

A Canadian Sunday.

PART I.

GEORGE HERBERT tells us that "the Sundays of man's life, threaded together on Time's string, make bracelets to adorn the wife of the Eternal King." But the jewels of that bracelet, as we glance across the hundred years of Canadian History, vary greatly in brilliancy and lustre, at times shedding light on the day's work and on the beyond, at times barely distinguishable from the pebbles at our feet.

Among leading statesmen General Simcoe stands first in voicing a feeling of anxiety over the question of the Canadian Sunday. He speaks of a deputation which waited on him and only too truly testifying that the rising generation "was rapidly returning to barbarism," and that "the Sabbath so wisely set apart for devotion was hardly known to the children who were busily employed in searching for amusements in which they might consume the day."

This is hardly to be wondered at when we consider how few and scattered those people were, and how scanty the number of clergy of any denomination whatsoever appointed to minister to them. Few, if any, clergy were to be found, for instance, among the United Empire refugees, and the Rev. J. Stewart in 1786 writes: "I am the only clergyman in this Province, Quebec." The indifference as to Sunday continued long after General Simcoe's day. A correspondent of a Kingston paper (1816) tells how "the noise of hammers and axes resound from sunrise to sunset." A few years later a newly-converted Indian, at a conference in Adolphustown in 1826, expresses his wonder over the Sunday question. "You white people have the Bible too, you read sometimes—yet you get drunk—yet you tell lies—yet you break the Sabbath."

It is little wonder if in far-away remote, solitary homesteads, walled in by the shadow of the primeval forest, and silent but for the howl of the wolf or the cry of the wild cat, if the Sabbath were broken, and if liturgy, psalm and prayer died out. Dr. Strachan, who understood Canada perhaps better than any statesman of his day, appreciated the difficulty and sympathetically but firmly diagnosed the situation. He tells how the far-away settler begins by lamenting his distance from church and school and how, as time

goes on, those lamentations, together with the religious feelings which prompted them, gradually die away, till at last a disinclination, an estrangement, "even an hostility to God in all its deformity," takes its place.

It is easy to understand a gradual decline in the observance of Sunday in a newly settled country; it is more difficult to understand the change for the better, the growth in Sunday observance which from a quarter to half a century later gradually passed over the whole country. The change was so gradual and so simple at first that it is hardly noticed and consists mainly in "donning a clean garment on the seventh day." The next step goes further. We find now and again "a petition drawn up by respectable inhabitants that fishing on Sunday may be prohibited by law." This "happily accomplished," neighbourhoods once remarkable "for the most disrespectful negligence of the Lord's Day now strictly observe it." As the century wears on this change passed from the comparatively settled districts of Ontario to the more settled districts of the West. Thus a writer in a Minnesota paper contrasts the way in which the "entire population seems to go to Church in Winnipeg" with the "open ungodliness and unblushing wickedness of a Western town." How did such a change set in?

The answer in the East, at any rate, lies in the early half of the century and in the incoming of a new and God-fearing population. The first outstanding cause may be traced to the influence of the United Empire Loyalists, men and women as capable of fearing God as of daring exile and death in the service of king and country. Secondly, to an influx of sturdy North of Ireland Churchmen who set a high moral and spiritual standard and rapidly rose to influence. And last, but not least, to an incoming Scotch influence. An old writer tells us that wherever the Scotch predominated "a deep sense of duty, high aims, and a sincere love of the Word was noted." The Scotch shamed other settlers "by their sobriety, industry, frugality and patience," "their exemplary kindliness to one another, and above all to the stranger within the gate." Wherever the Scotch went they showed a deep consciousness "that God and His ways and His laws were written all about them." It is hard to read the old records without a thrill of admiration. "We drove forty miles to New Market (a journey possibly of some twenty hours' duration) on an ox sleigh to have my brother christened." "How

did I get to Kirk ? ” “ Through the bush, with only a blaze to go by. When I had shoes I took them off to cross the river, I could stick to the logs better without them.” It was no question of observance of Sunday, it was a passion for God and His service, and in that service a passion for Sunday. A settler picking out stitches which he had inadvertently (owing to his having lost track of the days in the bush) placed in his moccasins on Sunday shows an intensity and loyalty of conviction, no matter whether that conviction might or might not express itself in ways unaccustomed to us to-day.

