

# A SERMON,

Preached in the Newnan Presbyterian Church, May 26, 1889,

by the Pastor, REV. JAMES STACY, D. D.

Subject—"THE DANCE."

TEXT—"Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire." Matt., xviii.: 8, 9.

This is very strong language. I know of but few such passages where the truth is uttered with such fearful emphasis. In Mark (ix.: 43-48) the emphasis is still further intensified by the addition of the words, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." And then the argument is just as clear and conclusive as the language is emphatic. All must admit that where the alternative is presented between the loss of an eye, or hand, or foot, and having the whole man—soul, body, and spirit—cast into everlasting fire, there can be but one response. The unanimous voice would be, that it is infinitely better for a man to lose one member of his body than to endure the torments of the damned forever. It behooves us, therefore, to have a correct idea of the meaning of this text, for this fearful alternative may some time be set before us for our choice.

The word *offend* has somewhat changed its signification since the time of the translation of the Scriptures. It is now used in the sense to *displease*; but at that time it meant to *cause to stumble*. In the original, the word used is the same that was applied to the trigger of a trap, against which the bird or animal impinged, and caused the trap to fall upon it. The meaning of the word is, "to cause to be ensnared and taken." Anything, therefore, that becomes a snare, a trigger to the trap,

in which the soul is to be caught, like a bird, is, in Bible nomenclature, an *offense*, and is to be avoided at any and every sacrifice, even if it be the excision of a hand or foot, or the pulling out of an eye. If your right hand becomes a snare, a trigger to the trap by which your soul is to be ensnared and taken by the enemy of souls and dragged down to perdition, cut it off. If it be a right eye or foot that thus offends—that thus becomes a gin, a snare, a trigger to the trap by which your immortal soul is to be ensnared and taken—do not hesitate, says the Master, to pluck out the one and cut off the other and cast them from thee, and for the reason which carries with it all the cogency of an irresistible argument, and which, as soon as enunciated, demands universal assent, that it is infinitely better for a man to enter into life halt and maimed, having but one eye, or hand, or foot, than having two eyes, two hands and two feet to be cast into hell-fire, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

The obvious practical teaching, then, of this text is simply this: That things indifferent can be sources of danger and destruction as well as things wicked and sinful, and for that reason are to be avoided as much so as the other. What is wrong in the use of the eye? What is wicked in the use of the hand? What is sinful in the use of the foot? And yet that very eye, which God has made for noble purposes, can become a snare to the soul, a trigger to the trap. So the hand, so the foot. It was David's eyes that led to his ensnarement, when from the royal chambers he looked upon the fair form of Bath-Sheba engaged in



her ablutions. It was the hand of Aaron that became a snare to him and the people of Israel, when he took the earrings and jewelry of the women and formed and set up that golden calf by which Israel was enticed away from the worship of the true and living God. It was the feet of Lot that ensnared him and his family when they carried him to sojourn in the midst of the Sodomites—a people who had cast off all fear of God from before their eyes and given themselves up to every abomination and sin.

Then it would be well to remember that there are two kinds of indifferent things—those that are useful and necessary, like the hand or eye, and those which are wholly useless, as some idle habit or practice which is of service to nobody. If, then, we are to maim the hand or disable the eye when they become a snare to us, being actually required to destroy that which is useful when it performs the part of the trigger to the trap, how much more are we to forsake that which is unnecessary, unprofitable and expensive?

And, now, I doubt not but that you have already seen the point of these remarks and already made the application. It is perfectly obvious, even to the most casual observer, that the tendency of the age and the tendency of this community, partaking of the general degeneracy of the times, is to dissipation, and the tendency of dissipation, like the leak in the dam, is to cut for itself the greater opening. *Descensus averno facilis*; descent to the infernal regions is easy. The tendency to evil is without effort. To increase good requires exertion. To increase evil is simply to let it alone.

To every observant eye it is perfectly obvious that dissipation has been on the increase, of late, in our community; parental discipline has been neglected; greater liberties granted the young; the Sabbath more and more disregarded and desecrated; a place has been provided for dissipation, the whole

culminating in a regular paid arrangement whereby the rising generation are to be taught how to dissipate! Parents actually hiring a man to teach their children how to be godless and graceless!

