

THE SUNDAY QUESTION.

THE question how we are to regard and how to keep Sunday is becoming one of grave national importance ; and the decision formed of it by such nations as England and America will have vast consequences for generations to come. Now, I trust that this paper will show that I am not what is called a rigid or narrow Sabbatarian ; yet, I say, without hesitation, that even those who might be so stigmatized by their opponents may yet be guided by a wiser instinct and a deeper insight than those who look down on them with scorn and devote their whole Sunday to pleasure and amusement. Without any Pharisaism, with no Puritanical gloom, it is right and wise to call the Sabbath—and the Sunday, which has taken its place—“ a delight, holy to the Lord, and honorable.” To do our own will and seek our own pleasure on the Lord’s Day is a practice which will not bring a blessing on either nations or individuals, but rather the reverse.

The change which has taken place during the last twenty years, in the ordinary way of regarding Sunday, is very marked. It may be illustrated by the fact that the railway stations of London and of other great cities are now crowded every Sunday morning by men and women in sporting costume, who are on their way to the golf-grounds or the rivers to spend their whole Sunday in games and picnics, until the day is closed by a dinner party or a dance. It is a changed phase of modern life of which we should be wise to take note ; and it calls upon us to decide whether we should rejoice, or otherwise, in this new mode of spending what was for centuries regarded as a holy day.

In the Pentateuch of the Bible the reasons assigned for keeping the ancient Sabbath are threefold. In the Book of Exodus (xx. 8–11) it is commanded to be observed as a commemoration of the Sabbath rest of God ; in Deuteronomy (v. 12–15) it is ordained as a law of *kindness*, and a sign of gratitude for the Deliverance from Egypt. In Leviticus (xix. 30) it is an ordinance of *worship*: “ Ye shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary : I am the Lord.” But the division of time into periods of seven days is not peculiar to Judaism. It existed among the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, and even the ancient Persians. The

only *rule* for its observance laid down by Moses is that of "rest from labor." It was a boon of God to the nation, in order that one day in seven should be sheltered from the invasions of greed and toil.

Religionism is the destroying microbe of true religion ; and in the hands of Pharisees the Sabbath was degraded into a fetish, and surrounded by masses of niggling regulations, for which they themselves provided means for evading when they found them irksome. The Pharisees did not, however, fall into the error of the Puritans, who made Sunday a day of gloomy inanition, in which it was a sin to take a walk, or pluck a flower, or enjoy any of the innocent refreshments of a glad spirit. Both Pharisees and Puritans turned what was meant as the privilege of *sons* into the cringing externalism and useless eye-service of *slaves*. Such errors arise from false and narrow notions of the nature of God—as though He were such an one as ourselves. Hence, Christ deliberately broke to pieces the wretched Pharisaic idol ; and by His Sabbath healings and all His teaching restored the true principle that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath ;" that it was intended as a boon, not as a burden ; and that, in this, as in all cases, God desires "mercy and not sacrifices."

Christianity substituted the sacred observance of the First Day of the week in place of the seventh, because "it set the clock of time to the epochs of Christ's history." Sunday began as a day of worship, and became in the age of Constantine a day of rest. The only *command* which we find in the New Testament about the manner of its observance has become the foundation of our offertories, which are so rich a means of doing good. It is St. Paul's advice: "On the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." Thus *rest*, worship, and *loving-kindness* are ideal modes of Sunday observances. To vulgarize Sunday into a common day is not so much to break a commandment as to violate a principle. It is to wrong both ourselves and our brother-men by throwing away a heaven-sent blessing. It is to act in ignorant selfishness, like a bad son who sacrifices his own good and that of his whole family by preferring his own will to the merciful ordinance of God.

Let me point out some of the indisputable blessings which might come from regarding our Sundays as days of innocent and holy gladness, and spending them rightly as happy interspaces amid the cares and labors of the world.

To put Sunday on the lowest ground it is a day *necessary* to man for rest of body, soul, and spirit. The very animals require such a

rest. The horse which is allowed to rest one day in seven will last longer and be more serviceable than the horse which is worked every day alike. Moses pointed to this fact when he said, "that thy cattle may rest as well as thou."

The working classes should be most of all on their guard against the insertion of the thin end of the wedge of any custom which will first usurp Sunday for amusement, and then for greed. When they hear the infidel lecturer denouncing those who take this view as "tyrannous Sabbatarians," they should see that he is denouncing their best protectors and friends. Among the Jews, as the prophet Amos tells us, it was the meanest money-grubbers who used to say, "When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may sell wheat?" In the French Revolution, amid the frenzy of hatred for all religion, a holiday of one day in ten was substituted for one in seven—but an experience of twelve short years sufficed to show the nation, that one day in ten was not sufficient, and that they could not improve upon God's gracious ordinance. To how many a poor, weary English lad, amid the hardships of his toil, has the Sabbath beaten like balm upon his eyelids! Waking from his heavy, weary sleep the sweet music of church bells has told him that it was the blessed day of rest.

