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THE SABBATH.

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A PAPER

READ AT THE

CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE,
HELD AT GENEVA, SEPTEMBER 2. 1861.

BY ANDREW THOMSON, D.D.,

EDINBURGH.

WITH PREFACE BY

THE REV J. C. RYLE, B.A., CHRIST CH., OXFORD,
STRADBROKE, SUFFOLK.

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PREFATORY NOTE BY REV. J. C. RYLE.

I have been requested, as an English Clergyman, to preface Dr A. Thomson's valuable paper on

the Scottish Sabbath by a few recommendatory words. I comply with the request with much pleasure, though I feel that the paper needs no *imprimatur* of mine.

I am sensible, however, that there exists a certain amount of prejudice in many English minds against Scottish views of the Sabbath question. Too many Christians south of the Tweed are in the habit of regarding our northern brethren as "legal," "Judaizing," and "extreme" upon this subject. In the matter of all the leading Evangelical doctrines, they profess to admire their statements. In the matter of the Sabbath question, they say the Scotch "go too far."

I venture to think that this prejudice is not just. It is in fact a thorough "prejudice," a judgment passed without examination, a prejudged decision without any reasonable foundation. I believe that Scottish views of the Sabbath are scriptural, reasonable, and practical. As a proof of my assertion, I earnestly request the attention of English Christians to the following paper. My own firm conviction is, that, in the matter of Sabbath observance, Scotland has nothing to be ashamed of in her principles, and England has much to learn.

I can only say that the paper which I have undertaken to preface appears to me to deserve a wide circulation and an attentive perusal. That it is written in a Scotch style, and is consequently not so well suited to our uneducated classes as a more popular and less argumentative production, are facts which I do not pretend to deny. But there are myriads of hard-headed, thinking English readers in the middle and upper sections of the lower classes—myriads of tradesmen in our great cities, and assistants in our great houses of business, to whom I think this paper is eminently calculated to be useful. It is to them that I heartily commend it.

"My heart's desire and prayer to God" is now, and ever shall be, that He will bless this and every kindred effort to maintain the holiness of God's day, and to raise higher the standard of Sabbath observance. The subject is intimately connected with the best interests of the British churches and the British nation. From a Continental Sabbath may Great Britain ever be delivered! There is but a gradual descent, after all, from "No Sabbath" to "No God."

J. C. RYLE, B.A.
CHRIST'S CHURCH, OXFORD.

STRADBROKE VICARAGE, SUFFOLK,
November 1. 1862.

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"The first creature of God in the works of the Days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and His Sabbath work ever since is the illumination of His Spirit."—*Bacon*.

"Men should not be idle, but busy on the Sabbath-day, about the soul as men on the week-day about the body."—*Wycliffe*.

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THE SABBATH.

I have been requested to make some statements to the Alliance in reference to the observance of the Sabbath in Scotland; and I think I shall best accomplish the task committed to me, by presenting, in as condensed a form as possible, a view of general Scottish opinion on this vital subject, some details regarding our modern Scottish experience, with notices of the principal dangers to which I believe the cause of the Sabbath in Scotland to be at this time exposed. In doing this while I shall have to confirm the impressions of many brethren in other countries, there are also some misapprehensions which I am glad to be favoured with such an opportunity of dispelling.

1. *It is true, then, that our ministers and Christian people in Scotland, almost without exception, believe in the Divine authority and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath-day.*—They base their respect for it, not upon any ecclesiastical appointment, however venerable, or upon any time-honoured custom, however ancient, but upon the conviction that it is a benignant and unrevoked gift of Heaven to the human race. Ask any intelligent Christian throughout Scotland, no matter to which of our evangelical denominations he belongs, on what ground he keeps holy the weekly Sabbath, and he will tell you that he does this because he believes that it was given to man in Eden—an institution not for a nation or for a limited period, but for the world and for all time,—that it was republished to the Jews from Mount Sinai, not in the midst of transient ceremonial appointments, but "enshrined amid the eternal verities of the moral law,"—and that at the resurrection of Christ, while the mere day of its observance was changed by apostolic sanction, it entered on a new course, and became linked with new associations—the memorial, from that hour, of completed redemption as well as of completed creation. And in this fact, more than in any other, we find the secret strength of our Sabbath observance. From the peculiar constitution of the Scottish mind, as well as from the social condition of Scotland, the Sabbath would not stand its ground for many years were it based upon a foundation less stable, or surrounded by a sanction less sacred than a Divine command; and I affirm with confidence, that one effect of the re-discussion of the whole question of the Sabbath, which has been forced upon its friends in Scotland during recent years, has been to make the convictions of our Christian people regarding its Divine authority more deep, more intelligent, and therefore more immovable.

