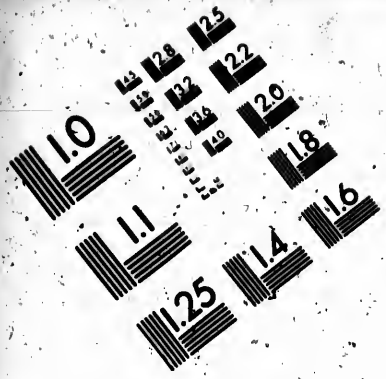

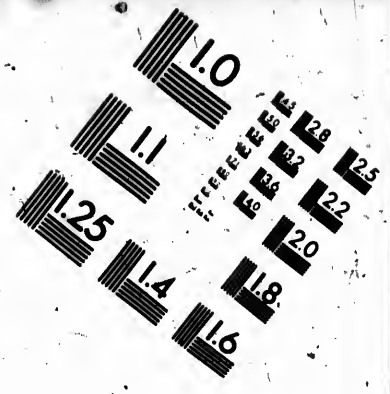

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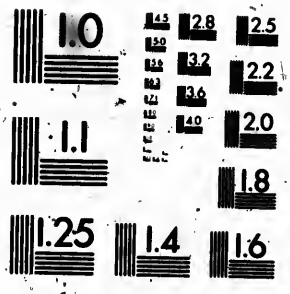

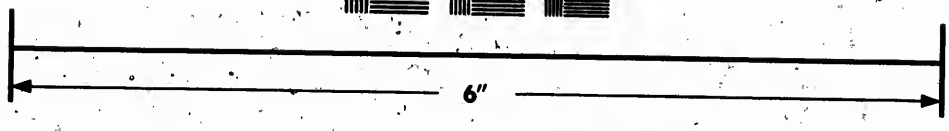

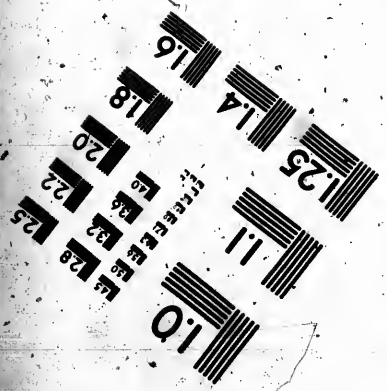

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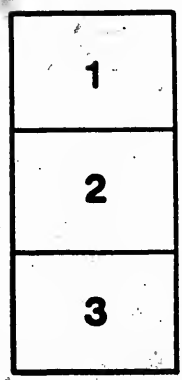

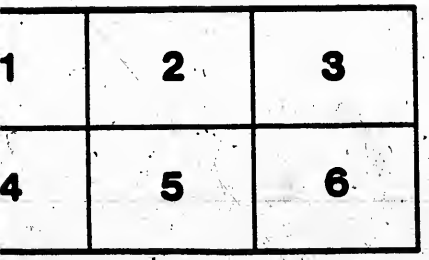

No. 9.

The Workingmen and the Weekly Rest Day

BY REV. J. G. SHEARER, B.A., SEC. L.D.A.

The *American Federation of Labor* at its National Convention in '96 passed the following resolution, which speaks for itself:

"That we urge our members to continue their warfare against Sunday work, remembering that if six men work seven days, they do the same work as seven men in six days; therefore, every time six men work Sunday, they are taking the bread out of the mouth of one fellow workman."

The *Trades and Labor Congress of Canada* has adopted similar resolutions.

"The Sabbath was made for man" is the Magna Charta of industrial liberty. No class in the community has so much at stake in "the Battle for the Sabbath" as the workingmen. The law alike of Nature and of the Bible imperatively calls for a weekly rest day for all toilers whether they work with brawn or with brain. The greed of gain, the love of pleasure, the passion for sport are combining with irreligion and immorality, at the present time as never before in our country, to rob the workingmen of their weekly rest day, with all its priceless privileges. Very often you will find these forces putting on the mask of philanthropy and of concern for labor's liberty in seeking to make their inroads on the Sabbath. No man is a friend of labor who is an enemy of the Lord's Day. Whether the workingman appreciates the need of that day for the development of his moral and religious nature or not, looked at only from the standpoint of labor and personal liberty, it is of the utmost consequence that nothing but works of real "necessity or of mercy" should be permitted on the weekly rest day. Three million workers in the United States, and probably not less than one hundred thousand in Canada, have no rest day because of unnecessary labor done on Sunday, and are thus reduced to industrial slavery.

