

A PLEA FOR PLAY;

BY THE REV. EMILE S. HARPER

A series of sermons on "Happiness," by the Rev. Emile S. Harper, rector of All Saints Church, Brooklyn, is attracting considerable attention. The third was on "A Plea for Play."

A certain type of man that holds rigidly to his orthodoxy would never have been satisfied with Jesus Christ. I refer to that kind of unhappy mortal to whom religion is purely repression, and Christianity is joylessness. These want in a leader a parody rather than a paragon. They were to be found in the Nazirites of the Old Testament, the Essenes of the New, in the anchorites and ascetics of the primitive Church, the flagellants of the Middle Ages, and in an echo in perversed Puritanism. It is the spirit we may call "kill joy." Today it lifts its unlovely head above the gray grass and arid stones of a sterile ecclesiasticism, from which it has sucked all the life-giving properties of joyful, uplifting religion.

If there be any unhappy descendants of these joyless forebears in my congregation, I am hoping that they may be shocked into doing something that at least remotely resembles play. In wholesome play we receive physical benefit as well as mental rest. It oxygenizes the blood, restores vigor, and removes the impurities. Play wipes away the cobwebs from the mind, permitting the student when he returns to his work to do something really worth while. Play, of the proper kind, in many cases, clears the soul of its incubance, so that it may sail on its journey Godward unhindered by the gloom and sorrow of a care-burdened world.

Perhaps when I advocate play a word that includes all the pleasurable activities in the category of recreation. I am afraid that I may receive the contention of being frivolous. Then I shall place the blame upon a most serious source, for the inspiration of this sermon comes from that most hopeful and helpful leader of humanity, Richard C. Cabot, M. D. He is a most enthusiastic advocate of play, this professor of medicine in the Harvard Medical School.

Can anyone imagine this great man playing the role of frivolity? Can a man that has written on social morality, on social service, on psychotherapy, as well as standard works in the narrower and more technical fields of his profession, works such as "Differential Diagnosis," "Serum Diagnosis," and others that I refrain from mentioning, lest I weary you, be convicted of frivolity? I wish that all of my listeners could own and study his book, "What Men Live By," and take the lessons to their own lives.

Our fathers had a saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." However, there was always a dim suspicion in the back of their dear old foggy minds that this was Scripture quoted by the devil and the converse was true. "All play and no work makes Jack and Jill, dull and unprofitable." For every ounce that he might hear the first we would have dinged and dinged into our ears and statement that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." We would be informed that there was "lost" somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes. And horror or horrors, there was no reward offered, for they were gone forever. However, too often in their idle hands and lost time were represented by marbles and dolls, by baseball and rope skipping, and sometimes, too, by the father's going fishing or hunting. They forgot that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and they cared not that the temple might be ruined so long as the mind was filled with all the lore of all ages, wisdom both secular and sacred. They ignored the fact that a weakened body was a poor temple and before too often in a total incapacity to use the treasures once placed in its sanctuary. Would that more might remember the motto of the Latins, "A sound mind in a sound body."

The nation is being awakened to the need of healthful recreation. The National Playground Association is meeting today some of the needs of the children. As Dr. Cabot observes, "No one would have dreamed, a generation ago, of groups of sober adults taking counsel together in a playful spirit and with missionary zeal, to the end that they might spread abroad the gospel of play. To our fathers that would have sounded as blasphemous as a gospel of laxity, as absurd as a gospel of sweetmeats."

How different are the Latin text books of today from those of a generation ago, and before the child could commence to read he learns all there was to learn of rules and exceptions, of declensions and conjugations. Now, when three words are mastered he is allowed to put them together in a sentence and the game of building is started. Yet you will hear objections to this method from those apparently still living in the middle ages. The objection is that the former method was so much more thorough. That is a fallacy. The truth is that formerly scholars were given a heterogeneous conglomerate of mental tablets in an educational table d'hôte, which produced intellectual dyspepsia, but were given the few foods and simple, that are suitable for mental assimilation. The subjects are too varied, but the methods is right.

It is wrong, going through some of the churches where there is a good parish house well used. Because the children play during the week in the gymnasium it does not mean that the Sunday school is any less efficient. If the men play there during the week it does mean that they will be more apt to worship on the Sunday. There will be a class of men that is of more use to the church than those who think that religion is merely singing psalms and dwelling on human imperfections. There is more joy among the angels over one strong, virile man that gives himself to God than over ninety and nine weak men that need no comradeship and fun.

