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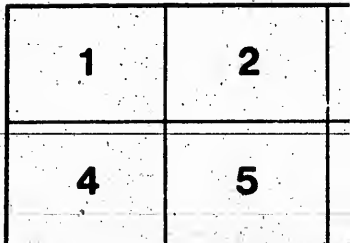
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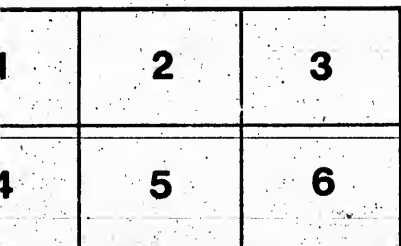
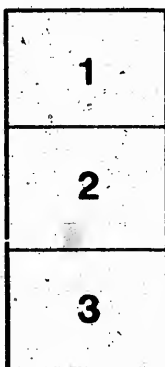
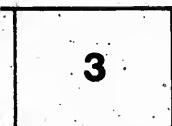
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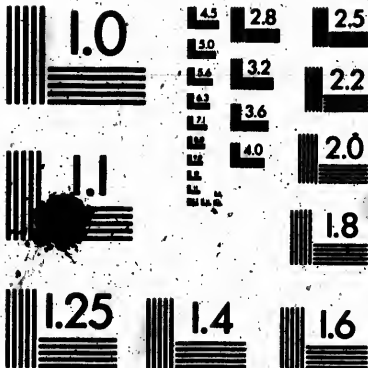
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THE
Modern Pleasure Dance:

"IS IT AN INNOCENT AND AN APPROPRIATE
AMUSEMENT?"

