

Arthur's Person

(3)

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The Risks and Rescue of Young Men.

The Risks of young men constitute one of the saddest facts, and the Rescue of Young men suggests one of the most momentous questions, of modern society.

On every side of us, we see the fairest, brightest, noblest of our youths falling into premature and dishonored graves or becoming the victims of habits which make manhood the synonym of disgrace and a hoary head a crown of Shame. Death's reapers are ever at work, and if we listen intently we may almost hear the sweep of their sickles as they cut down one new victim every second. Every beat of the pendulum is a fatal signal to some new soul, carrying it on to the extremity of life's awful arc.

But as though Death's ordinary reapers were not enough - as though destruction by natural agents were not sufficient -

ly sure and swift, lo, into the meadow move the legions of
Sin's myriad vassals and put in the sickle. They wait not
for the harvest to be ripe. Where Death would spare, till the
shock of corn, whitened with its full age might come in his
season, Sin delights to mow down unsparingly while, as
yet the ear is not even formed, or the green blade half grown.
The facts need not be told, how the mine-cup, the gambling
table, the strange woman, greed of gain, love of pleasure,
lust of power, social vice and vicious society, fashionable
corruption and corrupting fashion, all the combined in-
fluences of enslaving passions, debasing literature and
destroying associations, all the forms of indulgence, infi-
delity and irreligion are sweeping our young men into
an abyss worse than death and there is no one to deliver.

The text seems very fitting as a guide to our thought, as we study the methods of Rescuing Young Men from the Perils thus threatening and engulfing so many.

In the mind of the wise man, there comes the vivid vision of some great destroying scourge. He beholds multitudes taken off, dragged away to death, and tottering to the slaughter like victims borne to the scaffold, and shrinking before the executioner. What may be the precise character of the death they face is neither manifest nor material. It is sufficient that it is no relentless destiny, no inevitable doom which hurries them on. Deliverance is possible and practicable. And hence the sacred writer solemnly charges upon the reader a responsibility, in the matter and suggests that if we

fail, to do our duty, neither the fact that our guilt has been only the negative guilt of inaction, or the plea that we have been needlessly ignorant of the ruin, in progress will be accepted as an apology by Him who will render to every man according to his work.

Moses Stuart renders the whole passage as an injunction: Deliver thou those who are drawn away to death and those who are tottering to the slaughter & do thou keep back! Although thou shouldst say "Behold, we know not this! He that pondereth hearts doth not he know, Yea He that guardeth thy soul doth know: and He will [render to] reward every man according to his work.

The construction does not affect the sense. The peril is acknowledged; with the duty of ascertaining & interposing.

You will see therefore how naturally these words become
our guide in inquiring as to the Risks and the Rescue
of Our young Men. They are being drawn by the thous-
and unto death, and by the ten thousands are ready
to be slain. It is yet possible to deliver many of them.
possible even to destroy many of the snares which now
prove so fatal, and God puts upon us the responsibility
Vain to ask am I my brother's Keeper; God may be say-
ing even now the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto
me from the ground. True, ours is not the murderous
guilt of Cain; yet God holds us accountable for every
young man who goes down to a moral death from
which we might deliver. Vain is it for us to plead that
ours has been but a sin of neglect: just this the text

rebukes: if thou forbear to deliver. Nay we may not even plead that we knew not the rapid ruin going on and our duty; God accepts no pally excuse. You and I have no right to sit with folded hands while men are perishing. no right not to know of the work of destruction going on about us. Our inaction and ignorance constitute our crimes!

Such I take to be the general sense of the text; and from this taking our start let us endeavor briefly & tersely to present on the one hand the Risks which our young men run; and then the means which may be employed by us to accomplish their rescue, and especially as to the mission of the Young Men's Christian Association, in this direction

The Risks which young men run may be very naturally divided into those which are connected with the propensity to vice, the desire for amusement and the love of society. These are in practical life generally so connected that one involves the other. For example it is often the love of society which leads one to seek amusement in the companionship of those who are familiar with vicious pleasures and by whom the novice is initiated in unlawful and even criminal gratifications. Or perhaps it is nothing more than a desire for amusement which prompts one to seek society of the gay, careless, loose young men who are ready to seek pleasure where conscience and piety forbid. But though the three risks are thus kindred, they may be considered separately.