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2. *A second distinguishing feature in the Sabbath-keeping of Scotland consists in the fact, that we consider the entire Sabbath to be specially and equally consecrated to religion.*—The length of the sacred day we believe to be just the same as the length of common days. We know nothing of the distinction of "canonical hours," as if one part of the day were in any degree more hallowed than another; and all such distinctions we are accustomed to regard as a pernicious and presumptuous tampering with Divine rule, a narrowing of our charter, not indeed of inglorious idleness, but of holy rest. But while we look upon every part of the Sabbath as a dedicated thing, in the sense of our abstaining from all such secular employments and recreations as would be lawful on other days, its religious exercises are wisely and happily diversified; and in this allotment of the Sabbath's holy work, very much is left to the discretion of individuals and of churches. This statement, I believe, may do something to remove one injurious and prevalent mistake regarding our Scottish manner of keeping the Lord's day. Were I to describe a well-spent Sabbath-day, such as is spent by thousands of men in Scotland who are the salt of our land, and the life and glory of our churches—such as was spent by the best of the English Puritans two hundred years since, often leading them to confess, at the close of such a day, "Surely if this be not heaven, it must be the way to it;"—I should paint it in some such manner as the following:—The good man rises from his slumbers to realise the fact that it is God's day of sacred rest, and to open his mind to its devout associations. There is an unwonted stillness in the streets, and in the fields all around him, which that day only brings. The care of the body is not unheeded, and there is even a double attention to cleanliness and to taste in his attire; secret devotion is more prolonged than on other days, as it is more undisturbed; the family is in due time summoned around the frugal meal, it being perhaps the only day in the week in which they all meet at the same board; kind words and of affectionate counsels are interchanged; events in the family history are alluded to, and made the theme of edifying reflection; family-worship follows, and on this occasion the little family choir is unbroken, and sends up its full-voiced praise to heaven. The time has come for joining the companies that are already crowding to the houses of prayer. A brief interval, and a second frugal meal follows, and there is another ascent to the temple to worship God. Then comes the happy Sabbath evening, in which the Christian parents gather their children around them for religious instruction, and for recalling and reviewing the lessons of the sanctuary. Domestic affection has time to expatiate and grow in that Sabbath atmosphere; the Bible and other religious books are read; psalms and hymns are joyfully sung. Mercy joins her work with that of piety; the sick and the sorrowful are visited and comforted; neglected children are taught in the Sabbath-school; unreclaimed masses are evangelised in the mission district. The family once more re-assembles at the evening meal, and the Sabbath is closed with family worship, meditation, and secret devotion; and as the members of the household pass away to their nightly rest, it is felt that its hours have not been wearisome or unprofitable, but that they have in truth been all too short for the blessed work that was to be done in them. [7]