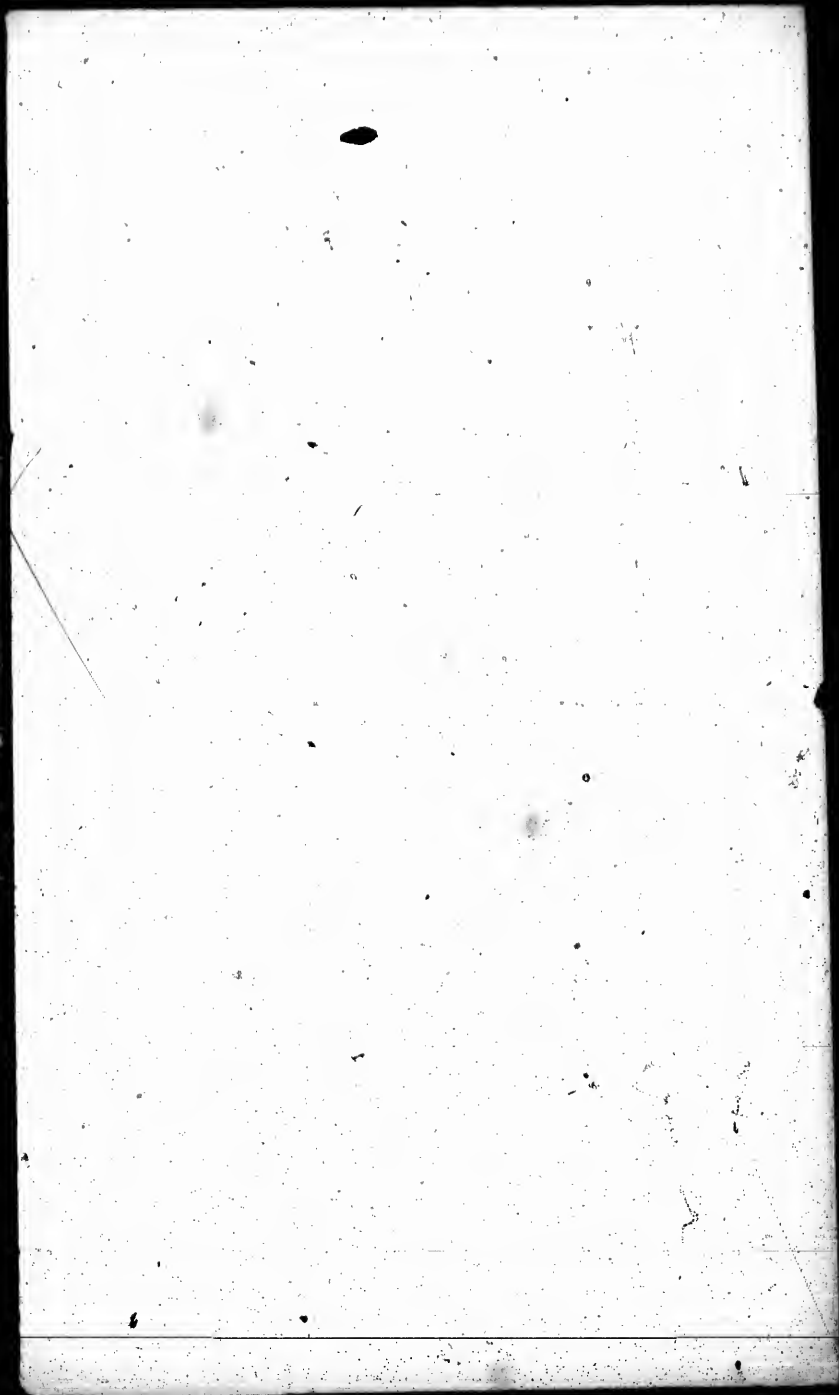
OUTLINE OF A SERMON,

BY THE REV. G. YOUNG.

REPORTED BY ONE OF THE CONGREGATION.

Contents:

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THE
MODERN PLEASURE DANCE.

OUTLINE OF A SERMON PREACHED IN THE WESLEYAN
CHURCH, BRANTFORD, ON SABBATH EVENING, FEB. 3RD.

BY THE PASTOR—REV. G. YOUNG.

REPORTED BY ONE OF THE CONGREGATION.

TEXT—2 Timothy III. 4. and Ecclesiastes xi. 9.

After a week of indisposition I am compelled to come before you this evening with an amount of preparation not at all equal to that I am wont to make for the most ordinary occasions. This I have deeply regretted, but could not avoid. In consequence of this, the discourse to which you are about to listen, so far as the *garb* in which my thoughts and sentiments may appear, is concerned, will necessarily partake largely of the extemporaneous. The sentiments, themselves, however, have been the more carefully considered, and the long cherished convictions of my mind.

The question has probably been asked—Why this selection? why choose the *subject of Dancing* as the subject of a special discourse from the pulpit? Are there not other and *more gigantic evils* existing, and in full and vigorous operation in our town; why not attack these? I reply—unquestionably there are, and their "*name is Legion,*" and they are daily working to the utter undoing of souls, and the insulting in the

most defiant manner of Almighty God. And these evils—Providence permitting—shall receive due notice in their turn from this pulpit. We have not reached even “the beginning of the end” of this discussion, of prevailing sins as yet. God helping me, I shall deal faithfully with several of them, and that right early.

The *prudence* of my course in preaching specially upon this subject, may have been questioned by some, fearing lest I should thereby give offence in some cases, and thus hedge up my way of subsequent usefulness. To this I reply—*I have a conscience*. There is an all-seeing and Holy God above me, whom I desire to serve, and there is a judgment day before me, when the pulpit and the pew must alike be judged.

In view of these solemn facts I cannot, from mere prudential considerations, keep back aught of the counsel of God. Besides, I hope, by the help of God, to speak nothing but the *truth*; and yet, as much of the truth as I can upon the point; and *in love*, with an eye to God's glory, if any take offence at such a course, then I have only to say, that I have greatly overrated their rationality, and good and kindly feelings.

I ask the prayers of God's people, and the candid attention of all. May the Holy Spirit guide speaker and hearers into all truth.

There are two points to which I ask your attention in this discussion:

I. The *one common actualizing impulse* with all

those who participate in the Modern Pleasure Dance.

And,

II. The Light which Divine Revelation, and especially the one great Bible doctrine of an on-coming judgment, throws upon *such a course*.