It is not my purpose to discuss the question whether it is a sin to dance, for I have already done this since my residence among you. Besides, my text does not contemplate such a thing. The Saviour is here speaking, you perceive, of things indifferent, not things sinful, and I am not going to be diverted from that issue. The question is not whether it is a *malum per se*—an evil in itself. The text speaks of plucking out a right eye and cutting off a right hand, and not the violation of any law, or commission of any great offense. It does not matter, then, whether it be a sin in itself. The only question is, whether it comes in the same category with the offending eye, or hand, or foot?—whether it becomes a snare to us and gets in the way of our salvation? Suppose I admit it is not a sin in itself, any more than romping, jumping, shooting marbles or playing chess—what then? Why, simply this: According to the rule laid down here, (and it is as much a command as any law that ever emanated from the Master's lips,) that if dancing, or even romping, jumping, or playing marbles, chess, or any other game, becomes a snare, a trap, a trigger, by which our soul is to be ensnared and dragged down from heaven, it is clearly our duty to abandon it.

There are those who seem to think there is danger in nothing but sin—by sin meaning the commission of some gross offense; but this is not the teaching of the Scriptures—not the teaching of the Master—not the teaching of observation and experience. In nature, death lurks in many things beside the poisonous drug, or fatal bullet, or even such diseases as consumption, or yellow fever, or cholera. The slightest exposure, or imprudence in eating or sleeping, may lead to a termination of life.

Many a man has lost his life in doing something proper in itself. Several years ago a little child in this place was choked to death with a piece of bread. That which was necessary to life actually became the means of death. And did it matter to the fond mother whether bread or poison did the fatal work, since the life of her child was gone? A man may be run over by the passing train and killed. Shall he stop and ask himself the question whether it is right for him to be upon the track or not when he sees the engine coming? In temporal matters men have but one idea, and that is to get away from the place of danger when they see death staring them in the face; and yet when we point them to spiritual dangers and things destructive to their spiritual life they are continually raising the question—"Where is the sin? What law is violated? What harm is in it?"

The Scriptures give us plainly to understand that there are a great many things which can destroy the soul besides overt acts of transgression. "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died," said Paul to the Romans. (Rom., xiv.:15.) Thus, the early Christians, by eating meat offered to idols, could destroy the souls of others. Yet where is the sin in eating meat? What law violated? Where is the harm? So the apostle declares that a man may eat and drink damnation by partaking of the communion unworthily. Yet where is the sin? Which of the ten commandments is broken? What law violated?

The Scriptures declare that, to be carnally minded, is death; that all that is necessary for a man to do to shut himself out of the kingdom of heaven is simply to prefer this world to the favor of God. As illustrated in the history of the young ruler who preferred his riches to the heavenly inheritance, or of the rich man against whom no charge of immorality was preferred, and who, like any other prudent man, resolved to pull down his old barns and build lar-

ger, where he might bestow his increased fruits. Now, where is the sin in a man simply looking after and taking care of his goods? What law was broken?—which of the ten commandments violated? Many a moral man has suffered his legitimate business to destroy his soul. And if business can drag a man down to perdition, why may not pleasure?

Neglect is presented to us in the Scriptures as another potential means of destruction. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" A man may sit still in his canoe until he is swept over the fatal cataract. So a man may sit still and do nothing till he loses his soul. And now, in that destruction, what law is violated?—which of the ten commandments broken?

Then, again, unbelief is presented in the Scriptures as the great destroyer of souls. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Unbelief shut the vast multitude of the Israelites out of the earthly Canaan, and the same unbelief is shutting out innumerable throngs from the heavenly Canaan. Multitudes every day going to perdition through the great and heinous sin of unbelief, and yet they are asking the question: Why, what have I done? What law have I broken? Which of the ten commandment have I violated?

