

OUR SABBATH.

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THE Sabbath in this country is no better kept than it should be; indeed, so far from this being the case, there are many things connected with it which call for humiliation and reform. There is, no doubt, much labour performed on the Sabbath that might be avoided, and classes of toiling people are deprived, either in whole or in part, of the rest and the religious privileges which they have a right to enjoy on that day. But in comparison with other countries, while we have no cause for pharisaical self-laudation, we have a right to be devoutly thankful for the manner in which the divine institution is observed among us. There is nothing in this country, and especially in this city, which makes so deep and favourable an impression upon the minds of visitors from abroad, and sojourners among us, as the comparatively orderly and quiet character of our Sunday, and the largeness of the proportion of our people who, as a consequence of this, are found attending the places of worship. There is probably no other country under the sun that is so well supplied as this is with churches, and, so far as we are aware, there is none where they are so well filled every Lord's day. And this is doubtless owing, more largely than to anything else, to the reverence in which this sacred day is held among us.

But eternal vigilance is not only the price of liberty—as it was affirmed to be by a distinguished statesman,—but of everything else in this world, that is of real value and importance. This is true of the Sabbath, which is fraught with so many and such incomparable blessings. If we are to keep it, it must be sacredly guarded; and this is rendered all the more necessary by the very progress of the age, and the circumstances of the times. A larger proportion of the western world, especially, live on water and on wheels

than ever before. Steamboats and railroads have interlaced and bound together distant localities and communities, and made them reciprocally dependent upon one another to an extent that was never realized before. The life-blood of commerce flowing through these great arteries and veins becomes almost too imperative in its flow to be interrupted in deference to any institution, whether human or divine. The moving mass includes not only the perishable but the living, and rapid transit is not only a matter of convenience, but often a matter of necessity, in order to avoid loss and to prevent suffering. And mammon, ever on the alert to find means to further its own interests and accomplish its own designs, is prompt to take advantage of these works of mercy and of necessity to get a great deal done upon the Sabbath that is neither merciful nor necessary.

The result is that Sabbath observance is no longer the simple question with us that it once was. It has come to partake to a greater extent than ever before of the general complexity of our social and commercial life. In order, therefore, to deal with it as it should be dealt with, requires a degree of intelligent discrimination which it never called for before. And both the delicacy and the difficulty of the problem is increased by our international relations. Our great railways and canals, though theoretically ours, practically, scarcely belong less to our neighbours than they do to ourselves. And, of course, international courtesy requires in the arrangement of a matter in which they are interested almost equally with ourselves, that they should have something to say. The transmission of mails, though not perhaps a matter of necessity, is a matter of such urgency that it is not easy for those in authority to resist the pressure brought