In the development of your child the whole history of the human race is re-enacted. The little baby has one test by which he proves all things, the sense of taste. The paleolithic man did not ponder over abstractions. What was good to eat, what pandered to the sense pleased him and the little mite of humanity is his descendant. The destructive age is reached, but more important for us in this connection, is that time when the boy reaches the clan age of old, or what we hate and call the "gang" age. Unhappy is the lad that does not belong to some good gang. He is a pariah or has a foolish mother. In that gang age the most beautiful of his virtues may be developed. He is obedient to the leader, he is loyal to the gang, he is liberal for the common good. Here is where the idea of the Boy Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls does its great work. Their ideal is not repression, which is futile, but development and guidance, which is salutary.

The joy also at about this time reaches the acquisitive age. He begins his collection of valuables and we can see the future Rockefeller or Rothschild. In these two incidents of his life, how happy is the country boy.

His gang has the fields and forests in which to roam. He is one of a band of Indians "starring" the trees by collecting birds eggs, rocks and flowers. He captures rabbits and birds. This may be bad for the animals, but it is better for the boy than his city brother is doing. In the better quarters of the city the boy has guidance, and there is a shield in the ideal of the athlete, or the physically brave boy. The lad in the slums knows nothing of this. His collections are lewd pictures, bad money and the faces of prize fighters. What constitutes his treasures it would be hard to say, but we know that treasures he will have. Heartful play is restricted to fights with other gangs and the only union is against the common enemy, the "cop." His hero too often is the tough, the pick-pocket or any fellow that knows how to get "easy money."

The boys of today that are teaching the fagots stealing and eating are above the busy hum of our industrial city, above the roar of traffic in subway and elevated, above the incessant din of riveting machines on rapidly rising skyscrapers, above the cry of the need and suffering rises the cry of our chest aching and the cry of what they have never known—a dumb, inarticulate wail that some day may change to the sullen snarl of a striped and numbered enemy of society, the modern Ishmaelite whose hand is against everybody and everybody's hand against him.

One great reason that we adults do not play is that we are not allowed to play. Public opinion demands that we do not play; it wants us to pose. When we are men we must put away childish things, and by childish things it means unmanly things. Imagine a judge being anything else than judicial. By the solemn word we have tried to put him outside the realm of play. He must act as though he were deciding the most momentous questions all the time. He cannot be human.

The most serious person in all the world is the young doctor. His first patient, suffering from some trivial complaint, is treated to all the technical words he has learned and has not forgotten in four years of study. The whole case is made more serious. The trouble is that he thinks the world wants him to be serious and not natural and playful. He is right. If he should tell the patient to go out for a long walk, laughing at the thought that there was anything dangerous, that patient would go where there are ailments and needs who knew her.

Worst of all, is the fate of the minister. He has had to act a grave part, for lo! these many years. He cannot be himself, for if he were the congregation would immediately look for his successor. He wants to be human. It is your fault that he is not, if he is not.

How unreal is the worship in some churches. You enter, possibly a bit late, and you hear the "solemn" voice droning along in the service, and it sounds as though the reader were a dweller in the tombs, garbed in sackcloth and ashes, sitting in the shade of a weeping willow tree, his food unheavenly bread and bitter herbs. We are getting away from this because we have more sanity because we have more play.

The church has forgotten that the Master had joy all His life. We take the most trivial incident in the gospels and make it into a solemn occurrence. Every event in the gospels is serious, but all are not solemn. When Jesus rebuked Martha. He was not speaking in the same tone as when he pronounced the woes on the Pharisees. He was a sad and complaining one, "Martha, Martha, thou art troubled and troubled about many things." We have the dear good Marthas to day, but do not think the Master was condemning her utterly. He loved Martha and He loves her counterpart the life of today, to whom we laughingly say, "Do not take life so seriously and sadly."

He whose Advent was heralded by songs of joy knew the value of play. In matches parables He spoke of joy, not the quiet, subdued joy of colorless triumph, but exuberant joy that overruns into laughing and dancing. In scenes of festivities, He performed the first miracle that ushered in the good news of the gospel.

In this world there will be sorrow, but the sorrow will be more easily borne by him who knows the value of play. Let us all aim to have more play in our work. Have the play not for the sake of play alone, but for the work that we can do after the play is over, provided the play cannot be carried over into the work. Remove tedium and draggery if we can, and if not then forget the tedium in healthful play. Solemnity and seriousness as ends in themselves are vicious. They will defeat the best work. Behind all good play there is something serious, but it must be well behind, or there will be no value in the play.

