

the subject and has had to come to a practical decision thereupon,—I would say: First, that I do not think there is any more wrong in dancing or arduous playing in itself—*i.e.*, when cards are played for amusement only, not for money—than I think it wrong to drink a glass of wine, which I know I could do, at a time, without any evil result. But, second—that indulgence in both these amusements, like that in wine drinking, *tends to encourage habits of life* which are most antagonistic to the spirit of Christ and of the New Testament. The family game at cards may be as harmless as a game at chess, but the "trail of the serpent is over" those spotted bits of cardboard, and the harmless game may be a step in the direction of the gambling den. And though it *does* seem as if the family dance were an amusement as innocent as could well be desired, yet, somehow, I have never seen the matter stop there. The dance at home seems to lead, by a natural sequence, to the dance abroad, and this again to all the injurious and frivolous influences of late dancing-parties, with all the *ceteras* which are apt, we know, to lead young hearts away from—instead of to—the Kingdom. If your correspondent is *sure* that he has the firmness and wisdom to keep, by his authority or influence, the use from degenerating into the abuse which would lead his children downward rather than upward, good and well! If not, then might it not be better to choose the safer path, and rather encourage the many innocent recreations in which spiritual danger does not lurk under a fascinating guise? And there are abundance of really harmless recreations without having recourse to any doubtful ones.

Finally, let me conclude with a few earnest words of Mr. Ruskin, from his recently published "Letters on the Lord's Prayer":

"No man can ask honestly or hopefully to be delivered from temptation unless he has himself honestly and firmly determined to do the best he can to keep out of it. But, in modern days, the first aim of all Christian parents is to place their children in circumstances where the temptations, which they are apt to call 'opportunities,' may be as great and many as possible; where the sight and promise of 'all these things' in Satan's gift may be brilliantly near; and where the act of 'falling down to worship me' may be partly concealed by the shelter, and partly excused as involuntary, by the pressure, of the concurrent crowd."

Is not this one of the great snares of Christians at the present day,—and one of the influences which so hinders our prayer: "Thy Kingdom come?"—M.

MR. EDITOR,—In a late number of your paper a letter appears, in which the writer desires to be enlightened as to the propriety or impropriety of card-playing and dancing, as home amusements. He gives us to understand that he is a believer in Christ, a praying man, and that he loves the Saviour with all the intensity and power of a master passion; but that he and his wife and children occasionally play cards, and that he does not forbid his children to dance in his own house, and with some of their young friends. We will give him credit for godly sincerity, and congratulate him as a possessor of religion, and a lover of God; for sterling piety is an invaluable possession; religion is the soul of happiness. We cannot, however, but regard the amusements which he sanctions in his family, as a species of worldly conformity, which he should at once and forever renounce, as contrary to the very spirit and genius of Christianity. "Be not conformed to this world" is an apostolic maxim, and one which should be practically regarded by every professed disciple of Jesus. Our object should be not to please worldly persons, by conforming in any degree to their vain and frivolous amusements, for these are at best vanity indeed; light as a puff of empty air; the mere toys of infancy, and unworthy the affection of a rational and enlightened mind. By a holy consistency of deportment, we should give the world plainly and unmistakeably to understand that we have renounced its service, that we have found a new master, that we have more substantial and enduring joys, and that we are animated by a more glorious hope. Alas! how many who profess and call themselves Christians, find numerous pretences for visiting and loitering among ungodly associates, and for joining in some of their vain amusements. They yield to solicitation in one instance, and then say, what harm can there be in this? they go a little further, and urge the same excuse. They plead

for conformity to the world in one thing after another, till almost every trace of distinction vanishes; and then deem it a mark of a liberal mind to maintain no singularities, and not to thwart the humour of the company, till at length they often come within the immediate attraction of the whirlpool, and are swallowed up in it beyond recovery.

"Renounce the world!"—the preacher cries.
"We do!"—a multitude replies.
While one as innocent regards
A snug and friendly game at cards;
And one, whatever you may say,
Can see no evil in a play;
Some love a concert or a race,
And others shooting and the chase.
Revelled and loved, renounced and followed,
Thus, bit by bit, the world is swallowed."

Card playing is a waste of precious time that might be more advantageously employed. Let those who make the world their home, and upon whose hands time may hang heavily, thus amuse themselves, but the servant of God should ever remember that he is to redeem the time, because the days are evil. Card-playing, under whatever restrictions, may in its ultimate results lead to temporal and eternal ruin. Money may not be staked; the game may be what men call innocent, and no apparent injury may be sustained, but who can tell what may be its effect upon some who engage in it. It may excite a thirst for worldly and dishonest gain; it may lead to professional gambling; it may produce a spirit of worldly dissipation, and exciting the malignant passions of man's nature, may lead to murder or to suicide. We are to abstain from all appearance of evil. And certainly there must be an apparent evil in that which thousands of holy men have in their writings powerfully and conclusively shewn to be a great and a crying evil, and against which thousands of godly preachers have raised their voices, and shewn to their hearers a more excellent way. Card-playing is, in a word, conformity to the world. Some years ago, after preaching on a week day evening in one of the cities of the United States, I was invited to sleep at the house of a very rich and respectable member of the Church. When I entered his parlor, I found him engaged at cards with other gentlemen. The immediate impression upon my mind was anything but favourable, as to his piety. I was led to the painful conclusion that he was either a mere formal professor, looked up to by the Church only on account of his wealth and high position, or that if the root of the matter was in him, he was in a state of fearful declension from the ways of righteousness. Now it becomes us at all times to be careful lest we should offend against the generation of God's children. The Christian has far higher pursuits to entertain him than card-playing and dancing. The richest entertainments of a genuine believer are divine ordinances and the engagements of religion. The peace of God, and an assured hope of heavenly blessedness will give to the soul a disrelish for all that is vain and worldly.

