

SOCIAL HINTS
FOR
YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

4402. R 6

SOCIAL HINTS
FOR
YOUNG CHRISTIANS,
IN
THREE SERMONS.

BY
HOWARD CROSBY,
PASTOR OF THE FOURTH AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW-YORK.



New-York :
BROUGHTON & WYMAN,
No 13 Bible House
1866



HAVING been asked by the Young People's Christian Association, of the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church, to preach a sermon especially addressed to them, I did so; but found the one sermon swelled into three. At the request of the same Association, I give the sermons to the press.

I have not attempted to alter a word of their plain, familiar style, or to consolidate them into one continuous form. May the Holy Spirit make them, so far as they contain His truth, subservient to the cause of Christian principle and the consistency of Christian life.

HOWARD CROSBY.

NEW-YORK, April, 1866.

SOCIAL HINTS

FOR

YOUNG CHRISTIANS.



I.

“WHETHER ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”—1 COR. 10 : 31.

HERE is the principle of life in the godly as distinguished from the actuating motive of the worldly heart. The commonest actions, and those which are most necessary to the physical existence, are to be performed with God's glory as their goal, just as much as the rarest and most voluntary actions in which we might engage. The thought implies a constant sense of God's presence, and a constant recognition of his grace. A human idea it would be to prescribe a godly frame and purpose for some of the grand undertakings of a lifetime, and to let the ordinary daily occupations run along

without any regard for the divine relation. I say this would be a human idea of a religious life. Man naturally views God as afar off—he can not naturally see him as in the heart—he must regard him as in the temple, or in the dark cloud, or in the mighty ocean. Hence the thought of God at the dinner-table, by the fire-side, in the counting room, or on the skating-pond, is utterly foreign to his mind. Hence speech about God is very appropriate in a church or under the awe of a gloomy storm; but speech about God in the parlor or at the croquet-ground is out of place, very awkward, and very embarrassing. This is the ordinary reckoning of the world on this subject. Right in the face of this human view of divine things, the Bible teaches us, that as nothing is too small for God's regard and providence, so no event is too insignificant and no place too trivial for God to be recognized in the thought and purpose, and so to suggest the speech. Furthermore, it enjoins this recognition as necessary to the true life, as alone harmonizing the diversities of man and keeping him in league and neighborhood with heaven. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof;" that is, *every thing in it*. "Therefore whether

ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The argument is clear and ought to be convincing. I propose, this morning, to turn this thought to account, with an especial view to the use and management of our social instincts and relations in life—to show wherein a Christian society and sociability ought to differ from a worldly society and sociability; and, in view of the comparison, to inquire into the right and wrong of some of our present practices and prejudices in social matters.

We are eminently social. One half of the life of each one of us is social in its character and complexion. We were intended to talk together, to eat together, to walk together, to live together, to laugh together, and to cry together. A man who plays the hermit denies the full one half of his being, and so shrivels the other half. The question can never come before the Christian mind legitimately: "Shall I be a social being or not?" That is settled in the very constitution of man and the whole ordering of providence. But the legitimate question is: "How shall I conduct my social activity? What shall be its laws and principle? If so large a part of our life is social,

it becomes peculiarly important to decide this question, for the influences of our associations must have greatly to do with forming our character and destiny. Let us first note that *all intercourse is not social intercourse*. There is an official and a business intercourse which are not social. The commander gives his orders to the troops, the overseer questions his journeymen, the dealer and customer exchange speech over the counter—none of these interviews are social. Duty and necessity, not the social instincts, draw the parties together. Of such connections we do not now speak. We confine ourselves to the question of rightly managing these social instincts. When they operate, we come together because we enjoy one another's society. Let us note again, on the other hand, that *social intercourse and intimacy are two different things*. Of course intimacy is social intercourse, but social intercourse is by no means necessarily intimacy. If I enjoy the society of a friend, and am glad at proper times to converse with him, it by no means follows that I wish him to become an inmate of my family or to be the partaker of my innermost thoughts. Intimacy requires a parity in taste, knowledge, and refinement, to-

gether with a magnetic confidence; but social intercourse, involving a true, hearty friendship, requires only a few general points of contact, and a certain respect for character. Still, again, as a third preliminary, let us note *the three departments in which social intercourse manifests itself*, and in regard to which it wears its character—to wit, *persons, conversation, amusements*. Those with whom we associate, the topics on which we converse, and the pleasures in which we together engage, are all the proper objects of analysis and selection, in regard to which we are responsible. By far the largest part of all practical cases of conscience arise in these spheres of experience, and every day is offering new opportunity of detailed application of whatever principle we may have chosen to be governed by. With these brief preliminary hints, I enunciate the lesson of the text :

Christians are in duty bound to use the social element for the glory of God.

The argument is very simple from the text. If eating and drinking are to be done to God's glory—if such small matters which have principally to do with our physical nature, are to be consecrated—much more are our conversing and partnering, which involve our ethical

and social nature. And still further, the "*whatsoever* ye do" of the text includes prominently that department of doing which occupies the most of life. "But what (some may ask) is doing to the glory of God?" I reply, the only way man can glorify God is by honoring him. He can not add to God's essential excellence, but he can reflect that excellence by conformity and obedience. Let me quote a few texts here to make this plain. "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." (John 21 : 19.) "That ye may with one mind and mouth glorify God." (Rom. 15 : 6.) "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6 : 20.) "The multitudes marvelled, and glorified God." (Matt. 9 : 8.) "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God." (Luke 17 : 15.) These are enough to show that glorifying God, on man's part, is a whole-hearted conformity to his word or work in the acknowledgment of his grace and the grateful obedience of the soul. To glorify God in eating is to recognize his mercy and love in providing us the food, and to use the food in accordance with God's will for our best bodily and mental welfare. A thankless eater, a glut-

ton, or one who eats what he knows unfits his body for the highest usefulness, does not glorify God in his eating. He abuses God's favor, and hence makes it a snare to him. Now, to use the social element to the glory of God is, evidently, to run every particular social activity in the same mould of consecration—to acknowledge God's grace in the gift of these instincts and their opportunities of exercise, and to use them in conformity with his high truth. Let us apply this definition to the three departments in which we have seen our social natures exhibit themselves.