The Risk incurred from propensities to vice.

To these, as a rule men are much more open than women. Woman from her birth is sheltered by comparative reticacy. She is surrounded by the atmosphere of home, and, rarely, leaves her father's home until she exchanges it for her own. Moreover she is different by organization; not as a rule of such active positive passionate nature, she knows nothing of those hard struggles by which alone, the young man going forth into the highways of the world and with a temperament more positive and aggressive, must maintain his early innocence and integrity. And remember we are speaking now of young men - full of the fire and fervor of youthful passions, in the very period when there is every way the most danger, when as yet habits are unformed, and principles often unfixed.

How many mothers know into what peril they send their boys when they dismiss from the precincts of home, the sons who are going into the wide world to make their own fortunes. I was born and brought up in the commercial metropolis of the nation. I have seen young men from the country come into town, to become clerks in the importing house where my father was cashier and in three months become unrecognizable, so fast had they wrecked their manhood. During a busy season while waiting for the college year to open I became myself a temporary employee of that firm and before the spring foliage of 1853 had faded into the sere and yellow leaves of autumn at least five young men in that very mercantile house had lost the bloom of their virtue, the blush of their innocence, and learned their way to the theatre and its three

attendant curses the dramshop, the gambling-house & the
brothel!

A wise and good man has said: the pendulum of destiny
swings between the years of fifteen and eighteen in the histo-
ry of every young man. And yet how habitually careless
is society and even the church of God. Even parents ignore
the danger and say behold we knew it not. How can we help
knowing it. The ruin is all about us. You, young men who
are before me, may be supposed to know young men. How
many of them would you trust, as upon principle, strictly
temperate, honest, and chaste! Scarcely one in ten! I know that
whereof I speak. Hundreds of young men in this city, clerks
in our mercantile houses spend their evenings & their earnings
where they would be sorry to have the eyes of a mother, a sister

Facts: Reapers of Death: One victim per second.

Sin's Reapers. Wine, Gambling, Greed, Lust re

Text: Vision of Wise Man. Responsibility.

Ignorance: Inaction, no excuse.

Risks, from Vice, Amusement, Society

1. Vice. Man vs. Woman. Exposure. Nature.

Departure from home. Pendulum of destiny.

2. Amusement. Play and Work. Smiles

Two Mistakes. Means and End. Hurtful forms.

3. Society. Goethe and Solomon. Companionship

Association and Assimilation. Accident re

Rescue. Great Law: Prevention not Restoration

1. Vice. Warning? Barred Gate: Self respect re

2. Amusement. Recognition and Provision

3. Society. Meet him at outset. Preoccupation

V.M.C.A. Four forms of helps.

Is it interference with Church? Unity. Economy.

Need. 1. Cooperation. 2. Library. 3. Money.

Arguments: Sanitary re. Moral.

Devil's policy. Pernicious Parsimony.

a wife or a sweetheart follow them.

And thus it is that these fast young men are so fast wasting life's best hours and powers and drying up the fountains of a true joy. Or what piteous sights are all about us if we but had a clear vision. men who are prematurely old at twenty one - youth thrown away in self-indulgence. If life itself be not sacrificed, it is spared only to be a curse. God makes them to possess the iniquities of their youth. The sins of early life become the lashing scourges of later days. Health is ruined; manhood sullied; habits of vice are established, and purity becomes virtually impossible.

The Risk of Injurious Amusements.

