

RATIONAL AMUSEMENTS.

The Rev. Dr. Talmage Preaches on the
Evils of Straitjacket Religion.

Plenty of Places Where We May Find
Elevated Moral Entertainments.

(Copyright 1901.)
WASHINGTON, D. C.—This discourse of Dr. Talmage is in accord with all innocent hilarities, while it reprehends amusements that belittle and deprave; text, II Samuel ii, 14, "Let thy young men now arise and play before us."

There are two armies encamped by the pool of Gibeon. The time hangs heavily on their hands. One army proposes a game of sword fencing. Nothing can be more healthful and innocent. The other army accepts the challenge. Twelve men against twelve men, the sports open. But something went adversely, perhaps one of the swordsmen got an unlucky slip or in some way and his ire aroused, and that which opened in sportfulness ended in violence, each one taking his contestant by the hair and then with the sword thrusting him in the side, so that the which opened in innocent fun ended in the massacre of all the twenty-four sportsmen. Was there ever a better illustration of what was true then and is true now—that that which is innocent may be made destructive?

What of a worldly nature is more important and strengthening and innocent than amusement, and yet what has counted more victims? I have no sympathy with a straitjacket religion. This is a very bright world to me, and I propose to do all I can to make it bright for others. I never could keep fencing, that a Christian man has a right to some amusements. For instance, if he comes at night weary from his work and, feeling the need of recreation, puts on his slippers and goes into his garret and walks lively round the floor several times there can be no harm in it. I believe the church of God has made a great mistake in trying to suppress the sportfulness of youth and drive out from men their love of amusement. If God ever implanted anything in us, He implanted this desire. But instead of providing for this demand of our nature the church of God has for the main part ignored it. As in a riot the mayor plants a battery at the end of the street and has it fired off so that everything is cut down that happens to stand in the range, the good as well as the bad, so there is never in the church who plant their batteries of condemnation and fire away indiscriminately. Everything is condemned. But Paul, the apostle, commands those who use the world without abusing it, and in the natural world God has done everything to please and amuse us.

And I am glad to know that in all our cities there are plenty of places where we may find elevated moral entertainment. But all honest men and good women will agree with me in the statement that one of the worst things in these cities is corrupt amusements. Multitudes have gone down under the blasting influence, never to rise. If we may judge of what is going on in many of the places of amusement by the pictures on board fences and in many of the show windows, it is not a picture of lower depth of prodigality to reach. At Naples, Italy, they keep such pictures locked up from indiscriminate inspection. Those pictures were exhumed from Pompeii, and are not fit for public gaze. If the effrontery of bad places of amusement in hanging out improper advertisements of what they are doing night by night grows worse in the same proportion, in fifty years some of our modern cities will be Pompeii.

I project certain principles by which you may judge in regard to any amusement or recreation, finding out for yourself whether it is right or wrong.

I remark, in the first place, that you can judge of the moral character of any amusement by its healthful result or by its baleful reaction. There are people who seem made up of hard facts. They are a combination of multiplication tables and statistics. If you show them an exquisite picture they will begin to discuss the pigments involved in the coloring. If you show them a beautiful rose they will submit it to a botanical analysis, which is only the post-mortem examination of a flower. They have no rebound in their nature. They never do anything more than smile. There are no great tides of feeling surging up from the depths of their soul in billow after billow of reverberating laughter. They seem as if nature had built them by contract and made a hanging job of it. But blessed be God, there are people in the world who have bright faces and whose life is a song, an anthem, a psalm of victory.

Now, it is these exuberant and sympathetic and warm-hearted people that are most tempted to pernicious amusements. In proportion as a ship is swift it wants a strong helmsman, in proportion as a horse is gay it wants a stout driver. If a people of exuberant nature will do well to look at the reaction of all their amusements. If an amusement sends you home at night nervous, if it keeps you from sleep, and you rise up in the morning not because you are slept out, but because your duty drags you from your slumbers, you have been where you ought not to have been. There are amusements that send a man next day to his work with his eyes bloodshot, yawning, stupid, nauseated, and they are wrong kinds of amusement. They are entertainments that give a man distrust with the drudgery of his tools because they are not words, with woeing aprons because they are not robes, with cattle because they are not infuriated bulls of the arena.

If any amusement sends you home longing for a life of romance and thrilling adventure, love that takes poison and shoots itself, moonlight adventures and hairbreadth escapes, you may depend upon it that you are the sacrificed victims of unsanctified pleasure. Our recreations are intended to build us up, and if they pull us down as to our moral or as to our physical strength, you may come to the conclusion that they are obnoxious.