First, as to persons. If I am Christ's friend, I am to select my friends from Christ's followers. This is a principle necessarily growing out of the preceding considerations. This simple rule cuts into the practice of half the Church of Christ, and its neglect explains half the Church's coldness and worldliness. When will Christians learn that it is dangerous for their peace, as well as dishonoring to God, to frequent and form part of a worldly society? How can you spend your leisure moments or hours (as it may be) when you throw off the restraints of routine and formality, in the free-flowing communion of others who have no

thought for Christ, without receiving their Christless influences upon your soul's constitution and expression? You do not use those hours as missionary hours for the Lord—(if you did, you would not have worldly friends long, you would either convert them or repel them)—but you let their irreligion, or want of religion, be the positive power of the interviews. You learn their styles of doing things without Christ. You, moreover, learn to live without testifying of Christ. You would not wound their feelings by introducing the subject of religion; but where are *your* feelings that ought to be wounded at keeping that subject out? You allow a part, and a large part, of your life to be Christless. You let the circulation of the gospel-spirit be checked and interrupted in certain important relations of your being. Now, an impeding and disarrangement of the circulation is a forerunner of death. All the dead Christians reached their stiff, cold condition through this stoppage of the healthy and thorough circulation of the warm life-blood of the Gospel in act and speech. They deferred to the world in the important matter of social intercourse, felt it prudent and proper, and in accordance with

refined etiquette, to keep religion entirely out of the social life, until they reached a spiritual asphyxia. My dear Christian hearers, this, this is the great argument, the irresistible argument against your balls and operas, and such like. I do not say that it is the only argument by any means. But it is the main argument, one of universal application, one that would remain in all its power if opera-performers were virtuous, and the librettos were moral, and the lascivious waltzes were excluded from your balls. The root-peril is the wilful, arranged, accepted banishment of Christ from these gatherings, and the presence of Satan in a thousand forms instead. You must go back of the ball to the friendships which took you there, if you wish to see where you went astray from Jesus. Your mother, perhaps, desirous of your success in life, in her weak faith thought that the only way to your success was for you to do as the world around you did. She encouraged, therefore, your association with the daughters of worldly families, and you very readily, with a young girl's facility, entered into all that sickening emptiness which is called "good society." You found yourself in a round of formal receptions and parties, consuming all

your time, leading your thoughts and plans principally to the adornment of your person, inducing extravagance, necessitating irregular and unnatural hours, till at length this became the established system of your life. Before you plunged into this vortex, you had been led to the cross, and had found comfort in remembering Jesus at his table; but your injudicious mother drove you far away from the blessed cross, and your attachment to religious things, very feeble as it is, has more of conscience than relish in it. Your system of "good society" excludes prayer-meetings on the ground of time, if not taste. This "good society" is a tyrant in your heart and brain. It may let you have Sunday as a prudent compromise with your conscience, but it can not give up an inch of the other six days to the claims of Christ. And what are you now? A Christian with none of the joys of the Christian, and with all the vanities of the world which flower into remorse; and fastened in this sad condition by the chains of habit, a gross example of inconsistency, folly, and uselessness. It all came of your beginning with false friendships, of joining hands in chosen social relations with unbelievers.

You disregarded the Spirit's cry: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever?" You sought out, under a foolish mother's guidance, (and the city is full of foolish mothers,) other friends than Christ's friends to be your friends, and verily you have your reward.

Christian brethren, is not this soil of "good society," just where we find unhappy marriages abound? Is the solemn covenant of wedlock likely to be entered into with due regard to its high and holy import by the heart rendered vapid and frivolous by a system? Is not all the simplicity and truth of life so overlaid and crushed out by this artificial conventionalism that a true married life, which should typify the purity and tenderness and holy communion between Christ and his Church, is absolutely impossible? And does not this view of facts and their results, as common among us, teach us to lay the axe at the root of the evil, and to seek for ourselves and our children the society only of the friends of God? Are we

not willing to take up our cross, if we are disposed to count this a cross, for the sake of a healthy and happy Christian life, that will honor the Master? We shall find it an easy matter with our children, if we begin early enough. Let the *beginnings* of friendship be watched; let occupations, hours, locality, every thing be regarded and arranged with this important subject in clear view, and it is the easiest thing in the world to guide the child into a safe and wholesome and God-fearing society. Of course, we shall have to be ourselves in such a society, if we would so guide our children. We must be able to say to them "Come!" and not "Go!" And Christians must come to the conclusion that the world and they must occupy two distinct camps. The social relations are so important in their bearings on the whole life that they can not be trusted to the world. The Gospel rule that we must do all things to the glory of God demands a complete divorce of these relations from worldly entanglements. Any alliance of the Christian heart to the world by these voluntary ties is a direct and constant detraction from the glory of God. When we see how things now are, we are sure a revolution must

• take place—a radical upheaving and remodeling must be made. The whole idea of “good society,” as the phrase is excusingly used, must be given up; formalism in friendships must give way to honesty; display, whether in person or equipage, must be abhorred; excess in diet or amusement must be shunned; and the worship of wealth and position must be withdrawn; in short, the whole framework on which the miserable thing hangs must be despised and rejected by the Christian who seeks his Master’s glory. And in place of all this, we must make and sustain a purified society of Christians, where the world’s methods and maxims are unknown, where enjoyment shall be found united to modesty, and cheerfulness to godliness, and the very ties of social intercourse shall be made happily subservient to the glorious cause of the Redeemer. In this way we shall make broad and deep the separating boundaries between us and the world, thereby testifying for God the better before the world, and also growing in grace the better among ourselves. Now asks some fearful soul: “What! are you going to ignore all the natural distinctions of society, and make every one who is a Christian admissible to your Utopia?”