We have a striking illustration of all this in the conduct of the people of Gadara. The Saviour went over into the land of the Gadarenes on a mission of mercy—to heal their sick and teach them the way of salvation. The first case he healed was a man with a legion of devils. He cured the man, but as the cure was followed by the destruction of a herd of their swine the people from all around the country came and besought Him that He would depart out of their coast. In compliance with their wishes the Saviour left them, never to return again, and they thus just as effectually cut themselves off from salvation as if they had been thieves, cut-throats and highway mur-



derers. They foolishly despised their privileges, they slighted their opportunity, and sealed their doom by turning their back upon the Master. So now, many a community has, like the Gadarenes, virtually besought the Lord to leave them. By their intense worldliness and by their indifference they have virtually asked Him to depart out of their coasts. There are other methods of destruction besides persistent, daring, overt acts of transgression and sin. A man can grieve, insult and drive away the spirit from his heart and seal his destruction by his wanton indifference to spiritual things and his inordinate love for worldly pursuits and pleasures. At the last day the Saviour will say to those upon his left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"—not for their numerous and aggregated transgressions, but their utter disregard and neglect of his claims. "I was hungered and ye gave me no meat, thirsty and ye gave me no drink." It was the unprofitable and not intensely wicked servant, simply, that was cast into outer darkness.

Let, then, the advocates of the dance bring with them a better plea than that it is not *malum per se*, and they can "see no harm in it." Indifferent things can become a sin, a snare, a trigger to the trap just as well as sinful deeds, and even more so, by reason of the very delusive disguise that accompanies them and that so effectually quiets all alarm. "There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

When the fisherman goes to the bank of the stream he unwinds his line, he baits his hook and drops it into the water. The unsuspecting fish soon comes along and, seeing nothing but the worm, it suspects no danger. Is not the worm good for food? He bites, his jaws are at once impaled upon the cruel hook, and he is unceremoniously drawn out of the water and soon finds himself in the fisherman's basket. O, it is with many of these same indifferent things

that the great adversary of souls baits his hook, with which he catches the unsuspecting sons of men and drags them down to perdition. Witness his strategy in the Garden of Eden. When Eve saw, from Satan's statement, that the fruit was good and calculated to make one wise—

—"She plucked, she eat!  
Earth felt the wound; and Nature from her seat,  
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,  
That all was lost!"

Witness his argument for the saloon: "It is no sin to take a drink;" but, alas! in the end it "biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."

I insist, therefore, the question is not whether the dance is an evil in itself, but whether it be a snare, a trigger to the trap—the tempting bait which Satan puts upon his hook, with which he draws the unsuspecting young away from God and heaven, and ultimately down to everlasting ruin. The decoy with which he allures them away from heaven and spiritual influences into the open field of worldliness, where he intends to bind them so securely with his cords that they will never return again, but be compelled to serve him the balance of their days.

But it is just here that the advocates of the dance join issue with me. "It is not hurtful or injurious to our spiritual life," say they. Perhaps not, for the majority of them have no spiritual life to be injured one way or the other. But let us look a little into this matter. There are certain incontrovertible facts wholly inconsistent with the supposition that the practice is not injurious to spiritual life.

1. In the first place, such are confronted with the united testimony of the whole Christian world. All the purest and best, the most devout, and those most noted for their spirituality, have unitedly set their face against the practice as hurtful to personal piety, and injurious to the spread of religion in the community. The consensus of all the Christian churches is against it, with-

out a single exception. All the evangelical denominations have condemned it. They have all declared against it as the insidious foe of the church, and the subtle and deadly enemy of religion in the soul. Now, it is to be presumed that they who know more about religion and practice it most would certainly know more about its nature and the condition of its life, and what would hinder its growth, than the giddy, gay, thoughtless worldling who has never experienced its power upon the heart, or the formal professor who spends far more time in preparation for the ball-room than in prayer or the study of God's word. Who would be the best witness, and whose testimony should go farthest, the man who studies and practices religion, or he who studies and practices the world?

