

The Orphans' Friend.

VOLUME II.

OXFORD, N. C., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 1876.

NUMBER 24.

A SERMON ON LOTTERIES.

Lotteries, though forbidden by law, are so often advertised in popular papers and endorsed by influential names, that many simple persons are deluded with unfounded hopes of drawing fanciful fortunes. The Masonic lottery of Norfolk was severely denounced by the Grand Lodge of Virginia, and yet hundreds of good people invested their money therein. Gov. Bramlette, of Kentucky, has received two hundred thousand dollars for the use of his name in connection with the Louisville lottery. No wonder so many tickets drew blanks. Rev. B. M. Messick, of Louisville, devoted a sermon to the subject. It is worthy of a careful perusal. Text, I Samuel, xv.: 22, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

"The latest sensation of our city is 'The Public Library Drawing'—a profound and far-reaching sensation—rendering Louisville the center of attraction, not only to the State, but to the nation.

A public library is surely a great thing—greatly to be desired, appreciated, and enjoyed. The founders of public libraries deserve well of their fellows, and have ever been honored by them. The name and the fame of Ptolemy Philadelphus, the founder of the ancient Alexandrian Library, are perpetuated with deserved renown: while the memory of the Caliph Omar, the ruthless destroyer of that library, is justly execrated by posterity. Augustus contemplated the best interests of his subjects in the public libraries founded by him, and merited the praises of the Romans. Sir Thomas Bodley, of the Bodleian Library, is one of the honored names of English history. John Jacob Astor, of the Astor Library, is no mean name in the history of our own country. The founders of public libraries are public benefactors who well deserve their crown. A public library—a great public blessing, disseminating knowledge, especially among the masses unable to buy books; educating, elevating the people—a fountain of living waters, a boon from Heaven.

The founders of a public library in Louisville would merit the respect and gratitude of the present, and of generations yet unborn. A public library—a noble institution, worthy the liberality of individuals, and the patronage of the State—a monument more enduring than marble to the public spirit of the one, and the philanthropy of the other. But a public lottery is a great curse, greatly to be deprecated, to be feared. The founders of public lotteries do not deserve well of their fellows, and have not always escaped deserved censure. Public lotteries in Queen Anne's time were styled "public nuisances," and in the early history of our country the agents of lotteries were styled "plunderers of the people." A public lottery, a public curse—cursing especially the poorer classes, who, from their circumstances, are more apt to resort to it—cursing them thus: 1. With a poor purse; taking the

money of the many, who need all they have, and giving it to the few—the agents of the enterprise and the lucky ones who draw the prizes. Robbing the many to enrich the few. And how insatiate is the monster—drawing, drawing, drawing, while there is a drop of life-blood in its deluded victim's veins. *Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris hirudo.* 2. With poorer principles; teaching the false and pernicious doctrine that men are to get money without working for it. Labor—the great law of life and the condition of wealth, the fundamental principle of political economy and the corner-stone of society—this law annulled, the foundations of social and civil life are shaken, and anarchy, with all its untold evils, reigns. Legalizing a public lottery, the State demoralizes its citizens, turning them aside from the peaceful walks of honest toil. The State forging its own fetters, its own folly, vulture-like, feeding on its vitals. 3. With the poorest prospects; tempting to a damning habit—gambling. Money a man must have, by work or by chance. Abandoning work, and committing himself to chance, he tries his luck again and again, till he is bound hand and foot by the fatal habit, and all is lost. And as men who enter the lists of fortune demand another and another chance, so the people-loving Lottery, by its successive drawings, responds to the demand, and not only teaches men the first steps of gambling, but leads them on in the deadly dance to the music of hundreds of thousands. The wheel of fortune thus becomes the iron wheel of fate, whose hapless victims, Ixion-like, forever pay their folly's penalty.

But there is a defense of lotteries made by their friends—a defense of no recent date. There is a natural propensity in men for games of chance, a propensity that will find gratification. Now, is it not better, by legalized lotteries, comparatively innocent, to gratify this native propensity in men, than to let them resort to worse kinds of gambling? Taking the less of two evils? This defense of lotteries reminds me of the argument for the use of wine as a common beverage among the people to save men from drunkenness. The logic being, make a nation of drinkers, to prevent a brigade of drunkards. Better that all men should be half drunk than that some should be dead drunk. Fill our reservoir with wine, or some men will drink whisky. Authorize all men to drink the wine of gambling, or some unfortunates will drink its gall, and fill its dishonored graves.

A recent defense of the lottery is the pleasure men enjoy in the anticipation of a prize they may never draw. Men must have some pleasing object to which to look—the anticipation its own reward. But will the coin of unrealized anticipation pass current in the blank day of failure? The fatal anticipation, siren-like, only rests upon the wrecking rocks of despair and desperation. The memory of the day's anticipation will light a brilliant star in the long night of the soul's repentance. This summer-day dream will kin-

dle a cheering fire in the coming winter of discontent. The lottery must plead guilty at the bar of reason; guilty of high crimes against the best interests of men, and the welfare of the State. And would that the court of public opinion might consign it to a felon's grave, to sleep the sleep that knows no waking.

On one side, we have a public library, a great public blessing; on the other, a public lottery, a great public curse—one, a tree of life to the people; the other, a tree of death, blighting all beneath its pestilential shadow—one, a Gerizim of blessings; the other, an Ebal of cursings.