I answer, "Yes," and "No." *Natural* distinctions in social intercourse are not to be ignored, but pray do not call your *unnatural* distinctions by that name. Distinctions founded on wealth, or fashion, or birth, or any other adventitious circumstance, are not natural, although they are common, made common by sinful man against the original nature of things, and in favor of his own personal pride and selfishness. The only distinctions which may be called natural, that is, which by the very nature of them militate against social homogeneousness, are the distinctions which lie in mind and heart, not in purse, or body, or family, or pretensions. The greatest of these distinctions is between a heart full of Christ and a heart full of Satan. They can never be brought together in social life. They may meet in courtesy and kindness, but they can not share that mutual magnetic reliance which is the secret essence of a social relation. Just as the Christian forms the social bond with the unbeliever, just in proportion he empties his heart of Christ, unless in the few, very few, cases where such a union is formed as a means of gracious activity. The next natural distinction is found in the matter of education. The educated and uneducated

occupy different levels of thought by an absolute necessity ; hence a close intimacy, involving frequent converse, is an effort on both sides, and neither of them in the exercise of plain common-sense would desire it. Suppose Isaac Newton, William Wilberforce, and two converted coal-miners from the Newcastle mines, were thrown together where they were required to pair off in a close intimacy for many days. Would not Newton and Wilberforce, on one hand, and the two coal-miners on the other, form the two couples by a true and worthy instinct? Would not all four be far happier by this arrangement than if Newton and one collier should become chums, leaving the other collier and Wilberforce for a like union? But this does not affect the main position that Christians should use the social element among themselves. There are various degrees of intimacy where these distinctions in education must operate ; but there is a social union outside of these of intimacies—I do not mean a formal, condescending smile and bow, but a cordial, honest shaking of the hand, a real delight in exchanging salutations and inquiries, a mention and response of Christ equally dear to both, and an earnest Christian

love at the bottom of it all. It is in this sense that all true Christians can and should welcome each other in the social relation, whatever be their differences in education, taste, or refinement. For in the departments of taste and refinement, we might argue as in the department of education, and our conclusions would be the same.

Now, if any one presumes on a social relation to press into intimacy, he is as guilty as the man who, being invited into my parlor, attempts to enter my bedroom. Such cases must be treated individually as they occur. My intimacy is most sacred, and I admit there by the most absolute system of selection—but my social relations are with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

This rule will be found simple and clear in principle, sound in philosophy, and easy in practice. It is the true and practical application of the fundamental law, that *my friends are to be Christ's friends*, as expressed in the converse, *Christ's friends are to be my friends*. Both parts of the law proceed from the great underlying principle enunciated in the text, "Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

I feel that I have but barely touched this one

division of my subject. I might rightly introduce the matter of business partnerships, so far as they possess a social side, and especially the very serious matter of the marriage of believers with unbelievers; and I might say much in regard to schools as in many cases the efficient promoters of worldly follies under the sacred name of education. I might also properly enlarge on the whole subject of parental control, and show that parental weakness and vacillation is child-murder; but I must end this first division of the question, and also leave the other two divisions touching *conversation* and *amusements*, until the next coming Sabbath morning.

II.

“WHETHER ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”—1 Cor. 10 : 31.

IN a former discourse, we regarded the great principle here involved as it was applicable to our social life in the one department of our choice of friends. I now propose to complete this view of glorifying God in society, by noting our duty in the other chief exhibitions of the social instinct, namely, conversation and amusements. We have already sufficiently dwelt on the necessity of a Christian's constant recognition of his Lord in every thing, small or great, and have seen that if a child of God seeks, to any extent, to turn out of the heavenly radiance, and to avoid, for any time, to reflect God's glory, the movement is of sin and not of faith. We need not, then, dwell longer on the merits of the great principle of the text. It is taken for granted that every one who bears the name of the holy Jesus, and who hears me to-day, is aware fully of his responsi-

bility before this truth ; that he can not shake off, and ought not wish to shake off the obligations which he bears, not only as the creature of the Great Creator, but much more as the saved and sanctified of the Infinite Redeemer. The question before us is merely a matter of details. It concerns the *applications* of an acknowledged truth, the particular conformities to a general law. We have seen that our social life is the gratification of an instinct. We do not enter into and sustain friendships as a matter of duty, but we simply guide and guard them by a Christian prudence. They are the sweet luxuries of life, in which the heart beats freely and the mind is relaxed from its tension, and the whole being is recuperated and refreshed. In the intercourse of these friendships, in the actual operation of human society, there is no one element so prominent in its use and so influential in its efficiency as *conversation*. I here use the word in its secondary but most common sense of verbal interchange of thought. Our speech is one of our crowning distinctions from the lower orders of creation. "Articulate-speaking men" is one of the meaning phrases of old Homer, by which, in his simple but philosophical description, he marks

man's high endowment. Language and reason are so united, that it is doubted whether either could exist without the other, and it is through language that mind is probed, analyzed, and understood. In conversation, then, eminently a man expresses *himself*—he discloses his character, and makes available that character for good or evil. The tongue, in this sense as in others, becomes a most powerful engine, and the watch over the tongue becomes a duty of the first importance. It is the chief doorway out of which the mind sallies forth to its work, and in the contact of mind with mind, it is the point for careful observation and control. Now, under the text-principle that our conversation should be to the glory of God, I think we can safely make several negative assertions in regard to it.

1. *It should not be vicious.* I have no more right to enlist my tongue, than my hand, on the side of vice. If I either urge on the murderer before the deed, or defend him after the deed, I am a murderer myself. And so in respect to any form of sin, my verbal connivance is my actual guilt. The man who only talks evil, while others *do* it, so far from escaping the guilt, adds the stain of cowardice to his sin.

