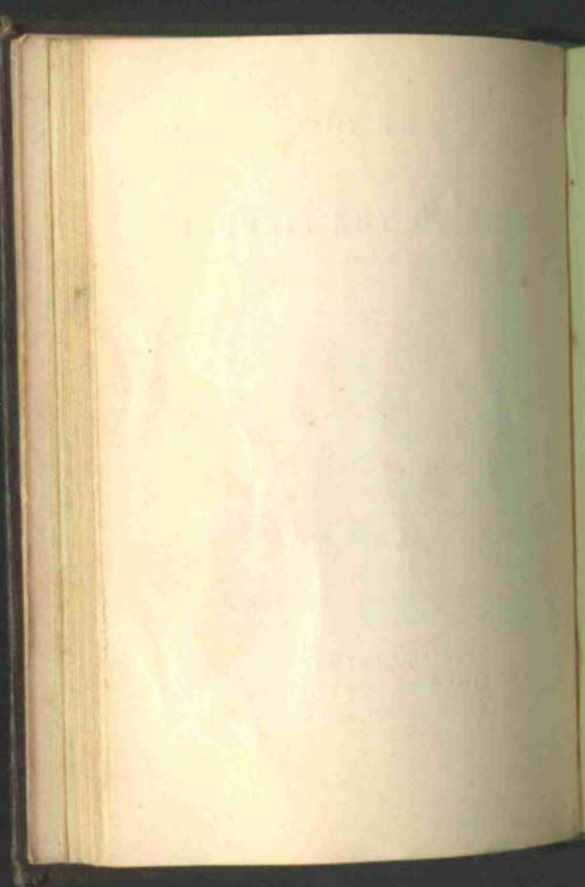




ARE YOU
GOING TO THE CIRCUS?



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A DIALOGUE.

MARY. Good evening, uncle William; I suppose you know that the circus is to be opened to-night, and my cousin Lucy has promised to take me with her. Are not you going ?

UNCLE. No, I am not, Mary; and I am very sorry that you are going. I have determined not to go for many reasons.

M. I should like to know what they are, for cousin Lucy told me that you went with her four years ago.

U. Yes, so I did; and what I then saw, and what I have since heard, have made me resolve not to go again; besides which, do you not know that a man was killed in building the circus which is to be opened to-night?*

M. Yes, I do; but that was not my fault; I could not help his being killed, nor you either.

U. No, we could not; but if I went there, I should be thinking of the poor man all the time, and that would make me very unhappy.

M. For what reason?

U. Why, I should be thinking that to procure me that amusement, a man was sent to eternity without a moment's warning; for he fell from the top, and was killed on the spot.

* The above melancholy event took place during the erection of a circus at Swansea, South Wales, in December, 1846.

M. But, uncle William, the man might have been killed in building a house or a ship.

U. Yes, so he might, that is very true; but then, Mary, houses and ships are needful things, but circuses are not needful; indeed, so far from being needful, they do much harm.

M. I should like to know what harm they do, for I have heard that in some places they allow the children of schools to go; and if they do harm, it cannot be right for them to go, nor for me either. But indeed, uncle William, I cannot see what harm there is in men riding beautiful horses.

U. O there is no harm in that, but it is only part of the performance; for I have seen women doing so, standing on the saddle, gaily, or indeed gaudily dressed, with very short dresses, and throwing themselves about in an un-

becoming manner. This cannot be right, for do you not remember what the Bible says about the dress and conduct of women?

M. Yes; that they "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." 1 Timothy, 2:9.

U. There is none of this in the circus.

M. No, there cannot be from your account, and I see now that the exhibition encourages young women to be fond of gay dress, and to be bold and immodest in manner, and all this in opposition to the word of God. But tell me something more about it.

U. There are with every circus one or two men dressed in all kind of colors, and their faces painted red and white, who are called "fools," or "jesters."

M. What do they do?

U. They play tricks with one another, and talk foolishness, to make the people laugh; do you think that is right?

M. No, I am sure it is not; for the Bible says that we are to avoid "foolish talking and jesting," Eph. 5:4; and from what you say, this is practised in the circus.

