MIRAMICHI ADVANCE, CHATHAM, NEW BRUNSWICK, DECEMBER 23, 1886

The Question of Amusements.

[The following extract of a sermon by the late Horace Bushnell treats subject, which is too often one of great difficulty to many, with clearness, simplicity and power. On the truth in physics that two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time, so he shows that if the heart is filled with the principles and objects of Christianity there can be no room for other things not congenial thereto and vice versa. Chrisbreak it; not the mere abstinance to avoid a penalty. The entire argument is on his work, "Sermons on Living Subjects."]

Free to Amusements, and Too Frie to Want Them.

"If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go, whatever is set before you, eat, asking no questions for con-science' sake."-1 Cor. x. 27.

I discover two points included in the advice given. The first is, that down upon the low plane of mere ethical observance, St. Paul does not think it incumbent on him, as a teacher of the Gospel, to enforce any Puritanically. close terms of restrictive morality. In this field the disciples must have their own liberty, and be responsible for their own judgments and the right understanding of their own liabilities. And to set them on a yet manlier footing of liberty, he shoves restriction still further away by telling them, when they accept such an invitation, to go with a free mind, hampered by no foolish scruples that will make them an annoyance both to the host and company.

of their feeling, and will only be dis- if we had enough to live in it and by it, turbances of their peace. They are there would be no so glad faces, or able to come down now and then it winning graces of life, as our liberty in may be, and touch the plane of na- the Spirit would show! The very at ture in ways of playfulness; but it will mosphere of such is fresh and bright not be to launch themselves on tides of and free as the day dawn. They live To the Heirs, Executors and Administrators of high excitement, and be floated clean above scruple, they do nothing by conaway, but only to freshen a little the straint, they go beaming where they natural zest of things, and keep off the go. Every one sees that they have motoseness of a too rigid and total the deepest satisfactons, and are most

separation from the socialities and completely alive, of all people that playtimes of the world. live. Our question of amusements then ap-But must we not, some very conpears to be very nearly settled by the scientious discipies will ask, be faithful

tenor of the distinctively Christian life to put a frown upon these pleasures? tianity is perfect freedom from law itself. The Christian, in so far as he is must we not declare them to be wrong by the expulsion of the desires that a Christian, is not down upon the foot- and raise a testimony against them? ing of a mere ethical practice, asking That is about the worst thing a true what he may do, and what he is re- Christian can do. They are not wrong stricted from doing, under the legal in themselves. It is you that have gone sanctions of morality. That kind of above them; not they that have come motivity is very much gone by. . . into conflict with you. And there is He acts now from the full, not from the nothing you can do against religion empty; having inclinations outrunning more hurtful than to make it the foe

mere duties, and doing all things, so to of all innocent enjoyments, in the speak from the overplus of joy. He reach of such as have not the higher is not shrivelled in scruple, but full- resources of religion.

orbed in love. And if he asks at all Every nominally Christian man is what is duty to be done, it is not what bound to be thoroughly Christian. is duty by the moral code, under its And so is every unbeliever. But our legal motivities, but only what is due being bound thus to the choice of to the supreme affection that has united Christ, does not any way touch the him to God and His Son. So that when matter of amusements; for whoever you come to him offering some kind of comes to Christ as a disciple, is never amusement, he does not fall back cut off from these because he is under straightway on his conscience, asking requirement to that effect; he only drops whether he may have it, or trying them out because he does not want whether he can tease the reluctant them, being turned away from them by To Malcolm Currie of Harcourt in the County of monitor into acquiescence-he does his new-born liberty itself.

nothing in that way of legal exaction-Here, then, my friends, in this high But he says more likely to the offered plane of royal liberty, it is our privilege amusement," No, I do not want it;" or, and calling to live. Worldly minds, in the Apostle's words, "I am not dis- | minds faintly Christian-if such are posed" that way. And this he does possible-can hardly imagine, rushing, without debate of privilege, and with- as they do in their emptiness, after all out any argument of constraint. Others | kinds of pleasurable diversion, to fill up

