

*“ Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but
“ rather reprove them.”*

A

S E R M O N ,

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CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF QUEBEC,

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BY

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EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF MONTREAL, AND
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S E R M O N.

5th Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, 11th verse.

“ Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of
“ darkness, but rather reprove them.”

You will remember that last year, at this season, I addressed you on the subject of the races—with what success the great day of account will declare ! Since that period, my opinions then expressed, have undergone no change, but have rather been strengthened and confirmed by subsequent experience ; while the practices then noticed, have been revived, and with more than wonted attraction. I shall therefore offer no apology for again adverting to a subject which does concern us much, as men and as Christians ; for if these races really are, what the promoters of them would fain represent them to be ;—conducive to the best interests of the country, and by consequence, to the glory of God ; then are your spiritual guides bound, either openly to support them, or else to show why they are backward in this so laudable design. But if on the contrary, such practices are baneful to the community, and consequently displeasing to God ; then by the same rule, (not now to speak of higher considerations) are these same guides obliged, as men “ set in authority” distinctly to deliver a clear and decided protest against them ; and the more specious the form of temptation presented, the more earnest should their voice of admonition be. For myself, as regards my own motives and feelings, in a somewhat trying position, I will not parade them before you, because

I do trust that they will not lightly be questioned by any—but if otherwise, through evil as through good report, am I pledged to “declare the whole counsel of God.” This much however I may be permitted to state, that if on any former occasions, I have directly alluded in terms of reproof, to proceedings upheld by some of the more influential members of this congregation ; and in so doing have sought to magnify my office, I have not sought (God knoweth !) to magnify myself ; and have only asserted the rightful claims of the Ministry, because I knew no members of my flock over whom I was not appointed to watch, and could recognize none for whom I should not have to give a strict and a solemn account before the judgment seat of Christ. To proceed then with the subject proposed, on which, by God’s blessing, I will endeavor to speak in a plain and familiar way ; and to show you why I would include the races among “the unfruitful works of darkness,” that is among works not only barren of good, but fraught with unmixed evil ; and would therefore call upon you, as you value your souls, to have no fellowship with such works, but rather to reprove them.

But before I enter fully into the argument, I must notice an objection urged *in limine* against the right of discussing this subject at all, not that I consider the objection of any weight, but because it is frequently advanced, and though futile in itself, does derive an air of plausibility from the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed. It is : *that the laws of the land do not forbid these practices.* A very negative sanction be it remarked, and one which, in plainer language amounts to this : that they who regard horse-racing as a nuisance, cannot put it down by the strong arm of the law. But it is the prerogative of the

pulpit, while it inculcates obedience to existing laws, to seek to ameliorate them, and thanks to the influence thus employed, many a wholesome reform has latterly been effected. Yes !—Thanks to the influence exerted by the people of God, on the masses of the community, and through them, on their Representatives; many a sanguinary enactment has now ceased to disgrace the Statute Book. Thanks to this influence, lotteries so lately encouraged by the State, are now branded as immoral ! Thanks to this influence, a voice has gone forth proclaiming liberty to the slave, throughout the length and breadth of the British Dependencies ! And I will add, that should it please God to spare my life for a few years longer, I do not despair of seeing, (thanks to this same influence) the obnoxious pastime of horse-racing repressed by legal enactment, or shamed away by the voice of public opinion. Already in many parts of England, where the Gospel is faithfully preached, it is falling into disrepute.

I trust that we are now free to examine the advantages said to result from the institution of races, and to try whether they are not *specious* rather than *real*.

First then ;—*An impulse is thus given to the circulation of money !* Yes, no doubt ; but the impulse of an unnatural excitement. A shock may be given to the body, and the blood shall be made to circulate with greater rapidity, but without any advantage to the system generally, and at the expense of local pains. And so as it regards the body politic : by the excitement of the races, money may be made to circulate, or rather to “change hands.” But ah ! if I were to appeal to the recollections of those now present, how many a tale of woe might be furnished in proof of the assertion : that while the community at large is *not* benefitted, there is

no lack of individual misery. Ah ! Should we not then hear of families reduced from opulence to beggary—of stains upon many a name, until then unsullied !—of lives, it might be, flung away in the recklessness of despair !—But I will not proceed with the painful catalogue.—If the commercial interests of a country do indeed require to be *thus* promoted, perish those interests that must needs be promoted at such a cost !