3. It will not be wondered at, after these details, that in Scotland we claim the entire Sabbath for religion, not only because it forms part of our most sacred convictions that it has been so conferred upon us by the unrepealed act of Heaven, but also because *we are of opinion that, within narrower limits than this, the Sabbath must ever fail to work out, to its proper extent, all its beneficent designs.* Anything less than this would be something like placing the sun under a partial eclipse, which you yet expected to ripen the fruits of the world. Suppose the period of the Sabbath to be restricted, as some would wish, to the hours of public worship, and men suddenly to pass from business or pleasure to the sanctuary, and then to pass with equal suddenness from the sanctuary to business or pleasure again, even the benefit of the season of public worship would be more than half lost. Nature in most men is incapable of violent transitions; it must have its dawn and its twilight; and were our Sabbath to consist only of the time that we spent in the temple, the world would be far more likely to introduce its corrupting and debasing influence into the Church, than the Church to send out its healing streams upon the world. It is no mere theory or conjecture this; for the experiment was actually tried in England in the reign of our Sixth James, in the publication of "The Book of Sports," when it was sought to make games and merriments alternate on Sabbaths with public religious worship; and the effect was to neutralise the power of the pulpit, and to deluge the land with frivolity, irreligion, and vice. There must be the preparation and attuning of the mind for public devotion and instruction, by secret prayer and meditation; there must be the recollection and the holy repose of the soul afterwards; there must be the hallowed intermingling of deeds of charity with exercises of piety, and room for the revival and the play of home affections, if the Sabbath is to shed all the good which the beneficence of Heaven has put into it, upon churches and nations. [8]

And if there is need for such a Sabbath in any country, and among any people, even were they as pastoral and contemplative in their daily habits as Abraham in Canaan, or as Moses when tending the flocks of Jethro, it is immeasurably more indispensable to the intellectual and religious well-being of men living in old countries such as Scotland or England, where over-population has unduly crowded the market of labour, and given rise to an unhealthy competition, in which men often need to strain their wits and their energies to the utmost in order simply to live. Nothing will save a people in such a community from an undue mental strain unfavourable alike to intellectual and moral health, and even from being wrought in great numbers to death, but the weekly recurrence of a day which is fenced off and guarded by Divine prescription, and attachment to which is deeply rooted in the religious convictions and the gratitude of the people. There are tens of thousands of our industrial classes, and even multitudes among our men of business, who seldom see the younger members of their families, except on Sabbath-day. And to what a debasing monotony of toil would the lives of these men speedily be reduced, were it not for the anticipation of the coming day of hallowed rest, in which the artisan should know no

master, and the master himself should be disturbed by no postman's rap or din of business, and should exchange his ledger for his Bible, and the hardening influences of commercial competition and rivalry for the softening and purifying influences of home and of the house of God. On this day, our sons of toil stand erect in the full consciousness of their manhood and of their heavenly birthright; and shall the day which brings such privilege and blessing to man be described as a restraint? It is such a restraint as the shutting of the door of the ark was to Noah, which kept the deluge out, and the patriarch safe. It is like the fence of flowers which we may imagine to have been drawn around Paradise when Adam dwelt in it; and to many a wearied and wasted labourer, when this day has returned with healing in its wings, it has seemed as if the primeval curse was suspended, and Eden threw open its closed gates for a season to receive the wanderer back.

4. It is true, then, speaking of the people of Scotland generally, that we rest our Sabbath observance on Divine appointment, and that we cling tenaciously to a whole Sabbath. This is our crown, which I trust no one will ever take from us, and which, indeed, can only be lost in a community of free men, by being voluntarily and guiltily abdicated. But in what I have hitherto said, I have spoken more of our Scottish principles than of our Scottish practice; and when I come to speak of this, *I find myself constrained to protest against two opposite representations that have been given of our Sabbath-keeping*, the one in the form of injurious caricature, and the other in a style of over-colouring that very greatly exceeds the sober reality. Of all the bold pictures in which certain of our modern novelists have indulged, there is none in which they have allowed their imaginations a more wild and unwarranted licence, than in the pictures with which they have entertained their readers of a Sabbath in a Scottish family. These pictures have been creations rather than caricatures. And there have been travellers who have become writers of fiction when they have touched on this subject, and who have quite equalled the novel-writers in the liberties they have taken with the simple truth. One writer, presuming, we suppose, on the safe distance of his readers from the scene which he describes, gravely informs them that in the city of Edinburgh all the window-blinds are kept carefully closed during the whole of the Sabbath, as if to attemper the gloom of the house to the gloomy state of mind of its inmates, and describes the little children as cowering under a vague sense of awe, and dreading to indulge even an innocent smile. Men who write thus may safely be affirmed never to have spent a single Sabbath-day in a religious family in Scotland. That the Sabbath is in no instance presented in a repulsive form before the young, by their rather being told what they are not to do, than of the blessed work to which the Sabbath summons them, it would be too much to affirm; for what institution of heaven does not occasionally suffer from human handling? But our danger, even in Scotland, in these days, does not arise from over-restraint or scrupulosity; and we speak from long and happy experience, when we assert that our Sabbath-keeping in Scotland is usually marked by a calm cheerfulness without frivolity, and that on that day, above all others, streams of gladness flow through myriads of hearts which have their secret and their fountain-head not in the exclusion of religion, but in the more complete turning of the mind to religious thoughts and associations.

