

Messenger and Visitor

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Sabbath Observance.

We are pleased to observe that the Lord's Day Alliance is making its influence felt with a view to securing a stricter enforcement in St. John of the law against the desecration of the Sabbath. For some time past this law, though declared by the unanimous judgment of the Supreme Court of the Province to be intra vires of the Provincial Legislature, and therefore valid, has been notoriously disregarded in the city, especially by certain vendors of cigars and soda water, and there has been no attempt on the part of the police authorities to enforce the law. The Sunday trade which has been going on in these articles is without doubt in itself decidedly inimical to public morality, and if permitted would probably prove to be but a step toward a more complete secularization of the day of rest. In our view it is highly important that such a first step should be prevented and that no encouragement should be given to men who, for the sake of their own gain or convenience, are willing to establish precedents which would open the way for the complete desecration and destruction of our Christian Sabbath. This Sabbath question is one of immense importance, and one in which all who feel any concern for human welfare, in this world as well as in a world to come, should be deeply interested. With it is intimately connected the highest interests of the people, physical and intellectual as well as spiritual. To the men who labor with brain and hand the day of rest is one of the greatest boons that Heaven has conferred, and if they are wise they will be jealously watchful against any attempt to rob them of any part of that priceless heritage.

We observe that in some quarters an effort is being made to discourage the enforcement of the Sunday law, on the ground that there is an inconsistency involved in prohibiting the Sunday sale of cigars and soda water, while many things are permitted which the Jewish law of the Sabbath forbade. But it is difficult to see what the fact, that we do not feel under obligation to keep the first day of the week with just the same observances as the Jew kept the seventh day, has legitimately to do with our protecting the day from the encroachments of ordinary secular business and from servile labor. It is not necessary to go back to the Mosaic law in order to find a basis and a justification for the legislation necessary to preserve the first day of the week as a day sacred to rest and worship. It is sufficient for our legislators that the people of this country in general believe that it is essential to the public welfare that the day be so kept, and that they desire such legislation as shall give legal sanction to the observance of the first day of the week as a day on which men may rest from their ordinary labors and worship God without disturbance. And when, in accordance with the will of the people, such legislation has been placed upon the statute book, that fact should be sufficient to secure its enforcement at the hands of the officers appointed for the purpose. If the great majority of our people should come to wish to have the first day of the week devoted to recreation and amusement, the law will doubtless be changed in accordance with that desire, and if they should come to wish that the day should be given to business as the other six days are, then the law which now forbids such desecration of the day would be abrogated. But as long as the people of this country in general desire that the first day of the week shall be sacred to rest and to worship, it is only in accordance with right and constitutional principles that the legal provisions designed to secure that end should be enforced. It may be said, of course, that there are some persons in this country who would prefer to devote the day to business rather than to rest or worship, and that they feel their liberty curtailed by our Sunday legislation. To this it seems fair to reply that, while

the people of this country in general believe that the day of rest is a blessing of so inestimable value that they have protected it from desecration by legal sanction, yet men are free to live under this law or not as they find it most to their advantage. The world is wide, and those who feel that our Sunday laws impose upon them a burden too grievous to be borne, are at liberty to remove to some happier land where the first day of the week is not kept sacred to rest and worship as it is with us.

Now as to the traffic in cigars and soda water:—the principle being admitted, as it is, that the first day of the week should be legally protected from the desecration of business, can any good reason be shown why exception should be made in the case of the vendors of cigars and of soda water? Certainly neither of these articles is so necessary to human welfare that, if total abstinence from both were practiced on Sundays, the resulting damage to the health and morals of the community would be serious. If there are six days in the week in which the devotee of the soda water fountain can drink to his heart's content, he might surely be able to survive the seventh day on some home-brewed beverage equally innocent. And as for the cigars, if any man judges it essential to his happiness to smoke cigars on Sunday, he can surely purchase a sufficient quantity on Saturday night to last him over one day. The contention that the Sunday tobacco business is necessary or seriously demanded in the interests of anybody but the people who are carrying on this illegal and demoralizing traffic, is sheer nonsense. The fact is that the Sunday cigar shop offers a constant temptation to young men—a temptation which no doubt has induced the first step in many a downward career.

If the protection which legislation gives to the Christian Sabbath is worth nothing in the interests of human welfare, then let us remove all restrictions to traffic, that whoever will may prosecute his business on Sunday as on any other day. But if our people desire to have the first day of the week preserved from the desecration of secular business, as without doubt they do, then there is certainly no good reason why any exception should be made in the interests of the traders in tobacco and soda water.

The Door and the Shepherd.

