative to the world of business, as our enterprising Commercial Club might suggest, I should feel myself inadequate to the task of pronouncing a eulogy worthy the occasion and the subject. To be an active, honorable and efficient worker in this mighty realm of life, is to be a co-operant with God, in having a divinely-approved ministry. All worthy effort—in whatever department of activity—is a contribution toward the realization of “that far-off, divine event, to which the whole creation moves.” Hence, as the sage of Chelsea tells us: “All true work is sacred; in all true work, were it but true hand labor, there is something of divineness. Labor, wide as the earth, has its summit in heaven.” Certainly, in this world of business, toil receives its aureole. Is it not a thrilling spectacle—that of a multitude of our fellow creatures, rising each morning in answer to labor’s reveille; touching those springs which open shops, stores, factories; setting in mo-

tion that complicated and wondrous machinery of brawn and brain which shall make for us bread, give to us clothing, provide for us comfortable homes and preserve for us the glorious civilization of which we boast. "Business," waking from its mighty slumber, preaches each day a sermon on the glory and nobility of work. Its sermon is heard in the whir of myriad wheels, in the tread of hurrying feet, in the scratch of innumerable pens and in the still, small voice of mind, directing stupendous enterprises, and governing the thousand forces which await its word of imperial command. Truly such preaching is marked by an eloquence superior to that which glorifies the most fervid oratory. It is practical preaching. Its sentences are deeds. Its utterances are read in accomplished results. Besides proclaiming with such vigor and earnestness this sermon on the perennial nobleness of work, the business world asserts its high rank and makes its rightful claim to our consideration by virtue of its development of human character.

In the successful prosecution of business, we behold the growth and exhibition of such virtues as self-reliance, industry, decision, attention to details, economy, concentration, punctuality,

strength of will, accuracy, public-spiritedness and a long list of excellences which form a crown of glory for their possessor. On no theater of action are there grander opportunities for the cultivation and display of these manly qualities, which win success. In view of the moral possibilities of this sphere of work, it becomes an honor to share its activities. We gladly award the meed of praise to business that is high-toned, that contributes to the bettering of mankind, that proclaims the nobility of labor and that encourages those traits of character, for the realization of which its peculiar duties so well adapt it. But there is another side to this question. Business life has its temptations and by consequence its dangers. It is in the throbbing, pulsing life of traffic and trade that character is most severely tried. In this realm of buying and selling, one is truly weighed in the balances. It is in the money kingdom that one most clearly reveals his littleness or nobility of soul. It is in this wide dominion of commerce that one's real worth is discovered. It is here that the strength of one's religion is tested, the capacity of one's faithfulness is ascertained, the quality of one's temper is defined. It is here, in a pre-eminent degree, that

we become acquainted with one's conception of life, and obtain clear insight into its governing principles. In this business world, therefore, are found some of the highest qualities and some of the meanest vices. In it, character is put to the test and found worthy or weighed and found wanting. In it, the soul resisting temptations, converts them into strength, or yielding to them, is wrecked for two worlds. Its very perils can be used as means of growth.

“The great stimulus that spurs to life,
And crowds to generous development
Each chastened power and passion of the soul,
Is the temptation of the soul to sin,
Resisted and reconquered, ever more.”

It is not our aim in this sermon to enter very largely into details. As in sweeping the eye along a range of mountains, you observe the prominent peaks, so we shall ask you to consider a few of the most conspicuous dangers connected with business—those dangers whose greatness forbids their being ignored.

You will very readily admit, I am sure, that one great peril of business life is an excessive haste to acquire wealth. Long ago the wise king said: “A faithful man shall abound with blessings, but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.” I may,

without irreverence, place alongside this sentence from inspiration the noble words of Horace Greeley: "The darkest day in any man's earthly career is that wherein he first fancies that there is some easier way of gaining a dollar than by squarely earning it." We are living in a fast age. The stage-coach has been supplanted by the railway, and very soon, it may be, the railway will give place to the air-ship. The spirit of the nineteenth century, like a breathless courier, rides to the door and shouts, "Haste!" The very atmosphere is tremulous with our quickened life. The world's pulse beats faster. Our intense civilization can not rest satisfied with slow processes. Quick travel; quick speech; quick methods. It is not strange, therefore, that men should be in a hurry to make money. Says Mathews: "Exceptional persons there are, who are content with slow gains—willing to accumulate riches by adding penny to penny, dollar to dollar, but the mass of business men are too apt to despise such a tedious, laborious ascent of the steep of fortune." Nor do we object to rapid accumulation so long as one travels the old path of honesty. Some men there are, who are born with a genius for acquiring wealth. It has

