

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWS

## IS THE YOUNG MAN SAFE?\*

BY REV. R. N. GRANT, D.D.

If the young man safe who breaks the Sabbath! These three sins usually follow each other in rapid succession: The young man first disobeys his parents; then he is led into bad company, for generally the first acts of disobedience are in regard to company, and bad company is certain to lead to Sabbath-breaking. Sabbath profanation is certain to have a fatal effect on the character of any young man. It has a double effect; it cuts both ways. It takes a young man away from good influences, and plunges him into the worst associations. The young man who habitually breaks the Sabbath must turn his back upon the sanctuary and the influences of home. At the same time he is certain to form the worst companionships, for the company he meets are Sabbath-breakers too. Young man, it may seem a small matter to you whether you go to church on Sabbath morning, or drive to some neighboring town or village. It is no small matter. You won't drive very far most likely until you have got into very doubtful company, and probably you will not be in that company long until the swearing and the drinking begins. Thus it is that Sabbath profanation leads to a train of deadly sins. Jehovah says: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and no one who habitually violates that command is safe. Tell me how a young man treats his mother, what company he keeps, and how he spends the Sabbath, and nine times out of ten I can tell you what kind of a man he will be ten years hence.

Is the young man safe who tipsled? No, a million times no. Safe! He is in the most terrible danger. Danger of what? In danger of losing everything that makes life worth living. In danger of shame and sorrow, rage and remorse, delirium and death. In danger at the very least of contracting a habit that debases, degrades and brutalizes the whole nature. No small part of the danger arises from the fact that the habit is formed insensibly. The fetters are put on unconsciously, and the young man never knows he is bound until it is too late to be free. Gough gives some terrible illustrations of the power of this habit. One fallen man whom he urged to stop drinking said: "It's no use, Mr. Gough, it's no use, no use; if there was a glass of brandy there," pointing to the table, "I would have to drink the brandy if I were to be thrown into hell the next moment." That man once occupied a high place in society, but he had thus entirely lost his will power, and yet young men with very little will power tell us every day they can drink or not as they please. The same distinguished man gives another, and I think a still more terrible illustration of the danger of forming this habit. A young wife and mother lay in an ill-furnished and comfortless room, dying. Years before she had stood at the marriage altar, beside the man of her choice, as fair and hopeful a bride as ever took the vow. Her young husband loved her, at least so he said, and he solemnly vowed to love her to the end; but he loved liquor more than he loved his young and beautiful wife. It soon began to dawn upon her mind

that she was in that most horrible of all positions—a position a thousand times worse than widowhood and the grave,—a position than which there are only two worse possible,—hell, and that of a drunkard's husband—I mean the heart-rending, degrading position of a drunkard's wife. She used every means to reform him, but, like too many others, found her efforts useless. His cruelty and debauchery soon brought her to the grave. A little before she died she asked him to come to her bedside, and pleaded with him once more for the sake of their children, soon to be motherless, to drink no more. With her thin, long fingers she held his hand, and as she pleaded with him he promised in this terrible solemn way—"Mary, I will drink no more till I take it out of this hand which I hold in mine." That very night he poured out a tumbler of brandy, stole into the room where she lay cold in her coffin, put the tumbler into her withered hand, and then took it out and drank it to the bottom. And yet young men can tell me they can stop drinking when they please! Young man, if it is easy for you to stop, stop on account of others; if difficult, in God's name I say, stop on your own account.

Is the young man safe who idles away his time? Certainly not. You know who it is that "finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." The fact is neither young nor old idlers are ever absolutely idle. The oyster fastens itself on the rock and opens its mouth and takes in sustenance. If the young men would only fasten themselves on their relations and open their mouths three times a day for their daily allowance idleness would not be so bad. But the trouble is that most men who won't work for themselves or anybody else work for the devil. Does any young man say: "The world owes me a living, and I must have it, work or no work?" The world owes you a living? Indeed! What have you done to put the world in your debt? This world is a fairly large place, and a man must do a pretty large thing to put it into his debt. What big thing have you done? I have heard people say the world owed them a living, when the only thing they ever did was to consume good food, and wear out good clothes for a quarter of a century. The world owes no man a living that won't work for it, or woman either.

Is the young man safe who indulges in extravagant habits? No, certainly not. This is one of the crying sins of our age and country, and I wish I had more time to discuss and denounce it. How often do extravagant habits lead to debt, debt to dishonesty, and dishonesty to crime. Dr. John Hall says he finds it a profitable exercise to stand before one of those magnificent shop windows in New York, and thank the Lord for the large number of things there he can do without. This might be a good exercise a little nearer home. Young man, if you cannot afford to pay for a new coat, wear your old one. Wear it until the elbows are out. Wear it until it is so patched that it would take an expert to tell the original cloth, rather than have these drygoods merchants watch you through the store window as you go down street, and wonder when you are going to settle your bill. Begin on the lower rungs of the ladder and climb up. Climbing is glorious, exhilarating work, but remember, coming down is hard on human nature.

Extravagant people nearly always have to come down.

Is the young man safe who throws off religious restraint? Not by any means. I address many young people now who were brought up in religious homes. You remember the old homestead in which childhood's days were spent; you can picture the old home in your mind at any moment; the trees that grew near, planted by one who is now no more; the vines that climbed the wall; the flowers that bloomed by the window; the babbling brook by whose banks you played; the room in which the family met; the old family Bible with the marks on the margin opposite the striking passages and rich promises; the father who read daily from that book; the image of her who used to clasp your hand in hers and teach you to say "the Lord is my Shepherd" and "Our Father in Heaven." You remember it well. You remember too the morning you left that home. Who packed your trunk and gave you a Bible which you promised to read? Who followed you to the door with a heart so full that she could not say good-bye as she gave you a parting kiss? Who watched you from the window as you went away, and when she could see you no longer, went to her chamber to commend her boy to the care of her covenant God? My young friend, you know well who did all this. Have you kept the promises you made that morning? You promised to read your Bible—have you done so? You promised to attend church regularly—have you done so? You promised to begin and end each day with prayer—have you done so? You promised to keep the Sabbath and avoid bad company—have you done so? I have been guarding you against such sins as disobedience to parents, bad company, Sabbath breaking, tippling, idleness and extravagance; but I must tell you in closing that no young man is safe in the highest sense of the word until he has a personal interest in Christ. Two children were playing in a cutting in one of the American lines of railway; the express train came thundering along; they ran to the side for safety; as they stood close against the face of the cutting, the elder, a little girl, was heard calling to her brother as the train thundered past, "Cling to the rock, brother, cling to the rock." So say I to you, my young friend,—cling to the Rock of Ages, my brother; cling to the Rock; cling to the Rock and you are safe.

THE LIVING AGE for February 15, with its accustomed readiness to present both sides of any current question, whether in the field of politics or that of religion, prints two articles on Modernism and the Papal Encyclical, one written from the point of view of a Catholic "modernist,"—no less a person than the Rev. George Tyrrell—and the other from the loyal Catholic point of view. Both articles are reprinted from The Hibbert Journal.

It is not ours to worry and do evil, but to trust and do good. We neither trust without doing nor do without trusting.

God's plans for us in the new year are greater than our ambitions for ourselves. It will be the best year if we let it be his year.

To keep a calm exterior when the heart is swept by storm is the supreme exhibition of mastery over self.

\*Concluding portion of a sermon preached in the Presbyterian church, Orillia, Ont.