In this connection comes closely the very common habit of backbiting and slander. If I pick out the faults of a neighbor and discuss them, thus giving them undue prominence, perhaps using the media of exaggeration and ridicule in the process, am I not as truly injuring him as if I should strike and wound his body in the street? There is a humor in this work which attracts 'us, and there is a sort of defense of our own frailties, a compounding

"For sins we are inclined to
By damning those we have no mind to,"

which gives a relish to the satanic employment. I use the word "satanic" advisedly, for the distinguishing title of the great adversary is "the accuser or traducer of the brethren." My friend's position and prospects in this world may depend on the words I use about him. I may poison others with a prejudice against him from which he may only very late or never recover. And I may do this without the slightest desire to injure him, but in the wild, reckless use of my tongue's power under a general impulse to belittle others. No illustration or corroboration of this is necessary.

You will see it before this day is passed, my hearers. Every gathering of unguarded minds reveals this sad defect. Go from group to group at an evening's entertainment, and see if the spirit of detraction is not present with his baleful power. And then let us honestly look into our own hearts and see the same tendency, that at the sight we may cry to God to help us against this insidious form of vice. It is a good rule to make and keep, "never to speak a word of evil against another, unless imperatively compelled by high regard to duty." There is no safe, there is no right course short of this. But another form of vicious conversation is found in the talk *about* sinful things, as a sort of indulgence in the things without doing them or wishing them done. It is a feeding of the imagination through words. A sin is rehearsed with great gusto, perhaps a fiction, and the minds of speaker and hearers are enjoying the details of an act which is an abhorrence to God. They are indulging in the imagination what they would not think of indulging in the outer life. But is not sin a matter of the heart which God sees, and is not that sin, allowed to live and sport in the imagination, as evil in his sight as if permitted to

appear before the world? And then again, can you thus accustom your imagination to such rehearsals without lowering (perhaps imperceptibly but surely) the standard of truth and holiness in your soul and life?

2. A second negative or prohibitory rule in regard to conversation is this—*it should not be low and vulgar*. God wishes us to rise nearer to him in every thing that refines and purifies the heart. The use of impure or repulsive words, a broad phrase where a delicate expression would do as well, can not be justified on the plea of calling things by their right names, when these right names have a tendency to degrade the soul. It is better, then, to call things by their wrong names. This department of our subject especially addresses itself to young men, who are too apt to mingle their ideas of manliness and vulgarity, and who may thus contract habits of speech and thought, in youth, that will prove lasting annoyances and injuries in maturer life. In the view of the text given us by the Holy Spirit, to do all things to the glory of God, I enjoin upon you, young men, to refrain sacredly from all loose conversation; to shun stories, however witty, that are stained with impurity, and to frown upon all attempts

to vulgarize and debase this staple of human society.

3. Our third rule is, *conversation should not be frivolous*. Those for whom Christ died possess thereby a dignity which they ought never to forget, for his sake as well as their own. I do not mean that we are always to be solemn in visage and mien, and walk about like funerals. That would by no means honor the Saviour, who mingled socially with his brethren at weddings and dinner-parties. But we are to act in all our social conversation as if we felt the kind and loving Saviour's presence. We can expect him to look with approbation on the enjoyment of wholesome wit and humor—on honest and becoming merriment—but not on that which is flippant and trivial and foolish. The former recreate and build up the man, but these diminish his self-respect, his intelligence, and his heart. A hearty laugh over a capital story you can ask God's blessing upon; but you can't raise your eyes to heaven for its smile upon the gossamer nonsense which makes up the chat of a formal society. To avoid this common fault, which does so much to keep intercourse shallow and hypocritical, a

sound and solid basis of education should be furnished, on which a sensible conversation should be formed. Instead of useful learning, we are too prone to put forward what we call the "accomplishments," which are generally nothing else but a smattering passport into "good society," and a young lady consumes hours and hours every day to gain at best an indifferent knowledge of a single musical instrument and to be able to talk glibly and foolishly of Mozart and Beethoven, of Herz and Litz, and to do this must needs give up attention to the study of those great principles of practical life, on the knowledge of which, as sanctified, a true life is only to be built. Our whole notion and practice in regard to female education must be revised and corrected, if we will keep the injunction of our text and train our daughters to do all things to the glory of God. I would not have them educated as grave philosophers, nor do I mean by a solid training a knowledge of the abstruse sciences; but I *do* mean an inculcation of high moral and religious truth systematically imparted and illustrated by the facts of history, and an equally systematic instruction in the great practical duties

•

of personal, domestic, and social life. Then, if there is special taste for music or for any of the fine arts, by all means let that taste be cultivated and trained. With such a foundation it will not be cultivated in a frivolous way, by which both the mind is dissipated and the high art degraded. Much of this solidity of education can be given at home, when school advantages are out of reach. A wise, orderly mother, with a fair knowledge of things and ordinary common-sense, can lay these important foundations of moral truth. One thus educated can not be silly in conversation. You may ask, why direct all this to women—why not apply it equally to the other sex? My answer is this, that unfortunately our artificial society is so formed as to induce and encourage the idea that men are made for business and women for show, against which our Christianity struggles with more or less success. In the church of Christ, the facts are modified; but in the full-blown world, the idea is concrete and practically exemplified. Our homes more or less show the influence of the false theory. The male members of the family toil from morning to night, but the female members have servants to do

