

PRESENTATION.—At a Sabbath School Soiree, held in Cumminsville on the 28th April, the Rev. Alex. McLean was agreeably surprised by being presented unexpectedly with a valuable watch. Mr. Wilson, who was appointed to be the mouth of the congregation on the occasion, presented a suitable address, expressing the affection and high esteem of the flock for their pastor; and the Rev. gentleman replied in a short speech, intimating his sense of their kindness and attachment, and the great encouragement which such a token of regard gave in the midst of his spiritual labours.

SUNDAY LABOUR IN THE PUBLIC DEPARTMENTS.

In another place will be found a Pastoral Letter from the Convener of the Committee on Sabbath Observance, which we recommend to the attentive perusal of every reader. This interesting question meets us again in a more public manner, in the following Bill introduced into the House of Assembly:—

An Act to protect the Employés of the Government of this Province in certain Departments of the Public Service, from being compelled to labour on the Lord's Day.

Whereas it is the natural right of all men to refrain from ordinary labour on Sunday, and experience hath shewn that the habitual prosecution of such Sunday labour is injurious to the physical and moral well-being of man: And whereas the denial of this right to a large class of meritorious persons in the employment of the Government, is unjust to those persons and their families; And whereas the habitual despatching and running of the Boats and Stages with the Public Mails, and the opening of the Locks on the Canals, and transaction of business at all the Post Offices throughout the Country, on Sunday, is not only unjust to the servants of Government, but has a tendency to lower the public morality, and to encourage the open disregard of an observance which it is alike the duty and the interest of all carefully to uphold; Be it therefore enacted, &c., That no Post Office in this Province shall be opened for the transaction of business on Sunday; nor shall any letter, paper, packet or other mailed matter, be delivered from any Office on Sunday; That no Mails shall be made up at, or despatched from any Post Office on Sunday; That any Mail despatched from any point on Saturday, but which shall not have reached its destination by Sunday, shall be stopped and held over until Monday morning, at the first of the following places which it shall reach on Sunday, namely: Chatham, London, Hamilton, Toronto, Kingston, Montreal, Quebec and River du Loup *en bas*; That the Locks on all the Canals in this Province shall be closed from Saturday at midnight, until Sunday at midnight.

This Bill is the result of an earnest, extensive, and protracted investigation of the subject by the select Committee appointed for the purpose.

The Report is before us, from which we give the following extracts:

The Select Committee to whom were referred the several Petitions on the subject of Sabbath labour in the Post Office Department, and on the Canals, with power to Report by Bill or otherwise—Respectfully Report:

That they have given earnest and protracted consideration to the important subject committed to their care, and have used every exertion to ascertain the extent of the evil complained of by the Petitioners, and the probable effects of the remedy suggested by them.

The total number of petitions referred to Your

Committee was not less than 196—156 being from Upper Canada, and 40 from Lower Canada. Of these petitions 22 were from various Religious Bodies or Societies (20 in Upper and 3 in Lower Canada); and 9 from Town or Township Municipalities in Upper Canada. The aggregate number of signatures (exclusive of the above) was 20,484,—17,484 being from Upper, and 3,000 from Lower Canada. A List of the Petitions is appended hereto. The number of these petitions, and the parties from whom they proceed, most clearly show that a deep feeling prevails in the community, in all sections of the Country, on the subject of Sabbath observance.

It will be seen by the evidence, that the extent of Sunday labour in the Post Office Department is very great. One thousand and twenty-six Offices are open for the public transaction of business from one to two hours, and an additional space is required for distribution at all Offices where Sunday Mails are received. The number of persons thus compelled to labour on the Lord's Day is estimated by the Postmaster General at two thousand five hundred persons. To these must be added the stage-drivers and boatmen employed in carrying the Mails on Sunday, and the clerks and servants who are compelled to attend at the several offices for the letters of their employers. As regards the Canals, it has been found impossible to obtain an accurate statement of the number of persons who would be relieved from Sunday labour by their being closed on that day; but the number of lock-tenders, mariners, engineers and other persons habitually employed upon them, is unquestionably very large.

That it would be desirable to dispense with this vast amount of Sunday labour, no one denies; the only difference of opinion found by the Committee to exist is upon the point, whether it can be abolished without serious injury to the social and material interests of the community. Laying aside, therefore, for the moment, the consideration whether a habitual disregard of an admitted physical Law of Providence could be otherwise than hurtful to the interests of man—the Committee turned their attention to the inquiry, how far, and in what way, the mercantile and social interests of the Country could be supposed to suffer from the entire stoppage of the practice.

