

TRAVELLING AND PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

BY MRS. CHILD.

THERE is one kind of extravagance rapidly increasing in this country, which, in its effects on our purses and our *habits*, is one of the worst kinds of extravagance; I mean the rage for travelling, and for public amusements. The good old home habits of our ancestors are breaking up—it will be well if our virtue and our freedom do not follow them! It is easy to laugh at such prognostics,—and we are well aware that the virtue we preach is considered almost obsolete,—but let any reflecting mind inquire how decay began in all republics, and then let them calmly ask themselves whether we are in no danger, in departing thus rapidly from the simplicity and industry of our forefathers.

Nations do not plunge *at once* into ruin—governments do not change *suddenly*—the causes which bring about the final blow are scarcely perceptible in the beginning; but they increase in numbers and in power; they press harder and harder upon the energies and virtue of a people; and the last steps only are alarmingly hurried and irregular. A nation without industry, economy, and integrity, is Samson shorn of his locks. A luxurious and idle nation! Look at the phrase!—the words were never made to be married together; every body sees it would be death to one of them.

And are not we becoming luxurious and idle? Look at our steam-boats and stages, and taverns! There you will find traders, who have left debts and employment to take care of themselves, while they go to take a peep at the theatres, or the opera dancers. There you will find domestics all *ago* for their wages-worth of travelling; why should they look out for “a rainy day?” There are hospitals enough to provide for them in sickness; and as for marrying, they have no idea of that till they can find a man who will support them genteelly. There you will find mothers, who have left the children at home with Betsy, while they go to improve their minds at some public place.

If only the rich did this, all would be well. They benefit others, and do not injure themselves. In any situation, idleness is their curse, and unbusiness is the tax they must pay for affluence; but their restlessness is as great a benefit to the community as the motions of Prince Esterhazy, when at every step the pearls drop from his coat.

People of moderate fortune have just as good a right to travel as the wealthy; but is it not unwise? Do they not injure themselves and their

families? You say travelling is cheap. So is staying at home. Besides, do you count *all* the costs?

The money you pay for stages and steam-boats is the smallest of the items. There are clothes bought which would not otherwise be bought; those clothes are worn out and defaced twenty times as quick as they would have been at home; children are perhaps left with domestics or strangers; their health and morals, to say they least, under very uncertain influences; your substance is wasted in your absence by those who have no self-interest to prompt them to carefulness; you form an acquaintance with a multitude of people who will be sure to take your house in their way when they travel next year; and finally, you become so accustomed to excitement, that home appears insipid, and it requires no small effort to return to the quiet routine of your duties. And what do you get in return for all this? Some pleasant scenes, which will soon seem to you like a dream; some pleasant faces, which you will never see again; and much of crowd, and toil, and dust, and bustle.

I once knew a family which formed a striking illustration of my remarks. The man was a farmer, and his wife was an active, capable woman, with more of ambition than sound policy. Being in debt, they resolved to take fashionable boarders from Boston, during the summer season. These boarders, at the time of their arrival, were projecting a jaunt to the Springs; and they talked of Lake George crystals, and Canadian music, and English officers, and “dark blue Ontario,” with its beautiful little brood of *lakelets*, as Wordsworth would call them; and how one lady was dressed superbly at Saratoga; and how another was scandalized for always happening to drop her fan in the vicinity of the wealthiest beaux. All this fired the quiet imagination of the good farmer's wife; and no sooner had the boarders departed to enjoy themselves, in spite of heat, sand dust, and fever, and ague, than she stated her determination to follow them.

“Why have we not as good a right to travel as they have?” said she; “they have paid us money enough to go to Niagara with; and it really is a shame for people to live and die so ignorant of their own country.”

“But then we want the money to pay for that stock which turned out unlucky, you know.”

“Oh! that can be done next summer; we can