

duty is obvious, to lay anew the foundation of their repentance and faith, and to escape all future unhappiness of the kind, by casting their care upon God who careth for them, and never again distrusting that Providence who heareth the young ravens when they cry for food, and who will not suffer them that trust him to want any good thing.—*Presbyterian.*

RECOLLECTIONS OF A COUNTRY PASTOR.

The Strolling Player.

I was not a little annoyed one morning, in walking through the principal streets of our small town, to find placards posted in every direction announcing that the *Theatre Royal* would be opened on the following Monday; and that their majesties' servants would have the honour of performing certain pieces for the amusement of the inhabitants. Races, those moral pests to a neighbourhood, had been held at the country town; and I had no doubt but the *Theatre Royal* was to be under the direction of some of those wretched and unfortunate wanderers who frequent such scenes of disgusting and debasing profligacy, ministering to the worst propensities of the human heart, and extracting from the pockets of the astonished rustics some portion of their hard-earned wages, and too often causing them to imbibe the most licentious notions. A theatrical booth at a race, wake, or fair, teems with moral pollution.

I have never been able to enter into the views of those who patronise or even palliate theatrical amusements. Long before I felt as I now do on religious subjects, I could not but entertain strong views on this point. A visit to a rural theatre, and to one of those of the metropolis, very early convinced me that attendance at such places of public resort could not but be productive of the worst consequences; and growing years, and increasing experience only strengthen the impression so early made upon my mind. I have never, in fact, met with any one whom I could conscientiously regard as a real Christian, who has differed from me on this point. I have argued it again and again with many who have esteemed themselves as friends of religion, but who have condemned my views as narrow, uncharitable, and not to be defended by Scripture. I fully agree, however, with the remarks of Archbishop Tillotson on this point: "I shall only speak a few words concerning plays," says he, "which as they are now ordered among us are a mighty reproach to the age and nation. . . . As the stage now is, they are intolerable; and not fit to be permitted in a civilised, much less in a Christian nation. They do most notoriously minister both to infidelity and vice." Has any improvement taken place since these strong animadversions were written? Unquestionably not. Independent of the immoral tendency of most plays, do not the theatres of our metropolis and large towns swarm with the most abandoned characters of both sexes? Is it not notorious that such characters are there admitted free of expence? that their attendance in many instances is encouraged, nay, eagerly sought after? "Shall not I visit for these things?" is the question of the almighty Judge. How is it, then, that the stage is, with all its immoralities, supported even in high quarters? Simply because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not an operative principle with those who patronise such hotbeds of iniquity.

But to advert more especially to the little theatre in our small country town. I could not but notice on the day on which I read the placards alluded to, two or three youngish-looking men strutting about in what might be termed *shabby-genteel* apparel. Their lodging was a small public-house, of not the most respectable character, the landlord of which had some small difficulty in procuring the renewal of his licence. The entertainments of the evening commenced. The wretched barn,—hired, by the by, from the lay rector at an enormous rent, and in the fitting of which the Sabbath had been spent,—was crowded; and among the spectators were persons who were dependant on the parish for relief. The entertainments were carried on, often of a very lax description, for nearly a fortnight. The patronage obtained was considerable; and the receipts not less so. Many families honoured the performances by their presence. Three of the wives of the neighbouring gentry—I much regret to say, all of them magistrates,—allowed their names to appear as lady-patronesses of an entertainment, at the performance of which every modest woman would blush. But so it was. A sermon preached by me on the Sunday was the theme of much conversation: it was ridiculed by not a few; it was deemed an insult by many. I thank God it saved more than one of the congregation from falling a prey to the wiles of the destroyer.

