

Forms of Sabbath Desecration Prevalent.

The marked feature of our age is unresting activity. The race lives intensely. To keep pace with current events a man must know almost intuitively—must think swiftly—must act promptly, else he will soon be written a laggard, and be vastly outdistanced in the keen competition that prevails in everything and on every hand. Hence as men make haste to win wealth there is a powerful inducement to sacrifice the interests of others—and even their own best interests—in gratifying this ambition. Perhaps in no direction is this more keenly felt than in the insatiable greed that seizes some to get gold—to secure it at any cost—to gain it at any sacrifice.

It may fairly be questioned, I think, whether ever there was a period in the world's history when this characteristic held such dominant sway over the minds of men as it does in the present day. Against this spirit of our age, the temper of our time, the Church of God is solemnly bound to lift up her clarion voice. And this for two reasons. Because firstly, She is commissioned to safeguard in every possible way the best interests of men, and secondly, She is jealously to conserve the honor and glory of God. That both these are perilled by men yielding to this spirit of the age hardly needs proof.

On the one hand the tension and strain to which the human frame is subjected, in this ceaseless rush and nervous action of mind and body, will account for the number of lamentable suicides that continually shock society. It well explains the sudden break up and death, of not a few overwrought and overstrained business and professional men. Here also is to be found one at least of the motives that prompt men to violate the Sabbath law of a seventh days rest after a six days toil, the greed of gain impelling its devotee to rob God of His reserved seventh, and himself of absolutely necessary relaxation.

With folly that is consummate and imprudence that is both perilous and short-sighted, man, in his ignorance and stupidity, would first violate, then ignore, then defy and finally recast the divine law.

During the Reign of Terror in France God's seventh day was abrogated and a tenth day Sunday substituted. The result only demonstrated afresh the folly of man and the wisdom of God.

Having made man for His own glory the Lord made the Sabbath and ordained it for man's good, making it minister to his essential need, physical, mental, moral and spiritual. As the key is suited to the works of its lock, so the rest day of God fits into the very constitution of man's being, and opens the door that floods it with blessing.

Sightily, therefore, and righteously the Church is obligated to conserve for the race this most precious boon, a God-given Sabbath, to guard with a holy jealousy against any and every infringement of its hallowed privileges, and to preserve the day in the integrity of the divine intent.

To the Christian Church as the custodian of God's sacred oracles, and to the Christian State as the divinely ordained instrument for preserving the social, civil and national liberties of His people, God has entrusted the responsibility of maintaining inviolate a seventh part of our time for reverent acts of divine worship, to both equally the command being given:—"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." In the carrying out of this command, the Lord has been graciously pleased so to interweave interests with us that while, on the one hand, we are thereby promoting His glory, we are on the other subserving our own best interests both temporal and spiritual.

Now it is not affirming too much to say that both Church and State have been and are grievously remiss in the discharge of their obligations to this divine command, and there has been assigned to me to-day the unenviable duty of bringing a grave indictment against the Christian Church, against Christian society, and against the Christian State in this regard.

I address myself therefore to the duty of noting in the first place.

I. Some of the forms of Sabbath Desecration that prevail within the Church itself.

Under this heading I would name and with a deep sense of humiliation—

(1) *Star preaching and star singing* in the Lord's house on the Lord's day. To invite from a distance a preacher of brilliant talents and adding to the attraction a leading soprano of high culture, thereby drawing together a crowded audience for the purpose of excitement and money making to the detriment of neighboring congregations, is surely a profaning of the Sabbath,

and can scarcely be too severely characterized. One of our Presbyteries, in referring to this all too prevalent form of Sabbath desecration, justly remarks: "If it is sinful *per se* for railway companies to make money on the Sabbath, then it is worse to put up the Gospel for sale on Sunday and to make money out of the service of sacred song."

(2) *So called sacred Sunday concerts.*—Whether the object be to gratify the aesthetic taste, or to add to the church revenues, or to influence non-church goers to attend the means of grace, these can surely tend only in a greater or less degree to degrade God's day and destroy the sanctity of the Sabbath.

(3) *Church parades on Sabbath.*—These are usually held, though not always so, in the afternoon, when our Sabbath schools are or ought to be in session. Being duly advertised, the route of march is usually crowded with thousands of spectators—while the band discourses spirited, and maybe sacred music—the pageant the display, the excitement, all combine to divert the attention of both old and young within measurable distance of the line of march, from the solemnity and sacredness of the Sabbath. It is much to be feared that the possible good accruing from such service for our militia, of whom we are justly proud, is purchased at too high a price.

(4) *Sabbath afternoon social teas.*—A most insidious and demoralizing form of Sabbath desecration this is that is finding its way into not a few professedly Christian homes. The telephone is called into liberal requisition to convene the impromptu party, if it has not been previously arranged for, and then not a few of those who have spent a most secular Sabbath afternoon, quiet their conscience by driving together in the evening to some popular place of worship in the neighborhood.

(5) *Sabbath funerals and Sabbath visiting.*—Happily these forms of Sabbath desecration are confined largely to rural districts, though sometimes practiced in the more populous centres, in all cases to the injury of the regular service of God's house, to the great discomfort and inconvenience of many Christian homes, and to robbing the Sabbath of its sanctity.

(6) *Church business meetings on Sabbath.*—In cases not a few sessions are called together. Sabbath school teachers meet, committees of Y.P.S. of C.E., missionary or other committees convene for the transaction of business on the Sabbath that in almost all cases should be relegated to a week day, the Church being bound to teach by her example that she holds the day in deepest reverence, should see to it that her example in this regard is not made a stumblingblock to others.

II. Some forms of Sabbath Desecration that prevail in the Christian Community—perhaps not so directly under the control of the church.

(1) *Secular reading on Sabbath in Christian homes.*—Very attractive Saturday-Sunday editions of our leading daily journals are regularly issued by a self-interested press. As works of art they are to be admired, as budgets of information they may be prized, but for Sabbath reading no devout Christian parent should peruse them himself or allow them to be placed within the reach of the members of his household on the Lord's day. Very decisive is this insidious method of cultivating the taste and paving the way for the Sunday newspaper for which already there is such a demand in some quarters. How anxiously we strive to guard the bodies of our children from the infection of certain virulent diseases. Ought we to be less anxious to guard their souls from a still worse infection?

(2) *Encroachments on the Sabbath.*—These occurs when the toilers of the week conduct their business to such late hours on the Saturday night as that the hours of the Sabbath are invaded. When the outings of the Saturday so exhaust the pleasure seekers physically as that they must needs seek bodily rest in their homes on the Sabbath. When Christian men habitually set out from their homes on journeys of either business or pleasure on Sabbath evening and make choice of the Saturday night to return, and so rob God of the early hours of His day and unfit themselves for the sanctuary. I have often felt in this connection that the command "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" is honored in the breach by our politicians in going and returning from their parliamentary duties.

(3) *Saturday evening parties.*—Whether these parties be for dancing, for card-playing, or for whatever purpose convened, they are usually arranged with the deliberate intent of taking from the hours of God's day time that they think they cannot afford from their own business, or dare not take from that of their employer.

(To be Continued.)