

The Place of Amusement in a Well-Ordered Life.

In endeavoring to ascertain what part amusement should play in the well-ordered life of an individual, we should first determine exactly what we mean by amusement. Do we mean the passing of an hour or so in idleness? This may be the meaning which some ascribe to it but it will be found they are a minority. Idleness, it has been said is, "The devil's snare for catching men," and we may safely say that the man who is found spending his time in idleness is not far from being the agent of the Prince of Darkness on earth. Is it then the passing of the time given for amusement in bar-rooms, immoral theatres and various other places of a similar nature? This is what amusement means to a great many but this is even worse than idleness. The last named modes of recreation cannot be called amusement because they do not tend to benefit a person but rather to injure him both corporally and spiritually. Real amusement is that which tends to better a man and at the same time afford him pleasure. The word amusement itself means something done for pleasure and which will in some way strengthen us. Its purpose is to ease our minds so as to prepare us for the better performance of the work we shall be called upon to do. If we were to witness a tragedy in which the plot went on without a break, thereby continually increasing the tension of our nerves, the strain would be unbearable; and the object of introducing some little variety is to lessen this tension for a time so as to enable us to enjoy what is yet to come. So it is with amusement. It is simply a safety valve by which we lessen the great strain placed upon us by doing hard and steady work, either mental or physical.

From this it would seem that true amusement should consist of some sort of exercise which will invigorate and at the same time afford us pleasure.

Now that we have some idea of what amusement is, or ought to be, and whether or not it should have

any place in a well-ordered life we shall try to find what place it should occupy. Since the daily routine of our lives consists principally of work the time given to amusement must, therefore be limited. But the order of our various duties should be so arranged that recreation may get a generous proportion of our time. No matter what form it may take, as long as it is true amusement, it should at least find a place in our daily life.

The principal factor of a well-ordered life is work. The man who is indolent cannot enjoy the pleasures that may come to him and must, therefore, be miserable and unhappy. On the other hand if he works, life is a pleasure to him and if he works cheerfully he will find that even his work is a source of happiness and amusement. It is indolence and not work that injures a man. The human body has been compared to a mill in which the machinery is continually moving. As long as there is something to grind the machinery wears but slowly, but in its absence the mill, in its effort to act on something wears itself away much more rapidly.

The different organs of the human body act in the same way. It was Samuel Smiles, in his book on "Character," who said, "The wear-and-tear of rust is even faster than the tear-and-wear of work."

Healthy recreation, however, is a factor in a well-ordered life second in importance only to work. We should give amusement a certain degree of prominence in our lives. A man who never indulges in amusement of any kind soon becomes fretful and a burden to the world. As we must have sleep to rest our bodies so must we have amusement to prevent our nervous system from breaking down. If we do nothing but work every day of our lives and by so doing allow ourselves no time for amusement of any kind we separate ourselves from our fellowmen and are of little use to the world. Sir George Lewis, who lived during the time of Lord Palmerston, was such a man. Although his life was useful while it lasted, still it was cut short by overwork and the world deprived of much good which

might have followed had he taken some form of amusement or recreation.

If a man works diligently during the hours allotted to work and then allows his mind to be taken from his regular occupation during the period set aside, or which should be set aside, for recreation then he will be a benefit to all with whom he may come in contact. There is no room in the world today for men who are gloomy, morose and depressed in spirit, and such a condition is generally the result of their failure to take proper recreation. It may not be noticeable at first but it will appear sooner or later.

Another thing which very often accompanies incessant work and which is very disastrous to those who may have the misfortune to be so afflicted is worry. A great many men worry their lives away. Worry causes the mind to fret over things, very often trivial, and causes it to become excited when things don't look as promising as it may be thought they should. It also often consumes the body by loss of the sleep it requires in order to perform its functions. When one finds himself in this condition he should take recreation in some form and at once. He will thus cause himself to forget his worries and to look on the bright side of life.

While amusement must never be regarded as the end of living, yet the time devoted to a moderate share of legitimate diversion must not be considered lost. By partaking each day of whatever form of it appeals to us, we will be strengthened morally and physically. Unhappy disintegrating emotions will be driven away. Our lives shall become more happy and full of joy; and the more we dwell on that joy which has come to us the more we approach to that hoped-for state, "When we have shuffled off this mortal coil."

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