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## DISCURSIVE REMARKS.

Nice discrimination in morals is based, in most cases, either upon hypocrisy or superstition. Hair-splitting may be a very good thing in logic, mathematics and metaphysics, but when you come to morals, the decision between what is right or wrong, what may be innocently indulged in and what may not,—in our opinion, this delicate process is entirely out of place.

No, you are entirely mistaken, we are not at all tinctured with *Cliffinism*. This idea is all that we wish to illustrate,—the dividing line between right and wrong should be so broad and clearly conceived in each one's mind, as to make nice discrimination unnecessary. Now this is by no means admitting that all persons must claim an "extension" of the same line of rectitude, nor that you can draw the line for us, or we for you, except on general principles.

It is not our intention, in this note, to revise or review the whole code of morals. We shall content ourselves with a brief glance at some of the minor affairs of every-day life; as, for example, its festivities, games, and other amusements.

Some people are so excessively good and so devoutly orthodox—borrowing their ideas of the correct thing in morals and religion, of course, from some holy father gone before—that the dilemmas they fall into, in the strife between allegiance to their creed, the flesh and the devil, are really amusing.

The dodges and make-shifts resorted to by many to extract a little natural pleasure and enjoyment from this world, without violating some orthodox tenet or superstition, are ludicrous and pitiable. If a game or amusement of any kind is indulged in, it is not the genuine one, which they would so much like to enjoy, but they must resort to some wretched substitute, unpalatable and insipid, because all the virtue and flavor have been strained out of it. Instead of dancing or playing cards; they, like little children, play that they play cards or dance, by re-

sorting to some modern invention in lieu thereof; *vide* mite-societies, church-festivals and Author-cards—from which tortures may merciful heaven preserve us! Now there is some real pleasure and a chance for exhibition of skill in a quiet game of genuine cards, but "Authors!" if there is any virtue at all in that subterfuge, it must be the amount of christian patience and fortitude required to carry one through a game without profanity.

Deacon B. considers the game of billiards, even in the private parlor, a "sinful amusement," but croquet is perfectly orthodox, notwithstanding the fact that the first is a graceful, and intensely interesting game, requiring a surprising degree of mathematical skill, perfectly trained muscles, and a practiced eye, while the latter is attended with dust, blisters, round shoulders, and a sun-burned and freckled complexion. In fact we have not become educated up to a sufficiently refined standard of morals, to understand why the authorities of our institutions of learning (there are a few exceptions) do not furnish billiard rooms for the use of the students. base ball, foot ball, cricket, etc., are allowed and encouraged at the expense of broken limbs, injured health, and even the sinful practice of betting, so much dreaded in connection with some other games.

A good brother from the rural districts was terribly shocked when his pastor "swapped" horses, in order to obtain an animal that would serve his purpose better. But the good man thought it no sin whatever to exchange a few bushels of wheat with a neighbor to obtain a better quality for seeding, or to barter his butter and eggs for sugar and tea.

A Quaker friend scorns the empty fashions of the day, but is as vain of his broad-brim and drab coat, as a city exquisite of his Paris cut suit, or Diogenes of his filth and his tub.

In our more depraved moments, we have sometimes doubted whether a man can really enjoy religion, who makes each Sabbath more irksome than an April washing day for his children by forbidding all innocent mirth and amusement, or who fills their little hearts with sorrow and disappointment, by never allowing them to attend a circus or menagerie, or by leaving their little stockings empty on Christmas or New Year, when Santa Claus is so ardently hoped for, but who, nevertheless, "comes down" regularly with a liberal "quarterage," or subscribes heavily for the conversion of the heathen.

All games of chance are forbidden as amusements. If you demand a reason, you are promptly informed that they are the devil's playthings. Granted; but where will you cease to discriminate? What kind of knowledge has *not* been perverted in its use by man? Even the knowledge of Scrip'ture precepts has, often, in an evil hour, been made the agent of committing the worst sins. The Gospel robes and vernacular frequently conceal avarice, sloth, hypocrisy and lust. Do you prohibit your children from becoming accomplished horsemen, because there is danger, either from their love of the accomplishment, or the animal, that they will squander their fortunes in pools on a 220 trotter? You must have a great deal of faith in the virtue and stability of character of your daughter, to suppose, that, because she can play a game of whist, she will eventually develop into a first-class gambler.

Does it not sometimes puzzle you and

seem very strange, that man has been created with so many joyous or mirthful propensities, so many desires for pleasure, and yet he must engage his entire force of will in stifling them—feitering the "old man, Adam?" that an Omniscient, and All merciful Creator should fill the world with so many facilities and opportunities for festivity and pleasure, and fit man to desire and enjoy them with a keen relish, and yet he is not left free to choose that which suits his own palate best, but must *discard* all but the most insipid? Those amusements, the popularity of which attest that they are the choicest, must be abhorred as unholy.