But the final and determining factor seems to have been a general movement of Canadian laymen in favour of the observance of Sunday throughout the century. Wherever Canadian laymen move solidly towards any given point, moral or religious, they almost invariably carry that point whatever it may be, whether the observance of Sunday, the foundation of Sunday Schools, the formation of the Lord's Day Alliance, the Laymen's Missionary Movement, the Y.M.C.A. Campaign, or across the sea to-day the carrying of a Vimy Ridge. In the present instance we find the laymen seconding, if not leading, the advance of the clergy. In that advance they farsightedly throw their strength into Sunday Schools and through the Sunday Schools rapidly influence the rising generation. You see “ Father Ketchum,” mindful of the day when a poor homeless lad he landed from a little schooner on the pebbly beach and trudged through the pine clearing of blackened stumps, dignified by the name of Yonge Street, in later life seeking out lonely boys wherever he can find them. Intent on his quest he visits Sunday School after Sunday School, drawing Christmas gifts out of the capacious pockets of his overcoat, and at his death, mourned by thousands of his fellow citizens, leaves an annual endowment, “ Jesse Ketchum's Bounty,” to be distributed in perpetuity to the successive generations of the Toronto children.

But Jesse Ketchum is, after all, but one of the many. You find leading lawyers, leading business men, looking upon Sunday as a day of opportunity rather than a day of relaxation, and in the light of that opportunity superintending Sunday Schools or taking Teachers' Training Classes. You find a leading K.C., like the late Hon. S. H. Blake, Saturday by Saturday, and Sunday by Sunday, training two hundred teachers in the coming Sunday School lesson.

You see another leading K.C., Mr. Hamilton Cassels, for over thirty-eight years, first teaching, then superintending, the prison Sunday School, and on the prisoner's day of release holding out a hand of sympathy and relief.

But to-day the general attitude towards Sunday changes. You find a feeling arising that Sunday is a day needlessly hedged in, a day of pleasure rather than a day of opportunity. The restless feeling which is drawing men, women and children from the home fireside of an evening to theatre and entertainment is drawing men, women and children as in Governor Simcoe's time across the old boundaries in search of "amusements in which they may consume the day." In consequence, every thoughtful girl at leaving school faces a very live difficulty, that is to say, faces the problem of deciding what line she ought to take as to the right spending of Sunday. It was easy enough for her at school where definite lines were laid down and had to be followed. Now that she is free, the old-time definite lines are blurred and changing, and she has to seek out and make a new and definite line for herself. For whether we will or no the old Canadian Sunday is gradually receding out of Canadian life and customs. We know well enough the necessity for a "sufficing arrest." We know that the necessity for this "arrest" is woven into the very fibre of our intellectual and physical being. We know further that any attempt, as at the French Revolution, to substitute one day in ten for one day in seven, has failed and will fail. And yet with it all we grudge the time given for this "arrest."

The difficulty turns not so much upon whether there shall be an "arrest" at all upon Sunday as upon what the character of that "arrest" shall be. Our forefathers had no such difficulty, for they interpreted the Bible literally as it stood. They determined, since the Seventh Day was the Sabbath of the Lord their God that they would keep the Seventh Day. They determined, since commerce was forbidden by Nehemiah, that they would close their stores. They determined, that a special blessing having been promised by Isaiah upon those who turned away from their own pleasure upon the Seventh Day, that they would turn away from amusement and observe Sunday quietly. But to-day, consciously and unconsciously, we are looking upon the Bible from another point of view. We emphasize the teaching of the New Testament in place of the teaching of the Old Testament, and, instead of considering how far

the thought of the New Testament may be the development of the seed thought of the Old Testament, under a vague impression that Christ took a more lenient observance of Sunday we take a more lenient view. We are willing to take Sunday as a day of "sufficing arrest," but we make that "arrest" a time of amusement rather than a time of spiritual activity.