"Then wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet, retired solitude,
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets go her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impaired."

How is it but on this account, that Scotsmen who have emigrated to our colonies have in so many instances written of their Sabbath evenings at home as among the most "sunny memories" of their youth? And it is a fact of much significance that an old ecclesiastical law of Scotland expressly provides that a religious fast shall never be held on the Lord's day, for this special reason, that the Sabbath was intended to be a day of joy.

5. *On the other hand, we are bound to acknowledge that there have been foreign brethren who have visited our island-shores, that have traced the picture of our Scottish Sabbath in colours greatly brighter than the reality.*—They have only seen half the truth, and therefore they have only told the half. As they have beheld the streams of our church-going people crowding along the streets of our cities to our numerous temples, they have failed to reflect how even the best gifts of heaven, the Sabbath and the sunlight, are the most ready to be abused, and that, at that very moment, there were thousands loitering at home in indolence, and even not a few, perhaps, rioting in intemperance. At the same time, with all these sombre exceptions, that are necessary to be introduced as shadows into any truthful picture of a Scottish Sabbath, we do not wonder that good and intelligent visitors from continental countries have been impressed and delighted by the spectacle of such a day in Scotland. These are but exceptions after all. And there is surely something of high moral sublimity in the sight of a whole people, once in every week, ceasing from their business and their toil to celebrate the great facts of Creation and Redemption—"the plough left to sleep in the furrow," the loom motionless, the anvil silent, the mine and the factory tenantless, and the whole monotony of common life turned and elevated into a kind of sacred praise. This solemn pause over the wide extent of Scotland, seen still more perfectly in her rural districts than in her great cities, strikes us as the nearest approach we have ever known to national worship. And we do not wonder that all the great poets of our land,—our uninspired prophets, whose work it is to reflect and to idealise our purest national feelings,—should so often have "sung the Sabbath," and that the Sabbath pictures of our national poet Burns in his "Cottar's Saturday Night," though, alas, he seldom consecrated his great gifts to religion, shine as the most beautiful passages in a poem that seems marked for immortality.

