

Our Sunday Hour

There is wine will render the situation

THE coming of winter, with the comparative leisure that it brings to those employed, as are most of the readers of *UPS AND DOWNS*, and the thought of long winter evenings, and parties, and festivities, and social gatherings, raise in many of our minds questions not easy to answer as to what amongst various amusements and indulgences is wrong and harmful, and what can be enjoyed innocently and without feeling that we are acting inconsistently or bringing shame upon the name of Christ or dishonour to His cause.

In our own experience these questions are of daily occurrence. What is the harm in a game of cards? What is there more sinful in a rubber of whist than a game of chess? Why is dancing so strongly disapproved by certain Christians when it is spoken of in the Bible without condemnation and is regarded by many worthy people in the present day as a healthy and graceful accomplishment? What harm is there in a man taking his glass of beer, and what can there be to find fault with in his enjoying his pipe in moderation? What is there wrong in going to the theatre, and are not many people of high standing in the religious world often to be seen at the play? Why should a Christian man or woman be thought out of place at a ball, a card party or a football match? Why are we to set all sorts of limitations upon the enjoyment of our lives, and where are Christians bidden to go through the world with long faces, condemning and standing aloof from their fellow men? Did we not find our Master when on earth sharing in the enjoyment and festivities of the society amongst which He moved? Was He not a guest at the marriage feast and was not the first exhibition of His supernatural power the replenishing by a miracle

lous process of the stock of wine that had been exhausted, and graciously saving the host from the embarrassment that would have been caused by the failure of the supply? Do not the people who are most prone to sit in judgment upon others in respect of these amusements and indulgences commit far worse offences under the cloak of religion? Do they not often display a bitterness and intolerance, an eagerness to condemn in their attitude toward what they regard as the weaknesses or vices of their brethren, that discovers an unloveliness character, an un-Christ-like spirit that is far more intolerable than the very worst of these vices and follies? Were not the Pharisees the most scrupulous of all the Jewish community in respect of outward observance, the most rigid in the correctness of their lives, what we should now call the most Puritanical of men, and yet was it not for them that our Lord reserved His most unsparring condemnation, His sternest anathemas? Is there not some definite rule laid down for our guidance, and how can we make it apply to all the various circumstances under which these questions force themselves upon us? We cannot, if we are sincere, rest content with condemning or abstaining from certain things that from our training or circumstances or mental habits we have no taste for, and choosing to regard as harmless or venial those that we enjoy and which are habitual to us. If we do this, we shall soon involve ourselves in inconsistencies, and our conscience must condemn us. Some of us have no doubt, heard the story of the bishop who felt called upon to communicate with the vicar of a parish in his diocese upon his refusal to forbear hunting. "Well," said the vicar to the clergyman, "I did not see that for hunting was worse than foraging." "The Vicar," said the bishop, "is a