

THE DANCE OF DEATH

DR. TALMAGE FINDS A WARNING IN THE DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS.

Dancing Might Not Be Sinful in Some Cases, but in All Ages It Has Been Associated With the Lower Form of Dissipation.

BROOKLYN, Sept. 30.—Rev. Dr. Talmage, who is still absent on his round world tour, has selected as the subject of today's sermon through the press "The Quick Feet," the text chosen being Matthew xiv, 6, "When Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod."

It is the anniversary of Herod's birthday. The palace is lighted. The high-ways leading thereto are all ablaze with the pomp of invited guests. Lords, captains, merchant princes, the mighty men of the land, are coming to revel in the festivities. The table is spread with all the luxuries that royal purveyors can gather. The guest, white robed and anointed and perfumed, come in and sit at the table. Music! The jests evoke roars of laughter. Riddles are propounded. Repartee is indulged. Toasts are drunk. The brain is befogged. The wit rolls on into profane and blasphemous. They are not satisfied yet. Turn on more light. Pour out more wine. Music. Sound all the trumpets. Clear the floor for a dance! Bring in Salome, the beautiful and accomplished princess. The door opens, and in bounds the dancer. The lords are enchanted.

Stand back and make room for the brilliant gyrations! These men never saw such "poetry of motion." Their soul whirls in the reel and bounds with the bounding feet. Herod forgets crown and throne and everything but the fascinations of Salome. All the magnificence of his realm is as nothing now compared with the splendor that whirls on tiptoe before him. His body sways from side to side, corresponding with the motions of the enchantress. His soul is thrilled with the pulsations of the feet and bewitched with the taking postures and attitudes more and more amazing. After awhile he sits in enchanted silence looking at the flashing, leaping, bounding beauty, and as the dance closes and the tinkling cymbals cease to clap and the thunders of applause that shook the palace begin to abate the enchanted monarch swears to the princely performer, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee, to the half of my kingdom." Now, there was in prison at that time a minister of the gospel of the name of John the Baptist, and he had been making a great deal of trouble by preaching some very plain and honest sermons. He had denounced the sins of the king and brought down upon him the wrath of the females of the royal household. At the instigation of her mother Salome takes advantage of the extravagant promise of the king and says, "Bring me the head of John the Baptist on a dinner plate."

The Head of John. Hark to the sound of feet outside the door and the clatter of swords! The executioners are returning from their awful errand. Open the door! They enter, and they present the platter to Salome. What is on this platter? A new glass of wine to continue the uproarious merriment? No. Something redder and costlier—the ghastly, bleeding head of John the Baptist, the death glare still in the eye, the locks dabbled with the gore, the features still distressed with the last agony.

This woman, who had whirled so gracefully in the dance, bends over the awful burden without a shudder. She gloats over the blood, and with as much indifference as a waiting maid might take a tray of empty glassware out of the room after an entertainment Salome carries the severed head of John the Baptist, while all the banqueters shout with laughter and think it a good joke that in so easy and quick a way they have got rid of an earnest and outspoken minister of the gospel.

You will all admit, whatever you think of that style of amusement and exercise, that from many circles it has grown out of all intelligent conversation. You will also admit that it has made the condition of those who do not dance either because they do not know how or because they have not the health to endure it or because through conscientious scruples they must decline the exercise very uncomfortable. You will also admit, all of you, that it has passed in many cases from an amusement to a dissipation, and you are easily able to understand the bewilderment of the educated Chinaman, who, standing in the brilliant circle where there was dancing going on four or five hours and the guests seemed exhausted, turned to the proprietor of the house and said, "Why don't you allow your servants to do this for you?"

The Abominable Round Dance. You are also willing to admit, whatever be your idea in regard to the amusement I am speaking of, and whatever be your idea of the old-fashioned square dance, and of many of the professional romps in which I can see no evil, the round dance is administrative of evil and ought to be driven out of all respectable circles. I am by natural temperament and religious theory opposed to the position taken by all those who are horrified at playfulness on the part of the young and who think that all questions are decided—questions of decency and morals—by the position of the feet, while, on the other hand, I can see nothing but ruin, temporal and eternal, for those who go into the dissipations of social life—dissipations which have already despoiled thousands of young men and young women of all that is noble in character and useful in life.

