

BROAD GAUGE VIEWS OF CARD PLAYING

REV. W. F. SMALL'S LIBERAL SERMON ON POPULAR AMUSEMENTS—CALLS THEM A LONG WAYS FROM BEING ALL BAD—OTHERS SERMONS IN SEVERAL PULPITS.

Rev. W. F. Small, pastor of the First Universalist church, East Eighth and East Couch streets, yesterday morning took for his text, Romans xiv, 15, "Let every man be fully assured in his own mind."

"According to a law of his life," he said, "man must balance his work with play. He must amuse himself and be amused. The question of practical importance is what shall be the character of his amusements and the extent of his indulgence. In three conspicuous ways he amuses himself, and as these three forms of amusement are inspected by many church people of sobriety of spirituality, I purpose to consider them: They are cardplaying, dancing and theatre-going."

Cardplaying—Usually this means the use of the common playing-cards. But other cards are very similar in that an element of chance is involved in their play. Objection to playing-cards refers to their use in gambling. The objection is not strong in that it would apply with equal force to any play which might be made the means of gambling. The gambler, a parasite and bloodsucker, always uses playing-cards because their use is easy and has always been. But these same cards are employed right along by many good people in games that are largely a test of skill and quickness of wit, and to such people in the same class as gamblers is senseless.

Dancing—Man has always danced. Dancing was often indulged in religious exercises up to the middle ages. But it is the modern dance, more especially the waltz, that is so objectionable, that is destructive of spirituality. It depends very largely on the conditions that are made to govern the indulgence of the amusement. Dancing is altogether objectionable when it involves a promiscuous mingling of the sexes. It develops a familiarity which breeds deadly contempt on the part of each sex for the other. The ordinary public dance, to which any one is admitted, is vicious, and those who respect themselves will keep away from such. But when practiced under sane conditions, such as exclusiveness and decent hours, it is a beautiful pleasure. The objection that Christ didn't dance, hence we ought not, is pitifully absurd. So far as we know, Jesus did not dance. But there is a story told of his attending a wedding supper at which dancing formed one of the diversions. And the principle of this objection is extremely vicious—that we should not do what Jesus did not do, and by implication that we should do what he did.

Theatre-going—"Go to the theatre and you go to hell" seems to be the view of many. Now, the trouble with the average phillippic against the theatre is its lack of adequate discrimination. The theatre is said to be evil, the plays bad and most players immoral; the theatre subverts the Christian Sunday, it corrupts the tastes of its audiences, it develops an artificiality of life among its players. There is some truth here. But unless qualified, the truth is untruth. The tone of the stage, generally speaking, is low. But high-minded members of the dramatic profession yearn

for a better day, which is hopeful. The charge that the theatre subverts Sunday doesn't go deep enough. Commercialism, using the theatre, subverts Sunday, just as it does by using the trolley lines for an excursion to Canemah Park or Columbia beach or St. Johns. Sunday theatrical performances are vicious, and a future generation will see these evil effects more than we do.

"But in itself the theatre is not an evil, but good. If its moral tone now is low, denunciation and abstinence, aloofness, will boot little. The atmosphere of plays like 'The Old Homestead,' 'Ben Hur' and many others is morally uplifting and stimulating—more so than many sermons of unqualified denunciation in churches. The theatre will be elevated more rapidly as the church gives sympathy to the high-minded members of the dramatic profession who shall try to lift the moral tone of the stage and by practical co-operation, whenever possible. Some Episcopal churches and clergymen are doing noble work in this field."

"I do not present these remarks," said Rev. Small, in conclusion, "as the teaching of the Universalist church. Our church has always left the settling of such issues as this to the individual, realizing that each one must determine it in its relation to his personal ideals and his influence upon other lives."

REV. H. J. TALBOT.

At Taylor-street Methodist church Rev. H. J. Talbot preached yesterday on the text from Matthew xxvii, 23, "What then shall I do with Jesus?" He said in part:

"This was the perplexing question that came to Pilate when Jesus stood at his judgment seat, and when the mob had chosen that Barabbas should be released under clemency of the governor, and not Jesus. Pilate was in great perturbation of mind. On the one hand was Jesus, lone, friendless, helpless, but innocent of any wrong, and having a strange majesty and power, which Pilate felt but could not explain; on the other hand were the howling mob, the malicious and formidable chief priests and elders, and back of all the gloomy, crime-hardened, suspicious emperor at Rome yonder. No wonder, that, leaning toward justice, and fearing the power of the Jews at the Roman court, Pilate hesitates and seeks to rid himself of all responsibility by throwing the question back to the people, 'What then shall I do with Jesus?'"