Two arguments present themselves for immediate consideration: The argument of custom and the argument as to Christ's definite teaching on Sunday; or, in other words, how far, if at all, Christ's teaching is contrary to the Old Testament, how far a development of Old Testament seed thought.

As to personal custom and national custom. The lead taken by our ancestors, the acted on conviction of those who have gone before us, is important and worthy of full consideration, but does not decide the question. The fact that following in their lead we keep Sunday quietly, that worldliness jars on Sunday as quarrels jar on Christmas Day, is comparatively neither here nor there. The fact that we put aside weekday customs, business letters, exciting novels, in order that one day in the week at the least, "as in the temple of Solomon the sound of the earthly hammer may not be heard in the temple of the soul," may be wise, but once again is not the deciding word in the matter. The deciding word lies in the discovery of Christ's will, and that will once discovered, in avoiding hypocrisy and in being utterly straightforward with ourselves and with our children.

Then as to the national custom. We find that Sunday is not a peculiarity of the Canadian, or of the British, or of any other nation, but that Sunday is a day of rest, ordained and sanctioned by the far-seeing statesmen of successive generations. Constantine, A.D. 331, commanded all courts of justice and workshops "to be at rest on Sunday"; Charlemagne forbade Sunday labour; Edward VI., Elizabeth and the Puritans, all threw their united weight upon the due observance of Sunday. Finally, the Statute of 1676 placed the English Sunday and the Canadian Sunday upon the footing upon which they have continued to the present century; a footing stronger in Canada than in any other nation, a footing, God grant never to be changed.

The Canadian history of Sunday is in line with the regulations just quoted. Our forefathers, United Empire Loyalists, or men of

sturdy northern breed, understood their duty to God to be as binding as their duty to their neighbour, and laid out the week so as to give time and opportunity for six days' work, and a Seventh Day's rest. The Seventh Day was set apart as a day of opportunity, a day on which parents and children could learn "to know God," could practise His presence, could learn "to enjoy Him for ever."

Recent inventions—the telephone, motors—came in, saving time, but instead of conserving energy only opening the way to swifter thought and tenser labour. In the midst of the busy thoroughfare of everyday life Sunday stands invitingly open, the one leisured day for extra labour or amusement. The question arises as to how far it is right for us ourselves, how far it is right for us to permit our workpeople to encroach upon this Sunday space; in other words, to relieve the congested week by turning part of Sunday into a continual weekday.

It is easy enough to work upon Sunday, but is it equally easy to make up for a time of rest lost? We have to remember that nervous breakdown is one of the commonest diseases of to-day. We may find that we have encroached upon our day of rest at cruel cost to ourselves and to our children. We need only look at ourselves in Canada or at our neighbours across the line to see the result of this loss of Sunday rest upon the nervous constitutions of the men and women of to-day. How many breakdowns would never have taken place if, as a nation, we had not encroached upon our Sunday rest? How many sanatoriums would to-day be closed if a healthier, wiser, Sunday had been reinstated in the land? How many homes on edge with nervous irritation, would have relaxed if a quiet Sunday had replaced a tense Sunday?

But, granted that Sunday work is inadvisable for ourselves, is it equally inadvisable for our workpeople? How far are we justified in bribing our workpeople, in paying extra money, in order that they may crowd Sunday out of their lives? During the last two years, that is to say, during war-time, Sunday labour has increased by leaps and bounds. A special Committee pleaded with Mr. Lloyd George that Sunday munition labour might be discontinued on the ground that "there are inevitable limits to hours of labour," that "they would work to 10 p.m. on Saturday if they might rest on Sunday," that "the monotony of the work killed them," and that "they were sick of it," that "foremen could not

endure the mental strain of seven days' work." A little later a Committee of Investigation, composed of scientific and medical men, reported that seven days' work in munition factories was "not worth while," and "that the output of six days' work would equal, if it did not exceed, seven days' work."

