

THE SCOTCH, THE SABBATH, AND THE QUEEN.

The course of the boatmen of Loch Maree and of the innkeeper at Achnasheen in refusing to break the Sabbath even at the bidding of royalty has been severely condemned in several quarters—in some, for the sake of having a fling at "Scotch Sabbatarianism;" in others with the view of exhibiting a servile pseudo-loyalty. We do not doubt that by this time Her Majesty has estimated both the act and its condemnation at their true value; for we rather think she has not now to learn that the man who places his duty to his God before his duty to his sovereign is really more loyal than the sycophant who would sell his soul for a royal smile. But the press is not quite unanimous in condemning these rude Highlanders whose morals got the better of their manners—no great victory, it is said. Now and again amongst the din of reproof a word of approval and appreciation is heard. The following is from the Belfast "Witness."

Since Reformation times the Scotch have been greatly distinguished for their scrupulous observance of the Lord's Day. They accepted the moral law without any limitations or qualifications, and as a nation they have been for generations honestly endeavouring to obey it. Though the moral law is not read and responded to throughout the congregations of the Church of Scotland on every Sabbath as it is read, and with apparent sincerity and solemnity responded to by the congregations of the Church of England, who pray to God after the enunciation of each precept to "incline their hearts to keep this law," yet the statutes seem to have got a stronger hold of the Scottish mind. And so it is that many of the crimes which so frequently startle a section of the English community are utterly unknown in Scotland.

For the Lord's Day the Scottish people, as we have said, have had, and still have, a peculiar regard. Nor have they yet learned to look lightly upon any violation of its sanctity, no matter from what quarter such a violation may come. Believing in the perpetual obligation of all the Ten Commandments, they expect naturally that their rulers and all that are in authority shall show respect to the authority of God. And it grieves them much when those high in power disregard the day of God. Loyal though they are to the throne of England, they felt saddened and distressed when, on her sojourn in Scotland last year, Queen Victoria took to pleasuring in Loch Maree on the Sabbath Day. Nor has this Royal desecration been permitted to pass unnoticed by the Sabbath Alliance of Scotland. For at their annual meeting in Edinburgh last week they entered their solemn protest against the conduct of the Queen and the Prince of Wales "for doing their pleasure on God's holy day."

It does not appear from the report of the meeting which has reached us that the Sabbath Alliance deplored the desecration of the day by our Prime Minister, who ostentatiously travelled thereon—being feted by the way—to the Congress at Berlin, though he could as easily have gone on Monday as the Marquis of Salisbury did. If the Alliance have failed to note the Premier's conduct, and to protest against it, we hope that they will take good heed to remedy the omission. For if those high in authority and in place are permitted, without rebuke, to set any one of God's laws at defiance, the result over the whole community cannot but be disastrous.

Long ago Voltaire tried to write Christianity down; tried and failed; yet tried again. His philippics went for little. But when he got the Genevise to amuse themselves on the Sabbath Day, to open their theatres and cultivate theatricals on the day of God, the fair form of Christianity almost totally disappeared from the city of Calvin and Beza. For it is hard for religion to thrive in an unpropitious soil, all the more when it is denied a stated time for culture.

We are glad to think that notwithstanding the evil influences of Jacobites and gay cavaliers, of materialists and sceptics, the fourth precept of the Decalogue is still so deeply and loyally enshrined in the hearts of our co-religionists in Scotland. We are proud to learn on the authority of the Sabbath Alliance that the humble boatmen who usually ply on Loch Maree, and the innkeeper at Achnasheen, absolutely refused to convey the Royal party on their Sabbath breaking mission. To these consistent servants of God, it matters not that the London "Examiner" has poured out upon them its ridicule and scorn, has charged them with "indecent" and "impertinence." The old

Book which they love, and in which all Christians profess to believe, lays down the maxim—"We ought to obey God rather than men." And the God whom they so nobly served is able to protect them all the day long. So we shall extend to them no compassion under the "Examiner's" lash. For they need none. But surely if the "Examiner's" heart was equal to its head, it might have found words of commendation for these humble boatmen who had courage enough and manliness enough in presence of Royal and golden temptations to keep a conscience. There was a day when the "Examiner" could praise courage and self-denial, and conscientiousness. But these days lie far away from the present lacquer age.

Yet, let us hope that the influence of these much abused boatmen will be potential in the community in stimulating the careless to a strict observance of the day of God, since so much of man's physical as well as spiritual well-being depends upon it. For never did Sir Matthew Hale (William the Third's Chief Justice) deliver a truer judgment than when he said.

"A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content,
And health for the toils of to-morrow;
But a Sabbath profaned,
Whate'er may be gained,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow."