Again :—*The breed of horses is improved !* Now, it must be confessed that this is a matter of importance, and does deserve the serious consideration of all who wish well to their country ; but are these races the only means by which this end can be attained ? or might not some equally efficacious and less objectionable method be devised ? It may fairly be doubted whether the breed of animals can be improved, at the expense of so much cruelty to the animals themselves—for that these are cruel sports, none will deny, and though of late years horses while actually engaged in the race, may not be subjected to the same measure of unmerciful treatment to which they were formerly exposed ; yet the general training must have an injurious effect, if it be true that the racer is a short-lived animal, and often prematurely aged, before grown to its full strength. Nor must it be forgotten that almost all cruel practices may be excused on a similar plea. Bull-baiting, for example, was once the method in vogue for improving the breed of cattle, and cock-fighting the approved system of stocking the poultry-yard !

But again :—These races are “ *good old English sports.* ” Now any thing that may serve to endear England to us is valuable, and I would that our good old mother-country were as careful to bind all her colonies to her by the tie of religious education, as she is to naturalize her very question-

able sports among them ! But let us hope that she is awakening to a sense of her duty in this respect. To return—The sports of England are not those things which are most creditable to her ; and as for the sports of “ olden time ! ”—Why, unless it can be shown that our habits and manners are those of the olden time, these are plainly unsuited to us. Indeed, if the March of Intellect can effect any improvement at all in our social relations, it ought certainly to effect it in the character of our popular and prevailing diversions.

But yet again :—*The tendency of these amusements is to encourage manliness !* Now if we scrutinize this pretension, we shall find it to rest upon a very slight foundation. The trial of speed is between horses and not men—who are merely the lounging spectators—and if it be said that the skill of the jockey is almost as necessary to success as the speed of his horse, yet in all sober sense, what is there in the training of the jockey to call out the faculties of his mind, or to brace up the energies of his body ? Is it not, on the contrary, such as almost to preclude the exercise of the one, and seriously to impair the powers of the other ?

~ I do not know whether any other beneficial effects are anticipated from the races ; if there are, you will probably find them enlarged upon in the public prints, which certainly spare no pains to recommend them to you : these, however, which I have mentioned do appear to me rather *specious* than *real*.

I am now to show that plain, positive, and palpable mischief will arise from the races ; and here I must observe that I speak of races as they *have been*, as they *are*, and as judging from the known sinfulness of human nature, they ever *will be*. I do not argue from what they might be, if some Utopian theories were realized, but remarking that certain

effects do invariably flow from them, I am bound to argue that their tendency is to produce these effects.

First then;—They subtract money which can ill be spared from the labouring classes of the community. It is idle to say that such persons are not *obliged* to attend : the fact is, they *do* and *will* attend. Assuming that at our races 5,000 working men will be, if not strictly speaking thrown out, yet enticed out of two days' employment ; and computing their daily wages at an average rate of half-a-dollar a head, we find a loss to them and their families of \$5,000, at a time when employment can be obtained, and when a supply of fuel and other provision for the winter ought to be laid in.

But the races do not only lure away the artizan from his work, (probably to the no small detriment of his employer, and the consequent hindrance of business,) they promote idleness among all classes, and with idleness the evils which follow in its train. On the day of the races, our city will present the appearance of a deserted city, and deserted for what ? Do you think that the pillar of fire will go before the multitudes who thus leave their abodes at the call of vanity ? Do you think that the blessing of God will rest upon them ? Ah ! methinks that if the Saviour were on earth he would look upon such a city and weep over it !—But I must not wander from my subject. I know that, owing to the more efficient system of police established, we shall probably be spared some of the more revolting exhibitions of profligacy which so loudly proclaimed the benefit of the races last year. And this is some instalment of good ; and we have reason to be grateful that the evils originating in local causes, will thus in a measure be obviated. But, alas ! how small the amount of the evils to be lamented can be cured by police regulations !—The disease is radical ; and until human nature

have been changed, it *must needs be* that *such* a concourse composed of *such* ingredients, collected for *such* purposes, ferment into crime !—Drunkenness, and profligacy, in all its varied forms, must and will have holyday ! and excess of every kind must and will prevail.

