

Yet diligence, energy, enthusiasm in a worldly calling or profession does not necessarily involve *worldliness of spirit*. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," is the apostolic injunction; and no idler in the Vineyard, whatever his post may be, needs expect to grow in the "love of the Father" who hath said to him "Go, work." The difference between those who are working for God and those who are working for their own selfish ends lies often not in the manner of the work but in the *spirit* of it. Of two men sharing the same room, and diligently working at the same trade, the soul of one may be chained groveling to earth, while that of the other may be soaring aloft to the presence of his God, and dwelling in regions totally unknown to his companion. And so the professional man of whatever class,—the teacher, the merchant, the artisan,—if, with love to God placed before him as his governing principle, he strive, faithfully, conscientiously and unselfishly to perform the duties of his situation "as to the Lord and not unto men;"—then, though in the world, he is *not* of it. But, if, taking up religion as a thing to be assumed at some times and laid down at others, he be working only for *self*, whether it be in the form of riches, or pleasure, or fame, or prosperity, or power, or the accomplishment of some darling object, or even impulsive devotion to some ruling passion;—then, whatever professions he may make to the contrary, he is living the life of the world;—"loving the things that are in the world."

And now to apply the same principle to amusements, concerning which the chief heat of the controversy is directed. If it be true that some have erred on the side of asceticism and moroseness, that is not to frighten us from the stand which, as Christians, we ought to take. *Recreation* in itself is certainly not wrong. In so far as it contributes to the health of mind or body it is right and salutary, and our beneficent Creator has spread the means of it profusely around us. In the observation of His wonderful works, in the enjoyment of the beautiful in nature and art, in the harmony of sweet sounds, so far as that is preserved in its purity, freed from any commingling corrupting influence, in the many opportunities of healthful bodily exercise afforded us, the most eager seeker after recreation will surely allow that there is abundant access to the true and healthy relaxation which the natures of most men occasionally require; and a happier and better world would this be if some of the sources we have indicated were sought after with a purer and truer enthusiasm!

But into our recreations, as well as into our severe duties, the spirit of worldliness may enter, and again we must lay down the same strict and undeviating rule from which there is no alternative.—"If any man love the world, the love of the Father

is not in him." There is a class of amusements,—*recreations* in the true sense of the word we cannot call them,—in which the "spirit of the world", as defined in 1 John 2. 16, is indisputably the moving spring.—Not healthful relaxation but unnatural excitement; not the moderate enjoyment of God's good gifts but the gratification of the very passions which it is the Christian's hardest struggle to subdue; and can any Christian consistently mingle, even to a moderate extent, in scenes like these? Can he be a happy guest where his Master would be an unwelcome one; where God's sanctifying presence is neither asked nor desired; where the glitter of "things seen and temporal" is made completely to obscure "things unseen and eternal"? Is it likely that the influences which meet him there will have the effect of helping him to live near to God, to "overcome the world"?—Is it not almost certain that they must, for the time at least, succeed in deadening that spirituality of soul which is his only true life? Can he hope, in so gratuitously entering into temptation, "to come forth from the ordeal with unspotted garments? Will it be surprising, in pursuing such a course of conduct, if his life be a melancholy alternation of light and darkness, faith and doubt, lofty aspiration and miserable failure? That any Christians should find real enjoyment in such scenes is the saddest part of the matter, and shows how imperfectly they have yet tasted of the *living* water, so abundantly open to them. Hear the words of one who, though not professing himself a Christian, and in his speculative belief wandering sadly from the truth, seems yet in some points to come nearer it than many who rejoice in clearer light:—

"The world at large is nearly divided between surprise and contempt at the repugnance shown by spiritual persons to certain artificial pleasures; yet it cannot be by accident that in different ages and countries, without any definite Scriptural prohibition, spiritual persons coincide so markedly in apathy or dislike for pleasures of this description. I see not how to doubt that an instinct of the soul guides them, which is without law, and really higher than all law. A man who drinks within his own heart from a hidden well of joy cannot run to fill his pitcher from an artificial tank; and, if by any means that well is closed, his soul is widowed and dreads to be comforted,—then less than ever can he enjoy even the most innocent gratifications."

But, may he said, Christians should join to some extent in the amusements of the world, in order to christianize them and do good to those who know not Christ. Alas! have Christians no opportunities of meeting with and doing good to such without going there to meet them? And is it likely that they will be benefited by seeing those, who know a better way, encourage to any ex-

tent the very amusements which more than anything else contribute to rivet the chains of the world's fascinations to keep away all serious thought, and to prevent the very reflections which might, under God's blessing, have led to a radical change? And will such be likely even to copy the *moderation* of those who think it right to make the compromise? Will they be so accurate in drawing lines of distinction in fixing the precise point which is *moderation*? Will they not be far more likely to ease their troubled consciences by pointing triumphantly to the example of professing Christians, and pleading their countenance, so far as it is given, for themselves going to all lengths in the pursuit of folly and dissipation! It is too true that there is but little Christian social life among us, far too little of the meeting in love "as brethren." But is the encouragement of social meetings, where the spirit of the world irresistibly predominates, where the spirit of *caste* and exclusiveness is jealously maintained, where "idle words" and frivolous jests give zest to the occasion, and where religion is, if not formally, *virtually* excluded, likely to further the approach of the time when Christians shall meet on their common ground as Christians, to bear each other's burdens, sympathize in each other's joys and sorrows, to build one another up in faith and love; when they "who fear the Lord shall speak often one to another," and strengthen one another in "pressing towards the mark?"

It is true also that our gracious Lord, our only perfect Exemplar, when on earth, mingled freely with the world around Him, so much so that they who hated the Truth equally, whether it appeared in an austere John or a loving Jesus, gave Him in contempt the appellation of "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber." He accepted the hospitality of the Pharisee; so He did that of the publican and the harlot. He was found in the haunts of the reprobate and the outcast so often that He received the epithet of "friend of publicans and sinners." And so He was;—their friend in the truest sense of the word. But, wherever He went, whether among the openly sinful and degraded, or among those who, high in position and plausible in profession, commanded the respect of those who looked not at the heart, His errand ever was, far from encouraging the spirit of the world, to administer to it His severest rebukes, to manifest to the self-righteous the lurking evil of his heart, and to call "the sinner to repentance." And, until the disciple of Jesus can be sure of meeting the world in his Master's spirit with His high and holy purposes: can be sure too of the moral strength and courage to resist the tide of worldliness and carry those purposes into effect, he may not truly quote so sacred an example as *His* plea for entering into and *countenancing* the world's amuse-