

Ellen White on Recreation and Sports

As ordinarily conducted, parties of pleasure also are a hindrance to real growth, either of mind or of character. Frivolous associations, habits of extravagance, of pleasure seeking, and too often of dissipation, are formed, that shape the whole life for evil. In place of such amusements, parents and teachers can do much to supply diversions wholesome and life-giving. {Ed 211.1}

In this, as in all things else that concern our well-being, Inspiration has pointed the way. In early ages, with the people who were under God's direction, life was simple. They lived close to the heart of nature. Their children shared in the labor of the parents and studied the beauties and mysteries of nature's treasure house. And in the quiet of field and wood they pondered those mighty truths handed down as a sacred trust from generation to generation. Such training produced strong men. {Ed 211.2}

In this age, life has become artificial, and men have degenerated. While we may not return fully to the simple habits of those early times, we may learn from them lessons that will make our seasons of recreation what the name implies—seasons of true upbuilding for body and mind and soul. {Ed 211.3}

With the question of recreation the surroundings of the home and the school have much to do. In the choice of a home or the location of a school these things should be considered. Those with whom mental and physical well-being is of greater moment than money or the claims and customs of society, should seek for their children the benefit of nature's teaching, and recreation amidst her surroundings. It would be a great aid in educational work could every school be so situated as to afford the pupils land for cultivation, and access to the fields and woods. {Ed 211.4}

In lines of recreation for the student the best results will be attained through the personal co-operation of the teacher. The true teacher can impart to his pupils few gifts so valuable as the gift of his own companionship. It is true of men and women, and how much more of youth and children, that only as we come in touch through sympathy can we understand them; and we need to understand in order most effectively to benefit. To strengthen the tie of sympathy between teacher and student there are few means that count so much as pleasant association together outside the schoolroom. In some schools the teacher is always with his pupils in their hours of recreation. He unites in their pursuits, accompanies them in their excursions, and seems to make himself one with them. Well would it be for our schools were this practice more generally followed. The sacrifice demanded of the teacher would be great, but he would reap a rich reward. {Ed 212.1}

No recreation helpful only to themselves will prove so great a blessing to the children and youth as that which makes them helpful to others. Naturally enthusiastic and impressible, the young are quick to respond to suggestion. In planning for the culture of plants, let the teacher seek to awaken an interest in beautifying the school grounds and the schoolroom. A double benefit will result. That which the pupils seek to beautify they will be unwilling to have marred or defaced. A refined taste, a love of order, and a habit of care-taking will be encouraged; and the spirit of fellowship and co-operation developed will prove to the pupils a lifelong blessing. {Ed 212.2}

So also a new interest may be given to the work of the garden or the excursion in field or wood, as the pupils are encouraged to remember those shut in from these pleasant places and to share with them the beautiful things of nature. {Ed 213.1}

The watchful teacher will find many opportunities for directing pupils to acts of helpfulness. By little children especially the teacher is regarded with almost unbounded confidence and respect. Whatever he

may suggest as to ways of helping in the home, faithfulness in the daily tasks, ministry to the sick or the poor, can hardly fail of bringing forth fruit. And thus again a double gain will be secured. The kindly suggestion will react upon its author. Gratitude and co-operation on the part of the parents will lighten the teacher's burden and brighten his path. {Ed 213.2}

Attention to recreation and physical culture will at times, no doubt, interrupt the regular routine of school-work; but the interruption will prove no real hindrance. In the invigoration of mind and body, the fostering of an unselfish spirit, and the binding together of pupil and teacher by the ties of common interest and friendly association, the expenditure of time and effort will be repaid a hundredfold. A blessed outlet will be afforded for that restless energy which is so often a source of danger to the young. As a safeguard against evil, the preoccupation of the mind with good is worth more than unnumbered barriers of law and discipline. {Ed 213.3}

Among the youth the passion for football games and other kindred selfish gratifications have been misleading in their influence. Watchfulness and prayer and daily consecration to God have not been maintained. Converse, communion with God, is life to the soul. The light has been beclouded, and it was well pleasing to Satan to have the impression go forth that notwithstanding the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit in behalf of our institutions of learning, and the office of publication and the church, they fell back to be overcome by temptation. Satan and evil workers cast reflection upon God, and His name has been dishonored.... {6MR 127.1}

The instructors ought to have had wisdom to follow the indications of the Holy Spirit, and go on from grace to grace, leading the youth to make the most of the light and grace given. They should have taught the youth that the Holy Spirit, which was imparted in great measure, was to help them to use their time and ability to do the very highest service for the Master, showing forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. But instead of this, many went more eagerly in pursuit of pleasure. There were witnesses upon the pleasure-grounds, heavenly intelligences that made the records in the book of God of transactions that many will not care to meet in the day when every work shall be manifest. Not only were heavenly messengers present, but the synagogue of Satan were on the ground to exult that his ingenious methods had in a great measure thwarted the purpose for which God gave the Holy Spirit. God desired to carry the youth forward and upward that they might understand by experience the words of the inspired apostle, "We are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." Of how many who exhibited their qualifications in the games could this be said? ... {6MR 127.2}

Use your God-entrusted capital of means to arm and equip men to enlist in the army of the Lord as soldiers of Jesus Christ. Teach them that it is not the indulgence of every whim which youth may suggest that will facilitate their growth in Christian experience. Selfish gratification is the snare and curse of our youth. Their abilities are misapplied. Through erroneous ideas parents, friends, and guardians—whose money supports them in the school—seek to gratify their desires in order, as they suppose, to make them happy. This very course of action is blocking their way; it encourages selfish indulgence; it prevents them from entering the narrow, heavenward path. O that the Lord may anoint the blind eyes, that they may see! {6MR 128.1}

The public feeling is that manual labor is degrading, yet men may exert themselves as much as they

choose at cricket, baseball, or in pugilistic contests, without being regarded as degraded. Satan is delighted when he sees human beings using their physical and mental powers in that which does not educate, which is not useful, which does not help them to be a blessing to those who need their help. While the youth are becoming expert in games that are of no real value to themselves or to others, Satan is playing the game of life for their souls, taking from them the talents that God has given them, and placing in their stead his own evil attributes. It is his effort to lead men to ignore God. He seeks to engross and absorb the mind so completely that God will find no place in the thoughts. He does not wish people to have a knowledge of their Maker, and he is well pleased if he can set in operation games and theatrical performances that will so confuse the senses of the youth that God and heaven will be forgotten. {CT 274.3}

Pleasure and amusement is the prevailing sentiment of this age. Betting and horse racing for a meager reward creates an enthusiasm that is not aroused by subjects of eternal interest, but which overshadows the important themes Jesus came to our world to make prominent. Cricket, baseball, gambling, and the variety of plans and methods which the synagogue of Satan has prepared to entrap unwary souls, are common and all-absorbing. Papers filled with the recital of the success of these various games are placed before the young as food for their minds, that the matter of amusement may predominate over their eternal interests. {Ms72-1896.4}