I. The common actuating impulse with those who participate in the Modern Pleasure Dance.—I use the term "actuating impulse" synonymously with motive or impelling consideration. Ordinarily we act from such considerations, or motives, or impulses. And it must be admitted, that an impelling consideration or impulse of no ordinary power, one of the *mighty forces* of the world of mind and feeling, must have been brought to bear upon the minds of those who take part in this amusement. See what is involved in the preliminary arrangements—the actual engagements, and the unavoidable results of the pleasure ball. There is the *expenditure* on the part of some, who have to brave the frowns of unsatisfied creditors at every turn; many of whose demands might be met, if these ball expenditures were not incurred.

There are the *remonstrances* in other cases of Ministers, and loved ones, as wife or children, or parents, and of conscience, and the Bible, all of which endured and resisted, in order to take part in the frivolities of the dance.

There is the *time*, too, of which all are ready to complain, "we have too little of it;" which is readily given away by *hours and nights*, for the sake of the dance.

There is the *fatigue*, too, which is involved in a

night's dancing, especially by "*delicate* young ladies," some of whom have no strength for home duties, which is readily endured for the sake of the pleasure dance.

Now, when benevolent institutions and deeds, and religious services, make their demand for *aid* or attention, though they furnish motives as high as Heaven, and as deep as Hell; considerations which we should suppose, ought to impel every one that has the power to act, to an immediate exertion—these demands are not heeded by most of the patrons of the ball.—“Money is too scarce,” “have not time,” or “health too poor,” is the excuse.

Well may we say, that the impelling consideration which can over-master all these feelings, and call forth these expenditures of *money, time and strength*, and lead to this *braving of remonstrances*, must be no *ordinary force*. *What is it?* Can we find out the secret? Can we solve the problem? What is the *one common actuating* impulse with these lovers of the dance? The love of God; love of wealth; love of improvement, are mighty impelling forces in many minds. Let us inquire then—

(1) *Is it Love to God?* “God is love;” and He is worthy of the love of all created intelligences in earth and heaven. One of the noblest endowments with which God has blessed man, is the ability of loving and enjoying his infinite creator. Love to God wherever it exists, will manifest itself in gratitude and obedience. Is the dance designed to do either? We might suppose so from the plea which the apologists of the ball-room sometimes put in. We are told that our attention is directed to dancing in the Bible; that holy men of old danced, and that we are bidden

to praise God in the dance. Now I ask, does any person believe that this plea holds good in the case of the *Modern Pleasure Dance*? Before it can do so, it must be shown that the ancient Hebrew dance bore some resemblance to our modern dances, and that Miriam and David were actuated by the same motives and feelings which operate in the minds of the dancers of these times.

In those ancient dances there was no promiscuous mingling of the sexes, the night season was not selected, and the *motive* was love to God; the object was to express gratitude, to offer praise. Where is there a single point of resemblance? As well talk of similarity between a Bacchanalian feast and the Lord's Supper. As we'll seek a warrant for the false and blasphemous prayers offered on the theatre's stage—in the Lord's command to his disciples to pray and not faint. Besides, who of all those who patronize the ball and its dances, will profess that they do so from love to God? That they intend to "*praise God in the dance*?" Are they characterized by great love for the worship of God elsewhere? Do they open the dance with a hymn of praise, and a solemn prayer for a blessing to sanctify and aid them? Do they return thanks for the privilege, and separate with the benediction?

If we must reply in the negative in all these cases, then may we not ask wherein consists the similarity between the cases in question, and wherein consists the justness of the plea made in favor of modern dancing? The plea is an absurdity in its application. Men and women now-a-days do not dance from love to God. Wherefore then?

Is it (2) *Love of health*? It is proper unquestionably, to have a proper regard for our physical

health. It is from God, and one of his greatest blessings to man as a being of earth. What is life to us without it? While it is in our possession we should be grateful for it, and seek to retain it, and when lost we are justified in seeking its recovery. And with these feelings, even the most devout of God's people are not unfrequently led to incur great expense, and to undertake perilous tours, and endure long separations from home and loved ones, either to preserve or regain their health.