2. Then, in the second place, who are the advocates and friends of the dance? People of the world, of course. It just suits their ideas and feelings. The dance is worldly and they are worldly. The dance is at a distance from God, and they are at a distance from Him. They are precisely adapted to each other. Now, when we turn to the church members who go into it, we see a striking resemblance between them and the other class. As a class, dancing members look very much like dancing worldlings. They are never remarkable for spirituality, for religious fervor. They are not much given to secret prayer. They exhibit very few, if any, of those deep inner gifts and graces of the spirit, showing that theirs is a life of faith and prayer, and daily walk and communion with God. As a compensation for the privileges of the ball-room, they may affect an outward religious zeal, and show a willingness to work, as they say, for the church. But that is not spirituality of mind and heart. The man that is regenerated is taken unto nearness with God. He walks and talks with Him every day. This is the very essence and life of religion. Now, it is this essential element and feature—

this nearness to God—that is so strangely and strikingly absent from the life and experience of the dancing Christian. People of the world see and know this. They have very little difficulty in gauging such a religion. To say the least of it, they look upon it with extreme suspicion. Hence, the dancer is not the person to whom the men of the world would ever go for religious counsel and advice. Nor yet would the man upon the dying bed ever send for the leader of the german to kneel beside his bed and pray for him. We venture the assertion that the thing has never yet happened in the history of the world that a man was called out of the ball-room to pray with and for a dying man. The sick and dying feel that the man they need for such an emergency is one who lives near to God, and is in the habit of talking to Him, and they argue, and argue correctly, that the man who is in the habit of frequenting the ball-room is not the man who is in the habit of frequenting the Throne of Grace, and he who can breathe and live in the atmosphere of the one would certainly be stifled should he undertake to draw near and breathe the atmosphere of the other.

3. Then, look around and see what is the effect of this practice upon the state of religion in a community, as shown by experience. The universal voice of experience is, that these things never go together. Like the see-saw, when one goes up the other goes down; when religion flourishes the dance declines, and when the dance flourishes religion declines, which shows that they are antagonistic. Religion and arts and sciences can flourish together—religion and education can go together—religion and business can flourish side by side, upon the same soil, but not so with religion and the dance. Like the growing grain and the thrifty weed they cannot live and thrive side by side. The one can only flourish at the expense of the other. Hence, you will always find that in those commu-

nities where this amusement prevails, there is a dearth of revivals; and those churches in which this practice is allowed, religion degenerates into mere outward formalism, the gospel loses much of its power, and the church, instead of being the "city upon the hill whose light cannot be hid," becomes but the smoky lantern with its light flickering in the socket. Instead of sitting like a queen upon her lofty throne of beauty and grace, she becomes the bound captive crouching in the dust—the jest of the wicked and the sport of the uncircumcised and unclean.

4. Then, what is the effect upon the individual? Let those who go to such places answer. If this "innocent pastime," as you are pleased to term it, be not destructive of all religious feeling, and a formidable barrier in the way of salvation, then how comes it to pass that such are not yet saved? Why is it they are so little interested about their soul's salvation? Yea, why is it that they seem to be so entirely removed out of the reach of the gospel? Can that be innocent and harmless which so hardens the heart—sears the conscience and deadens all the religious sensibilities of the soul? It is a principle in philosophy that two bodies cannot occupy the same place at the same time, unless they coalesce and mix and mingle, like sugar dissolved in water, or any substance held in another by chemical solution. Religion will mix and mingle with business, or any of the lawful pursuits of life; but it will not mix and mingle with the german. The religion of the meek and lowly Jesus can never take up and hold in solution the carnal revellings of the voluptuous waltz. Just as soon expect light and darkness to coalesce in one, just as soon expect day and night, summer and winter, heat and cold, or any other of the antipathic elements of nature to lay aside their distinctive characteristics and come together under the operation and control of the same law. The german and religious interest cannot exist together in the