The Old Time Dance. Dancing is the graceful motion of the body adjusted by art to the sound and measure of musical instrument or of the human voice. All nations have danced. The ancients thought that Castor and Pollux taught the art to the Laodamoni-

nians. But whoever started it all crimes have adopted it. In ancient times they had the festal dance, the military dance, the mediatorial dance, the bacchanalian dance, and queens and lords swayed to and fro in the gardens, and the rough backwoodsman with this exercise awakened the echo of the forest. There is something in the sound of lively music to evoke the movement of the hand and foot, whether cultured or uncultured. Passing down the street we unconsciously keep step to the sound of the brass band, while the Christian in church with his foot beats time while his soul rises upon some great harmony. While this is so in civilized lands, the red men of the forest have their scalp dances, their green corn dances, their warden dances. In ancient times the exercise was so vitally and completely depraved that the church fathers expressed themselves most vehemently against it. St. Chrysostom says, "The feet were not given for dancing, but to walk modestly; not to leap impudently, like camels." One of the dogmas of the ancient church reads: "A dance is the devil's possession, and he that entereth into a dance entereth into his possession. As many paces as a man makes in dancing, so many paces does he make to hell." Elsewhere the old dogmas declared that: "The woman that singeth in the dance is the princess of the devil, and those that answer are her clerks, and the beholders are his friends, and the music is his bellows, and the fiddlers are the ministers of the devil. For, as when hogs are strayed, if the hogherd call one, all assemble together, so when the devil calleth one woman to sing in the dance, or to play on some musical instrument, presently all the dancers gather together." This indiscriminate and universal denunciation of the exercise came from the fact that it was utterly and completely depraved.

The Evil of It Today. But we are not to discuss the customs of the olden times, but customs now. We are not to take the evidence of the ancient fathers, but our own conscience, enlightened by the word of God, is to be the standard. Oh, bring no harsh criticism upon the young! I would not drive out from their soul the hilarities of life. I do not believe that the inhabitants of ancient Wales, when they stepped to the sound of the rustic harp, went down to ruin. I believe God intended the young people to laugh and romp and play. I do not believe God would have put exuberance in the soul and exuberance in the body if he had not intended they should in some wise exercise it and demonstrate it. If a mother join hands with her children and cross the floor to the sound of music, I see no harm. If a group of friends cross and recross the room to the sound of piano well played, I see no harm. If a company, all of whom are known to host and hostess as reputable, cross and recross the room to the sound of musical instrument, I see no harm. I tried for a long while to see harm in it. I could not see any harm in it. I never shall see any harm in that. Our men need to be kept young—young for many years longer than they are kept young. Never since my boyhood days have I had more sympathy with the innocent hilarities of life than I have now. What though we have felt heavy burdens! What though we have had to endure hard knocks! Is that any reason why we should stand in the way of those who, unstung of life's misfortunes, are full of exhilaration and glee? God bless the young! They will have to wait many a long year before they hear me say anything that would depress their ardor or clip their wings or make them believe that life is hard and cold and repulsive. It is not. I tell them, judging from my own experience, that they will be treated a great deal better than they deserve. We have no right to grudge the innocent hilarities to the young.

Death in Dissipation. What are the dissipations of social life today, and what are the dissipations of the ballroom? In some cities and in some places reaching all the year round, in other places only in the summer time and at the watering places. There are dissipations of social life that are cutting a very wide swath with the sickle of death, and hundreds and thousands are going down under these influences, and my subject in application is as wide as Christendom. The whirlpool of social dissipation is drawing down some of the brightest craft that ever sailed the sea—thousands and tens of thousands of the bodies and souls annually consumed in the conflagration of ribbons.

Social dissipation is the shelter of pride. It is the instigator of jealousy. It is the sacrificial altar of health. It is the defiler of the soul. It is the avenue of lust, and it is the curse of every town on both sides of the sea. Social dissipation! It may be hard to draw the line and say that this is right on the one side and that is wrong on the other side. It is not necessary that we do that, for God has put a throne in every man's soul, and I appeal to that throne today. When a man does wrong, he knows he does wrong, and when he does right he knows he does right, and to that throne, which Almighty God lifted in the heart of every man and woman, I appeal.

As to the physical ruin wrought by the dissipations of social life there can be no doubt. What may we expect of people who work all day and dance all night? After awhile they will be thrown on society nervous, exhausted imbeciles. These people who indulge in the suppers and the midnight revels and then go home in the cold unwrapped of limbs will after awhile be found to have been written down in God's eternal records as suicides—as much suicides as if they had taken their life with a pistol or a knife or strychnine.

Danger to Health. How many people have stepped from the ballroom into the graveyard? Can symptoms and swift neurologists are close on their track. Amid many of the glittering scenes of social life disease stand

right and left and balance and chain. The breath of the sepulcher floats up through the perfume, and the froth of Death's lips bubbles up in the champagne. I am told that in some of the cities there are parents who have so totally given up housekeeping and gone to boarding that they may give their time illimitably to social dissipations. I have known such cases. I have known family after family blasted in that way in one of the other cities where I preached. Father and mother turning their backs upon all quiet culture and all the amenities of home, leading forth their entire family in the wrong direction. Annihilated—worse than annihilated, for there are some things worse than annihilation. I give you the history of more than one family when I say they went on in the dissipations of social life until the father dropped into a lower style of dissipation, and after awhile the son was tossed out into society a nonentity, and after awhile the daughter eloped with a French dancing master, and after awhile the mother, getting on further and further in years, tries to hide the wrinkles, but fails in the attempt, trying all the arts of the belle—an old flirt, a poor miserable butterfly without any wings.