I am readily heartily to concede that relaxation or recreation, of a kind that is physically, mentally and morally wholesome, is not only innocent but needful. If all work and no play is injurious, however, all play and no work is destructive. Samuel Smiles finely says that the "best state of society is that in which there is some work for every man's leisure and some leisure for every man's work." The successful combination of a work, adapted to a man and recreation adapted to his work, is a much greater problem than it may seem.

Amusement, at all events will be sought by the young either of a wholesome kind in wholesome moderation or of an unseemly sort and in unprofitable excess.

It cannot be denied that the open door to what proves a life of vicious associations and habits is often entered under no worse impulse than pleasure seeking. Time hangs heavy on the hands of the idler, or perhaps of the worker after his work is done, and he naturally seeks a place of diversion. Where does he find it? In the club-room with its exclusion of female society, its fashionable dissipation, its extravagant furnishings, its atmosphere of tobacco smoke and its midnight carousals. In the billiard saloon, with its fascinating and scientific games, its jolly companions and its temptations to wine bibbing and money-wagers. In the theatre, with its brilliant scenery and array of fashion, its enchanting dramas, and its habitual pampering of the lower and sensual nature

In the lecture-hall where silvertongued orators insidiously sow the seeds of infidelity and sometimes immorality, under the guise of free speech and refined culture.

In the reading of worthless novels and perhaps a corrupting literature, which at the least degrades the mind and sometimes leaves rottenness of soul to precede ripeness of manhood.

The consequence is that many a man throws away his youth, in pleasure seeking. What would be innocent & excellent as a means becomes injurious and degrading as an end. Self-indulgence paves the way to habitual disregard of economy, and even the dictates of conscience.

The risk incurred from a love of society.

No words can exaggerate the power of our associations over us. Goethe wisely said Tell me with whom thou art found and I will tell thee who thou art: and a wiser than he had written more than two thousand years ago, He that walketh with wise men shall be wise but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Nothing settles a young man's future for two worlds more than the character of his companions; and yet nothing determines destiny more easily gradually and unconsciously. What more natural than for a young man to fall into the companionships which his business life makes almost unavoidable. Yet if his fellow clerks or mechanics be men of loose and easy morals and habits he

gradually & insensibly imbibes their views and imitates their practices. If they frequent the bar room & club room the gambling house and the theatre, what more natural than for him to go, at first, from mere curiosity, it may be; and, after becoming familiar with such sights and sounds, by and by himself venture a sip at the glass or a throw at the dice or something still worse.

If I could give every young man freshly starting out upon a career in business life, I would say guard your associations. Be companionless, admit no man to your intimacy until you know him.

How shall this risk be met? What method of rescue shall we adopt to save young men from vicious indulgence? Will warning suffice? Why, a young man treads to ruin, only by putting his fingers into his ears, and resolutely disregarding the myriad voices which admonish him. He walks over a hundred graves to his own! Tell you, that under God there is but one resort. Put up safeguards at the very entrance of a path of vice. The moment a young man begins a bad career, long before his vices become known so that he loses the respect of others, they are known to himself and he loses self respect; and from that moment his progress toward ruin acquires fearful momentum. How shall we erect these safeguards?

What method of rescue offsets this risk? I answer that a christian society must furnish wholesome amusement to take the place of that which is vicious in itself or vitiated by its associations. The appetite for knowledge must be provided with appropriate food, in the best papers and periodicals of the day, with a library of choice reading. There must be the scientific lecture to interest and instruct, amuse and inform at the same time. All rational forms of amusement should be furnished in order to supply natural cravings and needs.

Those who understand the policy of the young men's Christian Association will know what is their plan, in rescuing young men from the risks of bad society.

They propose to reach the stranger the moment he arrives in the city and from the outset endeavor to environ him with elevating intellectual moral and Christian influences. Since all young men will have society we would offer them at the first, such companionship as may become a blessing and saving influence. Assistance in this work is desired and sought and often rendered from Pastors and others throughout the country who give to young men removing here letters of introduction and communicate with members resident here the fact of their coming into our community.

