

## SAPPING THE FOUNDATIONS

When Demosthenes was once delivering an oration of great earnestness, a sudden uproar among the people stopped him in the midst of his speech. He secured silence again by saying that he had just a few words to say if they would cease their noise, and then said: "A certain man hired an ass to take him from Athens to Megara. About noon the sun waxed so hot that both the owner and rider wished to hide in the shadow of the ass, and forthwith quarreled, one saying, 'The ass was hired by you, but not the shadow,' and the other answering, 'As I have hired the ass I have the best right, for the time, to the shadow also'." At this point in the story Desmosthenes stopped and was coming down from the people, but they clamored loudly and would not suffer him to stop, so eager were they to hear the rest of the tale; whereupon Desmosthenes said: "Why have you no mind to listen to matters of serious import to the state, but are all ears to hear about the shadow of an ass?"

I am relating the old story to illustrate the reason why so many people take much more interest in the sensational fake stories printed in daily newspapers, than they do in instructive and elevating reading. And now that I have related it, I may say that the comparison may be doing a little injustice to the ancients; insofar as the sense of the ridiculous is concerned, their eagerness to hear the outcome of the contention over the right of ownership, of the ass's shadow, cannot be blamed; we, ourselves, I suppose, should be just as eager. The anecdote, however, is not without its meaning.

When we look about and see people in their mad rush for pleasure, turning down the highest and best things in life, and glorifying in things that pander to the depraved passions, when we read of a crowd of people assembling for an endurance test in dancing, when we see, as an eminent writer puts it, a world that barter Palestrina for jazz and jum-

ble, the architecture that produces cathedrals for California bungalows, and "Paradise Lost" for free verse, it would seem that the world is dancing before Herod to get the head of John the Baptist.

The devastating influences that are everywhere prevalent are certainly causing an alarming condition, or, should I say, the condition already exists? Yes, the harm has been done; papers, books, films, truly when they are not of the right kind, the venom of asps, have been thrust upon the people and continue to be thrust upon them daily, weekly, and monthly; these perverters of all that is good and noble are handed out to a gullible public, too willing to be deceived.

What possible and lasting good can emerge from the coarse and revolting picture shows which are so popular to-day?

The dancing, feasting, fiddling, of this age are secured at the cost of those nobler satisfactions that come from literature, art, and the deeds of great men and women. The hungry-eyed, fevered crowds, surging in and out of such haunts, are not enjoying themselves; they are simply cheating their souls of a more refreshing recreation, of the heavenly food; they mistake the temporary absence of restlessness and insatiate desire for the presence of pleasure.

Well may we cry out with the gentle Thomas A Kempis, "Oh, the stupidity and the hardness of mens' hearts," when we behold those who do not appreciate the beautiful strains of *Humoresque*, but who cannot find space enough to perform their antics to the music of a jazz band. And here is something that might well prove an interesting question to the psychoanalyst. What in the name of most elementary common-sense is this jazz? I don't know; I am, however, quite decided that it is not what many of its votaries think it is; it is not music, and I should not think it would take a Paderewski to discover this. No, jazz is not



music, whatever else it may be. It jars on the refined ear like a collection of noises from a boiler shop, a sawmill, and a smithy, with a few "blow-outs" thrown in. Truly, Thomas Moore was speaking of something better than jazz when he wrote the following, although he must have been conscious of a terrible din,—“This must be the music of the spears, for I'm cursed if each note of it doesn't run through one.” The taste that can be pleased with jazz is the taste that has never been refined by education.

The trouble with those who prefer such abominations as the worse than senseless literature in the cheap magazines, the almost pagan films that some how or other sneak by the boards of censorship, is simply this: Either of their own accord or through the instrumentality of others they are rendered incapable of serious thought. It was this lack of serious thought for which Demosthenes upbraided the people centuries ago; the people to whom he spoke in those far off days were philosophers compared with the unthinking populace of to-day. They are being duped on every side, and there is enough good, sound, sensible literature exposing these duperies to protect them from such frauds, if they would but avail themselves of it. But they would rather listen to some fanatic talk of “new freedom,” or applaud to the clouds some upstart out on a “feminist campaign;” surely, “it's silly wa's the win's are strewin.”

The world today is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel. “With desolation is the earth made desolate, because no one thinks in his heart,” may be truly said today. Yes, to those who think who see those things in their true proportions, the world today is a comedy. We hear much, of late, regarding economy; this economy, of course, is in relation to worldly dealings only. The comedy of it all is, that, while preaching economy, men fail to benefit by it in their own lives. and fail to apply its principles where they are most needed. It is comical to see men so easily deluded, so fickle, that, by the mere

suggestion that their rights are infringed upon, by the mere sound of the words freedom, enfranchisement, exemption, and other high sounding words used by would-be teachers and leaders, who, unfortunately, are of the type that have "itching ears",—it is comical, I say, to see such men, without any thought whatever of the truth of the matter, nodding their heads sagely, and embracing the "new learning".

But, on the other hand, behold the tragedy of it all. The beauty and the loveliness hath passed away; the abominations of divorce have robbed the home of its beauty, its power; the films are destroying the morals of young and old; the modern dance, which is nothing more than a sex orgy set to music, is a sad example of the result of careless standards. The sacrificing of principles is a sure way to popularity, and many there are who gain their approbation in this manner. Standards are being lowered to meet the requirements of an unspiritual society, forgetful of the fact that what the world labels as permissible, is not always free from sin.

Lord Kelvin used to tell his students in their studies, "if you do not go deep enough you will be in danger of not finding God." This is just the danger that exists in education today; it is not considered a danger however, for science has found that God plays no part in this world of ours; that it came into being by the "concurrence of atoms," and exists very well by its own forces; the fool still says in his heart, there is no God. The world is being educated into laxity, and it is the duty of those that govern, to awaken to the truth of this.

The education that the world needs today is not that which teaches how to lift marble to the fortieth story of some new office building, but how to lift the level of character; to develop those simple fidelities and homely virtues which are the chief defence of nations. When Tennyson wrote "Crossing the of Bar," he did more for civilization than if he had built an ocean liner or a man-of-war. Thom-



as Stevenson, to be sure, did much for England when he built the light houses which send their light over the waters of the channel. But we owe more to his son, Robert Louis Stevenson, because he taught us how to kindle a light within, how to keep the soul serene and steadfast in the face of pain and death. Not the men who add to our quantity of materials, but the men who deepen the quality of our living, are the real benefactors and educators of the world.

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