



The
CHRISTIAN TREASURY

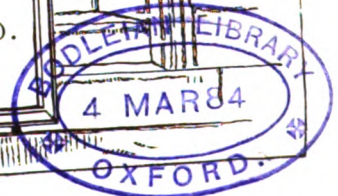
CONTAINING

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MINISTERS AND MEMBERS
OF
VARIOUS EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS



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CHRISTIAN TREASURY.

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EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS.

FOOLISHNESS AND POWER.*

BY EUGENE BERSIER, PASTOR OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF PARIS.

‘For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us
which are saved it is the power of God.’—1 Cor. i. 18.



FOOLISHNESS—power! These are the two names that Paul here gives to the preaching of the cross. I propose, my brethren, to study in succession these two ideas, in order afterwards to show you the tie that closely unites them together. This will be the plan

of our reflections.

The preaching of the cross is **FOOLISHNESS**. I pray you to remark, my brethren, that it is not an enemy of the gospel, but an Apostle, who says this to us. Christianity has not waited until the world cast this reproach at it; it has not left it this satisfaction. This insult it has itself seized, and been the first to claim as its lawful property. And let not men say to us that it is here a figure of speech, a bold apostrophe, that has escaped from the Apostle. The gospel is sparing in its use of these exaggerated epithets, of these figures of rhetoric; and, moreover, the same thought is found underlying the entire teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ presented His doctrine as a thing that the world would charge with folly. He clearly speaks of the incompatibility that there is between man's view of things and that which He preached; He foretold

His disciples that they would meet with opposition, hatred, and contempt.

This is, indeed, a strange method of seeking to gain men; so strange that it would be foolishness if it did not show a divine inspiration. Usually, when a man wishes to succeed, he promises to himself and to his disciples success. Every general well knows that in order to succeed he must announce victory to his soldiers. It is the same in the order of intelligence; a philosopher, a chief of a school, is forced to prove that his doctrine answers to all the needs of the age, and will satisfy all its aspirations; he points out intelligences already prepared to embrace it, and proselytes who are about to range themselves under his standard. We ourselves, sometimes yielding to this attraction, have we not announced the near triumph of our beliefs! Jesus Christ alone said to His disciples, ‘You will be judged, calumniated, hated because of My name;’ and it is this thought that Paul takes up when he speaks with so much assurance of the foolishness of the cross.

The cross specially merited this distinction and this reproach, for it is it which epitomises our entire Christianity. It is its centre; it is in it, above all, that there appeared what was strange and opposed to human wisdom. The preaching of the cross was designed to be foolishness; it has been so, my brethren, and Paul has said not a word too much.

And, first of all, considering it only from an

* Translated from the French for the *Christian Treasury*, by permission of the author, from the seventh edition of the second volume of his sermons. Paris: M. Fischbacher.



THE PERILS OF THE PLAY-HOUSE.

A PLAIN TALK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.



YOUNG people often ask me the question, 'Would it be right for me to go to the theatre? If not, then why not?' Those who propound these questions are not of the dissipated and dissolute class, but clean young men and maidens — too clean to be smirched by needless exposure

to impure influences. That such questions are raised constantly is not surprising; for the play-house is increasingly persistent in its demands on popular attention and patronage. It fills a constantly enlarging place in the daily journals. Theatres multiply more rapidly than churches in some of our great cities. Theatre-going increases more than church-going. The dead walls are covered with flaunting pictorial representations of scenes and 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?

Before our youthful inquirers become patrons of the play-house it is but fair that they should know just what perils to their moral nature and to their welfare as *immortal* beings they are likely to encounter. The first peril is to purity of character. Your eyes and ears are windows and doors to the heart. What enters once never goes out. Photographs taken on the memory are not easily effaced or burned up; they stick there, and often become tempters and tormentors for a lifetime. 'I'd give my right hand,' said a Christian to me once, 'if I could rub out the abominable things that I put into my mind when I was a fast young man.' He could not do it; neither will you be able to efface the lascivious images or the impure words which the stage may photograph on your very soul. We do not affirm that every popular play is immoral, or that every performer is impure,

or that every theatre-goer is on the scent for sensual excitements. But the stage is to be estimated as a totality; and the whole trend of the average American stage is hostile to heart-purity. The exceptions do not alter the rule. Nor have honest attempts to bring the stage up to a high standard of moral purity been successful. The experiment once made in Boston of so managing a theatre 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.

