

able performers, the theatre would be regenerated. It is a lamentable fact that this has proved to be an "iridescent dream." The experiment has not proved successful when fairly attempted.

The theatre manager is not a professional philanthropist; he "runs" his business simply and solely to make money. He produces what pays best; and if he can spice his evening entertainments with a plot that turns on some sort of sexual depravity, or burlesque of evangelical religion, or a shameless exposure of physical beauty, the temptation to fill his coffers is too strong to be resisted. The licentious stage and the Sabbath-breaking press are both conducted for filthy lucre; and the Christian who contributes to the support of either or of both is responsible for the spiritual mischief that they work.

A Christian needs recreation as much as any one else; but that recreation only is fit for a true Christian which makes the body healthier, the mind clearer and the immortal powers more vigorous. Whatever endangers self-purity and inflames evil passions is a sinful amusement. Wherever a servant of Christ cannot take his Master with him, he has no right to go; wherever he cannot ask a blessing on his pleasures, he has no business to be. Let him try this simple test on the average theatre, and he will find that the outside of the play house is the right side. There are certainly enough innocent and wholesome recreations without venturing upon one of doubtful morality—much less upon one which has wrought spiritual shipwreck upon thousands of souls. If the theatre has not helped many toward heaven, it has assuredly been to multitudes, especially of the young, a gateway to perdition.

Jesus Christ commands his followers to "come out and be separate." He drew a sharp, distinct dividing line between the "walking in the Spirit" and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh—between the pleasures of sin and the pleasures of a clean heart and a useful life. There is a tendency in these self-indulgent days to reduce this line to a mere chalk mark easily rubbed out! And when that dividing line is entirely effaced, then the nominal Christian and the people of the world can dance together in the same ball room, sit together around the same decanters of wine, and occupy adjoining boxes in the same theatre! How long will it take for such a Christianity to convert this world to the service of God?

Brooklyn, N. Y.

A STRANGE COMPACT.

ONE day two college classmates were talking jokingly about death and the inevitable tombstone inscriptions that they thought too often misrepresent character. They considered themselves quite the equals in good morals of the best men with whom they were acquainted, and as deserving of laudatory epitaphs as the

silent men whose virtues in life are proclaimed in our graveyards.

"I am willing to stand by anything I say or do in this life, and hereafter, as well," said the younger of the two. "I am sure I am as good as the average man, to say the least."

"That, I think, is beyond dispute," answered his friend. "Our lives and words show what we are to-day. The future will also show what we are then. But I've been thinking while we have been laughing, and am inclined to make a suggestion. It is this: suppose we make an agreement—that is, if you are willing to stand by your words—that it is our wish that the last sentence we utter in life shall be the epitaphs to be placed upon our tombstone."

"Agreed!" cried the other, hastily and almost without thought, and they at once drew up their agreement in legal style.

Years passed. The two drifted apart. Their strange compact lost its significance, and was almost forgotten.

One day the elder of the two took up a paper and read the announcement of the death of his friend. Then he remembered the contract. He found the agreement, put it into his pocket, and took the next train for the place of his friend's death.

He found that the dead man had been a widower for some years. The visitor was cordially received at the house of mourning by an only child, a son just growing into manhood.

"Do you know what your father's last words were?" asked the newcomer.

"No, sir; he died suddenly of apoplexy, in his store."

The friend went to the store. There he put the same question. An embarrassed silence answered him. He insisted on a reply, stating that he had good reasons for making the request. The head clerk then took him apart and explained:

"Your friend died in his office in a fit of anger. He was unfortunately given to violent attacks of temper, and I suppose at this time it was the rush of blood to the head that carried him off. He had just received a letter, stating that a customer had failed who was owing us a large bill. This made him furious, and he began to curse. I hesitate to repeat them, sir, but if you feel that you must insist upon it, his last words were—"

The white-haired man whispered a blasphemous sentence in the shocked ears of his listener. To have engraved it upon a tombstone would have blasted the dead man's name with absolute dishonor.

Very greatly moved, the visitor took the agreement from his pocket, and with trembling fingers tore it into tiny bits, and put them into the fire. Under these circumstances it was impossible for him to carry that declaration to the house of mourning.

He buried his friend. Then he went home. The moral shock he had received and the thoughts that followed gave life a serious meaning to him. Death now took upon itself the office of judge. It assumed control of his thoughts, and caused him resolutely to set a guard upon his lips.

Weeks passed. His self-restraint ripened into habit, and took on a higher moral purpose. New views came to him of God and his own relations to men. His words ere long became the expression of reverent sentiment, and his character assumed unconsciously the attitude of sincere, upright living. Changed, enlightened, purified, he has entered a higher plane of life.

Could words from the dying lips of such a man shock the living and bring dishonor to the dead? —*Ex.*