

## The Christian Helper.

A BAPTIST MONTHLY JOURNAL.

"Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." II. Cor. 1: 24.

Vol. II. APRIL 1, 1879. No. II.

### SHALL OUR CHILDREN BE TAUGHT DANCING?

A few words in reply to this question will be timely. The principal arguments urged in favor of dancing are: 1st. That it affords at once healthful exercise and pleasant amusement; 2nd. That it is very helpful to the carriage, and general development and grace of the person. Now we really think too much importance is attached to dancing on these accounts. It is far from being the only or the favorite amusement of young people; and we have generally observed that it is irksome to them unless attended by exciting accompaniments. Nor is it the only means by which a graceful deportment may be obtained. Drilling, and calisthenic exercises, are quite as well calculated to effect this object, while they afford equal, perhaps greater, advantages in point of physical development.

The arguments above referred to are as frequently urged by Christian parents as by others. But there is another which is most naturally and powerfully felt by those who wish their children to mingle in scenes of worldly gaiety. It is, that young people who are not qualified to take part in this fashionable amusement, appear to disadvantage in "society." We may be prejudiced, but we certainly regard this as a strong inducement to Christian parents to keep their children ignorant of the art. No truly pious father or mother could view, without alarm, a beloved son or daughter becoming engrossed in the chosen pleasures of a godless world, not excepting those of its most "refined" circles. And next to the preservation afforded by divine grace, a sense of what the world regards a deficiency, appears to us to be the best defence against such alluring pursuits.

Whatever may be said in favor of dancing, there are far stronger reasons to be urged against it. One is, that in this amusement there is, in *all circumstances*, an amount of familiarity that exists nowhere else; and the large number of dances that come under the description of *waltzing*, are especially objectionable for the reason now hinted at. And as dancing is objectionable in itself, so it is in its accompaniments. To say nothing of an extravagant and scarcely becoming style of dress, untimely hours, frivolous society, &c., &c., a peculiar excitement is produced,

which, when once tasted, is apt to bring the soul under its power, and to become what is denominated not "a taste" but "a passion." Dancing points towards the world, and not towards heaven; its tendency is to lead its votaries downwards. It is one of the steps towards the enchanted ground of "dissipation." But a slight partition separates some dances from all dances, private dances from public balls; and these again from all sorts of corrupting entertainments.

It is not without reason that the great majority of Christian parents have been led to the decision not to have their children taught dancing; and that in a great number of select schools and ladies' colleges, the practice is excluded on principle.

### "A WELL QUALIFIED TEACHER."

This is a phrase of frequent occurrence in these days of Sunday School Associations, Conventions, Institutes, Normal Classes, etc., and, rightly understood, it is full of meaning. As we thought upon it the other day, after hearing it several times repeated by a speaker in the course of an earnest address, the image of such a teacher rose up before our imagination. We beheld him in his work—the eye of intelligence and benevolence beaming on his youthful charge; and on their part the returning glance of affection and riveted regard; on the one hand an earnest instructor, and on the other an intensely interested class. He is no trifler himself, and triflers cannot take refuge within the circle of his influence. He has something of infinite moment to impart, and he looks as one who feels the weight of his message. His love of order is such that the most disorderly yield him homage. His rebuke, indeed, is sometimes stern, but the law of kindness is in his heart and on his lips. He can reason, and inform the judgment; but he can also plead and melt the heart.

Urgent must be that call of duty which withdraws such a teacher from his post. He has put his hand to the plough and feels that he dare not look back. While others leave their classes to the chances of an hour, of him it may be said, as of the faithful pastor, he is "instant in season, out of season." And all this is the result of fixed principle—vanity and self-importance have no place in his rule of action. He has calculated the cost and the self-sacrifice involved in his work, and has resolved to place all on the altar of his Saviour. His heart is full of compassion and love for the members of his class, and he longs to lead them to the feet of the Good Shepherd who "gathers the lambs in His arms, and carries them in His bosom."

Nor does he satisfy himself with handing out to his class what costs him nothing. He neither talks to them at random, nor commits the equally heinous offence of reading to them from the printed lesson notes which he has been "too busy" or *too idle* to study. On the contrary his Sunday toils occupy his thoughts during the week. Could we follow him to the retirement of home we should find him preparing for future service with intelligence and energy. Now he seeks to rectify and enlarge his general Bible knowledge. Now he ponders the lesson of the coming Lord's day, that he may teach it with clearness, impressiveness and ease. Now he examines the best works at his command on topics of acknowledged importance, and makes the ripest thoughts of men wiser than himself his own. His determination is to be an efficient worker—one who "needeth not to be ashamed,"—and hence he is constantly aiming at self-improvement.

But our ideal teacher is distinguished by something higher still in importance. He is a man of prayer. He walks with God. He lives in the Spirit. He feels his own weakness and insufficiency, and depends upon divine help. This is the *grand secret* of his intensity, his consecration to his work, his zeal and regularity in the performance of it, the stillness and thoughtfulness of his class, the progress which marks his career, the blessing which attends his labours. He is in *earnest*, and all around him can see that his is the purpose of a devout and undivided heart, the toil of one who is striving to approve himself unto God, and willing "to spend and be spent" for Christ, and the souls of the youthful group, for whom he expects to render an account in the day of the Lord.

With or without a "Normal class" certificate, a teacher such as we have described, will be universally admitted to be well qualified for his work.

### A SOURCE OF DANGER.

The Christian parent never had so many obstacles to contend with, and so many resisting influences to overcome, in the way of the religious training of his children as he has in the present day. The human mind never had so many objects of engrossing power presented to its contemplation at once as it has now, which not only divert the thoughts of the parent but attract those of the child. Ours is an age of progressive refinement in matters of taste, which is running through all the habits of society, and no parent can leave his children destitute of ordinary elegance and polish. Then also, mental cultivation and the acquisition of knowledge are now stimulated to an unre-