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6. It is not, however, as a mere sublime picture that we value at so high a rate the Sabbath-honouring habits of the Scottish people, but because *we are convinced that the practice nourishes and sustains the very roots of our national life, and keeps pure and deep the streams of our national morality and religion.*—It is not the least valuable result of the recent discussion of the Sabbath question in Scotland, that it has served to elicit and accumulate a mass of statistics demonstrating the close connection between the Sabbath observance and the religious prosperity of our people, as well as illustrating in a most interesting manner what has aptly enough been termed *the physiology of the Sabbath-day*. Thus, if we look through three centuries of the religious history of either portion of our island, it will be found that our Sabbath-keeping periods have uniformly been those in which the Church has been "as a well-watered garden." The two things have risen or fallen with each other, and have exerted mutual influence, as may be seen by comparing the age of Cromwell with that of either Charles. Inquiries on a very large scale, embracing all our principal professions and trades, were recently made in reference to the moral condition of those connected with each; and it was found that, from the costermonger and the bargeman upwards, the most Sabbath-breaking were also the most morally sunken and degraded. And our superintendents of police will tell you, that persons who are in the habit of honouring the Sabbath, and frequenting a place of worship, are more careful in their pecuniary transactions, "more careful also in their language, more economical in their arrangements at home, more affectionate and humane, and in every respect superior persons by far to those of contrary habits." Some who do not look with favour upon our Sabbatic rest, are accustomed to point to the drunkenness which exists among a certain class of our Scottish population; but it is not our Sabbath-keepers who are our drunkards. Some few years since, the moral statistics of certain congregations in Scotland, including a membership of thirty thousand, were collected, and it was found that an average of only two out of every thousand of those members had in the course of a year been charged with the sin of intemperance. And what is thus found to hold in the instance of large communities, is equally true in the case of individuals. So long as a Scottish youth respects the Sabbath and frequents the church, there is good hope regarding him, for he is coming under weekly influences that keep him right; but when these practices cease or become fitful, it is sure that virtue has begun to decay at the roots, if it be not indeed already dead; and Hogarth, one of our greatest painters, was therefore true to nature and experience, when, in his "Rake's Progress," he represented him in his first downward step to ruin as gambling on a tombstone in a churchyard while public worship was proceeding in the church near at hand. One of the sages of modern infidelity, Voltaire, who at one time dwelt on the shores of your beautiful lake, declared that he despaired of extinguishing Christianity so long as men assembled on a particular day of each week for Christian worship and instruction. And his remark shewed that he had discovered the value of the Sabbath to the Church; for public worship will never be common among a people where there is not the recognised sanctity of a Sabbath to preserve it. And let it never be forgotten, that it is far more easily preserved than recovered, for when any portion of its time is invaded, the habits of a people soon shape themselves to the new order of things. A spadeful of earth may prevent the inundation in Holland, but when once the sea has broken in, the strength of a million of men may fail to roll back its destructive waters.

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7. *And if possible, the facts that have been supplied by the testimony of medical and other scientific men have been still more valuable and triumphant.*—Recent physiological inquiries have placed it beyond doubt that man needs for repairing the waste of his body not only the nightly repose which night brings him, but, in addition, the weekly rest of a seventh day; and it has been noticed that in many of the industrial departments, especially in the more skilled and delicate forms of industry, there was a perceptible deterioration in what was produced in the last days of the week. Travellers on long journeys who have "rested the first day of the week according to the commandment," have outstripped travellers who pursued their journey on the seventh day, and have reached the end of their journey in far better health and spirits. The railway system itself, which, with all its other high advantages, has done not a little to disturb the integrity of our Sabbath rest, has strangely supplied us with valuable corroboration on this matter; for during the period in which our principal railways were in course of construction in Scotland and England, it was found that the work which those who laboured on Sabbath executed in seven days was generally less in amount and worse in execution than that done by sober, orderly, Sabbath-keeping men in six days.

And the same remark is applicable to labourers with the head as with the hand; for in these days we must extend the phrase, "working men," far beyond the comparatively narrow region of the industrial arts. The statesman or the barrister who does not allow himself the weekly pause in his round of mental labour which the Sabbath of God offers him, soon finds nature punishing him for his disregard of its great laws; and instances are not rare, and some of them stand out as beacons in our modern biography, in which such a course has carried him that followed it, in the very noon-tide of his life, to the maniac's cell or the suicide's grave; while many a noble mind has retained its spring and freshness, and has been able to "serve its generation" to the last, by allowing the Sabbath to interpose its hallowed associations and exercises in the midst of its common and absorbing studies. Our great Coleridge strongly and beautifully said, "I feel as if God, by giving the Sabbath, had given fifty-two springs in the year;" and Isaac Taylor, a very voluminous author, and one of the most popular and philosophical of our theological writers, gives the following as the testimony of his long experience: "I am prepared to affirm that to the studious especially, and whether younger or older, a Sabbath well spent—spent in happy exercises of the heart, devotional and domestic—a Sabbath given to the soul, is the best of all means of refreshment to the mere intellect."