been observed of them that "the talent and the inclination to convert dollars into doubloons by bargains or shrewd investments are in them just as strongly marked and as uncontrollable as were the ability and the inclination of Shakespear to produce a Hamlet and an Othello; of Raphael to paint his cartoons: of Beethoven to compose his symphonies; of Morse to invent an electric telegraph." Such men, in the nature of things, will speedily gain prominence in the financial world. Rapid accumulation with them is but the result of a natural gift. But the general rule is, that haste in acquiring riches is most detrimental to the moral life. But evil results are apparent. Who is not acquainted with what are denominated "tricks of the trade?" And who does not know that such methods of quickly securing gain are an offense to righteousness? If a grocer chooses to sell oleomargarine for what it is, well and good; but when he palms it off on innocent customers as genuine butter, he is guilty of fraud. "Wooden nutmegs, and sand for pepper, doctored coffee, glucose, adulteration raised to the dignity of a fine art, cloth with the gloss of broadcloth upon it, but made of contemptible shoddy; high priced shoes with pasteboard

soles; all kinds of food and beverages 'fixed and seasoned,' so that an inferior brand of goods may be sold at a superior price"—these are some of the supposed short-cuts to wealth. Can such methods be harmonized with honest dealing? Is it right to conceal facts or to misrepresent facts in order to induce a purchase? Is it right to take advantage of ignorance? Is it right to falsify the quality of one's wares? I remember that Solomon says: "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished," and again: "He that, by unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor."

"In vain we call old notions fudge

And bend our conscience to our dealing,

The ten commandments will not budge,

And stealing will continue stealing."

You can not, by any glossing process, conceal the nature of dishonesty. The most plausible pretext will not make wrong right. What we call "sharpness" in trade may indicate mental quickness, but it reveals a sad moral condition. Never were truer words uttered than those which I now quote: "Given a world of knaves, to produce an honesty from their united action." It is a distillation, once for all, not possible. You pass it through alembic after alembic, it comes out still a dishonesty;

with a new dress on it, a new color to it. We can not change the facts of the moral world. Any form of cheating results in the obscuration of the moral sense, the blunting and deadening of a sensitive conscience. One may well tremble when he can perpetrate a fraud without any feeling of self-condemnation.

But this haste to be rich not only introduces into business such disreputable methods of gain, as I have briefly indicated, but it claims a larger world for its exercise. It opens wide the door for reckless speculation. In this lottery "he is considered the shrewdest fellow who can throw double-sixes oftenest." Once start in the career of dishonesty and soon all moral distinctions will become obliterated.

'Tis fearful building upon any sin;
One mischief entered lets another in.
The second draws a third, the third draws more,
And these for all the rest open wide the door;
Till custom blunts the judging sense,
That, to offend, we think it no offense.

The stock gambler has reached that moral state "to offend, he thinks it no offense." He will openly attempt to justify his nefarious business. I can do no better in this connection than to give you the vigorous words of Bishop Newman. He says: "When in the day of plenty, the shrewd, unscrupu-

lous speculator, by well-laid plans, monopolizes an article of food to create an artificial scarcity and thus raises the price while the supply is abundant, and by so doing, causes the poor man to pay 100 per cent. more for his food than the natural law of supply and demand requires, he is a robber of the poor as well as an offender against the acknowledged principles of commercial integrity. A broker on "Change" who causes false information to be circulated for the purpose of raising or depressing the price of securities, or the price of gold, and reaps profits from that deep rascality, is a criminal against honesty. He who gives publicity to the report that a given bank is on the verge of insolvency in order to depress its stock, and then purchases all that is thrown upon the market, and he who gives currency to reports that some rotten financial institution is solvent and flourishing, and then sells out his holdings, is alike a criminal against property, and to all such men God says, "Thou shalt not steal." There are more ways than one of robbing than breaking open the back door of a man's house. One need not become a highwayman in order to acquire expertness in thieving. Alas! under the name of "business" he may