Again ;—Races encourage betting, which I need hardly remark is a practice in direct violation of the tenth commandment—a practise fraught with so much of evil when carried to any great extent, that it ought not to be sanctioned or connived at to any extent, even by those who are careless of the Divine interdict ; a practice, moreover, which is an infraction of the spirit if not of the strict letter of those very legislative enactments which prohibit gambling.

Again ;—The races furnish an occasion of jealousies, bickerings, and heart-burnings between those who win and those who lose, and their respective friends and adherents ; and whether they improve the breed of horses or not, (a matter more than doubtful,) they do call into being, foster and encourage, those disgraceful varieties of our degraded human species, distinguished as swindlers and black-legs—the pest of a civilized society ! Indeed, of all characters, the “ knowing one” of the turf, the man who so arranges his betting books as to be morally certain of success in his nefarious speculations ; and who has reduced villany to a system, is at once the most dangerous and the most thoroughly despicable. Now, not more certainly “ where the carcass is do the eagles gather together,” than these creatures congregate in the neighbourhood of a race-course : and let no one here present think, in the pride of conscious rectitude, that he could never become like-minded with them ; but rather let him avoid temptation, remembering, that the family of sharpers is perpetuated in the dupes whom they ensnare.—But in good truth, they who

may be termed gentlemen by feeling, do often strangely forget themselves in these scenes, and in deference to the laws of honor, falsely so called, do seriously injure their honest and lawful creditors.

My Brethren, I will not proceed further in this strain—nor appeal any longer to your good sense and right feeling as citizens and neighbours ;—it is time that I address you as professing Christians. As such, it will be with you an axiom of religious polity, that the welfare of a people cannot be promoted but in the use of means, on which the blessing of God may be sought and expected ; and that no means are of this character which do not directly or indirectly tend to His glory. Now are races such means ? Is there any one person here who would attempt to vindicate their propriety on purely Christian grounds ? I believe that no such person could be found amongst us, for I know that it is a prevailing opinion even among those who themselves frequent the course, that a *Clergyman* or a *Saint* ought not to be seen there ; in other words, that the man who is commonly honest in his profession, cannot agreeably to that profession, be thus employed. This opinion I think to be decisive as to the general estimate formed of these practices, as means of giving glory to God, namely, that they are not calculated to effect this end ; and therefore, they cannot but be considered by the Christian as “unfruitful works of darkness.” Indeed if they did not bear upon them such a marked and decided impress of enmity to God and His Christ, and were not so utterly devoid of any semblance of good, they could not be regarded by him as other than the “works of darkness,” if they were not strictly “of the light.” For the Christian is one taught to act upon the assumption that his lot is cast in the midst of “a crooked and perverse generation,” to

whose doings he must not be conformed, but must regulate his conduct by principles, not only differing from, but totally opposed to them. His standard will not be that of the world; and while on the one hand no employment in which the glory of God may be advanced, can be mean in his eyes, so on the other, none can be honorable which does not promote that end. Is any lawful occupation reputed mean? He will throw a dignity over it by the manner in which he will engage in it. But is any deemed honorable which is nevertheless but of time and sense? What has he the temple of the Lord “to do with idols?” He cannot invest with dignity that which is earthly and sensual, and will himself suffer from the contact. Nor is it only on account of the dignity of his new nature, that the Christian is bound to be jealous over himself, as to the scenes which he may frequent, the work which he may take in hand, and the company with which he may consort; and to require that these be such as become godliness—he is constrained by every principle of gratitude to do nothing which may dishonor His Master’s Name. A purchased profession!—He is not his own—his time is not his own—his money is not his own—his talents are not his own—nay his very life is hid with Christ in God! How then can he separate himself from his Saviour, and go whither that Saviour cannot follow him with a blessing? Can he have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, and *yet* walk in darkness—unless indeed there *be* a fellowship between light and darkness—unless two *can* walk together who are not agreed! Alas! in his ordinary intercourse with the world, he may be, by reason of his manifold infirmities, but too careless to make mention of the Name of the Lord and His righteousness only—yet at least he will re-

use to be the companion of such as never mention that name, but to blaspheme it !—or that righteousness, but to revile it !—and if he be but too niggardly in the offerings of his money, and too prone to spend upon himself, that which of right belongs to God—yet at least he will not seek money in the use of unlawful means, nor spend it in a studied contempt of God's providence ! And if he be but too lavish of his precious time, in employments which do not sufficiently uphold or set forward the glory of God—yet at least he will not encourage those of which his own sober estimate is, that he should be afraid to die when engaged in the pursuit of them.