their part of the family work. Our schools show the same contrast. Boys are made to study, girls to mannerize; boys are trained with a view to work, girls with a view to elegant ease. As I have said, our Christianity modifies this in special cases, and I would be very far from saying that this is a universal picture; there are some noble educators who are endeavoring to stem the tide; but it is a *general* view of education in New-York City, as I can say from twenty years' personal and particular examination of the matter. Now, all this tends to make conversation frivolous; and for this, according to the reasons given, the fairer sex are chiefly responsible. When our daughters are brought up in habits of industry and thrift and economy, and taught to contribute their full quota to the general welfare, we shall be done with the twaddle of which social life is so full, and with which God's image in us is so often degraded. Here again is where you, Christian women, have a high duty to perform in revolting from the world's yoke, (as some of you do,) so that the hearts of your husbands may safely trust in you, so that they shall have no need of spoil, when you seek wool and flax and work will-

ingly with your hands, when you rise also while it is yet night and give meat to your household, when you lay your hands to the spindle and your hands hold the distaff, when you stretch out your hands to the poor, yea, when you reach forth your hands to the needy, when you look well to the ways of your household and eat not the bread of idleness. When you answer to this inspired description of a godly woman, then you will find the rest of the description equally applicable—"She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness; her children arise up, and call her blessed—her husband also, and he praiseth her."

We have now regarded the three negative rules regarding our conversation as deduced from our text—that it must not be *vicious*, it must not be *vulgar*, it must not be *vapid*. We now advance to the positive side, and content ourselves with the one thought, that our conversation, in order to be to the glory of God, *must testify to our faith in him as our Lord and Saviour*. Three considerations demand it—first, our very *gratitude* for our salvation; secondly, our *position* as God's chosen ones through whom alone he will convert the

world ; and thirdly, the express *command* of the text and other scriptures of like character. Need I enlarge on these? Need I tell souls that are ransomed from sin of the debt of love they owe to Jesus? Need I bid those who are freed from the fearful oppression of a whilom condemnation to tell others what a Saviour they have found? Or is there any necessity of dwelling on the truth that, since the apostles' day, no other agency but man has been used to make known Christ and recover lost sinners, and that to the great consummation we can expect no other agency? and that thus the importance of speaking for Jesus becomes a personal and pressing matter? Or, again, need I use words to show that the emphatic language of the text demands a positive and open speech for the name and cause of God? I will take it for granted that these plain arguments are received and acknowledged by all, and will only now direct your attention to the *manner* in which we should speak of Jesus. My hints must be brief—1. First, then, speak *naturally*. Under the conscientious regard for duty, some will introduce the subject of religion with a marked formality, the effect of which is chilling. The awk-

wardness of the speaker sometimes excites a sense of the ludicrous in the hearer, sometimes suggests thoughts of the speaker's hypocrisy, and sometimes simply appears as a dry duty performed. Now, to avoid these unhappy effects, let the heart be overflowing with the love of Christ, so that speaking for Jesus is a delight and not a task, and then let common-sense be well mixed with our conduct, so that we use the right opportunities and the right style of speech. My religion must sit easily and naturally upon me if I want it to be available. 2. Let our conversation about Jesus be *cheerful*. Mrs. Browning says that "some people always sigh when they thank God." Have you not often seen pious persons who, the moment they spoke on a matter pertaining to divine truth, dropped their eyes, lengthened their faces, and put on a general attitude of melancholy? Now I know nothing more calculated to repel worldly people from Christ than this absurd association of religion with gloom. My happy heart, freed from condemnation by my Divine Saviour, is forsooth to tell a lie through my lugubrious countenance every time I speak of him and his blessed

service! I am to make those whom I desire to win to the glorious liberty of the children of God suppose that I am in a wretched prison-house!

3. Let us speak of Jesus *adaptedly*—I mean according to the occasion. If I am thrown into company with an inexperienced youth, it may be in the way of counsel. If I am conversing with a senior, it should be rather by suggestion. If I am with Christ's own people, I can speak of the higher and inner experiences of the Christian life; but if I am with the world, such speech would be a profitless casting of pearls before swine. At a funeral I may strike the minor key, but at a wedding I would let my religion ring out as merry as a marriage-bell. The same love of Jesus can appear in all the thousand phases of human emotion; and herein is its beautiful life. To make religion uniform in its expression is to fossilize it. Now, then, if we speak, in conversation, of Jesus *naturally, cheerfully, and adaptedly*, you will be astonished to see how—4. In the fourth place we can speak *constantly*. The religious element will form the whole warp of conversation, on which and across which we may place the woof of other sub-

jects. Without affectation, without fanaticism, without cant, our conversation will assume a strong, healthy tone. We'll not start and put ourselves into an attitude, or cause others to do so, when we make mention of all that's dearest and best in the universe, and our easy, graceful recognition of the unseen and eternal in our daily speech will imply and nourish a constant sense of the presence and blessing of our God.

Our thoughts, then, on a *conversation* that is in accordance with the text, ("do all to the glory of God,") have been these—that it must not be *vicious*, or *vulgar*, or *vapid*, but must positively testify for Jesus *naturally*, *cheerfully*, *adaptedly*, and *constantly*. And with these thoughts we pass on to the last department of society's activity—the department of *amusements*. But we have again occupied the time allotted to a discourse, and must defer this last division to another Sabbath.

III.

“WHETHER ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”—1 COR. 10 : 31.

THE third element of social activity — to wit, *amusements*—comes before us this morning in pursuance of our plan of thought, in which we have endeavored to show how our social life should glorify God. The inquiry before us to-day is, *How are our amusements to be directed to such a high end, and what choice of amusements and what law or plan in them does such a standard require?*

That amusements are a necessary part of society I need hardly stop to assert. There is a universal recognition in theory of the alternation of labor and recreation. I say “in theory,” because, unfortunately, in practice, we find chiefly two great classes in the community, the one all for work, the other all for play. Some who possess large sums, or else borrow them, (or else steal them,) are perpetually spending them in personal pleasures.