Now, the plea is urged by the patrons of the dance, that it is most conducive to health. Is this then the actuating impelling consideration? Let us see. What are the health-promoting elements in the modern pleasure dance or ball room? Let these be named. Is it said that the *exercise* in dancing is one? It is true, exercise under certain circumstances is highly conducive to health. But is the exercise which is sought and witnessed in a modern ball of that description? It must be obvious to all, that following, as it does, the fatigue of the day, beginning at eight o'clock at night, and terminating at some nameless hour before sunrise next morning, thereby completely reversing the arrangements of an infinitely wise Providence—exercise taken in a crowded and ill ventilated room, carried to excess, and generally followed by sudden exposure to cold or damp air, is not the kind of exercise which is calculated to promote health. What physician, having any claim whatever to professional skill, has ever been known to recommend such exercise to his patients or friends? Or which of those, who participate in this midnight revelry, have felt on the day following the ball, as if the exercise of the past night had restored their wasted energies, or increased their health? Or, could one interrogate the silent occupants of many *premature* graves, who have gone thence by *the way of the*

ball room, we should receive a very different testimony. Or, is it urged, that the *healthfulness* of the dance consists in the *pleasure* it affords? It is true, cheerfulness is conducive to health. But are dancing assemblies greatly productive of a truly healthy abiding cheerfulness? Is there not a very different class of emotions produced as well? Is there no uneasiness from excited passions, from envyings, and social rivalships? Are there no disgusts from dissimilar tastes, and no after-regrets for much-needed money and precious time squandered, and God-given strength worse than wasted? Are there no compunctions from a soul imperilled, and a Heavenly Father disobeyed? Ah, no! the ways of the dancer are not all ways of pleasantness, his paths are not all paths of peace. This is not the actuating impulse. No amusement, I believe, can be pointed out, which combines so many injurious particulars as this which is so often defended as a healthy one. What then is the motive?

(3.) *Is it love of Improvement?* Our age is emphatically one of progress. And to favor whatever tends to true material, or intellectual, or moral improvement, accords fully with our interests and our duty. Now, the apologists of the pleasure-dance have urged, that it was a great *refiner of tastes, feelings, and especially manners*, and as such an improvement is a consummation to be desired, therefore the pleasure dance should be favored. But let us pause here, and ask—is the cause adequate to the promised effects? Does it possess such a power as no other existing institution possesses to refine and elevate in the true sense? Who will profess to believe that it does? Are all but dancers the unrefined and vulgar; and do those who participate in the dance, because of that, stand head and shoulders above all their undancing friends in the matter of refined tastes and manners of a true politeness?

Besides, in other cases of study, we have a graduating point. The lawyer, the physician, and the artist, do not occupy the position of pupils all their days, they take their degree, or get their diploma, and graduate out of the class into practical life. Why may not dancers also, if dancing be a science or an accomplishment, and be pursued as such? Why deem it necessary to pass from the dancing master to the master of ceremonies, and the incessant and fatiguing drill and practice of a ball-room, for perhaps 30 or 40 nights per year? Verily, if followed as a refining and elevating study, then we have a right to look for an increased measure of true refinement in these indefatigable students, just as we expect skill in the physician, in proportion to the attention he has paid to his proper studies. I protest, my friends, that the ball-room is no more a *seminary of manners* than it is a *sanctuary of religion*. It teaches neither the one nor the other. It is quite possible that a free and easy style of manners may be learned there; a politeness such as is cultivated by the flirt and the fop; but that true grace and dignity of manners, which becomes us as rational and immortal beings, can be more easily acquired elsewhere. It is not from love for improvement, that dancers are actuated in their efforts to sustain the ball. We have not here the one great actuating impulse. What is it? Where is it to be found? I reply,—It is to be found in the words of my text: "*Lovers of pleasure,*" &c., &c.

It is this *love of pleasure*, of a pleasurable excitement, as an over-master impulse, that leads to a participation in the frivolities of the ball-room. This one impelling consideration overrides all others,—as the love of God, of health, of improvement—just like the mighty sea-wave that swelleth up far above all its fellows and breaks clear over the distant rock which the spray of the others failed to touch. But here, as

elsewhere, in the ways of folly, the true motive is kept back, and others, with some seeming show of truth, are put forward. Thus, for example,—The *Novel-reader* professedly reads the book of fiction for the improvement of the taste, and as an aid in the study of human nature. The *Theatre-goer*, too, patronizes the theatre professedly, because it is a school of morals. But in these cases, as in that of the dance, the true impelling consideration is Love or Pleasure of pleasurable excitement, as a predominating, all-swaying principle in the mind. This is the one common actuating impulse with all who participate in the frivolities of the ball-room.