do the work of a bandit. "It matters not in what such men deal, whether in oroide watches or in watered stock, whether they make 'corners' in wheat or in gold, whether they gamble in oats or at roulette, whether they steal a railway or a man's money by 'gift-concerts'—the principle in all cases is the same, namely, to obtain something for nothing, to get values without parting with anything in exchange." Such business—if we may apply so honorable a term to so disreputable an occupation—is ruinous to body and soul. Fortunes thus acquired are not built upon an enduring foundation. They are like the "grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven." Great and lasting results are not achieved save by great and continued labor. He who would rear a palace of wealth, in whose spacious apartments shall dwell the angels of peace, happiness and contentment, and which shall longest defy the encroachments of time, must lay, as its broad and deep foundation, the principles of truth and righteousness, and then, by patience, industry and economy, build the walls higher and higher, until it shall stand at last, in its finished beauty, the magnificent reward of long years of toil and thought. One whose range

of observation justified confident assertion, has said: "All those kinds of business which are surest in the end, which pay best in the long run, are slowest in beginning to yield a return. The truest success in every profession is often like the growth of the American aloe, for many years slow and imperceptible. Then, all at once, when the time comes, there is a crisis. The plant shoots up a stalk ten or fifteen feet high, hung with innumerable flowers." To make haste slowly, to advance by honest means, to squarely earn every dollar, to preserve our integrity to keep a sensitive conscience—this is the royal road to real success.

There is another danger, involved in the very nature of business, which threatens the highest interests of the soul. Its existence is compatible with honesty and the possession of many ennobling traits of character. Its fearful results are frequently observable in men of unexceptionable integrity—men whose commercial and social relations are above suspicion. It is a frowning, beetling cliff whose shadow projects itself over the entire business world. Many, recognizing the shadow, avoid the danger; others are crushed by the awful reality. The peril to which I allude, is the materialization of life. I

have said that it was involved in the very nature of business. This is evident. The world of business is a world of the senses. It has to do with facts. It prides itself on being practical. Its thoughts are of gain. Its mental energy is expended on devising ways and means of accumulation. Its imagination builds palaces which shall tell of the triumph of wealth. Its dreams are of stocks and bonds, of houses and lands, of buying and selling. Its conversation is of notes promissory, notes negotiable; of bargains and investments; of dollars and cents. "Property, property, property," is the refrain of the song that is never ended. Now, this business world is a necessity. It is right that one should give time, thought and energy to win success in it. Practicality is indispensable. It is quite natural that the business man should think and talk of those things with which he has most to do—those things which are a part of his everyday experience. All this is well. The fearful danger of which we speak, arises from contracting life until it fits within the circumference of business; the non-recognition or non-appreciation of a world of thought, feeling, imagination, beauty—and yet none the less a real world—outside the limited sphere

of practical affairs. To ignore this other world; to be indifferent to its claims; to make our nature impervious to its influence—this is to materialize life—to limit the exercise of the soul's magnificent powers within the circumscribed territory of the senses and to deny its inherent right to claim the ideal and spiritual as its possessions. A soul thus imprisoned within the narrow confines of actual business experience: that has no windows through which it may look up and out into the infinite; that has no doors through which it may pass into the realm of fancy; that has no couch upon which it may lie down to dream of angels ascending and descending on ladders of light—such a soul is robbed of the purest and highest enjoyments of life. Given the most splendid surroundings—a residence to the elaboration and construction of which the highest architectural genius has contributed; the costliest paintings hung on its walls, embodying visions of rarest beauty and noblest feeling; the choicest library, containing the life-blood of master-spirits; the sublimest music, furnished by the best talent that wealth can command—music, we will suppose, that would evoke from a sensitive heart thoughts of love, of heaven, of God.

Place such a soul as I have described in the midst of such an environment. It would be in exile. It would be a picture of lonely wretchedness. Its world would have nothing in common with this world of genius and thought and taste. Its appreciation would be limited by the money-value represented. Of such a soul, the lines of Tennyson relative to the "dark-brow'd sophist" are applicable:

"The flowers would faint at your cruel cheer.
In your eye there is death,
There is frost in your breath
Which would blight the plants.
Where you stand you can not hear
From the groves within
The wild-bird's din."