There is nothing more depraving than attendance upon amusements that are full of innuendo and low suggestion. The young man enters. At first he sits far back, with his hat on and his coat collar up, fearful that somebody there may know him. Several nights pass on. He takes off his hat earlier and puts his coat collar down. The blush that first came into his cheek when anything indecent was enacted comes no more to his cheek. Farewell, young man! You have probably started on the long road which ends in consummate destruction. The stars of hope will go out one by one until you will be left in utter darkness. Hear you not the rush of the maelstrom, in whose outer circle your boat now dances, making merry with the whirling waters? But you are being drawn in, and the gentle motion will become terrific agitation. You cry for help in vain; you pull at the oar to put back, but the struggle will not avail. You will be tossed and dashed and shipwrecked and swallowed in the whirlpool that has already crushed in its wrath 10,000 hulks.

Young men who have come from the country residence to city residence do not do well to be on guard and let no one induce them to places of improper amusement. It is nightly alluring when a young man, long a citizen, offers to show a newcomer all around.

Still further, those amusements are wrong which lead you into expenditure beyond your means. Money spent in recreation is not thrown away. It is all folly for us to come from a place of amusement, feeling that we have wasted our money and time. You may be it have made an

investment worth more than the transaction that yielded you hundreds or thousands of dollars. But how many properties have been riddled by costly amusements.

How brightly the path of unrestrained amusement opens! The young man says: "Now I am off for a good time. Never mind economy. I'll get money somehow. What a fine road! What a beautiful day for a ride! Crack the whip, and over the turnpike! Come, boys, fill high-top glasses! Drink! Long life, health, plenty of rides just like this! Hard working men hear the clatter of the hoofs and look up and say: 'Why, I wonder where those fellows get their money from? We have no toil and drudge. They do nothing.' To these gay men life is a thrill and an excitement. They stare at other people and in turn are stared at. The watch chain singles; the cup foams; midnight hears their guffaw; they swagger; they jostle decent men off the sidewalk; they take the name of God in vain; they parody the hymn they learned at their mother's knee, and to all pictures of coming disaster they cry out, 'Who cares?' and to the counsel of some Christian friend, 'Who are you?'

I go further and say that all those amusements are wrong which lead into bad company. If you go to any place where you have to associate with the intemperate, with the unclean, with the abandoned, however well they may be dressed, in the name of God quit it. They will despoil your nature.

I had a friend in the West—a rare friend. He was one of the first to welcome me to my new home. To fine personal appearance he added generosity, frankness and ardor of nature that made me love him like a brother. But I saw evil people gathering around him. They came up from the saloons, from the gambling halls. They piled him with the coarsest arts. They seized upon his social nature, and he could not stand the charm. They drove him on the rocks, like a ship, full winged, shivering on the breakers. I went to admonish him. I was in vain. "Now, I wish you would quit those bad habits and become a Christian," "Oh," he would reply, "I would like to, but I have gone so far. I don't think there is any way back." In his moments of repentance he would go home and take his little girl of eight years and embrace her convulsively, and cover her with adornments, and strew flowers her pictures and toys and everything that could make her happy, and then, as though hounded by an evil spirit, he would go out to the infaming cup and the house of shame like a fool to the correction of the stocks.

I was summoned to his deathbed; I hastened; I entered the room; I found him, to my surprise, lying in full everyday dress on the top of the couch. I put out my hand. He grasped it excitedly and said: "Sit down, Mr. Talmage; right there." I sat down. He said: "Last night I saw my mother, who has been dead twenty years, and she sat just where you sit now. It was no dream, I was wide awake. There was no delusion in the matter. I saw her just as plainly as I see you. Wife, I wish you would take these strings off me. There are strings spun all around me. I wish you would take them off me." I saw it was delirium. "Oh," replied his wife, "my dear, there is nothing there; there is nothing there!" He went on and said: "Just where you sit, Mr. Talmage, my mother sat. She said to me, 'Henry, I wish you would do better.' I got out of bed but my arms around her and said: 'Mother, I wanted to do better. I have been trying to do better. Won't you help me to do better? You used to help me. No mistake about it; no delusion. I saw her—the cap and the apron and the spectacles—just as she used to look twenty years ago. But I do wish you would take these strings away. They annoy me so I can hardly talk. Won't you take them away?' I knelt down and prayed, conscious of the fact that he did not realize what I was saying. I got up. I said: 'Goodbye! I hope you will be better soon.' He said, 'Goodbye, goodbye!'

That night his soul went up to the God who gave it. Arrangements were made for the obsequies. Some said: "Don't bring him in the church. He was too dissolute." "Oh," I said, "bring him. He was a good friend of mine while he was alive, and I shall stand by him now that he is dead. Bring him to the church." As I sat in the pulpit and saw his body coming up through the aisle I felt as if I could weep tears of blood. I told the people that day: "This man had his virtues and a good many of them. He had his faults and a good many of them. But if there is any man in this audience who is without sin let him cast the first stone at this coffin lid." One on the side of the pulpit sat that little child, rosy, sweet faced, as beautiful as any little child that sat at your table this morning. I warrant you. She looked up wistfully, not knowing the full sorrows of an orphan child.