Along with the words of our steadfast and fearless Irish contemporary, we place before our readers a thoroughly unprejudiced and disinterested opinion which finds utterance on this side of the Atlantic. The New York "Christian Union," though (somewhat unnecessarily) afraid of being itself suspected of Sabbatarian leanings, thus expresses its admiration of the character of the men whose principles had been so severely put to the proof:

England of the "Establishment" was stirred to its foundations, when the last mail left, over news from north of the Tweed which was deeply shocking to the truly loyal heart. It is well known that Sabbatarianism has its headquarters in Scotland, and less generally known, perhaps, that the "Sabbath Alliance" of Edinburgh is the chief exponent of its doctrines. It is likewise notorious that flunkysm reaches its highest development in and around the court of St. James. When, therefore, Her Most Gracious Majesty, on a certain Sunday in May, had herself rowed out to an island of Loch Maree, and the heir apparent on the same day visited between the services a famous stable of Clydesdale horses, it was inevitable that the Sabbath Alliance should be greatly scandalized. And when it transpired that the sturdy boatmen of Loch Maree refused to pull Her Majesty's boat on the Sabbath, when the worthy innkeeper of Achnasheen refused to let his horses be used on that day to carry the royal letters, and when, finally, the Alliance expressed its opinion in unequivocal terms, the flunkies of all England arose in their might. One calls the proceeding a "flagrant impertinence," and does not know whether to marvel most at the "impudence or the hypocrisy" of this "sublime piece of intolerance." It is evident that in the eyes of a considerable number of English men and women the Scots should have stifled their consciences at the Queen's behest.

There is no need at this time to recapitulate our own views as to the observance of Sunday, or point out the apparent differences between the teachings of our Lord and the tenets of the Edinburgh Sabbath Alliance. The Royal Family not being pressed for time would have done well to respect the prejudices of the surrounding community, and refrain from excursions on a day when they could not but be offensive to many loyal subjects. But the temper of the boatmen and of the innkeeper was admirable to a high degree. It shows that the spirit of the Covenanters still survives in a land where the tendency is to cringe somewhat abjectly in the presence of hereditary titles. The convictions of these people may be narrow, and without good Scriptural authority, but so long as they are earnest convictions there is true nobility of a very high order in standing by them despite the supercilious laughter of the world. It is easy to imagine the amazement of the royal suite at this unheard of though perfectly respectful defiance of a passing imperial whim, but such defiance is evidence of far more sincere loyalty than the subserviency that is so conspicuous a trait of contemporary English character.

We know only too well that America has her flunkies and "tuft-hunters" as well as England. More is the shame to Americans! But at least there remains as yet a strong admiration for the kind of pluck that leads a man to maintain the faith that is in him.

INEBRIATE ASYLUMS.

The following is the speech of Dr. Cameron, M.P. for Glasgow, in advocating the Habitual Drunkards' Bill in the British House of Commons:—

Dr. Cameron, when moving the second reading of the Habitual Drunkards' Bill, wished to disabuse the minds of members of any idea that this was a heroic measure promising to deal with the great national curse of intemperance, or to carry out the object which it had in view by institutions of a costly nature supported out of national funds. All he proposed to deal with was chronic drunkenness, which was constantly associated with a morbid condition of body requiring medical treatment, and he proposed to secure that treatment, by the curative effects of what were proved by ample evidence, by means of retreats licensed by the local authorities. Experience showed that the great mass of habitual drunkards would become voluntary patients, and it was accordingly proposed that a habitual drunkard might go before a magistrate, and on undertaking to remain in a particular asylum for a definite period, the magistrate after satisfying himself that the man knew what he was doing, would sign the document, which would have the effect of putting him under the restraint and treatment he needed. As regards the other class, a friend or relative of the drunkard might apply to a magistrate for a summons requiring the drunkard to appear before the Court of Petty Sessions, who have power to order his detention in one of the retreats, unless the defendant preferred to have his case tried by a jury. From the decision of the Petty Sessions there would be a right of appeal. Power of liberation was given to the manager of the retreat, with the consent of two Justices of the Peace. The patient could at any time appeal to the inspector, whose duty it would be to report to the Secretary of State. He considered there were ample securities for the protection of the liberty of the subject, but he was willing to throw over all the compulsory clauses if the Government would accept the rest of the proposal. Institutions for inebriates existed in Edinburgh, in London, and in other parts of the country, and though powerless to keep the patient at the very moment when restraint was most needed, had not been unsuccessful. In America the experiment had answered beyond the expectations of its promoters, and all he was now asking was that power should be given to do publicly and above-board that which was already done illegally under the Lunacy Laws. He regarded the question as an eminently practical one. He had not proposed to cure intemperance, neither had he endeavoured to work upon the sympathies of the House, but amongst many letters he had received on the subject he had received one so touching that he should conclude by reading an extract from it. The writer was a pensioner who for many years had served in a Scotch regiment. In 1866 he married, and in order that he might bring up his family more respectably became a teetotaler. "Unfortunately," he says, "for me and my children, my wife seems to have begun from that date, and it has gone on from month to month and from year to year, gradually becoming worse until she has almost killed herself, ruined me, and become an object of disgust to her own children. I have done all that lay in my power to cure her, but of no avail. I have knelt at her bedside with the children, and begged and prayed her to leave off taking the cursed stuff that was killing both body and soul. I have made her swear over the dead bodies of our children in succession—for we have lost five out of the nine—to abstain from taking the deadly poison, and at each death she has promised me to leave it alone, but at the first opportunity she begins again. Several times she has had narrow escapes of killing herself by falling into the fire or down stairs. It is very sad, and a sad thing for me to be forced to bear this life; for the law can do nothing for me. My firm belief, sir, is, that if there were places to put unfortunates like my wife in confinement, where it would be impossible for them to get liquor, and where they could reflect on the sin of the life they had been leading, thousands of starving families might be saved from utter destruction. I do not say that all the unfortunate beings could be cured of their dreadful habit, but a great many would, and I firmly believe my wife would be one of the saved. She has struggled hard I know to overcome the evil, but it has got master of her, and nothing short of confinement will cure her. It has gone so far that she beats her children when I am not there if they will not go