same brain. Hence, I have no fear of contradiction when I affirm that of all those who have of late been attending these dances, or your dancing school, not a single one can be found who has any serious concern about his soul. Like soldiers in battle, they have lost all sight of danger from the excitement of the hour. And what is true of this community is likewise true of all others. Show me a single impenitent person in this community who attends the dance, and who at the same times is anxiously inquiring, "What shall I do to be saved?" and I will at once yield the point. Show me one anywhere in the State of Georgia; show me one anywhere in the United States of America;—yea, more, show me one anywhere upon the habitable globe, who is going to the german and who is sincerely attending the inquiry meeting at the same time, and I yield the point at once. Before a man can go to the one he must forsake the other. Before a man can attend the former, he must make a compromise with his conscience and the Holy Spirit. He must virtually say to the spirit, "Go thy way for this time, and afterwards I will call for thee." Go search the annals of the world and see if a single instance can be found where a soul was ever converted upon the floor of the ball-room, amid the whirling mazes of the giddy dance? Very few places in this world, in my judgment, are farther removed from God and heaven and the Spirit's influences than the ball-room. I know of one or two more, and only one or two. Yet in the face of this damaging array of facts, we are coolly met with the statement: "I don't see any harm in it;" and parents are actually sending their children to this Christless, graceless, spiritless place, that they may be taught in this Christless, graceless, spiritless school!

Enough has already been said to show why church people have always opposed the dance in all of its forms. If it antagonizes the gospel, interferes with

church work, weans the heart away from God and heaven; if it becomes a sin, a snare, a trigger to the trap by which thoughtless and unsuspecting souls are ensnared and taken; if it becomes an impediment and harrier in the way of salvation, then it matters not whether a *malum per se*, an evil in itself or not, no Christian man and minister of the gospel who feels any concern for souls can hesitate for a single moment which side of the question he will take. It matters not whether an evil in itself or not, so long as I can see its effects are so hurtful and damaging to the cause of religion, like the saloon, I cannot help resisting it.

I am opposed to the dance in every shape and form, because it is opposed to my work. It is in the way of the gospel, it is in the way of salvation. It is in the way, equally, of the development of the Christian and the conversion of the sinner. It paralyzes the efforts of the one, and puts the other very nearly out of the reach of the gospel. What is the use of talking about the preciousness of a Saviour's love, or the sweet peace and ecstatic joys of the Christian, to a man when in the wildest delirium of wordly intoxication and delight? There is such a thing as intoxication from pleasure as well as from ardent spirits, and the one renders the man just as oblivious to the claims of God and the gospel as the other; and, with all candor, I make the statement that I have about as much hope of reaching the one with the gospel as the other. I would just as soon preach to a man who gets upon a drunk every week, with a view of saving his soul, as to a man who goes to a ball every week. Revelling and drunkenness are put in the same category, both by the Apostles Paul and Peter, (Gal., v.: 21; I. Peter, iv.: 3;) and the one will shut out of the kingdom just as easily and as surely as the other.

I am opposed to the dance because it is inconsistent with that complete and unqualified separation between the

church and the world, everywhere insisted upon in the Scriptures.

"Come out from among them and be ye separable," (I. Cor., vi.: 17.) is the positive and explicit command. "Be not conformed to this world," (having the same form and behavior) "but be ye transformed;" in the original, "metamorphosed," completely changed into a different being, having a different form, with a different life and different habits. "Delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated," (*trans*, beyond, and *latum*, carried.) Carried outside and beyond the limits of the country and brought into another country—owing fealty to a new sovereign, speaking a new language and brought into obedience to new laws. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was required to leave Ur of the Chaldees—to come out from his idolatrous kindred and people, and be separate from them. Israel, the type of the true Israel, were required to come out of Egypt and not to go back—the Red Sea being put behind them and the path through its trackless waters closed up, so they could never return. One whole generation perished in the wilderness because they lusted after the flesh pots of Egypt and desired to return; and after their establishment in Canaan they were required to be entirely separate from the surrounding nations, to have no dealings with them in any shape or form, and form no alliances with them, either matrimonial or otherwise. They spoke a different language from the nations around them—their religion being so different and many of their laws and rites so repulsive to them, as to secure complete and total separation—thus showing that God's people are to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" that they are to have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness"—that is, to have nothing in common with them as the Word means.