And let us remember that the working classes are the greater in number. Say there are twenty-five million people in England—for simplicity's sake, drop the millions—then out of the twenty-five, eight are young children; six are women; and, of the remaining eleven, two till the soil; six are in shops and manufactories; one is a tradesman; one is either in the workhouse or the gaol; and one belongs to the independent, the wealthy, or the professional classes. Now, even this one million of the comparatively prosperous need a day of holy rest: how much more the eight million children; the six million women; the nine or ten million shopmen, clerks, laborers, and artisans!

And this rest is needful *intellectually* as well as physically. The man of business or the scholar who makes no marked difference between Sunday and other days will be neither so happy nor so prosperous nor so long-lived as the man who on Sunday gives himself a respite from worldly cares.

Few men worked harder than the late statesman, Mr. W. E. Gladstone, yet he always kept his Sundays sacred from work even amid the intense excitement of political crises; and it was to this fact that he publicly attributed both his longevity and his health. "The

Sabbath," said Adam Smith, "as a political institution is of inestimable value, independently of its claims to divine authority." "From a moral, physical, and social point of view," said Mr. Gladstone, "the observance of Sunday is a duty of absolute consequence." "Of all divine institutions," said the Earl of Beaconsfield, "the most divine is that which secures a day of rest for man. *It is the cornerstone of civilization.*" "We are not poorer, but richer," said Lord Macaulay, "because we have, for many ages, rested one day in seven. That day is not lost. While industry is suspended, while the exchange is silent, while no smoke rises from the factory, a process is going on as important to the wealth of the nation as any process which is performed on more busy days. Man, the machine of machines, is repairing and winding up so that he returns to his labors with clearer intellect, with livelier spirits, and with renewed corporal vigor."

Next, apart from physical and mental rest, Sunday is an inestimable blessing as a day of *calm*—a day for utterly getting rid of any absorbing, exciting thought that may swerve and sway the soul. Such thoughts may become, alike to old and young, an engrossing, destroying fanaticism ; subduing the man to what he works in, like the dyer's hand, and shutting him out from the eternal, as a brass farthing held before the eye may shut out the sun. From this paralyzing slavery, whether of worldliness or of passion, Sunday may prove an effective emancipation. It may be as the hand of a dear friend laid upon the shoulder to warn us against some fatal deed ; as the voice of a loving monitor which whispers in our ear Beware ! as a strong arm held out to us from heaven to pluck us out of drowning floods and to save us "from being drawn down into the great whirlpool of time and sense."

Nothing may be so potent as are our recurrent Sundays to make us realize our true manhood, our divine prerogative, amid the benumbing bondage of dull routine. On a French tomb was once carved the striking epitaph, "He was born a man ; and died a grocer." No one who saved his Sundays can ever merge the sacredness of his immortality in his ledger or his moneybags, or be tempted to forget that behind the laborer or the mechanic stands the Man in the dignity of God's image, and with the sign of his redemption marked visibly upon his forehead.

"A servant with this clause,
Makes drudgery divine ;
Who sweeps a room as to My laws
Makes that and the action fine."

The Sunday may most happily remind us and bring home to us, week by week, that we have an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, not chaining us to the treacherous depths of earth, but passing up through the ærial ocean, behind the veil of time and sense, and holding our souls firmly to the Everlasting Rock.

Again, if we forsake the duty—the plain, happy, eminently Christian duty—of gathering ourselves together for worship on Sunday “as the manner of some is,” we voluntarily throw away one of the most precious and necessary elements in human life. We neither live nor die alone. The man will, necessarily, be a base and useless man who lives and dies only to himself. Public prayer is as necessary as private; and for those who, in mere selfish and arrogant vanity, neglect it, Sunday will become more and more a curse and not a blessing—a day of indolent indulgence and listless self-seeking. “There can be no religion,” said the Comte de Montalembert, “without public worship, and there can be no public worship without a Sabbath.”

And the blessed duty of public worship, of which our Lord Himself set us the constant example, involves, or brings with it, other blessings and privileges. Even if the gifts which we give on that day be small, and far below what, in nine cases out of ten, they ought to be, they yet furnish, in the aggregate, no trivial part of the means for carrying on the work of religion in the world, and are, only too often, the *sole* contributions which many furnish to any good cause outside of “the slightly expanded egotism” of their domestic claims.

