

Devotional Service.

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JUNE 18.—"INTEMPERATE PLEASURES"

(A TEMPERANCE MEETING.)

2 Tim. 3: 1-7.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., June 12. The lover of pleasure. . . . Prov. 21: 17-21
Tues., June 13. Check of with pleasure. . . . Luke 8: 13-15
Wed., June 14. Ye have lived in pleasure. . . . Jas. 5: 1-6
Thurs., June 15. This also is vanity. . . . Eccl. 2: 14, 24-26
Fri., June 16. Love not the world. . . . 1 John 2: 15-17
Sat., June 17. For all these, judgment. . . . Eccl. 1: 18, 19; 2: 1-8

Our topic Scripture contains the advice of Paul, the older, to Timothy, the younger—Paul, who had been over the field and knew its dangers, to Timothy whose experience had been limited, and whose knowledge was incomplete; Paul, the old warrior, to Timothy the young recruit; Paul, the experienced sea-captain, to Timothy the young sailor. The counsel given was timely and appropriate; and, no doubt, it was accepted and acted upon. There is a tendency among the young to treat lightly the advice of older people. This unfortunate tendency is too common, should be stoutly resisted by all who wish to make a fair future for themselves. The student at law gladly learns from the senior partner of the firm; the medical student is eager to gain the knowledge of the experienced practitioner; the young artist sits at the feet of his master and reverently accepts his true knowledge. So should the youth of this generation eagerly learn from their superiors in age, knowledge, and wisdom. For it is dangerous to refuse the counsel of competent advisers.

A LIVE QUESTION.

The question of amusements is one frequently discussed among young people, and in this age of rapidly increasing forms of pleasure, and novelties in recreation, it becomes important that our youth should be possessed of safe principles which shall lead them to wisely discriminate, selecting the good, and rejecting the evil. Surely this rage for amusement needs restraint on the part of youth. The passion for pleasure must not conquer us, we must master it. And part of the moral struggle in early manhood and womanhood, is the attainment of this victory. Young people should constantly remind themselves that life is a moral strife, with God and goodness as its end, not a scene of pleasure merely, or a low and ignoble endeavor to snatch enjoyment and secure comfort. The healthiest tone in manhood and society, as Bisset remarks, is when people are busy; when they are bent on some great ideal and do not need to be amused. Even a healthy child needs far less to be amused than its seniors think. Its great idea of amusement is to do something. The Kingdom that is at its best, the society that is at its healthiest, and the Church of God at its most useful stage, do not need entertainments. If young people will drill their minds, steer their course through life with the grand helm of duty, they will not care to roll listlessly on the waves of amusement and self-indulgence.

RECREATION NECESSARY.

When this wise view of the situation has been made, it still remains true that recreation is a necessary part of life. The old adage that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," contains much wisdom. The absence of proper recreation often produces both mental dulness, and physical incapacity, yes,

and spiritual decline. Recreation means to create over again, the building up of the system when it is exhausted, says Dr. Lees, from whom we shall gather some helpful thoughts. Amusement, which is another name for recreation, is said to be derived from the halt a dog makes in hunting, when he pauses to sniff the air in order to see in which way the scent lies. Having done this he starts off again with redoubled speed. Hence, both these words in themselves suggest the place that the things which signify should occupy in life. Recreation or amusement is intended for the refreshing of our strength in order to renewed effort. And yet in it all we must not be "lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God."

TWO GREAT LAWS.

There are two great laws under which we live; the law of work, and the law of recreation. Man should work, and work hard in order to live. In toil, too, will be found happiness, as well as freedom from temptation. Says the Italian proverb, "He that idles is tempted by one devil; he that labors, by a thousand."

The industrious life should be coveted, and pursued by all. But recreation, the second law, is as needful in its place as work. This is both the teaching of nature and experience. God has made us capable of enjoying ourselves. The first sign of intelligence in the infant is a smile. The child nature unfolds itself in play and as man grows up, it develops itself in many forms. The universe, also, has marks of joy and gladness. The sky is blue, the sea glitters, the flowers strewn over the earth. The waves sport on the shore, and the shadows play on the mountain side. There seems to be a certain play element that obtains in the world around us. And then, experience teaches that unvaried and unbroken toil becomes a sore burden; it breaks the spirit, weakens energy, and saddens the heart. There are men working in the mines so hard that they have no family life, no social life, no time for thought or for culture. They are simply cogs in a great wheel that is ceaselessly turning round and round—wearing themselves out before their time by excess of labor. This cannot be right. Rest, recreation, harmless diversion fit one for a renewal of toil, and a more successful prosecution of duty.