The question every morning is: "How shall I find the greatest selfish gratification to-day?" The mind calls up in review every form of amusement, but never thinks of the poor, the afflicted, the solitary, and never proposes to insert *duties* in the day's docket. Just the contrary of these are the busy men of our city. Their lives are consumed with toil. In every department, trade, and profession, a New-York worker knows no rest. Every hour is engaged a week ahead. He leaps from one duty to another without interval. He runs his nervous system under the highest head of steam all the while, and breaks down, collapsed, an old man at fifty. Now, as to these two classes, neither of them knows any thing of recreation. The former class do not, because they do not know what labor is, and there can be no recreation without labor. Their amusements are not recreations, but mere pastimes or *kill-times*, often becoming exceedingly stupid and onerous. The latter class do not, because they will not take their hand from their work. They are driven as by the lash of some fury, or else are drawn by some malignant infatuation into the ceaseless whirl of toil. Now, in view of these practical extremists we can say *first*, that labor

is the normal occupation of man. "By the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat thy bread," puts that beyond a peradventure. The man or woman who is not a worker is denying the very condition of life, and is putting the life out of joint. Something will go wrong with you if you are not a worker. Industry is a guardian angel, but idleness is the devil's imp. But, secondly, in this matter, the greatest amount of life-time labor demands periodic rest of mind and body. Experience proves that we need a seventh day of repose, and seven nights of sleep in each week, as well as seasons for eating and drinking. But experience goes farther than this, and shows that we must have the mind diverted to other than its ordinary objects of thought, for the same reason that the body needs repose and sleep. The mind never sleeps—its repose is in diversion — it rests by taking a new direction. When the body is asleep, the mind is always active, although we may not always recall its action in our waking hours. When we do, we say we have been dreaming, which is simply thinking while the body sleeps. A man who is engrossed in a business pursuit will be apt to spend the night with his mind working in the

same sphere in which it has worked all day. Hence, as I said, the mind's true rest is in diversion. We need, then, a recreation more than sleep — more than bodily repose. The Sabbath is a gracious gift of God which contributes to this end, and we can not estimate the advantages which it affords to those who observe it, in carrying the thoughts away from the old course, and thus relieving and benefiting the mind. But we need more than the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man's *soul* principally, and for his *mind* incidentally, if I may use the expression. The mind must have a daily rest as well as the body, and nature teaches us to give up toil of mind as of body with the day, and to use the evening hours, before retiring, for relaxation and social enjoyment. A genuine relaxation of mind in those hours which precede sleep secures an easy and efficient sleep. The mind, run off from the track of the day's work, will keep off all night, and not resume its old place till a new day calls to the duty. I fear we do not sufficiently act in accordance with these acknowledged principles in this country. We overdo every thing. We practically forget that *overdoing* is *undoing* — that there is far less

work done in a lifetime by him who is *always* working than by him who takes his stated recreation. The traveller that rests betimes can make the longer journey. Our third remark in this matter is, that only as *recreation* can amusements be defended, sustained, and used. Labor being the normal condition of man, amusement (which is non-labor) can only be admitted as a help to labor—that is, as *recreation*. If in character or duration it loses the form of recreation, then it is contrary to our good, contrary to the law of God, and must be dangerous. If I indulge in an amusement which weakens my body or poisons my soul, I am committing a grievous sin; or if I use a perfectly proper amusement, one that is wholesome to body and mind, but continue in its use immoderately, I am wasting my time and shirking the duties which a wise God has laid upon me. With these three preliminary remarks, then, that labor is the normal occupation of man, that the greatest amount of labor demands recreation, and that only as recreations are amusements to be defended, we come to the more special discussion of our subject. By amusements we do not mean every thing that amuses, but those particular occupations

which have self-indulgence as their object — wherein we deliberately turn aside from labor and address ourselves to light enjoyment. The passing jest, the humorous allusion, the pleasant details of our labor, the friendly greeting, and a thousand other things, may amuse and cheer while we work, but the amusements to which we refer are something different from these, as standing apart from and being independent of labor. They may be divided into festivities, games, and artistic exhibitions. Under these three heads are found all the chief amusements of a civilized people, and we shall now consider them in their order.

I. *Festivities.* These are gatherings of friends, smaller or greater, private or public, where eating and drinking, the dance and the song are generally found as accompaniments or as elements of the enjoyment. In *itself* there is nothing evil or hurtful in this form of amusement. Our Saviour's presence at the marriage-feast of Cana, and his repeated attendance at formal banquets, are sufficient to satisfy any unbiased mind that a social festivity, with eating and drinking, is not an evil *per se*. We are not told whether the dance and the song were used at these entertainments,

but we know that they were usually attendant upon every such occasion. These occasions have been so abused, and made opportunities for excess in drunkenness, lasciviousness, and all manner of folly, that our minds are often wrongfully warped in relation to the true merits of the subject. We become harsh and ascetic in our denunciations of all festive assemblies, and run to an extreme where our Saviour's precept and example alike rebuke us. The Christian's rule is to use all these innocent things without abusing them—to show to the world a practical testimony against their excess in the moderation which tones his indulgence. In regard to a *sin*, the rule is, "Cut it down at the roots;" but with regard to an innocent indulgence the rule is, "Keep within bounds, lest your indulgence become a sin." The system of the Gospel is a system which strengthens the character by a freedom which demands a constant watchfulness against sin, and does not render character feeble through want of use by a monastic exclusion. Every thing I have I may hurt myself or others by; I am not to rid myself of every thing I have, but simply I must be constantly prayerful and watchful in regard to the use of every thing. From a