So far then he sets them free-free, looking on may judge that he is under | the void of their feeling, what supreme that is, in the exercise of their own re- they know not what scruples, and is fulness of life is here vouchsafed us. sponsible judgment. But we have making himself unhappy by not daring They even look askance upon our scarcely noted the position given them to claim their enjoyments, but it is Gospel, as if it were proposing



posed; for the dear love of God, in the such hankering after questionable pleasures and light-minded gateties. . . Which distinction thus developed I now propose to use in its application to the true law and right use of amusements. We begin then-

cover the whole ground of the subject ; significance of everything else. In the to behold His Face! as if it were the only matter to settle pursuit of gain, if we speak of nothing our opinion of what is right under the bigher, they will look upon amusements world's law. In this view, the Apostle as mere nonsense, and will sometimes says, it is not to be judged a sin if you even forget the feeding of their bodies. go to the entertainments where you are How then will it be when a Christian invited. It may be, or it may not, and man has become thoroughly engulfed in of that you must every man judge for the work and cause of his master? It yourselves, in your own freedom, at is now his passion. He wants nothing your own responsibility. If you want else. Compared with this, everything the exhilaration, there is nothing mor- is trivial; he has no taste for the gaieties ally wrong in exhilaration. If you of mere natural pleasure. Christian want the festive play, such play is for- people are set off thus, in a sense, from bidden by no common principle of life. the amusements other people delight in, But it is incumbent on yon, if you go, by the stress of their own new love, and that you go to be one with the company. | the heavenly engagements into which it To go, half condemning yourself for brings them. Of course, on mere what you allow; to go, packed full of ethical grounds, they have a right to do little timid scruples; abstaining, ques- just what everybody has, to claim all tioning, and making yourself an annoy- the justifiable amusements, and go as ance to the company, is even a Christian | far in them as moral safety may allow, impropriety. Undertaking to enjoy but to claim that right, they must dethe occasion, you must not churlishly scend a long way into the spirit, as into mar the enjoyment, by looking askance the law of the world, and be really of it and timidly on everything done. Bee themselves. These things we say are not there as a man tied up in scruples, innocent, but they are not innocent to but as a man rather who is free, and them, because they bring down a spirit knows how to enjoy the innocent lifted far above into better affinities, hilarities of the occasion. If you speak and nobler ranges of good. of duty, this is your duty, else it was Here open accordingly some very your duty not to be there. . . . As deep lessons for Christian souls, that St. Paul said to the Corinthians, so we must not be lost. Being not simply say, Be free : make up no mere scheme free, as all men are, to have their

r this liberty, when we begin to they that are in the absurdity, not he. to shorten their privileges, and cut off see that he is thinking of a second, He is only too free in his great, nobly the few endurable things they are able higher kind of liberty for them, which, divine pleasures, to find anything but to find in the world. Unspeakable in his own view, makes the other quite loss and meagre littleness in theirs. delusion! Would that they could see insignificant. Thus he drops in, as it Their world is not his world, and he it! No, my friends. The real purwere in undertone, at the middle of his has renounced their world, not because pose of our Gospel is to set us clear sentence, this very brief but very signi- he must, which they probably think, of all restrictions that work legally, ficant clause-"and ye be disposed to but because he has gotten by it and and bring us out to reign with God in go"-putting, I conceive, a partly sad above it. And here is the reason, I God's own liberty. It says, "all things cadence in his words, as if saying, in- conceive, why we keep on debating this are yours," and permits us to live in wardly, I trust not many will be so dis- question as we do, in the footing of that broad wealth which consists in mere moralities as the people of the universal possession. Nothing is farglorious liberty of our discipleship, world, who bring it always to that ther off and deeper down below it, than ought to be a liberty too full, and sweet, standard, and do not imagine that that we are to be set in scruple and and positive, and blessed, to allow any Christian souls can bring it to any careful debate, about what social pleaother. sures and diversions are permitted,

It may be well to put the question in and what forbidden us. Permitted or a different way; which yet will not be forbidden, we shall not want them, or really different except in the form. It go after them, because they are chaff to comes to us every hour, that men who us. We have meat to eat which is are deeply immersed in some great work better. We sit in the heavenly places, L At the free; taking up the question or cause, have no care for anything else, having it ever as our prime distinction of amusements as a question of ethics, least of all for anything that appears to there, that we would rather suffer or common morality; which, in all the be trivial. Anything which has become with our Master, than be feasted withdiscussions I have seen, is taken to the supreme end of life, sinks the out Him, and would even willingly die





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