

per press, the canal, the steamer, the railroad, the public carriage, the tavern, the bakehouse, and the tobacco-shop, have already engulfed in the ever-widening vortex of Sunday traffic nearly a million of the working men of Britain! If these human machines were beasts of burden, we might have some hope of bettering their condition under the Act for the prevention of cruelty to animals; but as they are only men, gifted with reason and with deathless souls, they are to be sacrificed for the good of society—used up with appalling rapidity—compelled for the sake of their fellows, to do harder work on the day of rest than any other day of their toilsome week—doomed as an omnibus driver once said to a friend of mine, to look for rest only in their graves. Is this, we ask, in accordance with sound physiology, with ordinary humanity, above all, with Christian morality? Yet this is the system to which it is proposed, by the opening of the Crystal Palace on Sunday, to give a development hitherto unknown in England. We earnestly protest against it, not only on moral and economical, but “on sanitary and medical grounds,” because we consider the Sabbath rest essential to the health of ALL, and believe that, under the proposed relaxation of the law, the million of men now doomed to incessant toil would be quickly doubled. Then, if not before, the mass of the working classes would find, when too late, that, under a delusive expectation of increased facilities for healthful recreation, they had been sacrificed, in the first place, to “the claims of capital,” and next, to the aristocracy of their own order and the middle classes, who can take their holiday when they please, without encroaching on the liberty of their more needy and helpless neighbours. We venture to think that the concluding paragraph of the of the petition, which pleads for a weekly half-holiday to the labouring population, suggests “a more excellent way.”

I am, &c.,

A. P. STEWART.

74, Grosvenor Street, June 20 1853.

SUNDAY—AT HOME, OR ABROAD? (From the London Association Medical Journal)

In a subsequent page will be found a letter from a member of the Association (Dr. Stewart of the Middlesex Hospital), announcing that six hundred and forty London medical practitioners have signed a petition to Parliament against granting to the proprietors of the new Crystal Palace at Sydenham, the power of opening it for profit on Sundays.—Upon inquiry, we find that among the six hundred and forty signatures, there are the names of many of the most eminent of our profession. The step which has thus been taken by so numerous and influential a body of metropolitan physicians, surgeons, and general practitioners, undoubtedly claims the attention of the journalist. We might perhaps avoid the question, by declaring that it is not professional in its character; and that medical men have nothing to do with state politics; but such a course would not only be opposed to our own convictions of duty, but would likewise be a deliberate censure upon our esteemed colleague Dr. Stewart,

and his coadjutors in the present movement. We would not willingly incur such a reproach. Most cordially do we say with Dr. Stewart:—“Woe worth the day, when the lips of the medical man shall refuse to utter that noble sentiment—*Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto.*” It is nothing short of professional cant and social heresy to abdicate the responsibilities and the prerogatives of the man, when we assume the functions of the medical practitioner. In becoming members of a profession, we cannot guiltlessly ignore the fact, that we still remain members of the commonwealth; and that while our position as medical men imposes upon us certain special duties, it does not release us from any of the obligations which every citizen owes to the State.

There is a depth and a magnitude in the question before us which is not sufficiently recognised by many of those with whom we are in the habit of associating and conversing. The question is not merely, Shall the Crystal Palace be open or closed on Sundays? It is the broader question, whether Sunday is to be made in this country—what it has long been in France—a day of increased toil to the minority, that the majority above them in the social scale may seek pleasures at a distance from their homes, or amid scenes more brilliant and more exciting than the domestic circle? This is the real aspect of the question at issue. Were Parliament to grant to the proprietors of the Crystal Palace the privilege of throwing it open on Sundays to the myriads of this huge metropolis, for gain, assuredly the speculators of Vauxhall and Cremorne, and the lessees of the theatres, would clamorously demand, and ere long obtain, a similar concession. Then, again, in accordance with an universal law, the example of London would be imitated in every provincial town in the kingdom. In this way a rapid and a radical change would be induced in the habits of the people—a change for the better, we shall be told by some of our prominent statesmen and popular orators—a change for the worse, we shall be as positively assured by politicians of another stamp. We can fancy that we see before our eyes the familiar speeches of Mr. Joseph Hume and others in behalf of Sunday amusements for the people—“intellectual and elevating recreations, calculated to entice the toil-worn mechanic from his tavern debaucheries;” or, sailing back over the ocean of Parliamentary debate, we can stop at a memorable speech delivered during the discussion on the “Public Houses Bill,” on the 1st of June, 1842, by an able statesman, at present a Cabinet Minister of the Queen.—Upon the occasion referred to, Sir James Graham said:—

“I see no evil in a hard-working man, taking a little refreshment more stimulating than tea, perhaps, in a public house on a Sabbath

morning; and I have been told that in the manufacturing districts it was customary for the artisans to take their breakfasts on such occasions in public houses, that they might enjoy a little more comfort than ordinary.”

We believe that both Sir James Graham and Mr. Hume have a higher object in view than the speaking of pleasant things to ten-pound voters—the aristocracy of the working-classes; and that they sincerely desire to improve society by affording facilities for Sunday extradomestic indulgences and amusements. But while we accord to them all praise for honest philanthropy of purpose, we venture to charge them with a great political blunder. All history proclaims their panacea to be worthless. We cannot help stating our deep conviction that it is shallow statesmanship—charlatanic treatment of the body politic. It is palliating symptoms by soothing syrups, and at the same time allowing the diseased condition, whence the pains arise, to remain without a remedy, and ready on any slight provocation to burst forth with implacable violence.

Amusement is essential to all classes of the community—to those who work with the mind as well as to those who work with the body; and we would go all lengths with Mr. Hume in earnestly striving to obtain for our toil-worn population a weekly holiday. But we would take the ground of the petitioners, and not purchase this boon at the price of weakening home attractions, and of seducing the heads of families from the cultivation of home affections, amid which only can be acquired enduring lessons of virtue, patriotism, and religion. It is because we believe virtuous homes to be the nurseries of patriots, that we wish to maintain Sunday as a domestic day. Times are fast coming in which much patriotism is certain to be wanted; and it is, therefore, well for us jealously to refrain from weakening the relish for the purifying pleasures of domestic life, whether by such reckless suggestions as those which fell from the lips of Sir James Graham, or by systematically enticing people to career over the wide world in search of amusement, on the only day in the seven which gives to the majority an opportunity of family converse.

This is not the place for a discussion upon the theological aspects of the Sabbath question; but, nevertheless, we may be allowed to guard ourselves from misapprehension, by declaring that our convictions are opposed to the puritanical austerities of Sabbath observance. We have adverted to the subject, because there appeared to be imposed upon us the duty of adding our voice to the protest of our medical brethren. With them we feel that the introduction of public amusements on Sunday would be a tremendous stride towards national demoralisation; inasmuch as it would be the commencement of a system which would generate a titanic influence similar to those which have been produced in France, and which have formed within the Parisian vortex the most dangerous populace in the world—a populace giddy and improvident—governable only by the physical supremacy of an ever present army. If there be any reader who has thoughtlessly admired the glitter and seeming joyousness of a Sunday in Paris, we would ask him to read the bloody chronicles of the guillotine and the barricade; and to ponder well the fact, that one-third of the gay crowd by which he had been charmed are destined to die in the hospitals.