want of regard to this clear Gospel, many, with the highest motives, have pursued very erroneous methods to reform the world. They have preached a doctrine of total abstinence from things indifferent, when the Scripture teaches us that we are only to abstain totally from things which are in themselves sinful. The only place where total abstinence from a thing indifferent becomes a duty is where we have by its abuse made it a tyrant and a sin. The drunkard ought to become a total abstainer. There is no other safety for him. And then we may add that if any individual Christian thinks he can aid another spiritually by a total abstinence from a thing indifferent, then it is his duty to totally abstain. But that is a purely *individual* matter. I can not judge for you, or you for me. That case belongs to the sphere of Christian expediency, cases in which sphere are perpetually occurring, and are to be all settled by private judgment. For example, I may know that a certain very innocent word always awakens very wicked feelings in a certain man. I will, therefore, abstain from the use of that word in that man's hearing—it's my duty to do so—but abstinence from the use of that word does not thereby become a uni-

versal law, or universally expedient. Let us apply these thoughts to *festivities*. They are perfectly right and rational in themselves. I must not therefore make a general law against them. I must simply keep away from any sinful forms of festivity. I must observe the fundamental law of moderation in the use of them, and I must in this, as in every thing else, consult the interests of others as well as my own. (1.) If there is any thing of a debauched or lewd nature in a festivity I must, as a Christian, keep away from it. Where drunkenness or lasciviousness to any extent is nurtured or practised, I have no business to be present. (2.) If it is a festivity of unbelievers, I have no business there, for I can not carry my Saviour with me. I go voluntarily to exile myself from my Lord, and cement intimacies which will prove snares to my piety and the good of others. It is to me a sinful form of festivity, because it encourages my sinful nature. I can not judge others, but I must keep away myself. So (3) if the festivity tends by its improper hours or its length to militate against the law of moderation, and either harm the health or the labor-habits which all should

possess, then I must avoid the excess, and by my example protest against it.

Just here properly comes the question: "What of the dance? Is dancing right? Can a Christian dance?" Well, let us hold fast to the principles laid down, and so answer the question. Let us avoid all prejudice and blind stubbornness. First, then, is dancing a sin in itself? Certainly not. Dancing is a jumping, skipping, bending, whirling, and tripping to the sound of music; and is intrinsically no more evil than a jumping, skipping, bending, whirling, and tripping without music. There is nothing in the music and the symmetry (which the music ordains) which can make it evil. The exercises of the body enumerated are perfectly proper—often wholesome. Sometimes it is true they are undignified, but that is more a matter of taste than of religion. Now, then, dancing being no sin in itself, is there any sin in its ordinary forms in use? We have here to be very practical, and come down to particulars. There are two classes of dances in vogue, entirely different in their character—the one called the square dances, the other the round dances. In the former are cotillions, quadrilles, and the old contra-dances; in the

latter the waltzes, polkas, and such like. In the former the sexes meet with perfect propriety, in the latter they publicly embrace. The former are modest—the latter immodest, and still worse. In regard to these latter, a Christian ought not to hesitate an instant, any more than he should about thieving or lying. It is a fearful thing that fashion has so perverted the sense of Christian parents, as to allow this enormity to be practised in their houses and by their own children, or else to make them guilty of the grievous inconsistency of forbidding it to their children while furnishing it for the children of others. The foundation for the vast amount of domestic misery and domestic crime, which startles us often in its public out-croppings, was laid when parents allowed the sacredness of their daughters' persons, and the purity of their maiden instincts to be rudely shocked in the waltz. This is not the place to enlarge on such a topic. I regret that I have been obliged to speak so plainly as I have spoken; but this vice, by the force of fashion and "good society," has captivated the young and deluded the old in the Church of Christ, and no minister of Christ must utter an uncertain sound here.

Now, then, without further expansion, I think our premises would warrant the conclusion that square dances among Christians, without excess in hours or dress, would form a perfectly appropriate part of a festivity. But where do we see these conditions? I believe it would be the proper part of devoted Christian mothers to arrange and perfect such a plan of social enjoyment as would embody all these innocent amusements for the right recreation of their children. Our children must not be brought up as monks and nuns. They must have fun and frolic, merry society and cheerful recreation. Let Christian parents, with utter contempt for the world's style and method, make a style and method of their own for this great and important end. By surrounding our children with innocent enjoyments, suited to their lively age, we shall keep them from the *world's* innocent enjoyments, which are only baits to lead them on to the world's *sinful* enjoyments.

II. *Games* form our second head of remark. The principles laid down and already dilated on can be readily applied to this class of amusements. All gambling games are at once excluded, for gambling is robbery, and a gambling

game is a sinful game in itself. Whether the stake be a dollar or a dime, the character of the game is the same. It is as sinful to steal a penny as a pound. But ought games to be used, which are generally used for gambling, but which we would use without gambling? As a rule, *yes*. The sin is in the gambling, not in the game. If you leave out the gambling, you leave out the sin. There may be a question of simple propriety in taste, or a question of expediency, but those questions (as we have seen) are to be decided not by a general law, but by individual conscience, and the special dictation of the Holy Spirit. It may be prudent, and wise, and right for me to abstain from a certain game simply because of its associations in the mind of myself or some one else. But that's *my* affair, not my neighbor's. If the game is not wrong in itself, and if in playing it you are not going to a place or using a time which is improper, what am I that I should dare judge you? You may be so situated as to think one game proper for you to play and another improper—both, of course, being innocent in themselves—but I may think exactly the opposite. We are both Christ's own redeemed ones. We love him who has

saved our souls, and we seek his sanctifying spirit. Now, shall I judge you, or you judge me on this matter of a recreation which in itself has no sin? Let me instance a case in point. I never play cards; I can not think it prudent or right to do so. Yet I would not hesitate in a proper place and at a proper time to play a game of billiards or of ten-pins. I form this distinction on my own private view of the associations connected in the mind with the three games. I may be right or I may be wrong. But not long ago I called on one of the godliest men in this city—a man whose talk was full of Jesus, and whose works testified to his warm faith and love. He was an ardent mission-school teacher, self-denying and indefatigable in the labor for souls. My visit happened to be only a few days before his death. He was then well, though a very old man. As I entered his parlor, he was playing cards with his family. I inwardly started at the sight, but instantly recovered myself with the rebuke, "Who art thou that judgest another's servant?—to his own Master he standeth or falleth." I sat down by his side, and as the family went on with their game, our conversation was concerning the things of the kingdom.