It is our private opinion that there is a screw loose somewhere. Herbert Spencer, in his *Genesis of Superstitions*, has admirably shown the origin of many of the cherished fallacies and bug-bears in morals to which many good people still tenaciously cling. The superstitious discrimination in *minor* morals, we have attempted to illustrate, might be explained in much the same way. Churchmen in their anxiety to reduce all things to Creed, have attempted to prescribe dogmas and tenets to control the actions of all men in matters, which, in our opinion, each man is only competent to decide for himself. This or that pleasure is interdicted, because you say the association is bad, it may be made the agent of vice. This appears to be a very weak argument indeed. You tacitly acknowledge that the amusement is innocent of itself; it is merely the use to which it might be put which brings it into condemnation. Do you refuse to learn the use of the fowling piece, because in a moment of despair or anger you may commit suicide, or murder some one else?

Such teaching is the most effectual means of moulding weak and unstable characters. Would it not be wiser to teach the child to choose virtue, or shun vice *per se*. To compel the child to shun innocent pleasure, because it might lead to evil, is to furnish him with an excuse ready-made, for going to the bad, when nature and desire do beguile him into the forbidden precincts, as ten chances to one they will.

The recent entertainment given by the Adelpian Society was, on the average, a creditable and enjoyable affair. But it was by no means satisfactory in all respects. Many of the orators and essayists spoke very indistinctly. If you want to tantalize your audience, and create a reputation for yourself as a first-class hero, "speak your speech" in a *thin* voice, and with *thick* indistinct enunciation.

Mr. Simmons deserves great credit for the manner in which he delivered his recitation. His personation is good, the chief element of oratory.

Mr. Lambertson's Parody was well written and witty withal, abounding in fine passages. Both of the gentlemen last named can improve in their articulation. The effect of many of their funniest passages was impaired by a too hurried and indistinct utterance just at the *point*.

Mr. Wilson's oration was a sound and logical production, delivered in the best style, perhaps, of any oration of the evening; though the oration of Mr. Rhodes was equally pleasing and well written, but delivered in not quite so clear a voice.

Mr. Culbertson's oration was one of the best productions of the evening, but a hesitation and frequent repetition of sentences on the part of the speaker was a

fault which he should guard against in future. His oration was well received, however.

Mr. Hardy recited the "Flying Machine" in a style we have never seen excelled. He is a decided success in this style of recitation, and should develop his talent. Miss Frost's essay was elegantly written and replete with thought, but rather imperfectly read.

Mr. Martin's oration was an anomaly. The geometrical definition of a line would describe it, perhaps, as well as anything original we could devise, though the breadth would have been more apparent, had it been contracted to about one tenth its length. It certainly showed a weakness, or else an amazing sight of cheek on the part of the speaker, to impose a rambling, extemporaneous speech of thirty-five minutes, on an innocent and unsuspecting audience, who had come out in search of pleasure and amusement. We imagine the Christian fortitude of the President of the Adelpian society was put to a severe test, judging from the play of emotion upon his expressive features, during the trying ordeal. By many, the gentleman's subject was considered entirely out of place, but we are not prepared to rule any literary production out of order, or any respectable subject, popular or popular, which has literary merit, and his remarks contained some stray ideas, though imperfectly expressed; but we do object to a man's calling an extemporaneous talk, an oration. Every sentence of an oration should be carefully studied, and expressed in the strongest and most elegant words at one's command. What right have you to palm off a careless, slipshod concern as a literary production, when you are capable of something better? If you are thus capable, it is an open insult to your society and to your audience to present anything of inferior quality taking time and circumstance into account. When they are unfavorable say nothing at all. You must have a vast amount of assurance and self-esteem, or you would see that you are risking your own reputation, from the comparison of your production with those of other performers.

It is to be hoped that the society will continue to give these public entertainments, but let past mistakes lead to improvement in the future.

## CONCERNING A QUESTION OF MORALS.

Does thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?

Every mortal of us all has his portion of what Jeremy Taylor quaintly calls the "festival spirit." A spirit which irresistibly urges us to bid dull care begone, and to forget that to-morrow we die. The light of life is soon enough gone out; it is surely the better part to make it as much of a festival as we can and to

sing though before the hour of dying—since indeed,

—'tis naught but mirth

That keeps the body from the earth.  
Charles Lamb, when he went out on what he was pleased to facetiously term a "gaudy," (and if ever festivities were innocent, surely those of poor Elia were), clearly obeyed the impulses of this spirit. Even Solomon, most staid of moralists, recognized its existence when he smiled upon the time to be merry, and Milton, most ascetic of poets, celebrates, in his inimitable *L'Allegro*,

Sport that wrinkled care derides,  
And laughter holding both his sides.