But supposing the Christian to acknowledge that these are unfruitful works of darkness, and to declare that he will have no fellowship with them, but will studiously avoid them—Has he therefore done his part ? No—no—the Christian lives not to himself. Not only must he not promote, but must use every lawful means to discountenance these things, which, if they be comparatively harmless to some (though sinful be it remembered in all—for “whatsoever is not of faith is sin”) are yet deeply and extensively prejudicial to many of those his fellow men and fellow sinners, for whom Christ died. He would not be seen on the race-course, aiding in his own person and abetting such practices ! Can he then tacitly sanction that in others which he would reprove in himself ? Oh ! he will *hardly* thus act who has learnt to live for God. And let not any one say : “ I wish well to the cause of Christ, but what influence have I ? what can I possibly do in this matter ? ” Who then is warranted in adopting any such language ? Is not every individual a member of that body termed “ the people,” a component part of that aggregate of influence

so powerful under the name of "public opinion?" And is not every believer a member of that mystical body, between all the members of which such a sympathy of mutual interest subsists?—Who so weak? Who so mean that he cannot exert some influence for good if so disposed?—What! a father of a family—and no influence!—What! a wife or a husband—and no influence! What! a brother or a sister—and no influence! Since what time then have the cords of affection become thus powerless? Nor let those who have the talent of wealth or station fail to remember their peculiar responsibilities—nor let any father who may have any, the smallest *doubt*, as to the propriety of these amusements, lead his children thither with him; lest hereafter he see cause to regret that a father's influence should have been to his children the first and the strongest inducement to the commission of this sin. And let us all remember, that "the time is short"—that "the fashion of this world passeth away," that we have a work to perform which demands our utmost energies, and unremitting attention—that they who are young, may soon die—that they who are aged, cannot live long—and that to all, "after death is judgment." In reference also to the season on which these races are about to be held, viz : on the day immediately following the stated celebration of the Lord's Supper, I wish to ask it of those who are accustomed on such occasions, to unite with the people of the Lord, and to keep the feast; whether they can with comfort to themselves, attend at the Lord's table and at the race-course also—or what they propose to do under these embarrassing circumstances—and whether of the two they will prefer? If they think to do *both*—I implore them fairly to consider the profession which they will make at that Table, and then

to reflect whether the races are likely to further a devout resolution to "lead a new life."

And now, in conclusion, if it be said that thus to dilate upon one species of worldliness, is to give an undue prominence to it, to the neglect of other and weightier matters of the law, I would only observe, that the engines set in motion by this species of temptation, are powerful in no common degree, and baneful to no common extent. Vanity, Avarice, Love of Pleasure—The appeal is constant and unvarying to these, the strongest feelings of our nature. Week after week, as the appointed season comes round, we see in almost every newspaper, under the inspiring device of two horses spurred on to the goal, these races recommended to the public eye!—The sanction of the Sovereign—a sanction perhaps of usage rather than of will—and which, (I say it with all becoming deference,) ought to weigh nothing in a question of this kind—is studiously paraded.—The valuable prizes are exhibited in due array.—The list of influential stewards is displayed—inducing the weak and wavering to believe, that if they do sin, they will sin in good company.

Nor are we permitted to view this pastime, in the light of a popular amusement, and to discuss it as such:—A claim of patriotism is set up, and generally acquiesced in, and they who promote horse-racing, are termed "benefactors!" And shall I—who, from my heart am persuaded, that they "who do such things," are at once sinning against their own souls, and (however well meant their intentions) bringing down a curse upon the land, and not a blessing. Shall I—because my motives may possibly be misconstrued, make no effort to disabuse the public mind, and to interpose a word for God? My Brethren, I dare not thus trifle

with your eternal interests, and my own plighted vows—
and though you may, and probably will treat with contempt, the remarks which I have offered ; yet I do bless God, that I can leave the issue, with perfect confidence, in His hands ; and can feel, that whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I at least have delivered my soul !—And now, &c.