The second point to be discussed is—

II. The Light which Divine Revelation, and especially the one great Bible doctrine of an on-coming Judgment, throws upon the course of the dancer.

We possess such a revelation. The Bible is from God—a message; and for man—a directory. It is as a light shining in the midst of thick darkness. It pours a flood of light upon a vast variety of subjects; it solves for man many great and mighty problems in which he has the deepest interest. It teaches man great lessons concerning God, eternity, and the judgment, concerning his own state, and duties, and prospects.

Now, the position I take is, that viewed in the light of Revelation, the modern pleasure-dance is not to man an appropriate and innocent amusement. Is it? Let us see. Study man as the Bible represents him—as a fallen, redeemed mortal, and accountable being.

(1.) We have to study him as a fallen being.

He has forfeited his original holiness by apostatizing from his God. Now he is the subject of certain susceptibilities, tendencies, and propensities to evil, which had no place in the moral constitution God gave him. "The imaginations of the thoughts of his heart are evil." The entire moral nature has become diseased by the terrible leprosy of sin, "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness in him." His unrenewed heart is a huge fountain of evil, "out of it proceed evil thoughts, as adulteries, fornications, murders, blasphemies," &c., &c. In a word, deep down in every unsanctified man's moral being, exist the germs of all evil, which only require the action of some developing forces to cause them to spring up and produce a fearful harvest. There smoulder the fires of lust, which, if fanned by the breezes of temptation, are liable to burst forth in the raging flames of a fearful conflagration, before which virtue and purity melt away, as the snow before the summer's sun. Now, are not these developing, exciting elements to be found in large proportions in the modern ball? Is there nothing here to act upon, and to feed, as fuel feedeth a fire—that love of show, that extravagance, that envy, that forgetfulness of God, that irreverence, that sensuality to which our fallen humanity is so prone?

Beside, is there no danger from intemperance and licentiousness? The Ball-room is not far from the bar-room, and many a young man attending the former soon learns and gets to love the way to the latter. And is the virtuous youth as safe amid the whirlings of the lascivious waltz, and the simpering small-talk and flattery of the ball-room, and in this close and free intercourse with the man who has long ago become bankrupt in morals, as parents could desire?

Now, whatever brings fallen man with his evil propensities unnecessarily into this close and dangerous contact with evil is no appropriate amusement for him. What, shall man launch his tiny boat into the very circlings of the whirlpool, because it is pleasant to be borne on and on without effort? Shall he clothe himself in gun-cotton, and then go and play with firebrands just for the fun of it?

(2.) We have to study man as a *Redeemed Being*.

"He is bought with a price: therefore he is not his own, but the purchaser's. He is Christ's by the most legitimate rights. All he possesses too,—the earth and its fulness, his physical and mental energies all belong to Him. Man holds them in trust; he is a steward; nothing more. To glorify God in his body and spirit is but his reasonable service. Whatever he possesses should be devoted to this great object. For example, there is his *Property*. This is one of "the talents" which he has received from the Great Proprietor. Now a day approacheth when an account will be demanded as to the way in which he has appropriated his Lord's money. This is clearly taught in the parable of the talents. Now, let us ask, what will be the position on "that day" of those who have used their property and worldly influence for the support of foolish and hurtful amusements rather than for Christ's cause. Will the Judge say to the patrons of the dance who have given pounds for this object, and scarcely perceive in some cases for the other, "Well done, good and faithful servants," &c? Will the poor and the heathen who have suffered for want of this aid rise up and call them blessed?

Then, also as a *Redeemed Being* there is the *Time* allotted to him. This, too, is God's gift. Time is short, it is granted to be used according to the mind of the Giver. Is it granted for the purposes to which the dancing master and his pupils, and the patrons of the ball appropriate it?

