

from want of better instruction in times gone by, have allowed this terrible habit to take such hold upon them, that it becomes rather a physical disorder than a moral offence.

And the worst of it is that many well-meaning ministers practically encourage them in this unscriptural experience. They try to console people *under* their doubts, rather than to shake people *out* of them, as a terrible symptom of spiritual danger and disease. They too often persuade professing believers to look upon their doubts rather as the misfortune of human weakness than in the light of positive sin. And hence it is that many, under the preaching, and sometimes under the personal influence, of ministers of the Gospel, settle down into this fearful habit of doubting, till it really becomes a mental disease. The physician watches the case, but he knows not how to treat it.

There is but one remedy. The evil habit must be broken off at once, and a more healthy tone of mind established. In the strength of God's grace, such doubters must determine to doubt no more. Once again they must fall back upon the perfectness of Christ's work for them, and His willingness to save them. Every suspicion must be cast aside the very moment it arises, as a thought of the most wicked kind. There must be no inward reasonings, no arguments with the tempter, but a simple exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus.

Deliverance will result. Every such resistance of the temptation gives strength to faith. Thus 'the trying of faith worketh patience,' or endurance (Jas i. 3) and so every such trial will leave us better able to meet the next. And the time will come when the believer, on each temptation to doubt, will learn 'to count it all joy' that it affords him a fresh opportunity to exercise his faith in Christ.

THE PERILS OF THE PLAY-HOUSE.

A PLAIN TALK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

Young people often ask me the question "would it be right for me to go to the theatre? If not, then why not?" Those who propound these questions are not of the dissipated and dissolute class, but clean young men and maidens—too clean to be smirched by a needless exposure to impure influences. That such questions are raised constantly is not surprising; for the play-house is increasingly persistent in its demands on popular attention and patronage. It fills a constantly enlarging place in the daily journal. Theatres multiply more rapidly than churches in some of our great cities. Theatre-going increases more than church-going. The dead-walls are covered with flaunting pictorial representations of scenes and actors in full dress (or of no dress at all); and many of these are of such disgusting indecency that they deserve suppression by the public authorities. If the picture be so shameless, what must the original be?

Before our youthful inquirers become patrons of the play-house it is but fair that they should know just what perils to their moral nature and to their welfare as *immortal* beings they are likely to encounter. The first peril is to purity of character. Your eyes and ears are windows and doors to the heart. What enters once never goes out. Photographs taken on memory are not easily effaced or burned up; they stick there, and often become tempers and tormentors for a life-time. "I'd give my right hand" said a Christian to me once, "if I could rub out the abominable things that I put into my mind when I was a fast young man." He could not do it; neither will you be able to efface the lascivious images or the impure word which the stage may photograph on your very soul. We do not affirm that every popular play is immoral, or that every performer is impure, or that every theatre-goer is on the scent

for sensual excitements. But the stage is to be estimated as a totality; and the whole trend of the average American stage is hostile to heart-purity. The exceptions do not alter the rule. Nor have honest attempts to bring the stage up to a high standard of moral purity been successful. The experiment once made in Boston of so managing a theatre as to exclude every indelicacy from the stage and every notoriously improper person from the audience ended in pecuniary failure. The Puritanic play-house soon went into bankruptcy. The chief object of the manager is to make money; and if he can *spice* his evening's entertainment with a plot that turns on a seduction or a scene of sexual passion, or with a salacious exposure of physical beauty, the temptation is too strong to be very often resisted.