Do you know that while society and even the church, at large, folds the hands in inaction and seeming indifference there is an organization, having its branches all thro' our state, whose membership composed of a few of our earnest christian young men aims to do this very thing: prevent first steps in vice? The Young Men's Christian Association of Detroit with comparatively little public sympathy & assistance, is striving to surround alike our own youth and strangers who come here, from falling into the ways of vice and sin. It aims to provide as nearly as may be a christian home free to all who seek its sheltering and elevating influences. The appliances and means employed for this end demand at such a time as this, mention in detail and may all be included under the following particulars

First, certain facilities looking to intellectual improvement:-

1 A Free Reading Room, supplied with leading newspapers and Periodicals

2 A Free Library for reading and reference, just now numbering only about volumes

3. A course of Free Lectures on literary and scientific subjects particularly designed to elevate and improve the minds and hearts of young men.

Second certain measures looking to social culture and enjoyment. 1 Introduction of strangers to fit associates and friends

1 A Social meeting by which members are brought together and made acquainted

2 These same appliances of Library and reading room and familiar lectures.

Third, certain arrangements for rendering aid in temporal and business matters

1. By obtaining good and if possible religious boarding places for young men, visiting the sick &c
2. By obtaining as far as possible good situations for those out of employment.
3. By rendering pecuniary aid to young men who are temporarily destitute or unemployed

Fourth. Certain means aiming at spiritual & moral improvement.

1. Daily noon prayer meetings at the association rooms.
2. Christian work in which it is meant to enlist every member - visiting jails, &c and holding open air services
3. A course of Sabbath evening sermons - to be added

Some one may say as has sometimes been said, that in all this the Y. M. C. A. is interfering with proper church work, or as some have affirmed has erected itself into a kind of independent church. The same may be said with equal truth of any other benevolent or philanthropic organization, like the Bible Society or Tract Society. The true conception of the Y. M. C. A. is this: it is the churches combining to do undenominational work through their Christian young men - doing work, more effectually & economically, than though each church should attempt it by a separate organization. In fact one of the most beautiful features of the association is this demonstration of a practical unity among Christians, while as yet denominational barriers are not removed!

This great humane, philanthropic and christian work for the improvement of the intellectual social and spiritual condition of young men, this Christian Association of Detroit is actually carrying forward to the utmost of the men and means at their disposal. If this great movement makes but slow and feeble progress it is simply for want of general cooperation. And I have been thus at pains, to present the character and claims of this noble though crippled organization in hope that this day which is observed throughout the nation as a day of prayer in their behalf, might bring their interests, closer to the public heart. I have sufficient confidence in the christian intelligence and generosity of the community to believe that when it is once known what a grand work these christian young are striving to do, they will have all the help they need and can ask.

First they need the active cooperation of every christian or even morally upright man in this city. What is often an intolerable burden when a few lift a load, becomes no burden, nay even a delight when a hundred hands divide the weight. And I hold that you can all well afford to give your time & energy to that which aims at nothing less than the actual salvation of youth from vice, crime, irreligion and infidelity.

Second, they need an ampler library and assortment of secular, religious and especially illustrated papers, and magazines. In hundreds of families, there are volumes neatly enshrined behind glass doors and on shining shelves, or laid away amid darkness and dust, which perhaps never read or referred to, might do unspeakable good there where young men congregate.

Third they need more money, to pay, especially, the necessary
hire of a general secretary who beside the supervision of the
reading room and parlor, shall be ready as a city missiona-
ry to be to the Association and those, over whom they watch,
just what a minister is to the church, a pastor to the flock;
who shall be at the call of those who need counsel, visit the
sick and dying, who may have no church connections, talk
with such as come into contact with him and in general
do missionary work, among, especially the young men of the
city.

I am going to be bold, and say that what these young men preeminently need is a building, held by them in trust for their uses and which shall contain or embrace the following:

First a Library and Reading room well stocked with all the various helps to literary entertainment and improvement.
Second Furnished parlors for social gatherings, prayer-meetings and Bible classes.