O, when I see young persons of shining talents and fairest prospects, if they would but improve their time in preparing for life's duties and contests—turning aside and perverting God's gifts, and prostituting them all to sensual purposes, and squandering their moments, and means, and energies in sinful amusements, I tremble for them in view of the position they must occupy in that day, when the light of eternity shall break forth and uncover and reveal all man's misdoings.

(3.) But man is also to be studied as a *Mortal Being*. That he is mortal all have, and daily receive an abundance of proof.

It is appointed unto all to die. Dancing is no preventive of death. All, too, are liable to die at any time, and in any place. Now if life be so uncertain, does it become us to go anywhere, or enter upon any enjoyment or pleasure in which we would not be met by death? Who, we ask would be found by the summons of death engaged in the *frivolities* of the *ball-room*? And if you go there at all, this liability becomes yours. There is no charm in the music or the dance to keep death away from the place. Ah, no! His icy fingers have been in numerous instances, laid upon the throbbing hearts of gay dancers

O! What a change,—what a terrible transition do such experience, passing as they do from such

scenes and thoughts into the immediate presence of a sin-hating and Almighty God? And from time to time, we meet with accounts in our weekly and daily papers of sudden deaths in ball-rooms.

I quote two or three which have lately come to hand :—

* In a New York paper, I find the following :—“ A lady dropped dead while dancing in the city last week.” Reader, for what earthly consideration would you have death find you thus ?

In a Philadelphia paper the following appeared :—“ On Thursday morning about one o'clock a sad affair took place at a ball in this city. While the ball was in progress a lady who was engaged in dancing the lancer's quadrille, suddenly fell upon her face on the floor, and when her companions raised her up it was found she was dead. The ball was given on the anniversary of her 36th birth night.”

In another New York paper, I find the following :—“ Two persons died in this city last week in the midst of the gayeties of the ball-room. The one was a young lady, the other was a young gentleman. They were at different places, both were seized suddenly and were dead before friends or help could be summoned.”

Thus are we admonished that there is room for death even in the ball-room ; and that the gay and the thoughtless dancer may be called to exchange the embrace of the partner in the dance for the cold hand of death.

We say again to one and all, who would die under

such circumstances? Who would prefer the excitement and wallings of despairing associates, and their exclamations of horror at the idea of death, *at such a time*, to the presence, sympathies and prayers of christian friends? Go not, fellow mortal, where you would consider it unsafe to die. And as you would shudder at the idea of having the report given in at the gate of eternity,—“*this soul hath come hither fresh from the pleasure dance,*”—so imperil not that soul by going there at all.

We have to study man also, (4) *As an Accountable Being*. God holds him responsible for the actions, words, and cherished purposes of his life. And as the text teaches, “for all these things, whether good or bad—will God bring him into judgement.” There shall the books be opened and the entire race be judged. Heaven or Hell shall thenceforward be the portion of each.

In view of these solemn facts, I ask is it proper to spend hour after hour, and night after night, in the pleasure dance? “Rejoice! *O young man,*” &c., &c. Besides, let us try these parties for pleasure by a very reasonable rule. Suppose a ball to be announced for the Kerby Hall, for three weeks, from next Tuesday evening, and that before that appointed time arrives, it is ascertained without the possibility of a doubt, that in four weeks from next Tuesday the Son of Man will come to judge us every one. How many, think you, could be found making their way to the ball, under such circumstances? Would the patrons of the dance, if they thought it an innocent amusement? Or rather, would not our churches and Town Hall, and Kerby Hall, all be crowded by vast multitudes of men and women, not to dance, but to pray, and be pointed to Christ?

Now if dancing be so proper and innocent, why would not men dance right up to the judgment day; or go to the ball even though they were certain of meeting death, just as they would engage in any other innocent and proper work, or recreation?

I argue that the modern pleasure dance is not an innocent and appropriate amusement for man.

(5) Because its spirit and bearings are in *manifest antagonism* with the designs and influences of the *Spirit of God*. The designs of the Holy Spirit are the moral renovation and ultimate salvation of man. His influences upon the minds of men, and the design of all the institutions of christianity are to make man devout and holy here, that he may be saved eternally.