You must take the average stage *as it is*, and not as you would like to have it. It is an institution, which if you patronize, you become morally responsible for, as much as if you patronize a public library or a public drinking saloon. As an institution it habitually unsexes woman by parading her before a mixed audience in man's attire. Too often it exposes her in such a pitiable scantiness of any attire at all that if you saw your own sister in such a plight you would turn away your eyes in horror. Yet you would propose to pay your money (through the box-office) to somebody else's sisters and daughters to violate womanly delicacy for your entertainment. "If the daughter of Herodias" dances to *please you*, then you are responsible for the dance, both in its influence on the dancer and on your own moral sense. There is no evading before God of your accountability for the theatre, if you habitually support it. What its influence upon the average performer is appears from most abundant testimony. One of the most celebrated actresses of this time informed a friend of mine that she "only enters a theatre to enact her part, and has very little association with her own profession." A converted actor once said to me, while passing a play-house in which he had often performed; "Behind those curtains lies Sodom." Although sorely pressed to return to his old business he said he would sooner starve than go to the stage again. Mrs. Francis Kemble Butler—the last living representative of the most famous histrionic family of modern times—has, in her old age, condemned the stage emphatically. "As an institution, the American theatre tolerates sensual impurity in its performers, and presents scenes of impurity to its patrons. If you become one of its patrons, you go into moral partnership with the theatre.

(2.) It would be a sufficient condemnation of the average play-house if it stimulates one evil passion. But other temptations lurk about it. There are dangerous associations to be encountered there. It is a prevalent habit with young people who attend the theatre to remain until a late hour amid the excitements of the play, and then finish off with a midnight supper, or a wine drink at some neighboring restaurant. To this perilous practice a young lady of my acquaintance owed her downfall. Long after sensible people have laid their head on their pillows, the *habitus* of the theatre are apt to be adding a second scene of dissipation to the first one; and it must be pretty hard work for a Christian to finish up such an evening's experience with an honest prayer for God's blessing. That is indeed a poor business and a poor pleasure on which we cannot, with a clear conscience, ask our Heavenly Father's approval. Certainly, there are enough innocent, wholesome and beneficial recreations without venturing into the dangerous atmosphere of the play-house. That is a dear bought pleasure which involves even a risk to the immortal soul.

(3.) Another peril of the theatre arises from the fascination which it too often engenders,

Like wine drinking, it becomes an appetite, and a very greedy appetite. To gratify this growing passion for the play-house, tens of thousands of young people squander their money and their time most profusely. Other and purer recreations become tame and insipid. Even the entertainments of the stage become dull unless they are spiced with new excitements to the passion. Wholesome pleasures cease to please, just as a brandy drinker ceases to be satisfied with cold water or a cup of coffee. It is not recreation, but stimulation, and a very dangerous sort of stimulation, too, that you will be after when you become enslaved by the fascinations of the stage.

My young friends, be assured that no sagacious employer ever chooses a clerk, or accountant, or any other employee, the sooner because he is a theatre-goer. No sensible man is apt to select the companion of his heart and home because she is a frequenter of a play-house. No good woman wants her sons and daughters there. No pastor expects his youthful church-members can go often into that impure atmosphere without a terrible damage to their piety. I don't believe that the theatre has helped many souls toward Heaven. I know that it has sent thousands to perdition. Now that I have, in kind and candid plainness of speech, pointed out some of the inevitable *perils* of the play-house, do you feel like *taking the risk*?—*New York Independent*.

Missionary.

"How shall they hear without a preacher?"—Rom. x. 14.

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth more labourers into His harvest."—Mat. ix. 38.

What strikes one most in all accounts of missionary work is the increase of openings on every hand for preaching the Gospel, and, in most instances, the inability to make use of these opportunities for want of the necessary means. Whether at home or abroad, the cry is the same, "More money and more agents, that we may go forward and enter in through those open doors." Sadly and reluctantly many a promising mission field is left unoccupied for "want of funds to take it up."

In all this there is nothing new. Listen to the old record of more than eighteen centuries ago:—

"When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

And what follows?

"Then saith He to His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." Writing to the Romans of the love of God "to all that call upon Him," St. Paul adds, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?"

Our dear Lord, the Lord of the Harvest, says: "The laborers are few; Pray ye therefore." . . . Do we "therefore" pray? Do we, like our Lord and Master, look round on the multitudes and see their need? Are we "moved with compassion"? Are we "His disciples"? Does He speak to us?

Baptized into His visible Church, receiving that "spiritual food of His most precious body and blood," do we, when we gather round the "Sacred Board," ever mourn that the "blessed company of faithful people" is so small? Are we ever sad because of the vast numbers who know nothing of the "bread which we break," nor of the "cup of blessing which we bless"? Are these "moments sweet to us and rich in blessing,"