

Buddha then comes from heaven in the clouds, and the spirit of the murdered woman is observed sitting on the petals of a flower, being now an angel. All is brilliantly illuminated by the light from heaven, and lovely flowers are seen in full bloom.

After another interval, the length of which would discourage and weary an English or Colonial audience beyond endurance but not a Japanese—who amuse themselves by eating, drinking, smoking and chatting the time away, or by playing simple games—a herald announces with a great rhetorical flourish that the most renowned ventriloquist in the world will make the very supports of the building talk and sing to them. Although the majority present are quite familiar with the wonderful pranks of this genius, they at once manifest as much interest as though they had never heard of such an astonishingly clever individual. Ashes are knocked out of the little pipes, dishes and edibles hastily collected and put away, maidens straighten out their ruffled garments and all are ready to give their undivided attention to talking posts and voices from heaven. The discordant notes of a samisen, which is a stringed instrument bearing a crude resemblance to a guitar, are heard in season and out of season as an accompaniment to a cracked, jerky, and spasmodic female voice, the combination producing an excruciating sound sufficiently agonizing to make a quartette of Kilkenny cats hide their heads for shame or send the fine chords of Paderewski's musical anatomy into convulsions. But it is charming to the Japanese.

At length everybody wearies, and the programme is changed to the recital of blood-curdling ghost stories which make the old folks utter exclamations of astonishment, while a creeping feeling passes through the frames of the children, who look nervously about them as they huddle closer to the maternal side. The ghost stories are indulged in until a sudden storm breaks over their heads and startles the audience. To the roar of thunder is added the lightning's flash in such a realistic manner as to create alarm and consternation. The noise of the storm is enhanced by the banging of doors and windows, and the entertainment is brought to a close. Occasion-

ally a disturbance takes place among the spectators which temporarily eclipses the performance on the stage, but such occurrences are very rare, considering the crude manner of providing accommodations for such a mixed crowd as attend these pleasure resorts. It is a simply a matter of time, however, when all such defects will be remedied and the good old-fashioned performances are relegated among the things of the past, for foreign innovations have already appeared on the stage, as in most everything else in Japan.

AMUSEMENTS.

THERE can be no doubt at all that a certain amount of recreation is a necessity for the healthy human being. Without it minds become unhinged and bodies become diseased. The strain of continued labour kills. It is not so much the toil that is dangerous, as the monotony.

Addison truly says that 'pleasure and recreation of one kind or other are absolutely necessary to relieve our minds and bodies from too constant attention and labour.' But the mistake which is too generally made, and which certainly defeats its own end, is to imagine that amusement is the purpose and aim of our existence.

Tully rightly tells us that 'where pleasure prevails, all the greatest virtues will lose their power.' Nothing is more easily abused than this pursuit of recreation. To find the golden mean is so difficult.

The true object of life is undoubtedly work of some kind or other; labour of the hands or of the brain, or of both together. Amusement is the relaxation which fits us for continuing our work; and therefore, though of great importance, can only be given a secondary place. It occupies somewhat the same position as our appetite for food. We can not do without it, as we can not do without eating or sleeping, but it is not the goal, the motive, the purpose of life. We live for a higher purpose.

The best possible proof that amusement is not the chief end of man, is the discontent which it always brings with it when it usurps that condition. Only those who keep their recreations in the right place know how

to properly enjoy them. They lose their freshness at once if advanced to the premier position. None are so restless and discontented as the constant pursuer of pleasure.

There are persons who have so fallen under this slavery that they can not even enjoy a quiet evening at home. If left to themselves they are miserable. They have totally neglected their inner resources, and when there is no external amusement they have nothing to draw upon. They are bankrupt of all that makes for peace and content. As Matthew Arnold puts it:

'They never once possess their soul
Before they die.'

It is a pitiable condition, but we fear that it is common enough. Do we not all know persons who are dissatisfied, fretful, unhappy, simply for the reason that they are starving their better natures—living superficial existences—votaries of constant amusement and pleasure?

But the constant amusement ceases to amuse; the so-called pleasure palls terribly; its ways are not ways of pleasantness, nor its paths peace. Yet it is difficult, almost impossible, to break loose from the bondage. The burden of habit holds them down, and the result is sometimes catastrophe.

Many ruined lives have been wrecked simply by this placing amusement before them as the aim and goal.

At best, recreation is a means to an end—a rightful and legitimate means; a good servant, but a terribly bad master. It is apt to become tyrannical and selfish, when unduly indulged, that it crushes all the faculty for nobler enjoyment—all the possibility of enjoying quiet, peaceful hours—all the exquisite contentment that comes of working for others.

We may well beware of this canker, this vampire. It is so easy to convert a good thing into bad.

Seneca draws a striking picture of our fate when we have surrendered ourselves to the constant quest of amusement. He says:

'What is the worst of all, when we grow weary of the public, and betake ourselves to solitude for relief, our minds are sick and wallowing, and the very house and walls are troublesome to us.'

There are people whose own homes are a weariness to them. What can be more deplorable than that? This is brought about by the mere exaggeration of what is a natural and healthy instinct.

As we spoil our taste for wholesome food by pampering ourselves with artificial dainties, so do we spoil the taste for pure enjoyments by continually seeking for artificial recreations. An ever-increasing stimulant is necessary to stir the jaded palate at all. The pleasure of life is lost by its being sacrificed to 'perpetual pleasures.'