So the doctrine of the new birth asserts the same thing. It is spoken of as a new creation, some of the leading

characteristics of which are that they were once afar off, but are now brought nigh—were once blind, but now can see—once dead, but now made alive—once living in the world and serving divers lusts, but now denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly—i. e., sedately or with Christian sobriety.

So the kingdom the Saviour came to set up was to be diverse from all others. He called His apostles out from the world. Moreover, He said that all who would be His disciples must deny themselves and take up the Cross and follow Him. "Crucified with Christ" is the formula that expresses their new state.

Now, turn to the ball-room and see if you can discover any of these leading essential characteristics? Do you see anything peculiar or separate, any line of demarcation between life and death? Any old and new? Any self-denial? Any self-crucifixion? Any bearing of crosses? If so, in what does the self-denial and cross-bearing consist? Which have on the old man, and which put on Christ? Which making provision, and which making no provision to fulfill the lusts of the flesh—which Christ-like and which like the world? Which crucified with Christ and which not? A dancing disciple of a crucified Saviour! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice—lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." (II. Sam., i. : 20.)

I am opposed to the dance because it levels all these distinctions and teaches that there is no difference between the church and the world, while the Scriptures everywhere declare that there is a chasm between them as high as heaven, as deep as hell, and as broad as immensity.

Again, I am opposed because it causes church members to violate their consecration vows.

There is not one of the evangelical churches but what has condemned the dance and forbidden its members indulging in the same. This is known to

every one. Those, then, who apply for membership, and are received, come in with the understanding that it is under the ban of the church, and if not in so many words, virtually agree to accept this as part of the covenant. When they stand up before the congregation and take the vows of the church upon them, they solemnly promise to forsake the world, its unhallowed pursuits and pleasures; they promise to study the purity and peace of the church, conscientiously avoiding in speech and behavior what is contrary to the holy principles of the gospel. They promise to submit to the lawful exercise of the authority of the church as long as they remain members of it. It is useless to say they do not *promise* to give up this amusement, for no church would receive them with any such mental reservation; and surely the Lord Jesus would not receive them. No man is fit for the church, or can hope to be received by the Master, who is not willing to make a full and unconditional surrender of the world. Unless he is willing to do this, to cut entirely loose from the world and burn the ships behind him, he is simply mocking God and heaven, sporting with the church, and trifling with his own soul as well as with sacred things, when he applies to be received into membership. And yet, in the face of all this, we find recalcitrant members in all the churches, who have lost sight of their covenant engagements and seem entirely to have disregarded these, their solemn vows, and who persist in their refusal to submit to the wishes and authority of their brethren in the Lord. Such is the fascination and such the stronghold that this form of the world has upon the hearts and lives of many of the professedly devoted followers of their crucified Lord, that before they would abandon it, they would suffer themselves thrust out from her communion and the church torn asunder with internal dissension and strife!

I am opposed to the dance because,



like Achan of old, it is a great disturber of Israel. Witness the recent agitation in our church, which shook it from its center to its outmost circumference.

I am opposed to the dance, because it is an interference with parental vows and obligations. Presbyterians need not be told that parents are responsible to God for the training of their children. This idea is forcibly set forth in the ordinance of infant baptism. The Lord claims the children of His people as His own. The theory and practice of the Presbyterian church is for parents formally to dedicate their children to the Lord in early infancy, and to enter into covenant with God and the church to train them to His glory. What, then, becomes of these solemn vows and obligations when they not only allow them to go, but actually send them to these schools of the world, to be trained for the world? Is that training them for His glory and His church? But do I hear you to-day, "I have not had my children baptized?" So much the worse! The neglect is but an admission on your part that you are willing that they should remain in the world and be regarded as belonging to the world. It is but ignoring the claims of God altogether and surrendering them entirely to the world. Whether you have your children baptized or not the obligation is the same.