You must take the average stage *as it is*, and not as you would like to have it. It is an institution which, if you patronise, you become morally responsible for, as much as if you patronise a public library or a public drinking saloon. As an institution it habitually unsexes woman by parading her before a mixed audience in man's attire. Too often it exposes her in such a pitiable scantiness of any attire at all, that if you saw your own sister in such a plight, you would turn away your eyes in horror. Yet you propose to pay your money (through the box-office) to somebody else's sisters and daughters to violate womanly delicacy for your entertainment. 'If the daughter of Herodias' dances to *please you*, then you are responsible for the dance, both in its influence on the dancer and on your own moral sense. There is no evading, before God, of your accountability for the theatre, if you habitually support it. What its influence upon the average performer is appears from most abundant testimony. One of the most celebrated actresses of this time informed a friend of mine that she 'only enters a theatre

to enact her part, and has very little association with her own profession.' A converted actor once said to me, while passing a play-house in which he had often performed—'Behind those curtains lies Sodom.' Although sorely pressed to return to his old business, he said that he would starve sooner than go on the stage again. Mrs Francis Kemble Butler—the last living representative of the most famous histrionic family of modern times—has, in her old age, condemned the stage emphatically. As an institution, the American theatre tolerates sensual impurity in its performers, and presents scenes of impurity to its patrons. If you become one of its patrons, you go into moral partnership with the theatre.

2. It would be a sufficient condemnation of the average play-house if it stimulates one evil passion. But other temptations lurk about it. There are dangerous associations to be encountered there. It is a prevalent habit with young people who attend the theatre to remain until a late hour amid the excitement of the plays, and then finish off with a midnight supper, or a wine drink at some neighbouring restaurant. To this perilous practice a young lady of my acquaintance owed her downfall. Long after sensible people have laid their heads on their pillows, the *habitués* of the theatre are apt to be adding a second scene of dissipation to the first one; and it must be pretty hard work for a Christian to finish up such an evening's experience with an honest prayer for God's blessing. That is indeed a poor business and a poor pleasure on which we cannot, with a clear conscience, ask our Heavenly Father's approval. Certainly, there are enough innocent, wholesome, and beneficial recreations without venturing into the dangerous atmosphere of the play-house. That is a dear bought pleasure which involves even a risk to the immortal soul.

3. Another peril of the theatre arises from the fascination which it too often engenders. Like wine-drinking, it becomes an appetite, and a very greedy appetite. 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. Even the entertainments of the stage become dull unless they are spiced with new excitements to the passions. Wholesome pleasures cease to please, just as a brandy-drinker ceases to be satisfied with cold water or a cup of coffee. It is not recreation, but stimulation, and a very dangerous sort of

stimulation, too, that you will be after, when you become enslaved by the fascinations of the stage.

My young friends, be assured that no sagacious employer ever chooses a clerk, or accountant, or any other employé the sooner because he is a theatre-goer. No sensible man is apt to select the companion of his heart and home because she is a frequenter of a play-house. No good woman wants her sons and daughters there. No pastor expects that his youthful church members can go often into that impure atmosphere without a terrible damage to their piety. I don't believe that the theatre has ever helped many souls toward heaven. I *know* that it has sent thousands to perdition. Now that I have, in kind and candid plainness of speech, pointed out some of the inevitable *perils* of the play-house, do you feel like *taking the risk?*—*New York Independent.*

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In the Morning.

The day is before me, for bliss or for woe.
For toil or for waiting, how little I know!
The day is before me, dear Saviour divine,
I pray Thee upon it in beauty to shine.

Wherever I go, be my errand for Thee;
Wherever I look, there Thy poor let me see;
Whatever I say, be the words in Thy name;
On the thoughts of my heart breathe Thy
spirit of flame.

Uphold me in weakness, for Thine is the
power,
My dearth with Thy fulness in benisons
dower;
Restore me when fainting, withdraw me when
ill.
And stir me to praise Thee whate'er be Thy
will.

I would run in Thy service, yet grieve not to
stand
With folded hands quiet, if such Thy com-
mand.
All trials I pray Thee to sweeten and bless,
Nor suffer my faith, dearest Lord, to grow less

Oh fain would I bring to the place of Thy feet,
Some pilgrim who knows not that hallowed
retreat;
Oh fain would I tell, where the perishing are,
Of Jesus my dayspring, my sun, and my star.

The day is before me, dear Lord, let me break
Its bread in contentment and peace for Thy
sake.
And this be my glory, my joy, and my crown,
All things on Thine altar to gladly lay down.
M. E. Sangster.