U. Yes; and perhaps if you went, you might learn to do the same.

M. What you tell me makes me begin to be afraid to go to the circus, for if I went and learned foolish talking and idle words there, what should I do in the day of judgment? For I heard my teacher read in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." But how strange it is, un-

cle, that so many people go to the circus: I suppose they have no Bibles.

U. That is not the reason: they have Bibles, and read them occasionally, as you have done; but the truth is, they do not know what the circus is until they go, and then they are so pleased that they forget all the Bible says, and soon become "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" and his word; and having gained a taste for it, they go again and again, as often as they can.

M. But does it not cost money to go there?

U. Yes, it does.

M. How, then, do poor people and children get money, when they can hardly get food and clothing? I am sure my mother finds it hard enough to get us those things.

U. I must inform you what I have

been told on this subject, for this is another bad thing to which the circus leads. In order to go there, some have been known to pawn or sell their clothes or furniture to get money, or borrow it of their fellow-workmen and others; and when pay-day comes, it must be returned, and then the wife or family must go without some necessary of life or clothing. But that is not the worst, for I have heard of masters being robbed by their servants, and even parents by their children, that they may get money in order to go to such places of amusement.

M. O, how very bad! I never thought that theatres and circuses led to so much that is evil, or I am sure I should never have wished to go with my cousin. Only think, some break the eighth commandment to go there.

U. But these are not all the bad consequences of the circus.

M. What, are there more still?

U. Yes, many; the performances are generally at night, and it often happens, I have heard, that persons who go to such places, when they come out, instead of going straight home, fall in with bad companions, and are induced to go to a public-house, where they spend their money in beer, or spirits, until they are overcome with strong drink.

M. Why, the circus coming to town leads people to commit a sin which the Bible says shuts men out of the kingdom of heaven. 1 Cor. 6:10.

U. Yes; it is well known that going to such places of vanity, and then to public-houses, has led to the ruin of thousands, body and soul; besides which, wives and children suffer by

the drinking habits of their husbands and fathers learned there.

M. O what bad things come from going to the circus. But all do not get drunk, and spend the money in beer which they ought to take home for their wife to buy food and clothing for the children.

U. No, perhaps they do not do exactly that, but quite as bad; for I have been told that in some public-houses they play cards and gamble, and often lose more money than they have; and then they borrow, and to repay this they rob their masters, and this often ends in their imprisonment perhaps for life.

M. But young women cannot get into harm by going to the circus.

U. Indeed they do; for I have heard of some who rob their employers to go there; or if not that, many, in spend-

ing their own money, deprive their aged or sick parents of some help which they might have given them; and others tell lies to go there, when their employers do not wish them to go: they say they have been to see some relation or friend. And added to this, I have heard that many young women can trace their ruin to the bad company which they have met by going to the circus or theatre.

M. O, uncle, I have heard quite enough about the circus. I see now it is bad in itself, and it leads to much that is bad also. I am determined that I will not go; and I shall do what I can to persuade cousin Lucy and others to stay away.

U. I am glad to hear you say so, Mary, and I do not think you will ever repent of such a resolution; but

to strengthen your determination, let me tell you something more.

M. I have heard quite enough; I do not want to know more.

U. But I must tell you one thing.

M. Well, what is that, uncle?

U. Have you not heard how many people there are in the world who have no Bibles and no ministers; who have never had an opportunity of knowing any thing about the Lord Jesus Christ, and the value of their souls, for the salvation of which he suffered the death of the cross?

M. Yes, I have heard that there are about six hundred millions in this wretched state.

U. How much better it would be to give the money to feed the poor, or clothe the naked, or teach the ignorant, or to help to send the gospel and Bibles to the heathen, than to support

theatres and circuses, which, so far from doing any good, do much harm.

M. I know now what I will do. I will ask my cousin to give me the money instead of taking me to the circus, and I will give it to send the knowledge of Jesus Christ to the poor heathen; and I will try to get all my young friends to do the same. I beg, uncle, that you will not say another word about the circus; I am quite ashamed that I ever thought of going there.

U. I am very thankful that you are brought to this mind, Mary. May God, by his word and Spirit, lead you to believe in and trust and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and ever keep you in the right way; and may many be induced to follow your good example.