In a world of beauty, there is no eye to see; in a world of song, no ear to catch its melodies; in a world of sentiment, no imagination to appreciate its delicate manifestations; in a world of spiritual realities, no capacity of response to its glory. Did I not speak truly when I said that the materialization of life meant robbing the soul of its purest and highest joys? I appeal to business men to guard against this peril. "Be diligent in business;" but recognize that there is part of your nature to which business can not minister. Read good books, until a really great thought will thrill you more than

a successful investment. Cultivate a love of the beautiful, until you can at least appreciate the genius of a painting or the glory of a sunset; until art and nature alike shall suggest unseen realities. Let imagination lead the way into realms of noble speculation. Introduce into your ideal life whatever can refine the nature or widen the horizon of the soul; whatever will make the spirit more susceptible to truth, beauty and goodness; whatever will bring peace and joy to the highest part of your immortal selves. Keep the windows of your being open to all corners of the universe. Be not content with what you can see and handle, for life is larger than any territory that the senses can bound.

I pray you to occupy all heights from which you can obtain broad views of God's world and from which you can look up into that heaven whose very infinitude says: "and yet there is room." If I have seemed to lay too much stress on the materializing influence of business, attribute it to the magnitude of the peril involved in its evil influence. "Grant the utmost that can be said of the necessity and the value of money," writes a distinguished author, "it will still remain forever true that life is more than the means by

which it is sustained; more than dwellings, lands, merchandise, stocks, bonds and dividends; more, even, than food and raiment. All things are for the mind, the soul, the divine part within us; and if this, our true self, is dwarfed and starved, the most royal worldly possessions only serve to set forth by contrast its deep poverty and servitude." Make life a conscious joy, not a mere tread-mill existence. Do not permit the current of life to flow in a narrow channel. Deepen it, widen it, so that it can receive into its bosom all tributaries, all helpful influences.

You will permit me, in conclusion, to mention another evil—one, I fear, that is common in the business world. It springs from the non-recognition of the true relationship which employers should sustain to those in their employ. Carlyle very forcibly presents the danger when he says: "We have profoundly forgotten everywhere that cash payment is not the sole relation of human beings; we think, nothing doubting, that it absolves and liquidates all engagements of man." Of one's clerks, there is a disposition to ask: "Did I not hire them fairly in the market? Did I not pay them to the last six pence, the sum covenanted for? What have I to do with them more?"

You have young men in your service—some of them far from home and loved ones; some of them, under the spur of encouragement, capable of such helpfulness in your business as you little suppose; all of them subject to the temptations of city life. Are you under no further obligation to them than to pay them their wages? Do you recognize only a cash basis of relationship? Here is the peril. An employer forgets that those under him are anything more than paid servants. He does not realize that in any sense he is his brother's keeper. So much pay for so much work—there the connection ends. Our managers and proprietors need to remember that moral responsibility arises from all social relationships—a responsibility that is not discharged when the mere letter of the bond has been complied with. Every employer owes to his employes sympathy, kindly treatment, interest in their surroundings, encouragement, friendly recognition. How the heart of a young man thrills when the one whom he recognizes as master speaks to him a word of good cheer! Do not withhold commendation if one who is serving you has deserved it. A warm hand-shake, a sympathetic smile, fatherly or brotherly counsel—these

things are sometimes valued infinitely more than dollars. Are you a Christian employer? Invite your clerks to the Sunday-school or church. As you find opportunity, speak to them of the glory and dignity with which Christian living is invested. Have them occasionally at your own board. Let them know that you feel an interest in their welfare. What magnificent opportunities for doing good!

Money is a marvelous power in this world of ours. It can almost work miracles. But it is not the divinely recognized bond of union between man and man. "We be brethren"—this is the truth we must learn. The payment of wages can not atone for the lack of brotherliness. It can not discharge us from those duties which are an outgrowth of our associations. It can not take the place of those blessings which only a loving heart can bestow. You can not make money pay the whole of a debt which you owe to a fellow man. If capital recognized in labor a brother—one with a heart capable of appreciating affection, one with a soul that longs for kindness and sympathy, one with an environment that calls for helpfulness and encouragement, I feel sure that a better day would dawn on the

great world of business. Instead of antagonism, there would be genuine fellowship. Instead of crimination and recrimination, there would be a conscious recognition, a mutual dependence. The panacea for the evil we deplore in business life is to be found in the sublime truth of Christianity—"One is you Father, and all ye are brethren."