Third a public hall for scientific and literary lectures, concerts, and all kinds of interesting and instructive public gatherings.

To all of which ought to be added a gymnasium where in innocent trials of bodily strength and skill young men might not only find recreation, but a wholesome means

of starting the blood from its stagnant fountains after confinement at mechanical and mercantile employment during the day.

No doubt this may seem chimerical to many who hear me to night. But I say deliberately after the lapse of twenty years since I joined the first association formed in the United States, after twenty years of acquaintance and identification with young men, after twenty years of thought and study upon the subject that I believe no measure could be devised which would improve the tone of health and morals among our young men, and cost less than this. Why it would be worth while as a sanitary and economical measure. We build our hospitals, jails, houses of correction, prisons, reform schools, insane

^{& inebriate}
asylums, poor houses not as a matter of philanthropy
but of protection - on the ground of common real & wealth.
But suppose you can prevent young men from becoming
diseased, drunken, dishonest, insane, beggars, and instead
secure a new generation of healthy, sober, upright, sound-
minded, frugal, industrious men, suppose you can thus
deliver one out of three or five or ten that are drawn
unto death or ready to be slain have you any right to
forbear! Can you not afford to spend money to put up
even a golden gate that may effectually bar the entrance
of the great road to ruin whose branches conduct to
the poor house or the madhouse, the asylum & hospital
the drunkards grave and the felon's cell,

My brethren the Devil and all his legions are after our youth! See how lavish Satan is of the wealth he commands. Look at these saloons, brilliantly chandeliered, gorgeously furnished, artistically decorated, with musical instruments, & orchestral harmonies, costly gaming tables; look at these fashionable parlors in the palaces of the strange Roman in our great cities; look at these magnificent buildings where model artists and low dramatic troupes flatter to sensuality; look at the drinking saloons where amid every attraction of luxury death is dealt out by the dram. Satan spares no money to lay golden snares for the feet of our youth. Yet we allow an Association whose sole object is to save our young men from physical moral & spiritual ruin to

hire at their own expense a couple of small rooms in a third story, furnish it with second hand furniture and tattered carpet, collect a few hundred half obsolete books, a score or two of papers and magazines and then to keep their organization alive compel them to come to us and beg our charities!

I was recently asked to lecture in a small village in this state where a man not a native of this country had at his own expense founded a library and reading room for young men. He had built a fine building, and given to the village a ten years lease of the whole second story free, and furnished the nucleus of a library, reading room and art gallery at his own cost, and I was asked to give the profits of a lecture

to stock the empty shelves. That man expressly disclaims any motive of piety or philanthropy. He affirmed that he did it purely as an investment; and that he believed it would prove the most economical - cheapest way to save the village the expense of flouters, drunkards & criminals and that in the elevated moral as well as intellectual tone of society, in the promotion of intelligence and industry, in the increased prosperity of the village, he or at least his children would get the money back with interest.

Was he very far from the truth? Satan does his best at great cost to entrap our young men. They will have entertainment and amusement. If we would not have them drawn away by unwholesome, unlawful, injurious allurements we must supply something rational,

entertaining, innocent & improving. And every dollar thus given, wisely and judiciously will come back into our own bosom as christian philanthropists yes into our own purses as citizens and taxpayers. Temperance

The question, practically before us to be decided, is simply who shall have our young men? God or the Devil. And the contest is waxing hot. The enemy spares no pains. The intellect, the treasure, the energy of all wicked men are at his disposal: if an hundredth part of the intelligence, wealth and endeavor of the christian community were as freely at the disposal those who would save young men we might in hundreds of cases defeat the powers of hell! Can we stand inactive, or ignore the issue and be guiltless before God!

for Y. M. C. A. Anniversary.

church Detroit Mich. Nov. 12. 1871. Sabbath P. M.

for Ont. Nov. 26. 1871. Ext. Menabst ch Sabbath P. M.