In the common absence of religious self-culture they give almost the sole opportunity which is left for reminding us of the sacredness of our obligations to God and man, and of the awful peril of suffering our heart to become “hard as the nether millstone” in worldly selfishness. Nothing is easier than to sneer at sermons; but the world has found them necessary for many thousands of years, and to all but the arrogantly supercilious “the worst speak something good.” Once more, if all begin to imitate the example of the selfish few, what would become of the great work of Sunday-school teaching, to which millions of the young, in all countries, and especially among our working classes, owe all that they ever effectively learn about things divine? It is a sad thing that nine-tenths of our Sunday-school teachers are women. This work, so far from being a work for young men to despise, might be an infinite blessing and deep source of happiness to them. Few men are so busy as great lawyers; yet four of our recent Lord Chancellors—Lord Hatherley, Lord Cairns, Lord Herschell, and

Lord Selborne—were, for years, faithful Sunday-school teachers, amid the full tide of their honors ; and one of our most cultivated and brilliant judges—the late Mr. Justice Denman—who had been Senior Classic, and Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, told me that even his many and varied experiences as a judge had not been nearly so full of interest to him as his experiences as a Sunday-school teacher of the young and ignorant.

On all these grounds, then, I should regard it as nothing less than a national misfortune if Sunday became more and more secularized ; if public worship became more and more neglected ; if frivolous personal amusement became the one transcendent end of a day granted us as a boon. It was given us for *rest* indeed—which is most necessary, but is by no means best secured by indiscriminate pleasure-seeking—but also to secure for us *deliverance* from mere earthly interests and all enslaving routine ; and for *calm* amid constantly recurring excitement ; and for special *opportunities* for receiving good ourselves, and doing good to others and helping forward the best work of the world ; and for hope, which lends sweetness even to a bitter present, and which, like a charioteer who bends over his swift steeds, leans forward with eager gaze fixed on the goal—which is that unimaginable future wherein God shall be all in all.

We need be neither Pharisaic nor Puritanical in our view of what Sunday involves ; we are not required to burden it with a mass of petty regulations ; still less to degrade it into a sort of mechanical fetish, or to make of it a dreary form ; or to worry ourselves and others with perpetual little questions as to whether we may or may not do this or that on Sundays. But we *are* called upon to accept, and rightly to use, the blessing which God has granted to us all : a boon which we may neglect and despise at our pleasure, and at our peril, but which, if rightfully employed, and thankfully consecrated, may make all our lives more useful, more cheerful, more noble, more nationally fruitful and glorious than otherwise they can ever be.

F. W. FARRAR.

COMMERCIAL JAPAN.

THE new Japan is the object of special interest to all the world, and especially to all Americans—and with good reason. The United States was her godfather, her tutor, her adviser, her neighbor ; and now that she is essaying to walk alone among modern nations, it is not surprising that we should look with interest, not to say solicitude, upon her first steps. It is less than half a century since our Commodore M. C. Perry “persuaded” Japan to open her doors, which had been closed to all the world since long before our nation existed. It was to the United States that she first sent envoys to make acquaintances and to observe the ways of the modern commercial and political world. To our schools and colleges she sent thousands of her best young men, who have now returned, and in turn are instructing hundreds of thousands of her people in the things which they learned here.

Many American citizens have taken up their abode in Japan as teachers in the schools and colleges and as instructors in modern methods, mechanical, mercantile, financial, and political. Numerous other American citizens have visited Japan in the interest of the Christian religion, and, mingling with the people, have carried the light of modern methods with the light of the Gospel. Thousands of citizens of the United States have been residents of Japan during the years since the acquaintance of the two nations began ; and tens of thousands of Japanese citizens have, in that time, lived under the Stars and Stripes. The citizens of the United States residing in Japan to-day number more than 1,000, and of Japanese in the United States there

NOTE.—It is proper to call attention to the fact that in many cases, especially where the period under consideration extends over a considerable number of years, the increase of values, stated in yen, is more apparent than real ; since the value of the yen, which, in 1885, was 85.8 cents, has gradually fallen, touching 52.9 cents in 1896, 51.9 cents in 1897, and 49.8 cents, upon the adoption of the gold standard, in 1897. The value of the Japanese yen on January 1 of each year, from 1885, expressed in United States currency, as shown by the report of the Director of the United States Mint, has been as follows : January 1, 1885, 85.8 cents ; 1886, 81 cents ; 1887, 78.4 cents ; 1888, 75.3 cents ; 1889, 73.4 cents ; 1890, 75.2 cents ; 1891, 83.1 cents ; 1892, 74.5 cents ; 1893, 66.1 cents ; 1894, 55.6 cents ; 1895, 49.1 cents ; 1896, 52.9 cents ; 1897, 51.1 cents ; 1898, 49.8 cents. The sen is $\frac{1}{100}$ of a yen.