Of the strolling band which infested our parish, there was one in whom I could not but feel a very deep interest. He was a young man, as nearly as I could judge, about 25 years of age. There was a degree of elegance about him which testified he was not of the common sort. I marked him as he passed

me in the street; and I found he did not lodge at the public-house already adverted to. He looked as if consumption had begun its ravages; and I was informed that it was frequently exceedingly difficult for him to go through his part, owing to incessant cough and languor. His history, as I afterwards found, was most distressing. A young man of good family, but of very small fortune, he had received the advantages of an excellent education in early youth, was intended for a learned profession, and with this view had been entered at one of the universities. He had very early in life been deprived of the benefits of parental care; and had but few of the comforts of a home.—He was induced by some worthless companions to spend a Christmas vacation in London, where his ruin was completed. He constantly attended the theatres, and became acquainted with some actors of the lowest grade. His evenings and nights were passed in the greatest dissipation. He removed his name from the college boards, and at length went upon the stage. His little patrimony was soon spent, and he was compelled to undertake some of the lowest parts in comedy. He was a good musician, sang well, and generally gained applause. Alas, in what a wretched state must that mind be which, to minister to popular gratification, feels no repugnance at the employment of language too often licentious in the extreme! The history of actors, generally speaking, affords melancholy instances of the entire loss of principle. It discloses sad tales of suffering, penury, and wretchedness, not unfrequently the lot of those who are compelled to put on the guise of cheerfulness, and to keep the audience in a roar of laughter.

Disease had evidently marked this young man for its early victim; and he was now obviously hastening to an untimely grave. One of the actresses was said to be his wife; she used his name at least, and that was, as is often the case, a feigned one. She appeared, however, to be but little affected with his deplorable state, testifying the demoralising influence of a life of what the world calls pleasure on the female character. I felt anxious, if possible, to have some conversation with the unhappy man, but found it impracticable; every attempt I made to see him was frustrated, and more especially by his wife. I was positively refused all access to him. His language, I was informed, was very licentious and profligate. His little earnings, for small indeed was the pittance that fell to his share, were chiefly expended in brandy. His reputed wife was little better than himself, being nearly always under the influence of strong drink. Could any case that called for deeper commiseration be presented to one's notice?—a young, unprincipled man, dead to every virtuous feeling, opposed to every attempt to awaken him to a sense of religion, hurrying to the grave, almost by a suicidal act—for his vices and habits had reduced a strong and athletic frame to the last stage of emaciation—without one warning voice to call him to repentance—to implore him to flee from the wrath to come, for mercy to the cross of the Redeemer—to assure him that pardon might yet be procured, and hell might yet be escaped, and heaven might yet be won. He died in three weeks after the company left the town. His last earthly moments, as I have heard, were fearful in the extreme; although some of his associates endeavoured to stupefy him with spirits. He was in an almost raving state, and expired uttering blasphemies, the recital of which was horrible.

Is this a solitary instance? I fear not. It is no exaggerated case. Were it a solitary one, even of itself it should be sufficient to induce the patrons of theatrical amusements to reflect, that the support which they give to the stage may, in not a few instances, be instrumental in leading, not only the actors themselves, but their associates, to ruin. Assuredly no man under the influence of the Gospel will hesitate for a moment as to the propriety, nay absolute necessity, of endeavouring to prevent those over whom he has any influence exposing themselves to the manifold temptations of a theatre.—*Church of England Magazine.*

THOUGHTS.

When any temptations are presented to us from without, we cannot, perhaps, avoid feeling an irregular passion, or motion, or inclination stirring within us, upon occasion thereof; but yet at that very time it is in our power, whether we will comply with those passions and inclinations, or not; whether we will pursue them further or not. Now if we do not consent to them, but endeavour to stop, and stifle, and resist them, as soon as we are aware of them there is yet no harm done. Our thoughts, how indecent or irregular soever they were, are rather to be accounted the infirmities of our corrupt nature, than our sins properly so called.