Is it a good investment to have a public library at the price of a public lottery? The library educates the mind, developing its God-like powers; the lottery corrupts the heart and paralyzes the public arm. The intellectual and lower nature educated at the expense of the higher moral nature. Knowledge is power, but for evil if not well conditioned. A knave is by no means a fool. The devil is mighty in evil, arch-enemy of God and man, and his great knowledge is no small element of his damning power. "The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." Knowledge is the most formidable weapon in the giant hands of vice. The head equipped, the hand depraved, and the hand is skilled to desolate and destroy. A Plato's head, a Nero's heart, and a Tamerlane's hand, building its ghastly throne of human skulls. A public library, that blesses the mind of the rising generation, is as the Tree of Knowledge in the midst of the paradise of God; but if its condition be a public lottery, that curses the heart and palsies the hand, it is as "the fruit of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste brought death into the world, and all our woe." Louisville would be infinitely better off without a public lottery. How can the good and true spread an intellectual feast for the people, with such a sword of Damocles suspended over the moral life of the people?

But abating all the evils that may flow from a public lottery, and granting, without qualification, all the inestimable blessings of a public library, is it right to have the library at the cost of the lottery, the morality of which is a least questionable? Can the conscientious be parties to such a contract?

Now to the text and context. God commanded Saul to go up against the sinners, the Amalekites, and utterly destroy them, with all they had. The king, instead of destroying to the letter the command of God, took Agag, the King of the Amalekites, alive, and his soldiers reserved the richest of the spoils, the best of the sheep and of the oxen. The Lord sent Samuel the Prophet, to remonstrate with Saul. And at the interview between the king and the prophet, Saul complacently said he had obeyed the word of the Lord; but the prophet answered, "What meaneth, then, this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the low-

ing of the oxen that I hear? And Saul said that his people had reserved the best of the sheep and oxen, not for their own use, but for a holy purpose, even to sacrifice unto the Lord God of Israel. True, they had not obeyed the very letter of the divine command, but they had God's glory in view, and would make ample amends—would offer a splendid, Heaven-propitiating sacrifice in Gilgal. But Samuel replies, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" And then the prophet utters the noble sentiment of the text: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The end does not justify the means in the eye of God. Results, however great and glorious, are vitiated if there be any wrong in the means by which they are attained. "A dead fly causeth the precious ointment to send forth a stinking savor." A grain of evil discolors an ocean of good. Burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings are no acceptable sacrifice to the Most High if there be spot or blemish in any victim. St. Peter's may be the crowning glory of papal Rome, but the sale of indulgences traces upon it in letters of fire, "Ichabod!" The Public Library may be ever so grand a sacrifice to the Commonwealth, but the bleating of the sheep! The Public Library may be an arch of triumph to Louisville, but the lowing of the oxen of the public lottery! Saul saved the life of Agag, that as a captive he might swell his royal triumph, but Saul's triumph cost him his crown. So the Agag of the public lottery robs Louisville of the crown of the Public Library.

We turn now to the relation of the Church to this question. Can Christians have anything to do with this matter? Is it to the honor of Jesus that his people should be either principals or accessories? Yes, if there be communion between light and darkness, concord between Christ and Belial. Yet we understand that not a few Church-members have been betrayed into this thing—surely not without some show of reason. And we pass in review their defense; (1) The specious plea of charity. You give to a worthy object, a noble charity. But it is poor charity that consults its own interest, giving ten dollars, hoping for a hundred thousand in return. Beautiful picture of Christian charity—one hand casting in its mites, the other eagerly grasping after millions; much like Saul's mercy sparing the life of the king of the Amalekites, but slaying his people with the edge of the sword!—charity that "seeketh not its own," "giving, hoping for nothing again!" The wrongs that are done in thy sacred name, O charity! (2) The noble uses to which you would put the prizes you draw. You would give to the Church, to the ministry, to Missions, to widows and orphans scattering gifts with generous hand; build altars, and sacrifice unto the Lord, devoting all to religious purposes—God's name praised. But God requires obedience, not sacrifice. He needs

not your vain oblations. His rivers of oil and the cattle upon a thousand hills. Your holocausts are an abomination unto him. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" saith the Lord. "I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fel beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats." (3) You are poor, and feel that God would wink at your providing for your wife and children in this way. Possibly he will place his hand upon the wheel and cast the golden lot into his needy servant's lap. God, of old, gave his people Israel their inheritance by lot; may be he will give Christians the inheritance of other people in the same way. Poverty is no plea for wrong-doing. You had better starve, and your children with you, than sin against your God. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." But God's faithful people do not starve. "Daily bread" is the eternal covenant of God with his people. While the infinite resources of the everlasting God fail not—while the inexhaustible treasures of earth and heaven honor his calls, his people shall be fed. "In the time of famine they shall be satisfied." Let the heavens be as brass, and the earth as iron, for them the wilderness shall rejoice, and the waste places bloom and blossom as the rose. Of his pilgrim-people in the desert the mighty God hath spoken; "Their water shall be sure, and their bread shall not fail." Trust not your wives and little ones to the fickle goddess, Chance: but trust all to your covenant-keeping God, whose are all things, and to whom be glory forever and ever.

Strange that Christians would covet the prize of sin—an Achan's wedge of gold—Judas's silver—a millstone about the neck, sinking into the depths of the sea. Far better a little of God's blessings, than all riches with his frown. "A little with righteousness is better than great revenues with wrong." David would have Uriah's wife, even at the cost of Uriah's life; but Uriah's blood was upon David, and upon his house after him. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, and Jezebel secured him the prize; but the dogs of destiny licked the blood of Ahab. Mammon, "the least erected spirit that fell from heaven," is a mighty god, tempting even God's people from their allegiance. "The wages of unrighteousness" is the fatal field whereon not only the bones of Balaam lie bleaching, but where many mighty have fallen. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Christians are the representatives of Jesus—his honor is committed to them. The eyes of the world are upon them, and their influence for good or ill is tremendous. By their example they light men on the way to God and heaven, or decoy them on to the rocks of death and hell. Even in things the morality of which is doubtful, they must give the benefit of the doubt to God, not the world. In things different, things having no

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