With this view, it was resolved to obtain the evidence of men in different positions of business and life throughout Canada, on the subject, accordingly a Circular was prepared and despatched to persons in the several sections of the Country, who from their standing and occupations were in a position to communicate reliable information. In reply to these questions nearly a hundred communications were obtained, from which much important information has been gathered.

Your Committee felt all the difficulty of legislating on such a subject. They were deeply sensible that to the Christian, the Commandment of Scripture for a strict observance of the Lord's Day, must always be a final and unerring rule for his personal guidance; but, they felt at the same time, that the Legislator has no right to interpret Scripture for the community, and that the moment he assumes that province and proceeds to enforce his view by the strong arm of the law, the door is opened to evils of the worst character, and the conscientious scruples of the subject on matters of religion are in danger of being set at naught.

But there is, it appears to Your Committee, safe ground on which the protection of the Law may be invoked in regard to Sabbath labour in the Public Departments. Abstinence from work during one day in seven, is a moral and physical necessity of man's nature—he has a natural right to a seventh day of rest—he cannot dispense with it, without injury to mind and body; the whole civilized world has been forced to recog-

nize this necessity, and to set apart the first day of the week to meet it. And not only has man a right to the full enjoyments of Sunday as a day of rest and abstinence from all ordinary labour—he has the right to be protected by the law in the decorous and quiet observance of the day.—The law forbids trading on Sunday, closes the banks and public resorts on Sunday, prohibits everything that tends to a disturbance on Sunday—and in various ways secures to the subject the peaceful enjoyment of the day. It is a well recognized principle that to compel men to do ordinary labour on Sunday, except in cases of absolute necessity, is *wrong* and hurtful.

The Committee are respectfully of opinion that this rule can be applied with great force to the open and systematic disregard of the rights of individuals and of society by the Government of this Province, in its management of the Post Office Department and the Canals. It ought to be the high aim of every government to set an example to the people under its rule, by the careful avoidance of all that is unjust, unseemly, or conducive to immorality. But, it is to be feared, that the Government by compelling its servants to labour in these departments on the Lord's Day, under the penalty of dismissal, inflicts great injustice on a large number of meritorious individuals and their families, and encourages thoughtless persons in the open disregard of an observance which it should earnestly seek to uphold. With what consistency can the Government enforce the many existing laws for securing the quiet enjoyment of Sunday, when it compels its own servants openly and systematically to desecrate the day in every corner of the land? [Is not guilt contracted?—ED.]

Does any good reason exist for denying to the Government *Employés* in the Post Office and on the Canals, the same privilege of abstaining from labour on Sunday which is enjoyed by other public officers? Would the plea of public convenience, which is the sole argument for transacting business in these departments, not apply with equal force to many other relations of life? Doubtless it would be *convenient* to many persons were the Custom-houses opened on Sunday—were Parliament to continue its sittings—were the shops all opened on that day; but would not the mind revolt at any proposal to desecrate the Lord's Day in such a manner? Would not the injustice to individuals be declaimed against loudly and justly? Would not the injury to morality be felt painfully and admitted readily by all? Would not such a proposal be rejected with indignation? Assuredly it would. And yet what constitutes the difference between the Post Office and the Custom-house—between opening the canals and opening the shop? Habit may have hardened our minds to the impropriety and injustice of that which we have weekly witnessed, but unquestionably the moral argument is equally applicable in all these cases.

Whatever inconvenience therefore might ensue from the prohibition of Sunday labour in the Public Departments, the Committee respectfully submit, that justice to the officers of government, and a due regard to public morality, justify the demand made by the petitioners, and that their prayer ought to be acceded to. But the Committee are far from apprehending that the measure would entail any serious inconvenience.

As regards the despatching of Mails by steamboat or stage on Sunday, little doubt can exist. The fact that no mail leaves the City of London on that day, proves clearly that the business community of Canada could not suffer very seriously from the total cessation of this practice. And indeed, the limited number of Sunday mails despatched at present, proves the safety with which all might be dispensed with. No mail is despatched between Quebec and Montreal on Sunday, in summer; Why then should one be despatched in winter? No mail is despatched in summer between Kingston and Toronto; Why then should one be despatched between Kingston