The following quotation from the Constitution of the Lord's Day Alliance, now organized in every part of Canada, sets forth the objects and methods of that body:

"The Alliance believes that the Lord's Day is a divine institution, and that the only sure foundation upon which the enjoyment of its benefits can rest, is a strong conviction on the part of the people of its sacred character.

"It shall be the object of the Alliance to preserve the Lord's Day in its integrity, and to secure to the whole community the right to its full enjoyment."

This it seeks to do—(1) By appeal to conscience and public opinion. (2) By a strong and effective organization. (3) By enforcement of laws for the preservation of the day of rest. (4) By securing such legislation as may be found necessary for the complete protection of the Lord's Day as a day of rest and of opportunity for worship.

It will be seen from the above that while the Alliance believes in the religious observance of the Sabbath, it seeks to promote this only by persuasive means. It holds, strongly, however, that "the liberty of rest for each man demands the law of rest for all men." In this, assuredly, labor men, whether Christians or not, have good cause to agree with the Alliance. And the workingmen of Canada have, of late, been showing their appreciation of these considerations by, either on their own account or in co-operation with the Alliance, resisting encroachments upon the rest day and seeking to have it protected by the law of the land. In Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton, the Trades and Labor Councils have already appointed committees to co-operate with the local Alliances. In Kingston, Guelph and St. Catharines, labor unions have for some time been strongly sympathetic. The barbers of Montreal and of Ontario have secured the prohibition of Sunday barbering. The labor men of British Columbia were the first to begin this active co-operation. Mr. Ralph Smith, M.P., well known to every labor man in Canada, is the First Vice-President of the Lord's Day Alliance of the Pacific Province; Mr. D. J. O'Donoghue, Dominion Fair Wages Officer, is one of the founders of the movement, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Lord's Day Alliance of Canada.

There are two ways in which workingmen can assist the Lord's Day Alliance: (1) By individually *becoming members* of it. The usual membership fee (annual) is 50c., but when any labor union supplies twenty or more of its number as members of any branch of the Alliance they are admitted at 25c. each. (2) By unions and councils *co-operating* whenever there is work to be done in defence of the weekly rest day.

The chief temptation which working people have to meet is the yielding to various efforts by excursions, sports, etc., to make of the Sabbath an ordinary holiday. *Citizen and Country* effectively deals with this delusion. It says:

"Capital, under the fever of competition, is ever seeking to infringe on the rights of labor. This it seeks in various deceptive ways. Sympathy for the workers is the usual mask. This has often proved a winning card; Sunday street cars in Toronto, for instance. The Sabbath is not a day for outings, for picnics, for pleasurings; it is essentially a day of rest—rest for mind and body, for men and beasts. Some will say, 'Men must have recreation,' then I reply, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday for work, Saturday for recreation; Sunday for rest. Five days of labor are more than sufficient to fill our wants. The chief thing to be guarded is the sanctity of the weekly day of rest. Making that secure, let us go on to the next victory—the Saturday holiday."

Strong wise words from MR. RALPH SMITH, M.P.:

"It is important for members of labor unions to remember in the discussion of the observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest, that to relinquish any opportunity of rest is ultimately to labor where we might rest, and that for the same wage. Whilst we may benefit for a short time by the disposal of certain privileges for what we think is an extension of enjoyment, to gain which we compel fellow workmen to labor, in the end we ourselves may be compelled to do the same by the power of capital, and ultimately to do so for the wage we now receive for the shorter week. Any *privilege to ourselves which compels others to labor is* CONTRARY TO TRADES UNION PRINCIPLES."

MR. P. J. MAAS, General Organizer, American Federation of Labor, writes:

"At the high pressure rate of life which modern civilization has forced upon us, there is *now more than ever a necessity for the Day of Rest.*

"Close every place of business, even to the confectionery, ice cream, soda water, and other shops, and bank the fires in the furnaces; let the hum of machinery cease and give every man a chance to recuperate strength and improve his mind.

"If, through neglect or indifference, all the [illegible] restraints of law are gradually swept away; [illegible] *greed for gain is to prevail* over natural and [illegible] physical laws, *the time will come when labor on* [illegible]

of the week will be the rule for the majority, and rest the privilege of the favored few."