There is health, social contact, physical development and physical grace and possibly the love of God that bids us bring joy to all our friends. The most glorious words of all in the Bible are, "Fear not, for behold I bring you tidings of great joy."

In that great epic of Creation we spoken by God to the suffering, we find no heavy, serious, somber solemnity. After the earth and the sea were formed, the mighty mountains heaped on high, the water courses chiselled by the finger of the Almighty, we are told that the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Let us do our little bit of creative work in the spirit of joy. Let us go from useful toil to refreshing play and from revivifying play to cheerful toil, that as we go through life our work and play may be as good that the morning stars sing together and all the sons of God shout for joy.

In preparing the linen centres for crochet work I have found the following method to be of great help, writes a contributor of Good Housekeeping. With a led pencil draw a circle the size needed on the linen; with the machine stitch along the line, then make a second row of stitching on the inside, about one-eighth of an inch from the first row. Trim the cloth as close as possible to the first row of stitching, and it will now be ready for the crochet work. Stitching on the machine does away with hemming, which is somewhat clumsy in heavy linen, and the second or inside, row gives a line by which the crocheting may be made perfectly even.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

January 17, 1915
THE CALL OF GIDEON
Judges 6: 11-40

GOLDEN TEXT—Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth. Psa. 65:4.

This story of Gideon teaches us that man does not know himself; no man knows how great he is capable of becoming, or what great things he may be destined to accomplish.

It also teaches us that the man who recognizes his own limitations most clearly is the man who is able to trust God most implicitly. "Wherewith shall I save Israel?" asked Gideon. "Behold my family is poor in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house."

What Gideon thought of himself was what his neighbors thought about him, but what God thought of Gideon was a very different thing. God knew that Gideon was the sort of man that He could use, and therefore Gideon was capable of doing great things. No one but God would have the thought of selecting Saul of Tarsus, the fierce persecutor, to be the greatest of Gospel missionaries.

There is in every man some capacity for participation in the divine nature, because the Holy Spirit can communicate His own nature and His own power, and His own holiness, to the spirit of a man, if the man will only put himself without reserve in the hands of the Holy Spirit, to be moulded and guided as He pleases. And as the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit are infinite, there can be no limit to what He is capable of doing in and through a man, except the limit of the man's capacity for receiving and utilizing the power of the Spirit; and that depends upon the character of the man.

The Holy Spirit cannot do much with a weak-willed, feeble, or frivolous person, even if that person does desire to be used by the Spirit; unless the whole nature of the person can be changed and such change cannot be experienced without passing through some severe trial, or some great crisis that will break down the nature to very depths and burn the frivolity of freckleness out of him. As a rule, it is only intense, purposeful, determined, self-controlled persons who are used by God for the accomplishment of great purposes. God can change a very weak man into a very good man, very quickly, if the man is willing to be changed, but it is only with great difficulty that God can make anything of a careless, indifferent man, or one who is lacking in determination.

"There came an angel of the Lord and sat under an oak." In the 8th verse, we read, "The Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel." The prophet reminded them of what God had done for them and rebuked them for their disobedience to God's commands. Then God sent an angel, who seems to have been the Angel of the covenant, "the Angel of His presence." Isa. 63:9 the same Angel that appeared to Abraham at Hebron and told him of the coming destruction of Sodom. That was the Lord Jesus Christ. (See John 8:55-58.)

Job spoke of God as the Angel who redeemed him from all evil. (Gen. 48:15, 16. And in the subsequent verses of the chapter before us the Angel who appeared to Gideon is called "the Lord.")

In other passages we read of angels that were with Jesus when He appeared to Abraham, and who afterward visited Lot and dragged him out of Sodom, were clearly angels, and the angel Gabriel is mentioned by name both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. And the angels who announced the nativity of Jesus to the Shepherds were real angels.

"Have not I sent thee?" "Surely, I will be with thee." A created angel would not talk that way. He would say, "God has sent you and God be with you."