I am opposed to the dance, because it is wholly useless and unprofitable—a useless expenditure of money and time. Four hundred dollars spent in this town to maintain a dancing school, when there are so many poor and needy in the land crying for bread, and so many children growing up in ignorance for want of education! Four hundred dollars for a dancing school, and considerably less than that amount from the whole community for the cause of foreign missions, when there are over eight hundred millions of heathens sinking down to perdition for the lack of the gospel. Our money belongs to the Lord, and constitutes a talent for

which we are to give account. Is this the best use to which we could put our Lord's money?

Then, what a useless waste of time—time, one of the talents for which we are accountable; time, every moment of which is more precious than gold-dust; time, which we shall yet value as did the dying Elizabeth when she cried out, "Millions of money for an inch of time!" Could we not spend the time more profitably?

Again, and finally, I am opposed to the dance because it interferes with the great duties of life, and compromises the very object of existence. We are put here for a purpose, and that purpose is to serve God, to glorify and enjoy Him forever. The great business of life is to secure the favor of God, to obtain the forgiveness of sins, and to lay up treasures in heaven. The first great duty of the sinner is to secure the salvation of his soul. The command is to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and whatever interferes with that is to be sacrificed, whether the right eye, or hand, or foot. The great duty of the Christian is to work for the spread of the Master's kingdom and the salvation of precious souls, and whatever hinders in that work is to be unceremoniously discarded. The life of the sinner is in jeopardy and he has no time for dalliance; and the Christian, like Nehemiah, is engaged in a great work, and has no time for a conference with Tobiah and the Arabians in the plain below. The sinner has no time to be dancing when the flames of an endless hell are rolling beneath his feet; and the Christian has no time to be fiddling and dancing, like Nero at the burning of Rome, while souls are perishing around him. "Life is real, life is earnest." This is the sowing time, the reaping time hereafter; this the working time, the gathering time bye-and-bye. There is a work to be performed; there are duties and obligations to be met; there are precious opportunities to be improved, which, if

we let them slip, are gone forever. "And as we sow, so shall we reap. If we sow sparingly we shall reap sparingly; if bountifully, we shall reap bountifully. If we sow to the flesh, of the flesh shall we reap corruption; if we sow to the spirit, of the spirit we shall reap life everlasting."

One of the great doctrines of the Scriptures is, that we are not our own, but have been bought with a price; that we are to glorify God with our bodies and spirits which are His; that there is a service which is due Him; that we are to make God our partner—partner in our joys, partner in our sorrows, partner in our business. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of His name. Our religion must be mixed up with all we do. It must hold the whole of life in solution; so that the life of the Christian will become one stupendous offering, one perpetual sacrifice. This is the grand conception of Christian life presented in the Scriptures; this is the high plane upon which he is expected to move. How does the dance comport with this view of a Christian life?

Then, there is another great truth presented in the Scriptures concerning the final rewards. Those rewards will depend entirely upon our conduct here. Every man is to be rewarded according to his works. If we build upon the true foundation with wood, hay, and stubble, our works shall be burned and we suffer loss. If we build with gold, silver, and precious stones, which will abide the fire, we shall receive a reward. Every life is to be put into the crucible, and everything not permeated with the religious element is to be destroyed. What is to become of the dance in the final conflagration? What has it to do with this daily sacrifice of the Christian, and what rewards will it bring hereafter? Will it become the gold and silver and precious stone to enrich your stores, or will it prove to be the worthless chaff and straw that is to be consumed, and thus be the means of

cheating you out of your reward? Everything that forms part of that daily sacrifice will become a means of grace and a stepping stone to the kingdom of heaven. And anything dissociated from that service, no matter what its character, may become a gin and snare, a stumbling block, over which we may fall into perdition. Which will the dance become, a stepping stone to the kingdom of heaven, or a stumbling stone over which we fall into destruction?