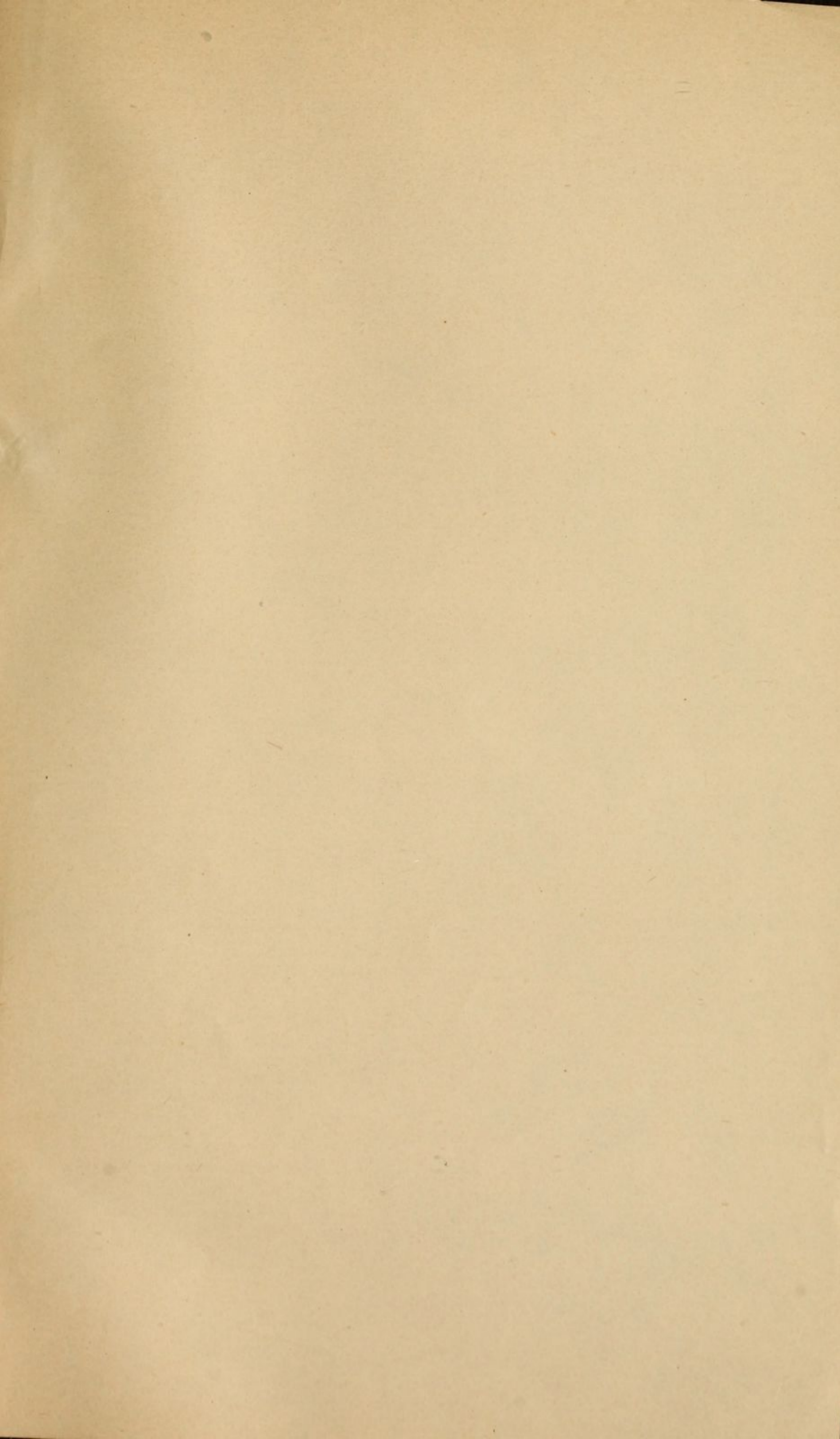
"For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin' yet for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that."



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