

## DANCING.

While we have no direct data whereby to determine how, when, or where dancing had its beginning, yet very early records, both sacred and profane, shew, not only that it widely prevailed among rude as well as civilized nations at a far by-past period, but that the dance formed an all but indispensable element alike in their religious ceremonies and warlike celebrations. In short, all their dances were either of a sacred or soldierly character, and thus in both they danced before their altars, and around the statues of their gods.

In addition to this the Greeks were wont to deify human passions, and institute and perform dances in keeping with the characters assigned to such deities. Among the more sedate Romans, however, it was reckoned disgraceful for a free citizen to dance except in connection with their religious services, hence the well-known declaration of Cicero that "no one dances unless he is either drunk or mad," and hence, also, in their festal entertainments, in early as in later times, the dancing was performed only by hired and professional dancers. All this is in full keeping with the surprise, as story tells, of the foreigner, who when he first saw in our higher circles so many voluntarily subjecting themselves to the frequent fatigues of the fashionable dance wondered why they did not get their servants to do it for them.

The Jews too, in common with other nations had from an early period their sacred dances, which were performed as expressive of their gratitude and gladness; in connection with some special manifestation of the divine favour, or in commemoration of past mercies. The Jewish dances, however, whether sacred or social, were ever performed by the sexes separately, and while in each both sexes seem to have taken part, yet they remained in distinct and separate companies, and there is no evidence in sacred history to shew that dances were promiscuously engaged in by both sexes together, except, it may be, when in the worship of the golden calf, all classes intermingled in the foolish and frantic revelry.

From a careful consideration of all that scripture says in regard to dancing, it is evident that dancing was a religious act, performed exclusively on joyous occasions usually out of doors, in the day time, and only by one of the sexes, seeing that there is no instance in which both sexes are united in that exercise, and further, that

those who perverted dancing from a sacred use, to a mere merry-making amusement, were regarded as infamous, and to be classed with the "vain fellows" so void of shame, alluded to by Michal, or with those families of whom Job speaks, whose dancing only increased their impiety and involved destruction, or with the shameless daughter of Herodias whose dancing terminated in the rash vow of Herod and the cruel murder of John the Baptist.

In view of all, a Presbytery in the neighbouring Union published the following declaration, which may not be unworthy the attentive consideration of the churches and families of our own Dominion.

"The practice of dancing in either private or public assemblies, this Presbytery regards as eminently worldly and sinful. It has been condemned by the highest judiciary of our Church and by most, if not all, other bodies of Christians. It is engaged in but by few professors of religion comparatively, and by those not noted for high spirituality or devotedness of life. It is regarded by worldly people as an amusement peculiarly their own, and when participated in by church members furnishes the former with occasions for triumph and boasting, and brings reproach upon the cause of Christ. It fosters the keeping of late and unseasonable hours at night, consumes much precious time in preparing for, engaging in, and recovering from the season of mirth with which it is connected. It wastes the physical energies through exhaustion or exposure, in some instances producing death. It diverts the mind from serious and sacred things, and places beauty, dress and display before sobriety, worth and wisdom. It sinks the moral beneath the physical, or makes animal pleasure a higher good than spiritual joy. It is inimical to revivals of religion and harmonizes not with a spirit of devotion. If the propriety of it were only questionable or doubtful, even then to engage in it is to stifle, and to sin against, conscience. But it is at variance with the principle which Paul propounded, and is opposed, we believe, to that blessed Book which teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."

DELTA.

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