

AMUSEMENTS.

"I have many things to say unto you; but you cannot bear them now."—John xvi., 12.

All nations, in all ages of the world, have had their amusements: It is however no part of our intention to serve up at this time, for the amusement of the reader, a dissertation on amusements. We only design, in the light of Christianity, to enquire and to shew how far amusements, and what kind of amusements, may be profitable.

Permit us to observe, by the way, that very many of the amusements of the ancients were most unquestionably pernicious. Their gladiatorial exhibitions and their animal baitings were cruel and barbarous in the extreme. And their boxing, wrestling and running matches indicate a great deal of loathsome coarseness of mind, compatible with nothing but ignorance and barbarism. Whether there are, or have been, any amusements in our own more highly favored land, which deserve to be characterized as of the barbarian or semi-barbarian description, I must submit to the judgment of my respected readers.

The Jews, whose polity was of divine origin, had eighty-two days in every year, which they kept sacred. All their festivals and amusements, which were of divine institution, were of a religious nature. They had fifty-two Sabbaths; twelve new moons, three great annual festivals, great day of atonement, and jubilee every forty-ninth or fiftieth year. These were their times of recreation, and they unbent their minds from secular pursuits, by exercising them in worship, according to the genius of their religion. Might not this be a profitable hint to Christians?

TESTS OF AMUSEMENT:—

1. *If they have not a tendency to vice?* Often, amusements, which when viewed abstractly, appear to be innocent, become stepping-stones to those which are not innocent; and so step by step may crimes of the highest magnitude be reached, thus:—checkerboard, dice, cards, gambling, drunkenness, cheating, robbing, murder, death!

2. *If their direct or chance expense does not prevent our charities, or the more useful appropriation of that in which God has prospered us?* The education of orphans and other poor children, the support of poor widows and other destitute persons; forming and adding to a public library, sending the gospel to destitute places, or supporting a competent eldership in the midst of the church; or even improving the street, is infinitely better and more rational, not to say more Christian, than spending our substance in noisy mirth or frothy festivity.

3. *If they are not so closely incorporated with the amusements of the bad, as to throw us into the company of the bad, and expose us to the corrupting influence of their vicious example?* There is, perhaps, nothing that is

better calculated to infuse into the mind moral poison, than vicious companions! "Evil communications," says Paul, "corrupt good manners." Their feet take hold on hell, leading down to the chambers of death.

4. *If they have no tendency to wean a person from more profitable employment?* The most of those exercises which are called amusements, we believe produce this tendency. The being engaged in the exercises of the ball-rooms, the card table, the horse-race the sister-Phebe, or the sell-the-thimble party, or even the conversation party, where light talk is the order of the day, or of the night, are not, we think, highly favorable to piety! A transition from these exercises to the worship of God, is immense.

5. *If they do not encroach upon that brief period bestowed upon man to do his work for eternity!* How short, O how very short is the time allotted to man in which for him to do this work. His days are a handbreadth, and his years are as nothing. His life is a vapor that continues for a little time and then vanishes away. He is commanded to give "all diligence" to make his calling and election sure. But, as if he had an eternity in which to prepare himself for heaven, he converts himself into a time killer, and murders his precious moments as they approach. Ah! sirs; these moments will bring their ominous flight to heaven's bar, and in burning words, to be written against you in the book of remembrance, bear faithful testimony of the unfaithfulness of your stewardship.

6. *If they are not cruel or inhuman in their nature.* "A reluctance to occasion misery even to an insect, is not a mere decoration of character, which we are left at liberty to wear or to neglect; but it is a disposition which we are commanded, as a matter of duty, to cherish. It is not a mere sensibility, but a necessary part of virtue. It is impossible to inflict pain, and connect the idea of gratification with such an act, without experiencing some degree of mental obduration. We are not surprised that he who, while a boy, amused himself in killing flies, should, when he became a sovereign, exhibit the character of a cruel and remorseless tyrant. To find pleasure in setting brutes to worry and devour each other, is a disposition truly diabolical and the man who can find delight in dog-fighting, chicken-fighting, bull-baiting, is quite prepared to imitate these cannibals who, in the popular insurrections and massacres of the French Revolution, sported with the mangled carcasses and palpitating limbs of their murdered victims, and dragged them about with their teeth in the garden of the Tuilleries.

Horse Racing, in addition to the cruelty with which it is attended, is generally the means of assembling on the course all the gamblers, swindlers and blacklegs in the neighborhood, and is the cause of much drunkenness, debauchery and ruin.