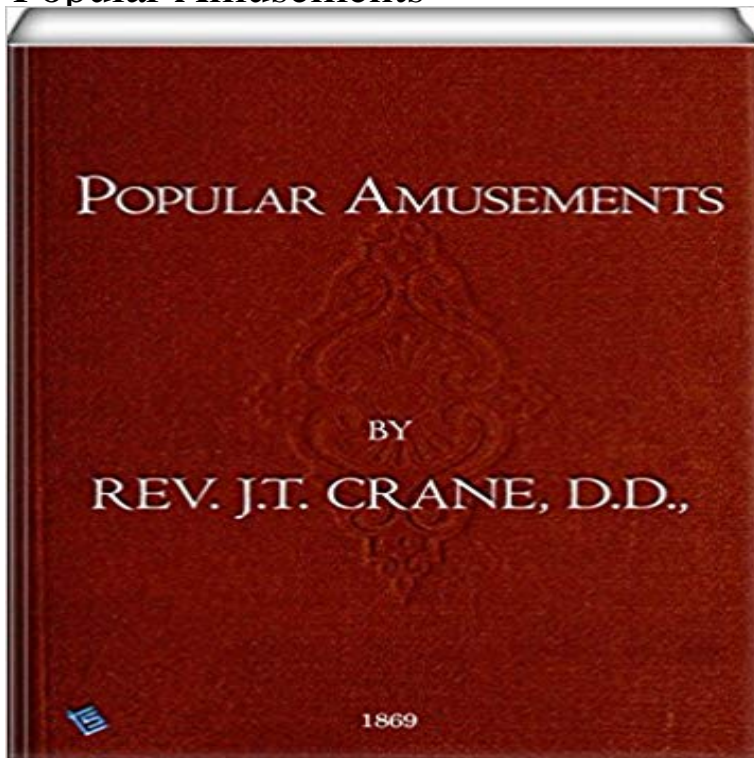


Popular Amusements



Popular Amusements by J. T. Crane The subject of which this book treats Popular Amusements is one of grave interest to the Church and to society in general. The Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church has always required its members and probationers, as an evidence of religious earnestness, to refrain from such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus, and also from singing those songs or reading those books which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God. In the following passages of Holy Scripture, worldly amusements or pleasures are denounced by God: He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasure, that dwellest carelessly. The consequences referred to in this quotation are stated in the following verses of the chapter. Being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, is classed by Timothy as one of the worst attributes of wicked men. How terrible is this statement: But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth! Consider, also, this Scripture precept: And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. In view of these and like Scripture utterances, how is it possible to believe that exciting, dissipating, worldly amusements are compatible with spiritual life or devotional enjoyment? The experience of multitudes corresponds with these teachings of the Discipline and the Bible. Take this instance. On one occasion Mr. Charles Wesley was warning the people against so-called harmless diversions, and declared that by them he had been kept dead to God, asleep in the arms of Satan, and secure in a state of damnation for eighteen years. There were three ministers present besides Mr. Wesley. Mr. Meriton cried out, And I for twenty-five! And I, exclaimed Mr. Thompson, for thirty-five! And I, added Mr. Bennett, for about seventy! These cases of Christian ministers suggest how

general and how baleful is the influence of these diversions. This evil, perhaps, is not peculiar to any clime or age. Diversions, indeed, change with the times. The fashionable follies of the last century are now deemed matters of wonder and derision, just as the follies of our day may be laughed at a hundred years hence. But worldliness, fashion, and frivolity are always at work inventing questionable pleasures and ingenious arguments for their defense. Possibly it is unreasonable to expect but one opinion as to what is allowable in the way of recreation. As there are various degrees of knowledge and piety in the Church, and various degrees of conscientiousness among even those who do not profess religion, there will be conflicting opinions on the subject, one condemning what another defends, and each wondering at the scrupulousness or the laxity of his neighbor. On this, as on all other subjects, Christians should judge each other charitably, but by the Scripture standard.

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