AMUSEMENT LIABLE TO ABUSE.

Amusement has the defect common to anything which is right in its time and place—it is liable to abuse. It was the unbridled gaiety of the age, with its selfishness and sensuality, that made the Puritans denounce amusement. But the history of that period shows the mistake religion makes by frowning down all amusements as sinful. Yet, remember that some amusements are sinful, and some are not. It is the fair play of the Christian or loyal Epworthian. And what are they?

1. Amusements are sinful when they are contrary to the express commands of the Word of God. There are pleasures which in themselves are unlawful, and which are condemned by the divine law. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," with all that the words mean, though the world may regard them as pleasures, are evil before God.

2. Amusements are evil when they unfit for work. Pleasures that tempt us from daily duty, that leave us listless and weary, are pernicious. Outdoor games, for example, ought to strengthen the physical frame, and make us healthy and strong and ready for work. But when carried to excess they often produce the opposite result, and become positively hurtful. If the Saturday's play unites for the worship and rest of the Lord's Day; if the evening party, prolonged far into the night, or the small hours of the morning, incapacitates for labor the next day; if the bicycle run be taken at expense of

neglected worship, or abandoned moral and spiritual development, it is clear that these things have not been good. Arm or chest growth attained at the expense of mind or spirit development is secured at too high a price. The amusements that send us back to toil with a cheery heart and a vigorous mind are those in which we should engage. All others are detrimental, and should be shunned.

3. Amusements are sinful when followed as the end of life. A life of aimless play, simply amusement, is no life at all. It is only a contemptible form of existence. "A soul sodden with pleasure" is a wretched one. To be a mere pleasure-seeker is not the chief end of man. Amusement is but the accompaniment of the more serious work of life. Nothing grows more wearying than the continuous diversion, and no one needs amusement so much as he who is always at it. He loses the power of real enjoyment. Bodily strength, mental power, spiritual growth, performance of duty—attain these, and compel pleasure to take a second place.

SIDE-LIGHTS.

1. Those who love pleasure more than God will become unimpaired in their pleasure.

2. The desire to gratify self, whether by ministering to appetite, or to the love of pleasure, precedes all unlawful indulgence.

3. Worldliness is a condition of soul, not of circumstance; a mind which is more carnal than spiritual, more earthly than heavenly, more self-seeking than God-fearing.

4. Do not denounce pleasure as such. Rest as well as labor is from God; laughter as well as tears, recreation as well as toil.

5. Pleasure becomes sin when we are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." For whatever we love better than God, that is our idol.

6. The Christian view of pleasure is that we should do nothing, however harmless it may be to us, which will cause a weak brother to stumble. We are in the world, not merely to save our own souls, but to help others to the same great end.

7. Nothing is lawful which deteriorates any of your powers or hinders the effectual discharge of duty. What is lawful in moderation becomes harmful in excess; amusement begun in recreation may end in dissipation.

8. If that is unlawful which dissipates, that which corrupts is still worse. If your recreation brings you unnecessarily into corrupting companionship, it is thereby condemned, and must be renounced.

9. If what amuses you demands loss of modesty on the part of those who amuse you, the amusement thus gained harms both you and those who lose their modesty. Our pleasure or recreation must not involve the shame, suffering, degradation, or ruin of any one.

10. The safe guide in recreation is the spirit of Christ and a knowledge of His Word. He who possesses these will not need a list of what are lawful and unlawful made out for him.

11. Don't ask "What is the harm?" but "What is the good?" when doubtful in regard to amusements. This is the true spirit, seeking to know what benefit we may derive mentally, morally, and physically.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

Keep before the young people at this meeting that religion never was designed to make our pleasures less, but that it is intended to lead the youth to what are true, unalloyed, and unvaried pleasures, and to save them from those that are corrupting, pernicious, and that leave a sting behind. Read the note appended to the General Rules of our Church which refers to the question of amusements. Show the wisdom of the rule, and urge the Leaguers to be faithful to it. Make the meetings a cheerful one so that the duty of attending the League may itself become a pleasure.