This destroyed man was a Samson in physical strength, but Delilah sheared him, and the Philistines of evil companionship dragged his eyes out and threw him into the prison of evil habits. But in the hour of his death he rose up and took hold of the two pillars of curses of God against drunkenness and uncleanness and threw them forward upon himself and upon his companions there came the thunders of an eternal catastrophe.

Again, any amusement that gives you a distaste for domestic life is bad. How many bright domestic circles have been broken up by sinful amusements! The father went off, the mother went off, the child went off. There are to-day fragments before me of blasted households. Oh, if you have wandered away, I would like to charm you back to the sound of that one word "home."

I saw a wayward husband standing at the deathbed of his Christian wife, and I saw her point to a ring on her finger and heard her say to her husband: "Do you see that ring?" He replied: "Yes, I see it." "Well," said she, "do you remember who put it there?" "Yes," said he, "I put it there." And all the people seemed to rush upon him. By the memory of that day when, in the presence of men and angels, you promised to be faithful in joy and sorrow and in sickness and in health; by the memory of those pleasant hours when you sat together in your new home talking of a bright future; by the cradle and the joyful hours when one life was spared and another given; by that sickbed, when the little one lifted up the hands and called for help, and you knew he must die, and he put one arm around each of your necks and brought you very near together in that dying kiss; by the little grave in the cemetery that you never think of without a rush of tears; by the family Bible, where, amid stories of heavenly love, is the brief but expressive record of births and deaths; by the neglects of the past and by the agonies of the future; by a judgment day, when husbands and wives, parents and children, in immortal groups, will stand to be caught up in shining array or to shrink down into darkness—by all that I beg you give to home your best affections.

Ah, my friends, there is an hour coming when our past life will probably pass before us in review. It will be our last hour. If from our death pillow we have to look back and see a life spent in sinful amusement, there will be a dart that will strike through our soul sharper than the dagger with which Virginus slew his child. The memory of the past will make us quake like Macbeth; the iniquities and rioting through which we have passed will come upon us weird and skeleton as Meg Merrilies. Death, the old Shylock, will demand and take the remaining pound of flesh and the remaining drop of blood, and upon our last opportunity for repentance and our last chance for heaven the curtain will forever drop.

A Question for the Barber's Union.

At the next meeting of the Montreal Barber's Union the following incident may or may not be brought up for discussion. It is evident, however, that a serious infringement of the rights of the profession is involved.

A man went into a barber's shop to get shaved, wearing a bear's claw on his watch chain.

"I suppose," said the barber, "you killed that bear yourself?"

"Yes, I did," was the reply. "Was it a grizzly bear?"

"It was."

"A big one?"

"About the size of a two-year-old steer."

"Gee whiz! How many bullets did it take to kill him?"

"Not any at all."

"Brain him with an axe?"

"No, I talked him to death."

It took the customer 15 minutes to get the rest of his shave, and during that time the barber didn't speak another word.

Just a Tom.

"Here, Siegfried! Come, Siegfried."

"What a strange name for a cat! Where did he get it?"

"Why, we call him that because he's popular in Thomas concerts."

Sweat and fruit acids will not discolor goods dyed with PUTNAM FADELESS DYES. Sold by all druggists.

A buried town of the early period of the Roman Republic, which closely resembles Pompeii, has been discovered near Caserta.

A soft answer may turn away wrath, but never a creditor.

Ask Your Dealer for Allen's Foot-Ease. A powder to shake into your shoes: cures the feet. Cures Corns, Bunions, Swollen, Sore, Hot, Callous, Aching, Sweating Feet and Ingrowing Nails. Allen's Foot-Ease makes new or tight shoes easy. At all druggists and shoe stores, 25 cts. Sample mailed FREE. Address Allen S. Olmsted, LeRoy, N. Y.

It's generally the man with well-shaped legs who goes in for golf.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for children: cures teething, soothes the gums, reduces inflammation, always cures, cures wind colic, 25c a bottle.

It's usually when a man speaks without thinking that he says what he thinks.

Fieo's Cure is the best medicine we ever used for all affections of throat and lungs.—Wm. O. ENDSLEY, Vancouver, Ind., Feb. 10, 1900.

Europe has had 221 monarchs since the battle of Hastings.

Have you ever experienced the joyful sensation of a good appetite? You will if you chew Adams' Peppin Tutti Frutti.

Germany holds the record for the first daily paper. It was printed in 1524.

H. H. GREEN'S SONS, of Atlanta, Ga., are the only successful Dropsy Specialists in the world. See their liberal offer in advertisement in another column of this paper.

An African who had visited England described snow as "rain gone to sleep."

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After I was induced to try CASCARETS, I will never be without them in the house. My liver was in a very bad shape, and my head ached and I had stomach trouble. Now, since taking CASCARETS, I feel fine. My wife has also used them with beneficial results for her stomach.

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