"If the Lord be with us, why then is all this evil come upon us?" That is the question of all ages. If God is good, why is there so much evil in the world? If God loves His children why does He allow them to suffer so much? The fashionable way of answering that question now is to argue that God does not interfere in the affairs of men in any way, but leaves the laws of nature and the will of man to work out their own consequences. But it is difficult to believe that those who give this answer have done any thing on the subject, because their answer is a very serious accusation against God. If He had created such a world as this, and such a being as man, and then left the world and man to the dominion of the blind forces of nature and of the evil dispositions which men have developed, without supervision or control, it would be impossible to believe that God loves men.

If one could believe that, we would be forced to the conclusion that God had made a mistake in creating the world; because He could not know whether the result of His work would be good or bad. He could not control all the forces which He created. And we would be obliged to infer from the past and present history of the world, that more of evil than of good has resulted, and is likely to result from the creation of this world. The only basis on which we can see any reason to expect a glorious outcome, an outcome worthy of God, is in the assurance which the Bible gives us that God is in the world, that all the forces at work in the world, whatever their nature, are under His control, and that He is working out His own glorious purposes in and through the chaotic conditions which seem to dispose His presence.

"Surely I will be with thee." That was an absolute guarantee of success to Gideon, because it was accompanied with a promise of success; but the presence of God with His people is not always a guarantee of outward or visible success. Many of the Lord's saints have struggled earnestly and long to accomplish some special work for Him, without achieving success. We need to learn to trust God to gather up the loose ends of our failures and weave with them His own design. He will certainly do that if we work faithfully and hopefully leaving the results to Him.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after giving a long list of the heroes of faith in Old Testament times, says, "These all having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise. God having provided some better thing concern-

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ing us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11: 29, 40.)

And Jesus said to His disciples, "One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not labored; others have labored, and ye are entered into their labor." (John 4:35-39.) Our share of the work may be only the sowing, or the cultivating; the reaping may be for others to do, but Jesus said that in the end he that soweth and he that reapeth will rejoice together.

RIBBON TRAY.
To make a ribbon tray, take two oblong embroidery hoops, and cover them by winding with ribbon one half of an inch wide. On the smaller hoop sew a piece of Dresden silk; draw it tight to form the bottom of the tray. Cover small pieces of wire of brass rings with narrow ribbon to form handles, and place them between the hoops. Finish with bows. For the legs of the tray, use four glass push pins.

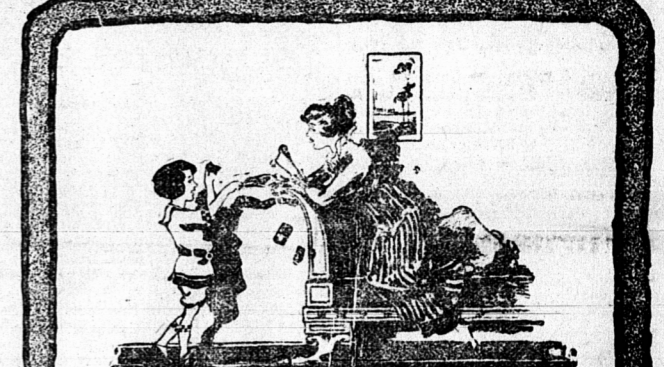
INFANTS ATROCITIES.
Naming babies after great men and events is a practice that no amount of civilization seems able to stamp out. While waiting for the arrival of pink, gurgling and helpless Przemysla Smith, let us consider past and present offences, quoted by the Philadelphia Ledger from British correspondence:

Scores of babies born during the present war will bear for life names inflicted upon them by parents carried away with patriotism or wishing to keep fresh events in history by the children whose names will recall the events. Among the child insurance registrations recently were: "Alsace Lorraine Jones" and "Louvain Nicholls." Jones" and "Louvain Nicholls."

A similar epidemic prevailed during the South African War. This prompted a song which became popular and a chorus which went:

"The baby's name was Kitchener, Carrington, Kekewich, Methuen, White, Kruger, Powell, Majuba, Gatacre, Warren, Colenso, Bright, Cape Town, Mafeking, French, Kimberley, Ladysmith Dobbs, The Union Jack, Fighting Mack, Buller, Pretoria, Bobs."

SMART VEILINGS.
Black flet veillings are perhaps the foremost of the many types now in favor. Plain black flets are a strong feature. Black flets, with huge velvet squares arranged in border design or elsewhere sparsely scattered over the mesh are smart. Hexagon and hairline novelties occupy a good position. There is a slightly increased demand for tete de negre brown, taupe and myrtle novelties. New sand colored veillings are shown for wear with sand-colored hats.



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