If there is anything on earth beautiful to me, it is an aged woman, her white locks flowing back over the wrinkled brow—locks not white with frost, as the poets say, but white with the blossoms of the tree of life, in her voice the tenderness of gracious memories, her face a benediction. As grandmother passes through the room the grandchildren pull at her dress, and she almost falls in her weakness, but she has nothing but candy or cake or a kind word for the little darlings. When she gets out of the wagon in front of the house, the whole family rush out and cry, "Grandma's come!" And when she goes away from us, never to return, there is a shadow on the table, and a shadow on the hearth, and a shadow on the heart.

There is no more touching scene on earth than when grandmother sleeps the last slumber and the little child is lifted up to the casket to give the last kiss, and she says, "Goodby, grandma!" Oh, there is beauty in old age. God says so. "The hoary head is a crown of glory." Why should people decline to get old? The best things, the greatest things, I know of are aged—old mountains, old seas, old stars and old eternity. But if there is anything distressful it is to see an old man ashamed of the fact that she is old. What with all the artificial appliances she is too much for my gravity. I laugh even in church when I see her coming. The worst looking bird on earth is a peacock when it has lost its feathers. I would not give one look of my old mother's gray hair for 50,000 such caricatures of humanity. And if the life of a worldling, if the life of a disciple given to the world, is sad, the close of such a life is simply a tragedy.

Fate of the Sybarites. Let me tell you that the dissipations of social life are despoiling the usefulness of a vast multitude of people. What do those people care about the fact that there are whole nations in sorrow and suffering and agony when they have for consideration the more important question about the size of a glove or the tie of a cravat? Which one of them ever bound up the wounds of the hospital? Which one of them ever went out to care for the poor? Which of them do you find in the haunts of sin distributing tracts? They live on themselves, and it is very poor pasture.

Sybaris was a great city, and it once sent 800 horsemen in battle. They had a minstrel who had taught the horses of the army a great trick, and when the old minstrel played a certain tune the horses would rear and with their front feet seem to beat time to the music. Well, the old minstrel was offended with his country, and he went over to the enemy, and he said to the enemy, "You give me the mastery of the army, and I will destroy their troops when those horses come from Sybaris."

So they gave the old minstrel the management, and he taught all the other minstrels a certain tune. Then when the cavalry troop came up the old minstrel and all the other minstrels played a certain tune, and at the most critical moment in the battle, when the horsemen wanted to rush to the conflict, the horses reared and beat time to the music with their fore feet, and in disgrace and rout the enemy fled. Ah, my friends, I have seen it again and again—the minstrels of pleasure, the minstrels of dissipation, the minstrels of godless association have defeated people in the hardest fight of life. Frivolity has lost the battle for 10,000 folk. Oh, what a belittling process to the human mind this everlasting question about dress, this discussion of fashionable infinitesimals, this group, looking askance at the glass, wondering with an infinity of earnestness how that last geranium leaf does look, this shriveling of man's moral dignity until it is not observable to the naked eye, this Spanish inquisition of a tight shoe, this binding up of an immortal soul in a ruffe, this pitching off of an immortal nature over the rocks when God intended it for great and everlasting uplifting!

With many a life is a masquerade ball, and as at such entertainments gentlemen and ladies put on the garb of kings and queens or mountebanks or clowns, and at the close put off the disguise, so a great many pass their whole life in a mask, taking off the mask at death. While the masquerade ball of life goes on they trip merrily over the floor, gemmed hand is stretched to the gemmed hand, and gleaming brow bends to gleaming brow. On with the dance! Flush and rustle and laughter of immeasurable merrymaking!

The Awful Change. But after awhile the languor of death comes on the limbs and blurs the eyesight. Lights lower. Floor hollow with sepulchral echo. Music added into a wall. Lights lower. Now the maskers are only seen in the dim light. Now the fragrance of the flowers is like the

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SIRS:—Your petitioners, patrons of the public schools, taxpayers and citizens of Oregon, respectfully petition you to take no action to bring about adoption of new series of public school text books under the law passed by the last legislature, nor to enter into any contract at present publishers prices adopting the text books now in use, or those that might be authorized by your board at present prices, such prices to be fixed and maintained by the publishers for the next six years, as specified in that law.

In view of the fact that by state publication the people of California are obtaining public school text books at an average price of about thirty cents a piece for the entire series needed in the common schools, or about one-half what we pay in Oregon, we demand state publication at the earliest day possible.

[Cut out the above form of petition, sign and address it to one of the state board of education, or mail it to THE JOURNAL and it will be published and forwarded to the board with others. Men and women should sign this petition in protest against perpetuating the present system of high-priced text books for six years to come.]

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