

virtually nullified; religious observances are restricted to the morning hours; and the day and evening are devoted to amusements, of which the tendency is to obliterate altogether religious impressions. A Sovereign of England, who attempted to form the temper of his subjects on this Romanistic model, published a Book of Sports, to regulate popular amusements after mid-day on the Sabbath, and the laxity of Sabbath observance in England from this, and more from preëxistent causes, is yet very far from being reformed. Now, the object of our appeal to such facts, is to point out the difficulty of leading men, and even that portion of them who occasionally put to themselves the question, "What doth the Lord require of me?" to consider the extent and obligation of the divine law, instead of sinking down to an easy contentment with prevailing customs, too often in direct opposition to its entire spirit and design. Could we gain the ear of thoughtful men to "all the words of this law," which enjoins us to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy; could we awaken in their soul and conscience a sense of obligation to it; could we persuade them that the divine morality holds the desecration of this day to secular pursuits and pleasure as much an offence to the supreme Lawgiver as theft or murder, (for the sinner has no right nicely to balance the degrees of turpitude connected with the violation of particular precepts of the divine law, where all are enforced with an equal authority,) we might effectuate important reformations on the lax, ungodly and injurious practices too common, we fear, among us. Reading men would then become more select in the choice of their reading on this day; conversable men would find little difficulty in turning to some of those themes which our religion at every point is suggesting; the merry and laughter-loving man would succeed in repress-

ing for one day his constitutional levity, and by and by he might become imbued with soberer thoughts; the man of busy correspondence and prices current might, without much difficulty, dismiss them for a day, even when their noise is loudest, finding happier employment in the way that God has appointed. And so graciously hath the supreme Lawgiver framed all his laws, and the law of the Sabbath among others, to the nature and condition of man, that in its most strict and conscientious observance industry would lose none of its gains; the tide of commerce would not roll less propitiously; society would be robbed of none of its enjoyments, for no proposition is capable of a more complete demonstration than this, that the purest morality is the purest happiness. Yet this demonstration, so often and so easily made, carries not with it the practical determinations of sinful men, blinded by passion, and misled by the prevailing customs of this present evil world.

But we may find other illustrations of this moral obliquity in our nature,—so sorely antagonistical to the moral improvement of the human family,—the obliquity which leads so many to an unfaithful dealing with the question, "What doth the Lord require of thee?"—and to justify their iniquity by overlooking the divine law, and appealing to the customs of society. Take the institution of Slavery.

In England, at a time not very remote, the conscience even of good and Christian men was strangely dull and perverted on this question. The traffic in human beings—in beings, however, of a darker complexion than our own—was conducted extensively under the sanction of law. Made captive in barbarous war, or kidnapped by the man-stealer, the unhappy victims were sold, and carried by the ships of a Christian king-