MR. SAMUEL GOMPERS, President American Federation of Labor, writes:

"In my judgment it is not only just and humane, but essential to the progress of our people, the perpetuation of our race, the liberty of our country, the moral, material and intellectual advancement of all, that one day of rest in seven should be the universal rule. I regard it as absolutely *dangerous to all our interests* and to our progress *that the workers should be required to toil more than six days in the week.*"

MR. JOHN JENKINS, J.P., President of the 1895 (British) Trades Union Congress, in speaking at the annual meeting of the Workingmen's Lord's Day Rest Association, said:

"I am here to-night as a supporter and preserver of the divinely appointed Day of Rest in all its sanctity, purity and sweetness, and I am thus here in obedience both to my Christian and trade union principles. Now, in personally observing the holy day, I know that I am doing the will of its Divine Founder. I believe, too, that *in striving with you to assure for others the opportunity* of similarly observing it, *of enjoying the greatest of all social privileges, I am doing true trade union work,* and *pleasing Christ,* my Brother, by trying to 'do unto others as I would that others should do unto me.'"

MR. JOHN HODGE, steel smelter, President of the (British) Trades Union Congress of 1892, in addressing the same Association, is reported as saying that "He strongly opposed Sunday work not only because he had been a sufferer from it, but from higher and holier motives. He opposed it because the divine law said, 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.' He could not help thinking that Christians had been too apathetic in this matter. But if the churches had been apathetic he thought they could congratulate themselves upon the success of the operations of their Association. *The workers certainly owed a debt of gratitude to the Society for what it had done for them.*"

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REV. J. G. SHEARER, B.A., *Field Secretary*, 78 CONFEDERATION LIFE BLDG.

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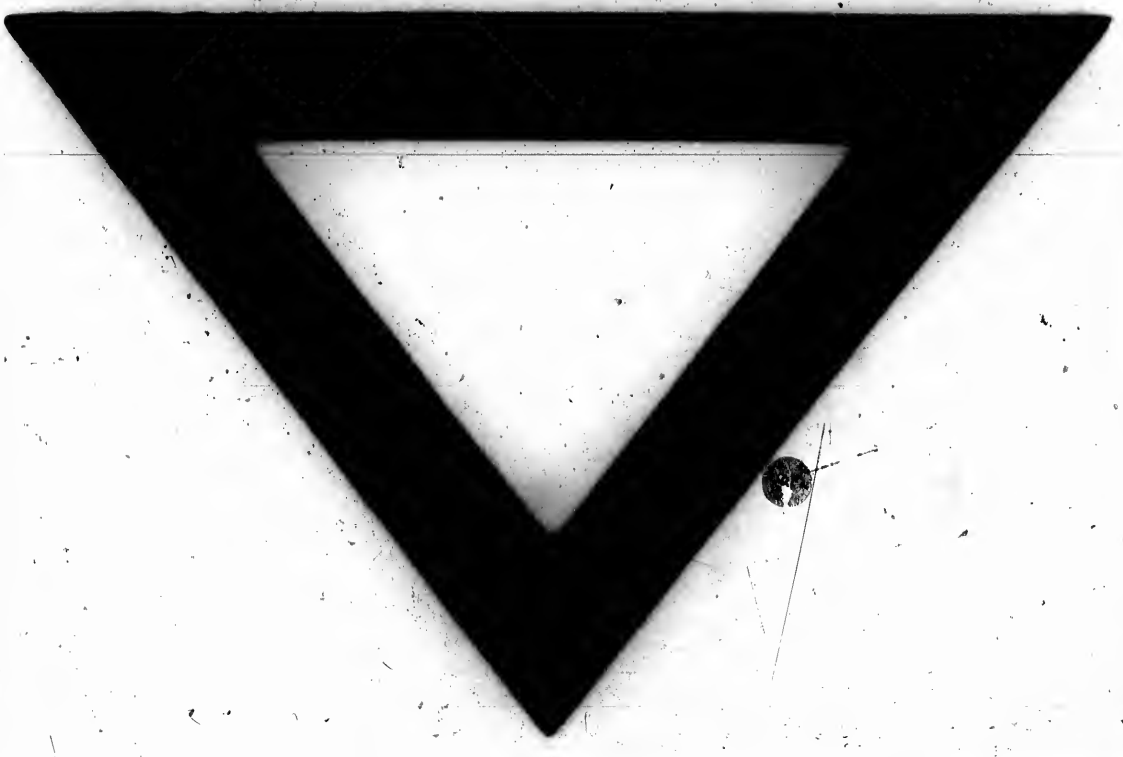
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