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There is a point, moreover, at which the physiology of this great subject touches closely on its

moral and religious bearings, for it has been found that physical weariness leads to mental lassitude, and that mental lassitude indisposes the soul to moral considerations. Nor would it be easy to calculate to what an extent the recurrence of the Sabbath, where its hours have been turned to their proper and appointed uses, has been of moral advantage to our commercial men and our merchant princes, checking the fever of reckless speculation, restoring the moral balance of the mind, and "winding up the soul, which the body had poised down, to a higher degree of heavenliness." "A Sunday in solitude," said one of the greatest English statesmen of the last age, "never failed to restore me to myself." Facts like these, which might be almost indefinitely multiplied, do more than demonstrate the inestimable value of the Sabbath: they appear to me to suggest, on their own independent grounds, that an institution possessing such wise and benignant adaptations to our complex nature, must have been appointed by Him that made us and who "knows our frame;" and that "while the Sabbath was made *for* man, it was not made *by* him." A great writer on natural religion has founded a beautiful argument for the existence and unity of God, on the adaptation of day and night to the physical nature of man: might not an argument of equal soundness and force for the Divine origin of the Sabbath, be founded on its adaptation to our physical, intellectual, and spiritual nature?

8. But while it is unquestionable that the Sabbath argument has gained a large and permanent addition to its force from the experience and discussions of the last twenty years in Scotland, I have already said enough to apprise you that *this divine and truly beneficent institution is not without its enemies and its dangers*. I shall be forgiven when I express my fear that the increased influx of persons from other countries in which "the day of the Lord" is less honoured and hallowed, has had some effect in lowering the standard of its observance among ourselves.—I do not think that the arguments of ultra-spiritualists, who tell us that every day should be a Sabbath, has had much effect in misleading any who were not already willing to be misled. The device was too transparently shallow to do much harm where it had the characteristic shrewdness of the Scottish mind to deal with it. For why, it was answered, on the same principle, might it not be said that men should be always praying; and that therefore it was unnecessary to have fixed times and places for our secret devotions, and that we ought to dispense with the use of words. It was noticed, moreover, that if things were not sometimes solemnly done, they were likely to be never done, and that "every day a Sabbath" came practically to mean "no Sabbath at all."—At one period the railway system, which attempted to introduce with it railway travelling and traffic on the Lord's day, threatened to do violence to our religious convictions and national habits, and to introduce among us a wide-spread and constantly-growing mischief. But this plague was speedily stayed. The religious traditions of our community proved in most instances too strong for the cupidity of men who seemed prepared to sacrifice the highest interests, and to trample on the most sacred feelings of a whole community, for the sake of a larger annual dividend. The majority of our railways in Scotland do not run trains on Sabbath at all; and this is found to operate with immense gain to the public morals, with no inconvenience to trade or commerce, or even pecuniary loss to the proprietors of those stupendous undertakings. [14]