"The question as it comes to us is ever recurring and it is personal. We do not get rid of it once for all, nor do we turn it over as one to be met by the community. Pilate sought to get rid of the personal burden of it, but this was his undoing. All the ocean's waters could not make his hands clean of blood after he threw off his personal obligation to decide it. We face the question for ourselves, 'What shall I do with Jesus?'"

REV. WILLIAM E. RANDALL.

"Man's Debt to Man: Shall Obligation Be Acknowledged and Paid?" was William E. Randall's theme at the Central Baptist church yesterday morning. "I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish," Romans i:14 was the text. He said in part:

"In a systematic or crude way balance sheets are being made up for the closing year. A genuinely honest person wishes to ascertain the amount of outstanding obligations and meet them. Regardless of the financial exhibit—the story of dollars—we are debtors. Moral obligations are of the highest order. "The primary principles of religion are as permanent as the laws of nature. There has been development in the sciences, but the physical forces are constant. There has been unfolding in knowledge, but great truths are unaffected. There has been progress in religion, but principles abide and rule. We are made debtors by the law of stewardship and responsibility that obligates each person to communicate to others every good. "Had Paul's letter fallen into the hands of the emperor, Nero and the patriarians would have spurned the thought of obligation to slaves, prisoners, barbarians. I say to the average modern man, 'You are a debtor,' and receive the reply, 'The world owes me.' "Culture, power, genius are often as aristocratic and selfish as superficial nobility. A hundred philosophers—one Tolstol, thousands penetrating dark continents for gain and glory—but one David Livingstone, scores of men brought into official prominence by the war that crimsoned our nation 46 years ago—three great, magnanimous souls



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"You and I will live life all over in an endless eternity. It will be joyful, satisfying, if we have made it easier for our fellow men to win moral victories; if we have added sympathy and smiles, if we have recognized and met our debt of humanity."

"For the glory born of goodness Never dies, And its life is not half-masted In the skies."

"THE BIRTH OF OUR KING."

At the First Christian church yesterday Dr. J. F. Ghormley, the retiring pastor, took for his text at the morning service, Matt. ii:2, "Where is He That is Born King of the Jews?" He spoke in part, as follows:

"We had with joy the return of memorial days. The birthdays of friends and relatives are seasons of gift-making. Wise men still bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the cradle of heaven's royalty and every child, in a sense, is born a king. The memorial days of the church are significant. They have been observed from time immemorial and will continue to be observed. The event in Bethlehem more than 1,800 years ago, which gave to the world the King of destiny, was far more than ordinary. The place itself—Bethlehem—had been foretold by the prophet Micah. Being the city of David and the place of many memorable events it was suited as the birthplace of the king. The journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem was to the world in obedience to a decree from Augustus Caesar that everyone should go to his own city to be enrolled, but to the eye that sees all things it was that the king should be born in the divinely appointed place. His birth was announced by the angels who sang on that first Christmas morning the blessed story of redemption. The lowly heard it, and responding to its invitation, found Emmanuel. Philosophy following its best light came to Jerusalem seeking the new-born king, and aided by revelation discovered him in the manger at Bethlehem. Hatred was defeated, for it found him not. "Sage men had lived and wrought. They came with the world on great missions and filled them. However, there was a spark to be completed and which philosophy declared it was unable to do and dedicated an altar to the unknown god, and awaited the fulfillment of the prophecies in the coming of the desire of all nations. The prophets had been speaking of him and when the fulness of time came they were ready; they had been looking came clothed in flesh and the power which makes for righteousness in human personality was named Jesus."

NEW PASTOR'S SERMON.

As the subject of his first sermon at Westminster Presbyterian church yesterday, the Rev. Henry Marcotte, the new pastor, took "A Great Preacher's Theme." His text was from I Cor. 2:2—"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "It is most instructive to know what the great preachers preach about. Paul was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, preacher the world has ever known. We have his one all-absorbing theme in our text. Notice it is not Jesus Christ crucified. Some have preached that exclusively and have presented a one-sided gospel. We need this, but we need more than the sacrificial death. "Some preach Jesus Christ and omit the last word, 'That is incomplete also. The preaching of Jesus Christ without the cross is a mere morality. Jesus Christ apart from the cross is surely one of the world's wisest men. But Jesus Christ and him crucified: What a world is opened before us! His words, his works, his whole life as example—revelations, inspirations and this includes his risen and glorified life also. Not only the man, revealer, example, inspirations, but also the sacrifice for sin. Some have sneered at this as a circumscribed theme. The author of a certain modern novel makes one of his characters say of a young clergyman: 'In this case it certainly seems a waste of good material; he will do a heap of thinking before he gets to the point where the man who can think for thirteen years



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