

Sunday Reading.

Dancing

Is it right to dance? For an answer to this question we must turn to the Bible. The word is sometimes used figuratively. The Psalmist says, "thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing."

Religious dances were common in the olden times. When the ark was conveyed from the house of Obed-Edom to the Tabernacle which was prepared in Jerusalem for its reception, "David danced before the Lord."

To such dancing as the foregoing there can be no possible objection. If the heart is right with God—if it is full of gratitude to him for his mercies—and if, through this powerful spiritual excitement, bodily motion is produced, then the exercise is such as Heaven itself will approve.

That no such thought as this is entertained at balls, whether public or private, at the present day, will be admitted on all hands. To be happy for a few hours is the only aim. Therefore, those who say that the Bible sanctions modern dancing are guilty of a gross perversion of revealed truth.

JESUS NEAR.

To a friend in affliction. Half a week, by tonight driven. Yet this faith's rock survives. Dashed against the rocks and driven. In the midst of Death it lives. See it posted on every side. See it call the sinner outside.

Can a harp, like mine so shattered, Ever cease that faintly shiver? 'Tis not that, as long and lettered, Can it stand our conduct moor? Should another storm assail, Must it plunk and all must fall?

So they would, but one that's greater Than the storm and waves is here; He it is whose name is sweetest Far than music to my ear. He proclaims my shatter'd harp, He makes light when all is care.

GAMBLING IN FOUR SCENES.

A general coffee-house, whose human screen conceals a line of gamblers, bottles, and hides respectable blouses from impertinent eyes. "There's a queer little room opening out of the bar, and here sits four jovial youths. The cards are set, the wares are laid. The fourth is a reluctant hand; he does not love the drink, nor approve the game. He anticipates and fears the results of both."

dimly; over the long and lengthened wick sit four men. Carved marble could not be more motionless, save their hands. Pale, watchful, though weary—their eyes pierce the cards, or furtively read each other's faces. Hours have passed over them thus. At length they rise without words—some with satisfaction, which only makes their faces brightly haggard, scrape off the piles of money; others, dark, sullen, silent, fierce, move slowly away from their lost money. The darkest and fiercest of the four is that young friend who first sat down to make up a game. What says he to his conscience now? "I have a right to gamble; I have a right to be damned, if I choose—whose business is it?"

Years have passed on. He has seen youth ruined, and first with exhortation, then with only a silent regret, then consenting to take a part of the spoils, he has himself deceived, duped, and stripped them without mercy. Go with me into that dilapidated house, not far from the landing at New Orleans. Look into that dirty room. Around a broken table sitting upon boxes, kegs, or rickety chairs, see a filthy crew dealing cards stouped with tobacco, grease and liquor. One has a pirate face, burnished and burnt with brandy; a look of grizzly, matted hair half covering his villain eyes, which glare out like a wild beast's from a thicket. Close by him wincees a white face, drooping wretch, vermin covered and stenchful. A scoundrel Spaniard, and a burly Negro, (the pilot of the boat) completed the group. They have spectators—drunken sailors, and aging, thieving, drinking women, who should have died long ago, when all that was womanly died. Here hours draw no hour, sometimes with brutal laughter, sometimes with threats, and oaths, and uproar. The last few stolen dollars lost, and temper too, with cheating, and high words—insult, and blows, and the whole gang bursts out the door, bawling, biffing, scratching, and rolling over in the dust. The worst, the fiercest, the most drunken of the four, is our friend who began by making the game.

Upon a bright day, stand with me, if you would be sick of humanity, and look over that multitude of men kindly gathered to see a murderer hung! At last a guarded cart drags on a three-galled wretch. At the gallows ladder his courage fails. His coward feet refuse to ascend; dragged up he is supported by bustling officials; his brain reels, his eyes swim; while the meek minister utters a final prayer by his leader's ear. The prayer is said, the noose is fixed, the signal is given; a shudder runs through the crowd as he swings free! After a moment his convulsive limbs stretch down and hang heavily and still; and he who began to gamble to make up a game, and ended with stabling an enraged victim whom he had becoiled, has here played his last game himself the stake!