9. But there is an influence at work which has already in some degree invaded our Sabbath-keeping in Scotland, and which I fear is working far more extensive and serious moral havoc in England. *I refer to the attempt which is made in so many places, and by so many parties, to use the day which has been given for sacred rest and religious worship, as a day of entertainment and amusement*.—Picture galleries, Crystal palaces, museums of nature and art, or romantic scenes to which men can be carried in crowds by Sunday excursion-trains, are sought to be substituted for visits to the house of prayer, and for Christian instruction and worship. The argument for this insidious and perilous exchange is sometimes put in a kind of religious phraseology, as if these visits to beautiful scenes in nature were only the introduction to another kind of worship, and as if gazing upon the master-pieces of human art in painting, or sculpture, or architecture, exercised a purifying and elevating influence on the mind; and sometimes again it is dressed in the form of a spurious philanthropy, though it is found that those who are the most earnest advocates for the Crystal Palace or the Sabbath excursion-train, generally expect to derive pecuniary advantage from the practice. There never was an argument more triumphantly met by sound philosophy, or more completely refuted by experience. There is no denying, indeed, that visits to high works of art, to objects of curiosity, or to beautiful scenes in the natural world, may at their own time, and in their own place, be beneficial to the busiest and the poorest. [15] But those who imagine that any of these things are capable, in any degree, of being a substitute for the weekly-recurring exercises of Christian worship, and instruction in the great truths of divine revelation, are strangely ignorant of the greatest wants and necessities of man. Who ever heard of looking upon pictures and images, however much they might breathe with genius, transforming the vile to pure, the earthly to divine! It is not by such appliances as these that the heart of any man has ever been made anew. The fact is, it is rather the æsthetic than the moral part of our nature that is influenced by them at all. They refine, but they cannot transform. They may "form the capital of the column, but not its base." The city of Munich contains one of the grandest picture-galleries in Europe, and it is also one of the most demoralized and debased of our European communities. The brigands around Rome were accustomed at the Carnival to visit the picture-galleries in that city, and many shewed high appreciation and discrimination in judging of the works both of ancient and of modern painters, but these influences never succeeded in wooing one of them from his life of violence and crime. And if the history of ancient Greece in its decay reads one lesson to the world more loudly than another, it is this, that refinement of taste may be associated in the same individual and people with the greatest debasement and corruption of morals.

And experience in our own island confirms us in the assertion, that these things are impotent for

the regeneration of a people; and that when they are engrafted on the Sabbath, and made the substitute for its religious and proper services, they tend in the reverse direction. The gin-palace soon plants itself around these places of public entertainment and amusement, and finds in them a smooth and fascinating pathway to its snares; and few spectacles in our land are more riotous, more debased, more miserable, or more alarming as regards the future of our country, than a Sunday excursion-train, when it comes back and empties upon a city its pleasure-seekers and worshippers of nature. It is well known to masters, that such men, depressed by the reaction of riot and excitement, seldom return to their labours on Monday along with the tradesman who has turned his Sabbath to its proper and sacred uses. Nor is it difficult to foresee that if once the Sabbaths in Scotland and England were generally given to pleasure-seeking, they would ere long be bought up by commercial cupidity and enterprise, and the career of the working-man would resemble that of Samson, first sitting on the lap of pleasure, then bound and groaning in intellectual darkness and moral night, and ending his retributive course by drawing down upon himself and upon those who had enslaved him the pillars of our social edifice. "The mere animal," says the late Hugh Miller, "that has to pass six days of the week in hard labour, benefits greatly by a seventh day of mere animal rest and enjoyment: the repose, according to its nature, proves of signal use to it, just because *it is* repose according to its nature. But man is not a mere animal: what is best for the ox and the ass is not best for him; and in order to degrade him into a poor unintellectual slave, over whom tyranny, in its caprice, may trample roughshod, it is but necessary to tie him down, animal-like, during his six working-days, to hard, engrossing labour, and to convert the seventh into a day of frivolous unthinking relaxation."

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But we believe that the heart of Scotland generally is sound and enlightened on the Divine authority and the inestimable value of the Sabbath-day. To our minds it stands sacredly associated with the greatest events in human history, and in the intercourse of God with man—the completed handiwork of Almighty power, when God looked around Him upon the young and unfallen world, and pronounced all to be good—the giving of the Divine law from the sacred mount amid the signs of the present Deity—and the rising of our Redeemer from the grave, and the rising with Him of the hope of our world. We are a free and happy people, we have conquered the ruggedness of our soil, and coped successfully with our ungenial climate; but it is to our religion that we owe our freedom, for who can enslave a people that fear God? and we regard our Sabbath as the bulwark of our godliness. It is our Tabor, on which we ascend weekly and meet with celestial visitants; our Jacob's ladder on which we climb to heaven's gate; the shield and nutriment of our domestic affections, it keeps the heart of our households warm and pure. It is not to be abolished, but extended; and even when it passes away at the end of time, it will not go out in whirlwind or tempest, but

"As sets the morning-star, which goes
Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SABBATH ***

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