Now the pleasure dance tends to neutralize these gracious influences, and prevent these blessed results. As a proof of this, I call your attention to the well known fact, that just in proportion as individuals become interested in the revival of God's work and the subjects of grace, they lose relish for the dance, and in proportion as individuals become interested in the pleasure dance, they lose all relish for the spiritual service of God.*

* THE INQUIRY MEETING AND THE BALL ROOM.—A most interesting work of grace once occurred in the Houston Street Presbyterian Church, of the city of New York. Many anxiously inquired what they should do to be saved. And many made choice of that good part which shall never be taken from them. Among the number who sought the instruction and prayers of the people of God, was the young lady who is the subject of the following sketch.

She listened to the voice of truth, and was troubled. Con-

science spoke within her, and would not be utterly silenced. She felt that the claims of God must be met, that she must not delay the work of her salvation. Personally and solemnly was she urged to settle the controversy, to renounce the pleasures of sin, and trust in the merits of a crucified Saviour. She knew her duty, but did it not. The next night a "Boz Ball" was to be held, and from this scene of awful solemnity, away she hurries to the chamber of mirth, and joins in a giddy dance. By the sound of the viol and the voice of melody, she aims to drown the admonitions of conscience, and she may have succeeded for a moment. Amid the display of fashion, the glare of lights, and the intoxication of the scene, conscience may have slumbered at her post, and suffered the gay transgressor to revel undisturbed in forbidden pleasure. But she only seemed to sleep. The voice of admonition and warning came—it came, though the voice of the living preacher was silent. And again she felt, and again is she seen in the meeting for conversation and prayer. Her heart is the seat of ten thousand painful and conflicting emotions. The claims of truth and duty are urged. She would yield, she would follow Jesus, but the world, the theatre, the ball-room, her gay companions, how can she give them up? Unfortunately she was solicited to attend another ball. Satan, as an angel of light, sheds a deceptive radiance over that scene, and suggests that such amusements are innocent, that her seriousness is melancholy, and that there is time enough yet. She triumphed over conscience, yielded to the temptation and went. She was permitted to return to her dwelling, but only to die; to die, too, as she had lived, *without God or hope.*

Mark the facts that fill the last page of her history. On one evening she is in the meeting of inquiry, the next in the ball-room, gayest among the gay, and almost the next *in her coffin!* One week, with a heart as light as air, she goes to a store to purchase trimmings for a ball-dress, on the next her friends to the same store to purchase her shroud.

Thus ended the career of one who loved pleasure more than she loved God. There was no hope in her death. No light to cheer her in the last sad hour!

M.

And in how many hearts has this love of dancing proved its power to subvert good desires and holy purposes, until those who have sworn allegiance to Christ in holy baptism, or in confirmation-vows or at the Lord's Supper, have utterly apostatized from the church and fallen subsequently into grosser sins?

Thus are the unwatchful drawn away from Christ in every direction by the allurements of the ball room, and souls are ruined annually. Is there reason or not why the pulpit should lift up the warning voice? And does it become those that are tending to one common judgment with us to dance and triumph over such successes as these? Woe be to that man or woman who has acted the part of a seducer of the young, drawing them from the paths of religion and virtue into the ways of folly and sin, when in that day the blood of these victims shall be found on their hands. The crime of that man who destroys the body is but small compared with his or her's who destroys the soul.

Let me beseech the youth before me "to abstain from all appearance of evil." "To deny themselves of all ungodliness and worldly *lusts and live soberly,*" &c. To do all, "whether they eat or drink to the glory of God." "To flee also youthful lusts." "To redeem the time." In a word, "seek the pearl of great price." Turn from the broad way of folly and death and enter the strait gate of conversion and walk in the way of piety. O strike for soul freedom aim at a crown of glory. Many of you have parents in heaven who taught you to pray, not to dance. Meet them in heaven. Let nought of this world's vanities draw off your attention from your proper business in this probationary life—aim at all practicable and scriptural improvement. Men-

tal, moral and spiritual, and especially at promoting God's glory.

Live for a home—a glorious home in the New Jerusalem.

May God guide, and bless, and save you every one!
—AMEN!

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