

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE SABBATH QUESTION.

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Having considered the questions, why and how we should observe the Sabbath, we are in a better position to ascertain the proper attitude which we should assume towards every form of so-called Sabbath desecration, such as pleasure-parties, excursions, etc., which have of late years been so much in vogue. There are some who take a very extreme position on this subject. They denounce without discrimination in the strongest possible language every form of Sabbath observance which does not chime in with the way in which they themselves have been accustomed to observe it, irrespective altogether of the motives which prompt the desecrators. To denounce thus harshly and indiscriminately is unchristian; for in looking merely to the outward and not to the inward, we shew that, although Christian by name and profession, we still breathe the cold air of Judaism; that we are in bondage to the mere letter; that we do not yet understand, or understand but partially, the spirit and genius of Christianity; and that we have grasped but feebly the grand principle which our Lord lays down for our guidance, when He declares that the "Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Besides, such indiscriminate denunciation does no good; it does positive harm. It is irritating to our opponent and blinding to ourselves, preventing that calm, dispassionate discussion of the question which is essential to our arriving at just conclusions. A firm grasp of the principle which our Lord enunciates will enable us to avoid both the Scylla and Charybdis of the Sabbath question. Abstractly considered, the rightness or wrongness of going on a railway or steamboat excursion depends upon the motives which prompt us to go. I can imagine a Christian taking a walk into the country on the Sabbath, and deriving as much moral benefit from it as he would by hearing a sermon or reading a good book, because he is in that moral or spiritual condition which enables him to find food for his moral nature in every object he beholds. He sees sermons in stones, books in running brooks, and good in everything. In the same manner it is possible to conceive a Christian in the exercise of his Christian liberty taking a railway drive or a steamboat excursion from a good motive and deriving moral benefit from it, and apart from any other consideration he would be quite justified in so doing. Some of these steamboat excursions are got up, we are told, for professedly religious objects. There are, doubtless, some who take advantage of such excursions for the purpose of attending religious gatherings, for the purpose of hearing some favourite preacher or Sabbath school worker who is to hold forth. Now, are not such persons quite justified in doing so if they think they can be morally benefited thereby? And would those, we would ask, who go from purely worldly motives, for mere pleasure or dissipation, be any less guilty were they to remain at home? Would they observe the Sabbath in any better spirit or from any less worldly motives? We fear not. But it will not do to consider the question from a purely abstract standpoint. Man is a social being, having relations to his fellow-men which he cannot ignore, and these relations when taken into account must modify our views as to the course which he should pursue under any given circumstances. Looked at practically, then, there are some strong objections against patronizing the running of steam-cars, trains, or steamboat excursions of any kind, on the Sabbath. There are some practical considerations of the most weighty character which we should take into account ere we decide to encourage them by word or example.

(1) In doing so, we deprive a certain number of men of their rest. In the running of the steamboat or railway men must be employed—men who need, as much as we do, rest. They need, too, more than bodily rest; they need moral instruction, spiritual training and culture, such as our Sabbath by its school and church is calculated to give. Now, oblige them to work on steamboat or car during the seven days in the week for our pleasure or profit, and we sin against them; we rob them of their right; we deprive them not only of rest for their jaded limbs, but of the opportunity of cultivating their moral and spir-

itual faculties, on the right exercise of which hang their present and eternal weal.

(2) But again, by patronizing such excursions, we set an example to those who are not Christians which may prove injurious to them. Our liberty becomes an occasion for stumbling to those who are not in a position to use that liberty. It may be true that the Jewish Sabbath has been abrogated, and that you, in the exercise of your Christian liberty, may derive moral or spiritual benefit from the excursion; but while this is true to you, it is false to those who are not in the same spiritual plane that you are. What is good for you may be bad for them, just as the diet which is nourishing to a healthy person might prove very injurious to a sick one. You, with a well-developed moral nature, possessed, as we will suppose you to be, of the spirit of Christ, may take a walk into the country, or even a sail in a boat, or a drive on a train, and be morally benefited thereby—more so perhaps than you would be by hearing the most elaborate sermon or reading the best book. But were others less spiritual than you to follow your example, injury would result. They might be led by so doing into riot and licentiousness, and in justification of their conduct would cite your example. In this way your liberty becomes an occasion of stumbling to the weak, and your example, it may be, cited as justifying the wrong-doing in which they were led to indulge. In view of such facts as these; in view of the fact that injurious consequences dissipation, unseemly behaviour, perhaps drunkenness may result, as they have resulted, from your patronizing such excursion parties, and thus your brother's moral weal be imperilled, how should we act towards them? We should take the same ground towards them that the apostle took towards the meats and drinks of his day. Paul would abstain from meats offered to idols, for his weak brother's sake, not because he believed that it was wrong to eat, but because his eating would prove an occasion of stumbling to others less enlightened, less strong than he. For their sakes he would renounce his right and abstain. "All things," he declares, "are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." And again, "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Now, we are justified in taking the same ground towards railway drives, steamboat excursions, got up on the Sabbath, as also towards playing cards, dancing, etc., in so far as they can be shewn to be productive of moral injury to our fellow-men. The only difficulty lies as to where we are to draw the line of demarcation. It may be said that the very best things have been abused—that it is hardly possible to mention a thing which has not been abused or turned into an occasion for stumbling. The most innocent games—for instance, football, checker-playing, even camp-meetings, so common now in some parts of this country—have been made occasions for evil doing by some. What things, then, it may be asked, are we to abstain from? What things have we liberty to use when the best things have by some one or other been abused? The practical answer to this question is, abstain from those things which experience has proven to be most liable to be abused, and whose abuse is followed by the most injurious consequences; and in so far as experience has shewn that the running of steamboats or street-cars on the Sabbath has been an occasion of stumbling to others, robs a number of our fellow-men of their rest, and turns our Sabbath into a day of unholy traffic and bestial vice, just in so far should we do our utmost to discountenance it. Above all, let us have the mind of Christ, and we shall observe the Sabbath aright, in the proper spirit, from the proper motive. Every day, then, shall be viewed by us as the Lord's, nor shall any day in the week have any intrinsic sacredness in itself. In Christ there is nothing "common or unclean." In Him all toil becomes divine, every day sacred, every place hallowed, if we but have the hallowed spirit. We need the Sabbath in this busy, bustling age more than ever. None of us can afford to dispense with it, none of us have reached that high moral or spiritual condition which would warrant us in dispensing with it as a day of moral instruction and spiritual training. Every Christian, no matter how advanced the stage of spiritual development he has reached, needs the means which the Sabbath furnishes for bracing and deepening his spiritual life; and if the Christian needs it, much more do those who are not Christians—who are worldly in heart and life. Above all, the workingman