"Cards are superfluous here, with all the tricks
That idleness has ever yet contrived
To fill the void of an unfurnished brain,
To palliate dullness, and give time a shove."

A lady who once heard Mr. Romaine, expressed herself mightily pleased with his discourse, and told him afterwards that she thought she could comply with his doctrine, and give up everything but one. "And what is that, madam?" "Cards, sir." "You think you could not be happy without them." "No, sir; I know I could not." "Then, madam, they are your god, and they must save you." This pointed and just reply is said to have issued in her conversion.

Dancing is also a fashionable worldly amusement, which should be repudiated and renounced by all serious persons, as destructive of spirituality; as unfitting for communion with God; and as a preventive of the spiritual growth and prosperity of the soul. We know that dancing is frequently mentioned in Scripture, and especially in the Old Testament. But we maintain that the dancing spoken of with approval in Scripture, was very different from modern dancing. It was not a mere worldly amusement: it was the natural bodily expression of inward overflowing joy, produced by some signal deliverance from danger, or some wonderful interposition of the Almighty. When David had slain the mighty giant, who had so long defied Israel, the women of Israel, enraptured by the glorious victory thus achieved, sang in dances: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." When David and his servants brought the

Ark of God from the house of Oniath, he was so filled with joy at the prospect of restored worship, and sanctuary privileges, that he danced, or leaped for joy, before the Ark. So that his dancing was a religious act, accompanied by ascriptions of lofty praise to God for His wonderful goodness to him and to His people Israel. This conduct was a practical anticipation of the exhortation given by the Apostle James in a subsequent age, who said: "Is any merry, let him sing psalms." On another occasion he said: "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing." God had so graciously appeared for him in a season of deep depression, that his sorrow was turned into joy. He was ready to leap for joy. And he represents God as doing this for a gracious purpose, to the end, he says, "that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks unto Thee forever." It was also predicted that the lame man should leap as a hart. And wherefore? Evidently for the bestowment of spiritual blessings. "For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." The only instance we have in Scripture of anything approximating to the fashionable dancing of the present day is that of the daughter of Herodias, who danced before King Herod and so pleased the King that he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And instructed by her mother, she said: "Give me the head of John the Baptist in a charger." And to gratify the caprice of a wicked and cruel woman, he sent and beheaded John in the prison. What we now call dancing should not be countenanced by godly persons, for however innocent and restricted it may be, it may produce such a relish for the amusement, as shall be satisfied with nothing short of the midnight dance, and lead to all the revelry and dissipation of the ball room. Your correspondent says there are many amusements sanctioned by professors that are worse than dancing. This assertion is, alas! too true. Many professors are going fearfully astray in this respect; not only individual professors, but even some Christian communities. When our Lord was upon earth, He made a scourge of small cords, and drove the money-changers, and those that sold doves out of the temple, saying: "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." And if our Lord were personally to appear upon earth now, His zeal for the house of God would lead him severely to censure many practices which are creeping into our social gatherings, gatherings avowedly for religious purposes. One perhaps excites uproarious laughter by a humorous speech interspersed with ludicrous anecdotes. Another gives us what he calls a recitation, and tells us, perhaps, how Paddy saved his bacon. Another sings a worldly song, and worldly men are gratified, and are ready to say: "These professors of religion are just as fond of fun and nonsense as we are." Thus "Jesus is wounded in the house of his friends," and when we witness and hear such things we are led to tremble for the Ark of God.

We do not write these things in a spirit of censoriousness, but in a spirit of Christian love, and with earnest and prayerful desires that the sanctuaries of our God, of every denomination, may be cleansed from everything that is opposed to the holy mind of Christ.

WILLIAM HANCOCK.

Fonthill, Jan. 20th, 1880.

MR. EDITOR,—In a late issue of THE PRESBYTERIAN "A Church Member" is anxious to know if card playing and dancing are wrong. It reminds me of the answer the sainted Bishop McIlvaine gave a member of his church who asked him: "Bishop, is it wrong for Christians to dance?" It might be well for many church members to think over and "inwardly digest" the reply: "Madam, Christians have no desire to dance."

He sees no harm in them. Those who indulge in them seldom do. Did you ever see a dancing church member who thought there was any harm in it? In the town of Micanopy, Florida, where I spent two winters, are two churches, Presbyterian and Methodist. There were weekly prayer-meetings in each, on different nights, and besides a fortnightly meeting for young men. All were well attended. Many of the young people became interested. Several young men took part in the meetings. About Christmas of the second winter, "parties" were instituted by a few, and were kept up the remainder of the winter. At first they never had a party on prayer-