My task is now done. As a watchman upon the walls of Zion, whose business it is to watch for souls, as one who must give an account, and who should sound the alarm at the approach of every danger, I have felt it to be my duty to call attention to an evil with which we are so seriously threatened. It does not require the skilled eye of a prophet to see the direction in which the current is drifting; nor yet to forecast what the end is to be. The world is coming in like a flood, and unless the tide of dissipation which has been so largely on the increase of late be arrested, it will soon, like the opening crevasse, assume such proportions as to be wholly unmanageable. Let the dancing school become part of the regular curriculum for the training of the young, and let the waltz and german be admitted as established institutions of the community, and like the curculio in the orchards or phylloxera upon the vines, a blight will soon seize upon the religious life of your place, the Spirit's influence will be withdrawn, the gospel will have little power, the ranks of the church will become decimated, the young will stay away from her ordinances, and those precious seasons of revival, for which our town has been so noted in the past, will seldom if ever return. The thing that has contributed more than anything else to make yours a delightful residence, is the predominance of the religious element; but when that element is eliminated, when the church, like the dead body of Hec-

tor chained to the chariot of Achilles, is dragged through the dust of your streets, and the halls of mirth and revelry be the principal places of attraction, then your glory will be departed. But pillow your head upon the lap of that Philistinean Delilah and suffer your locks to be shorn, and, like Samson awakening out of his sleep, you will soon find your strength and comeliness alike gone. It is impossible to retain the pleasant social features apart from the religious element, for the latter is the substratum upon which the former rests. As you value, therefore, your pleasant homes and firesides,—but, above all, as you value the favor of God, the gift and presence of the Spirit and the salvation of precious, immortal souls,—keep the church free from all worldly alliances and entanglements. Let church members come out from the world and be separate. Let them so live and so conduct themselves that they may be living epistles, known and read of all men, proving by their godly walk and conversation the superior excellency and power of the religion of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is a fearful responsibility resting upon professors of religion as witnesses for Christ. God forbid that, like the spies of old, they should bring back a false report of the land.

And let me remind parents of the fearful responsibility resting upon them. God looks to you for the training of your children. He expects you to use your every influence to turn them to Him and not to the world. If, therefore, instead of training them for Him, you send them to the school of the world, to be trained for the world, and they grow up to be thoughtless, godless, giddy, and gay, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and as the result of such training they choose this world as their portion and finally fall away and perish, He will surely require their blood at your hand.

And now what shall I say to those church members whose piety and con-

sistency would forbid their dancing, but who see nothing improper in attending such places as lookers on?—not dancers but indorsers? Made a sinner by indorsement is a principle of law, both in human and divine government. When a man stands by and approvingly witnesses a homicide he is as guilty in the eyes of the law, as the principal actors. When Saul of Tarsus stood by holding the garment of the martyred Stephen, and thereby consenting unto his death, he became one of his murderers just as truly as those who were hurling the stones. It is upon this principle that the Saviour declared that all the innocent blood shed, from that of righteous Abel down to that of Zacharias, would be required of that generation. And why? Because they indorsed their fathers' acts. Sin transferred by indorsement, and indorsement secured by presence and approving smiles. If such would free themselves from such entanglements, let them keep away. It does seem to me that the same piety and consistency which forbid participation, would likewise keep them away from such places altogether.

To the lovers of this amusement I have only to say, in the language of Solomon: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."—If, like Esau of old, you sell your birthright for a mess of pottage, like Esau you, too, when too late, may yet shed bitter, unavailing tears.

I desire to make but one other remark. I would not have you think from what I have said that I am not in sympathy with the young, that I would strip them of every pleasure and have them look upon life with sadness and moroseness. Not so. I feel I am in the fullest sympathy with the young. I have all the youth of this community upon my heart, and bear towards them



the tenderest affection and love. I would not deprive them of a single pleasure or rob them of a single enjoyment. It is because I feel the deepest interest in them and desire their good that I thus speak. It is because I see the dangers to which they are exposed, and the disastrous consequences to which their course must inevitably lead, that I would sound the note of warning and urge them to desist. If I have spoken with seeming harshness, it is on account of the depth of my convictions

on the subject. If I have said anything to influence anyone to forsake a form of worldliness so dangerous to the soul, I give thanks to God. If I have failed to make any impression for good I can but grieve over it.

May God draw the hearts of the young of this community to Himself, away from the vanities of this life, and sweetly influence them by His Spirit to seek their happiness and enjoyment in Him, and to His name be the praise forevermore.