But if hours of labour practically remain the same, whether we work upon Sunday or not, what about occupations in which a forced stoppage causes waste? This question of waste was discussed at the International Congress of Sunday rest at Chicago in 1893, and the decision was given against Sunday labour on the following grounds. It was urged that more oil could be pumped in six days than in seven because machinery "so continuously used was more easily broken, and broken machinery made forced stoppage." Secondly, that the loss of home life, coupled with the loss of opportunity for intellectual and spiritual refreshment caused a corresponding loss of efficiency, for men, haunted by a consciousness that they were breaking God's will, lost self-respect, and with self-respect lost interest in their work and in their employer.

In support of these statements it was contended that the largest oil-producing company in the United States, that is to say, the Hundred Foot District, did more work under the new six-day regulation than formerly under the seven.

But after all, it is not a question of hours or of loss of capital. In the last analysis it is a social and political question, for Sunday labour is dangerous in so far as it embitters and arouses antagonism between capital and labour. We know only too well the agony of to-day's warfare between nation and nation, but we have still to learn the still bitterer agony of civil warfare, that is to say of warfare between capital and labour, a warfare which like the shadow of a man's hand hangs over Canada and over the United States. Take, for instance, the railway question. We are always on the edge of a railway strike, and we breathe freely whenever that strike is averted, in Canada or in the United States. But we do not stop to think how far the Sunday question is the underlying irritant in inducing that strike. The four hundred and fifty engineers who petitioned Mr. Vanderbilt for a cessation of Sunday labour pleaded strong grounds. They claimed that a never-ending labour made them feel "worn out like old men"; "that ignoring Sunday had a demoralizing influence" upon their children; that the strain was

impairing the "requisite energy so necessary for making them good engineers"; and pledged themselves to give "ten days' work in six," if they could only look forward to a "certain period of rest."

Is their petition unreasonable? If the heated steel of a railway engine must be cooled off, and if that engine must be given one day's rest after five days' labour, how far more surely the delicate brain and nerve power of the man occupying the responsible post of locomotive engineer must be given one day's rest after six days' labour.

Next as to private labour. We do not need to be told that to-day is the day of the servant difficulty, but we do need to be reminded that nothing aggravates that difficulty like an infringement of the just rights of our servants, and among those rights the opportunity for rest and for attending Divine service, which are too often taken away owing to Sunday entertainment. Servants resent, and resent justly, seven days' labour, and employers are beginning to feel their resentment, so that inquiry has even been made at registry offices for "servants without souls," that is to say, maids who care nothing about Sunday and who will as gladly undertake the labour incurred in Sunday entertaining as in weekday entertaining.

But supposing servants without souls can be found, can they be expected to keep a high moral standard? Can they be expected to care for our interests if we deprive them of the time necessary for religious instruction and refreshment? How can a servant avoid a feeling of bitterness if, after a few hours of freedom on Sunday, she returns to heavy arrears of work and piled up dishes? It is difficult to over-estimate the value of a high-toned, well-principled servant in a house, and the moral effect that such a servant has upon the children of the house. Therefore, even upon utilitarian grounds, that is to say, upon the lowest ground of self-interest, if we value such a servant and wish to keep her, we should avoid Sunday labour.

The war is giving us a wholesome lesson in this respect. Officers and privates draw together in the trenches, and sacrifice themselves freely the one for the other. Mistresses and maids in this war-time draw together in one common anxiety and one common sorrow. If David would not drink the water of the well of Bethlehem brought at the risk of his soldiers' lives, how can we grasp Sunday pleasure bought at the risk of our servants' souls and lives?

Finally, upon national grounds, in guarding Sunday we are

guarding the moral and spiritual tone of the country. A leading man of letters said : " As a young man I launched my fieriest darts against the English Sunday, denouncing it for Puritanical hypocrisy ; in my old age I can think of no loss which would result more seriously in popular vulgarization than the loss of the English Sunday." What is true of the English Sunday is true of the Canadian Sunday. The tone of the moral and spiritual life of Canada turns largely upon whether our Canadian Sunday of the future is the Sunday outlined in the far-sighted wisdom of Christ and in the far-sighted wisdom of our ancestors, or the pleasure-seeking Sunday which our own short-sighted, self-seeking is imposing upon us.

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