God's goodness in nature. God made the present earth as the home of man; but had he meant it as a mere lodging, a world less beautiful would have served the purpose. There was no need for the carpet of verdure, or the ceiling of blue—no need for the mountains and cataraets and forests—no need for the rainbow, no need for the showers, no need for the flowers. A big round island, half of it arable, and half of it pasture, with a clump of trees in one corner and a magazine of fuel in another, might have held and fed ten millions of people, and a hundred islands all made on the same pattern, big and round, might have held and fed the population of the globe. But man is something more than the animal which wants lodging and food. He has a spiritual nature, full of keen perceptions and deep sympathies. He has an eye for the sublime and the beautiful, and his kind Creator has provided man's abode with all the materials for these nobler tastes. He has built Mount Blanc, and molten the lakes in which its shadows sleep. He has intoned Niagara's thunder, and has breathed the zephyr which sweeps its spray. He has slung the steps with its cedars, and spread the meadow with its king-cups and daisies. He has made it a world of fragrance and music—a world of brightness and symmetry—a world of grandeur and the lovely, rejoicing together. In fashioning the home of man the Creator had an eye to something more than convenience, and built not a barrack, but a palace—not a workshop, but an Alhambra; something which should not only be very comfortable, but very splendid and very fair; something which should inspire the soul of its inhabitants, and even draw forth the "very good" of complacent Deity.

Infinite goodness has lit the fire of truth and utters a warning voice to mariners, on every rock that lifts its head in the stream of life. We are often turned and saved from shipwreck by the kind Providence of God, while that Providence is mysterious and allusive to us. And not until we reach the port in safety will we fully appreciate the design and benevolence which prompted it.

STRAY ARROWS.

McCheyne once sitting in a church, when a pious friend whispered in his ear the single word "eternity," and passed on. The Holy Spirit flashed the mighty word in its fullness of meaning on his soul, and he found no peace until he had found it at the Cross. After he became a minister, he was one day compelled by a shower to find shelter in a furnace building. As he stood there he fixed his eyes on the glowing fire, and pointing to it, he said with much solemnity, "My friend, what does that remind you of?" The furnace man was filled with the most pungent distress, and was led to Christ.

Now had the uttering that word "eternity" to Mr. McCheyne, resulted in no other conversion than his own, and that of the furnace man, who would calculate the glorious consequence of drawing that bow at a venture? But when we look at the multitudes turned to God through the preaching of this gifted and fervent man then we may be certain that little things hold most important relations in the great and merciful purposes of God.

One of the most gifted and pious preachers of this age, once looked at a man who was swearing, and that look resulted in the man's conversion; and another preacher, who still lives, was once a wicked and thoughtless youth. One evening, his eyes fell on a page of Doddridge's "Rise and Progress." He felt an impulse to read, and every word was at hand fastened in sure place. The abundant fruits of his ministry, so far as we can see, were dependent on that little incident.

The writer of this was once visiting with his venerable colleague, in the parish of R. We met a Christian woman of undoubted piety, who asked the aged pastor if he remembered once making a visit, one stormy day, in a distant part of the parish? He remembered it well. Said she, "I was then a giddy, thoughtless girl, and was at the house by accident. I happened to be in the room a minute, and you addressed a few words to me about my soul. I was thrown in to the greatest distress. For months that distress continued, and then I was led to Christ. This was more than twenty years ago, and I thought I would like to thank you for that faithful word, which God blessed to my conversion."

Here, it is only a bow drawn at a venture. The pastor, "in his simplicity," sent the arrow, and for twenty years he did not hear of it, but God had sent it so that it smote between the joints of the harness.—N. Y. Evangelist.

BE CHEERFUL.

All good people ought to wear pleasant faces. There is no virtue in frowns, no piety in our sour looks, no sin in a general smile. If the heart is full of love to God and love to man, it ought to be a heart full of joy. And the face ought to reflect the heart. Some Christians act and look as if they thought it dreadful wicked thing to be cheerful. You are in no danger of mistaking them for angels. They make others look sad, and the world thinks that religion must be a very miserable business if those who have it are always so gloomy.

The face of a Christian ought to be as much like the face of an angel, as it is possible for the earthly to resemble the heavenly. Holiness and happiness should be in the features. Then the world would take knowledge of Christians, that they live with God and are like him. Religion would be commended to those who have it not as the source of his highest joy. Angels would dwell with men, or at least we should often say of this or that saint, as we looked steadily on him, that his face is as the face of an angel.

There is no poetry, no fancy, but practical truth, and I trust would send this. Of all men in the world, the good have the best right to be happy. And if the heart is right, the face ought to show it. Angels look happy, because they are happy, and they are happy because they are always good and doing good.

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