And thus it is likewise as to our wandering thoughts in our prayers. If we strive against them, and endeavour to keep our minds in a devout, composed temper, and attend as well as we can to the duty

we are about; I say if we do this, I hope those distractions and wanderings will never rise up in judgment against us. And as for the frightful, blasphemous fancies, which some, even pious persons, are tormented with; they, I say of all other irregular thoughts, have the least danger of sin in them, though they be not so solemnly and formally disputed with and contested against. Because, indeed they are so terrible in their own nature that no man in his wits, and that hath any sense of God or goodness can be supposed to consent to them. They are indeed great infelicities, but by no means any sin, farther than we approve of them; and to approve of them for any tolerable good man is impossible. *Archbishop John Sharp.*

Miscellaneous.

OBSERVATIONS ON DIFFERENT SUBJECTS MORAL AND DIVINE.

[SELECTED FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS, FOR THE GUARDIAN, BY W. N. OF CORNWALLIS.]

A pleasing anecdote of the Rev. Thomas Doolittle is observed of him, that he took great delight in catechising, and urged ministers to it, as having a special tendency to propagate knowledge—to establish young persons in the truth—and prepare them to read and hear sermons to advantage. Accordingly, every Lord's day, he catechised the youth and adults of his congregation, and this part of his labours was attended with the happiest effects. Of this we have the following striking instance:—

The question for the evening being, "What is effectual calling?" the answer was given in the words of the Assembly's Catechism. This answer being explained, Mr. Doolittle proposed that the question should be answered, by changing the words *us* and *our*, into *me* and *my*. Upon this proposal, a solemn silence followed. Many felt its vast importance, but none had courage to answer. At length a young man, about 28 years of age, rose up, and with every mark of a broken heart, and due seriousness was enabled to say, "Effectual calling is the work of God's spirit, whereby convincing me of my sin and misery, enlightening my mind in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing my will, he did persuade and enable me to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to me in the Gospel." The scene was truly affecting. The proposal of the question had commanded an universal solemnity. The rising up of the young man had created high expectations, and the answer being accompanied with proofs of unfeigned piety and modesty, the congregation was bathed in tears. Observe, this young man had been converted, by being catechised, and to his honour, Mr. Doolittle says, "Of an ignorant and a wicked youth, he had become a knowing and a serious professor, to God's glory, and my great comfort."—*London Evangelical Magazine.*

Here follows another anecdote, of the above mentioned Mr. Doolittle:—

He being engaged in his usual service on the Lord's day, and in catechising, on a certain occasion, when he had finished his prayer, looking round upon the congregation, he observed a young man just shut into one of the pews, who discovered much uneasiness in that situation, and seemed to have a desire to go out again. Mr. Doolittle feeling a particular desire to detain him, hit upon the following expedient. Turning to one of the members of his church, who sat in the gallery, he asked him aloud, "Brother, do you repent of coming to Christ?" No sir, said he, I never was happy till then: I only repent that I did not come to him sooner." Mr. Doolittle then turned to the opposite gallery, and addressed himself to an aged member in the same manner. "Brother, do you repent of your coming to Christ?" "No sir," replied he, "I have known the Lord from my youth up." Mr. Doolittle then looked down upon the young man, whose attention was now fully engaged, and fixing his eyes upon him, said, "young man, are you willing to come to Christ?" This unexpected address from the pulpit, exciting the observation of all the people, so affected him, that he sat down, and hid his face. The person who sat next him, encouraged him to rise, and answer the question. Mr. Doolittle repeated it. "Young man, are you willing to come to Christ?" With a tremulous voice, he replied, "Yes, sir." "But when, sir," added the minister, in a solemn and loud tone. The young man mildly answered, "Now, sir." "Then stay," said he, "and hear the word of the Lord, which you will find in 2 Cor. vi. 2, 'Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation.'" By this sermon, God touched the heart of the young man. He came into the vestry, after sermon, dissolved in tears. The uneasiness to stay, which he had manifested, was occasioned by the injunction of his father, who had threatened, that if ever he went to hear the sermons, he would turn him out of doors. Having now heard, and being unable to conceal the feelings of his mind, he was afraid to meet his father. Mr. Doolittle sat down and wrote an affecting letter to him, which had