needs it, who toils from day to day in smoky factory or ill-ventilated shop. It would be a sad day for him were the Sabbath abolished. The Sabbath is the workingman's best friend, and we shew ourselves to be his friends as well as the friends of virtue, religion and our country, when we put forth effort to preserve it intact as a day of calm, invigorating rest, spiritual joy and cheerful worship. Let us, then, prize the Sabbath as a precious heirloom of the past; as one of Heaven's best boons to sin-stained man; and while rejoicing in the glorious liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, let not our liberty be an occasion of stumbling to others.

A TRIP TO THE MARITIME PROVINCES.

NOTES BY THE WAY.—Continued.

CAMPBELLTON, N.B.,

Is a village in the county of Restigouche, and an important station on the Intercolonial Railway. It contains about 1,000 inhabitants, and is named after Sir Archibald Campbell, who was Governor of New Brunswick in 1825. The original settlers were all Scotch coopers. In this neighbourhood fish and lumber are the chief products, and are shipped in large quantities to the various markets of the world. Restigouche salmon is a celebrated dish, and is eagerly sought after in Montreal and western Canada, but I regret to say "few there be who find it." Among tourists and pleasure-seekers Campbellton is a noted fishing resort. It has been honoured by the patronage of the Marquis of Lorne, the Duke of Argyll, and the Ladies Campbell, who, having spent a Sabbath here, to their credit be it said, did not forget the religion of their fathers, but worshipped in St. Andrew's Church. The village is amply provided with churches and schools, the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics being largely in the majority. The Methodist and English churches have only a fortnightly service. The former church has been only recently erected, and is supplied by a clergyman from Dalhousie, a very beautiful town about sixteen miles distant.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,

which is the oldest in the place, was organized in 1831 by the Rev. James Stevens, a native of Scotland, who laboured for two years, when the present edifice was erected, which is an old-fashioned frame building painted white, with the pulpit perched on a pedestal near the ceiling. On either side of the church and in the centre are three pews containing tables, which are utilized on communion Sabbaths, and at which, whatever may be their faults, and whatever objections they are open to, in this age of progress and improvement, I do confess that I like to see the sturdy Scotchman with his Bible under his arm, with steady step and a confident look, take his seat. Mr. Stevens died in 1863, and was succeeded by the Rev. William Wilson, who was followed by the Rev. William Murray. The present minister is the Rev. J. C. Herdman, B.D., who was inducted in 1878, and who is giving promise of being an able and successful pastor. Mr. Herdman was born in Pictou, N.S., and is son of the Rev. A. W. Herdman, who, after a pastorate of thirty years there, was called to his native parish in Scotland, and is at present living in the manse where he first saw the light of day. Leaving Campbellton, the railway keeps pretty close to the bay shore, until within about fifteen miles of

DALHOUSIE,

when it takes a course and runs south until it passes the town, when it again strikes the front, but leaves this truly picturesque place some miles distant from the railway station, which is not only a serious loss to the town but is a great inconvenience to the travelling public. What is more remarkable is that the inhabitants did not wish for a station at the time the railway was built. Such apathy in this railway age seems strange. Dalhousie is by far the prettiest town on the "north shore." It is situated on the side of a rather steep hill which slopes to the water's edge, where there is a nice gravel beach. The rocky headlands and the variegated foliage of the trees, with nice white painted houses dotted here and there on the sloping hills, combine to place the scenery among the finest to be met with in the Dominion. The fossils which are found on the beach, and the plants to be met with in the woods, have attracted the attention of scientific men. During my short visit I met Prof. Spencer, of King's College, Windsor, N.S., who was pursuing knowledge under considerable difficulties, being over-