In that passage from John's gospel which constitutes the Bible lesson for the current week, our Lord describes himself under two figures which impressively set forth his relation to his people. In the first figure he is the Door of the sheepfold; in the second he is the Shepherd of the sheep. In order to feel the full force of these figures, it is necessary to have some knowledge of shepherd life in the East, with its perils to flock and shepherd from wild beasts and robbers, the necessity of frequently moving to new pasture grounds, the constant demand for knowledge, watchfulness and courage on the part of the shepherd, and the need too of the sheepfold in which, during the night, the flocks may find a secure refuge from their enemies. The fold, travellers tell us, is usually an enclosure open to the sky, with walls high enough to prevent wolves and jackals leaping in, and covered with branches of thorny shrubs. One such fold serves for a large district, and several shepherds may bring their flocks into it at night. The sheep of each flock are carefully counted one by one, as they enter, and all night the porter of the fold guards it, refusing entrance to everyone but a real shepherd of the sheep. In the morning the shepherds come. Each calls his own and leads them forth. The sheep recognize the voices of their own shepherds and follow them, but a stranger they will not follow.

It is of great importance to recognize clearly the truth that Christ is the Door both for shepherd and for sheep. It is by him that every true pastor finds access to the congregation. If anyone ignores the door and climbs up some other way, whatever may be his pretensions and his powers, he proves himself to be no true pastor. Only he who comes in the name of Christ and to whom Christ is Lord of all, can be in any true sense a shepherd of the flock of God. . . . And as Christ is the only door for shepherds, so also is he the only door for the sheep. It is by Christ himself and not by any ordinance that the fold is entered. And they who enter there are his, all of them, although it may be that they are found huddled together as separate flocks in dif-

ferent corners of the sheepfold. To know Christ and to be known of him is of far greater importance than to be able to pronounce any sectarian shibboleth. The question of the believer's relationship to Christ infinitely outweighs the question of his attitude toward Paul, Cephas or Apollos.

In the other figure alluded to above, our Lord speaks of himself as a Shepherd. He is "the good Shepherd," that is, one who preëminently possesses the qualities which belong to the true, the ideal shepherd,—one who in his relation to men realizes the relation of the ideal shepherd to his sheep. As the good shepherd he appears in contrast with three kinds of men, typified by the wolf, the robber, and the hireling. The wolf we may take as the type of the lustful or avaricious man, who cares not what or who are sacrificed to his wolfish appetites, so long as those appetites are gratified. The thief or robber type is like the wolf type in being actuated by selfish greed. Less savage perhaps in outward appearance than the other, he is no less an enemy to the flock and to the shepherd. Then there is also the hireling, who is unlike the others in that his purpose is not to tend, to kill and to destroy, but like them in that his purpose is a selfish one, lacking any inspiration of love. These three types had their representatives in the days of Christ, and they are not far to seek today. Probably if anyone will closely examine his own features in the light of our Lord's teaching, he may be able to discern, if not some wolfish lineaments, at least some which clearly indicate relationship with the robber or the hireling.

It will be observed that our Lord particularly contrasts the character of the good shepherd with that of the hireling. Now it is true that the hireling may render much valuable service, doing just so much for so much pay, but with no higher motive in it than to receive his wages. The hireling does many things for us, but there are many most important things which he does not and cannot do. No hireling can take the place in the family of the dead father or mother, of the dead wife or husband. We cannot hire men to be patriots. Perhaps there are hirelings in Civic Councils, in Legislatures, in Parliaments and Governments, but it is a truism to say that no hireling can render the service which the interests of the country demand from men in such positions. Perhaps the hireling sometimes finds his way even into the Christian ministry, and churches sometimes through their officers speak of "hiring" men to be their pastor, but surely no minister can ever be "hired," to render the service which a pastor of a church must give, if he is truly a shepherd of the flock in real fellowship with Christ. It would go hard with the world if there were none to render it greater service than that which the hireling can give. For the world needs to be loved and saved, and the hireling could never be a saviour because he is not a lover, and will not lay down his life for any cause. He who would save must love. Jesus could be the Good Shepherd because he was willing to lay down his life for men. He could save the world because he loved it. What the world needs most today is less hirelings and more shepherds, more men and women who care less for the pay the world gives to those who cater to its wants and whims, and more for the "well done" with which the Master will greet the good and faithful servant by and by.

Editorial Notes.

—In answer to an inquiry from the editor of our B. Y. P. U. department as to the authorship of a poem entitled "A Smiling Face," published in that department in our issue of August 8, Miss Louise W. Smith of Liverpool, N. S., informs us, on the authority of the Boston Transcript, that the poem was found in one of the late Phillips Brooks' early note-books, written by him in 1858, but never published until after his death. The readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR, we are sure, will feel grateful for this information.

—The case of a man who a few weeks ago was occupying a position of apparent respectability in the social and business life of this city, but who is today occupying a felon's cell in the penitentiary, with a five years' sentence to serve, is one which should carry an effective warning to all who are tempted to forsake the safe and clean path of rectitude for the sake of making money. To speculate with, or live on, other men's money, with the hope that something will turn up to balance the account, is a bad business. Let it be considered that the man who is living or speculating beyond his means has taken the first step in a dishonest career and one which is likely to overwhelm him in disgrace.

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