I went out of that house with a lesson of liberality written on my heart which I trust will never be effaced. Ah! brethren, let us ever, as our first religious duty, keep very, very near to Jesus, reading of him, speaking for him, walking with him, praying to him all the way through life, and we shall then be led to the true Christian antithesis in regard to external practices—strictness with ourselves and liberality to others.

III. Our third and last division of amusements relates to *artistic exhibitions*. The only disputed ground here is the theatre and the opera. Other forms of exhibiting art, as in painting and sculpture, galleries, in poetic or oratorical readings, and in the various developments of science through art, all agree to be decorous and useful in the main. But in relation to the theatre and opera opinion is divided—and this discourse would be incomplete if it did not note this division of sentiment, and meet it squarely.

First, then, is a theatrical or operatic exhibition wrong in itself? Some say "Yes." They argue that any fictitious representation of suffering only hardens the heart against true suffering. Their reasoning is ingenious and plau-

sible, yet I confess I can not accede to the premiss or conclusion. The assertion of the premiss would prove all parable, allegory, or fable, which portrayed misery, to be wrong, because these representations are often more powerful to the imagination than an enacted drama. It would also prove all pictures of suffering and death upon the canvas to be wrong, as these often move the spectator to tears. I have not time to meet the arguments one by one which the advocates of this theory propose. I must rest contented with the *reductio ad absurdum*, as my general reply, barely stating that the force of their reasoning is against the abuse of theatrical representation rather than its use. I can see no harm in the representation, theatrical or operatic, of any great and noble and tragic event in history; for example, the self-sacrifice of Arnold Winkelried, or the appearance of John Huss before the Council of Constance—or of any ludicrous and comical incidents, real or imaginary, which illustrate character in a humorous yet seemly way; but I can see in these much good done by furnishing vivid pictures to the mind full of instruction, or by unbending the whole mental system and laughing it into new freshness. With me

the theatre and the opera, if condemned, must be condemned for something else than their inherent qualities or elements. Speaking, then, of the theatre and opera *as they are universally*, not as they might be if constructed from foundation to cap-stone on Christian principles, speaking of them ~~as~~ they are, I pronounce them satanic and soul-destroying. Theatres and operas can not be made and sustained by a little company of friends. They cost large sums of money and demand professional persons, and hence theatrical reform is not the easy thing that social reform in festivities is. In theatrical matters, it would be almost an impossibility to avoid calling in the help of the world to defray the expenses and perform the parts, and that fact would be fatal to a Christian theatre. In social parties this objection does not hold, and a Christian social festivity, with Christian amusements and Christian merriment, is a perfectly feasible thing. I said that theatres and operas, as they are, are *satanic* and *soul-destroying*. Why? Of course, since not in their essence, it must be *in their invariable concomitants*.

Let me briefly mention four items.

1. Every theatre is surrounded by *brothels*

and *groggeries*. They flock around a theatre the moment one is built, as their choice ground of success. What does that prove? Does it argue for a healthy atmosphere? Does it show the theatre to be a fit place for a Christian? A sensitive Christian should shrink from such a region as he would from the gates of hell.

2. The *profession of the stage* is notoriously immoral. The actors and actresses who come before the audience and are by them applauded, are men and women living daily in defiance of the laws of decency and morality, and using this very profession as a means to such a wild and wicked life. The exceptions to this are so few that they cause universal surprise.

3. The *plays* enacted are generally themselves immoral. Low innuendo and double entendre abound in them, the name of God is blasphemously used, religion is ridiculed, and vice is whitewashed. These immoralities are found more or less in every play brought upon the stage. The public would not endure the stupidity of a play without them.

4. The *ballet*, which is an appurtenance to every theatre, is so disgustingly vicious that I will here only name it.

Here are four arguments against the theatre,

any one of which ought to crimson a Christian's cheek at the thought of countenancing so vile an institution.

Now, in regard to the opera, the first and fourth objections do not always obtain; but the second and third remain in full force. The operatic profession is *generally* immoral. The incidents of the life tend to develop immorality. These are a roaming irregularity and sudden intimacies which have a downward slide. And the very acting of a woman before a promiscuous multitude is itself a rapid poison to her soul. Some may withstand all this and remain pure and upright, but who would dream of going to an opera corps to find a zealous, happy Christian? And then, as to the operas themselves, you can count on your fingers all of them that are not immoral—and even these have many doubtful parts. But the favorite operas, those that draw the most crowded houses, are such as Don Giovanni, full of filth, to which Christian ladies go, forsooth, that they may hear the delicious music. Satan's bait has taken. These are very rapid hints that I have given, and nothing more. I can conclude this discourse only by going back to our text, and holding up to you there the great safeguard

for the Christian. We are to do *all* things to the glory of God. He should be in all our thoughts. A close walk with God will turn our feet from evil friendships, evil games, and evil places of amusement. And *nothing else will.*

My *young* friends, I especially address you. Do not be led away by the plausible sophistries of ungodly companions. Let your intimate associates be the lovers of Christ and holiness. With them play your games and seek your amusements, and sanctify the merriest games and amusements with prayer—the inward, ejaculatory prayer which thanks God and asks his guidance. That will be the use of your recreation to God's glory. Take your ground decidedly and boldly against the world. Say to the world, "We intend to be happier than you, we intend to possess a joy more true, more thorough, and more permanent, than your pasteboard thing. We have the infinite and loving Saviour to be with us in all our pleasures, to impart to them all a heavenly character. If you will come to us by coming to Him, we'll give you a hearty welcome—but we will never go down to you."



