

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON SABBATH OBSERVANCE.

The Committee on Sabbath observance beg leave to report:—
That no change or incident of consequence, as affecting either the better or worse observance of the Sabbath, has occurred in the Province since the meeting of Synod last year.

We trust the statement is as true as it is pleasant, that the christian people of Canada, almost without exception, believe in, the divine authority, sanctity, and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath. And after making just allowance for the heterogeneous origin and varied religious culture of the general population, and for the circumstances of the more recently and thinly settled districts,—perhaps in no country in the world is the Lord's day, on the whole, regarded with more reverence than in our own.

Yet would we be most unwisely flattering ourselves, and encouraging the already too great neglect of an evil, which, more than any other overt transgression of Divine law, lies at the root of all ir-religion and social immorality, if we thought and said that the general observance of the Sabbath among our people was, or was nearly, what it ought to be.

In cities, towns, villages, and purely rural neighbourhoods, every lover of God and his kind must be painfully aware of a vast amount of open Sabbath neglect and desecration. We have no data upon which to found with certainty; but we think we do not exaggerate when we estimate the number of people, who might attend, not found in any sanctuary at one time upon the Lord's day as amounting fully to one half of the population. And what with drinking, though public-houses are closed by law,—and sporting with gun, and fishing-rod at safe distance from a con- stable,—and pleasure-excursioning by land and water,—and pitiful display of tasteless overdressing,—and gadding about, and tattling,—propagating scandal and folly,—which all are apparent enough,—it is hard for one who would cherish a decent respect and good hopes for fellow-men and women to repel the saddest feelings.

Violation of the Sabbath law of another kind, frequently and long complained of, still continues, which, while deserving our strongest reprobation, is less screened from remonstrance, and more likely to be abated by vigorous action, on the part of friends of the Sabbath. We refer to the sailing of the Canadian Inland Navigation Company's, and other steamers on the Lord's day. It is but fair to state that the vessels of the company mentioned are not despatched from Montreal to Hamilton, and vice versa, on any but an ordinary week day; but, prosecuting the voyage commenced on Saturday, they call at and depart from such ports as Prescott, Brockville, Gananoque, and Kingston twice, and Toronto once, every Lord's day. Connected with this is the keeping open of the St. Lawrence and Rideau Canals on the sacred day. And there may be mentioned here also the not infrequent sending on, in Sabbath hours, of belated Freight-trains to their destination on the Grand Trunk and Great Western Railways.

This traffic of course requires the constrained or willing labor of a great number of persons, such as the officers and crews of the steamers, lock-keepers and their men on the canals, and mobile and stationary employes on the Railway. Upon these, and upon their families to some extent, this employment amounts to an enforced deprivation of Sabbath rest and privilege; and, as an individual has no right to injure another or deprive him of food, for "we are to love our neighbors as ourselves," so a nation, a corporation, and a company ought to follow the same rule of christian principle. Then, in addition to that wrong done to many, there are so many more to whom these practices furnish facilities for, and even invite