

## ART. IV.—THE SUNDAY REST MOVEMENT IN FRANCE.

IT is a significant fact that whilst in England there is a growing tendency to relax Sunday observances, and many are agitating for the opening of museums and places of amusement on the Lord's Day, in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, and other parts of the Continent the public mind is waking up to the necessity and value of a weekly Sabbath. This is especially the case in France; and in a country where materialism and godlessness of every kind are so prevalent it is most satisfactory to find a movement in this direction steadily gaining ground. Not only have societies for the sanctification of the day been established by Roman Catholics and Protestants, which are doing good service, but a wider and more influential agency was started about nine years ago, the "Ligue populaire pour le repos du Dimanche en France." To this we would now invite particular attention. It took its rise at the Paris Exhibition in 1889, and was the practical outcome of the International Congress on the Sunday Question held in September of that year. Leading men of various nationalities and of very different schools of thought there met to discuss the subject, and the French delegates formed themselves into this League to carry out the resolutions then adopted. Seldom has such a heterogeneous assembly met in France. It was indeed a happy family. Statesmen, scientific professors, Socialists, Freethinkers, Roman Catholic priests, Protestant pastors, representatives of large mercantile and manufacturing societies, and others agreed for the nonce to lay aside their religious and political differences, and to combine in one vigorous effort to secure for all classes the advantages of a weekly rest. This, therefore, could not be a directly religious movement; nor does the League advocate the Christian and religious observance of the Lord's Day. The members so disposed can do this privately and through the special agencies for the purpose. At the same time, a common basis is here offered for the advancement of these higher objects, and the strength and effectiveness of the League lie in the combined action of the members so far as they are agreed. Their standard is far from being all that we or earnest French Christians would aim at; but in the present state of the country many rejoice to attain so much. The French are not quickly moved to action except under the sudden impulse of political excitement. They are to a great extent slaves of routine and creatures of habit. It is, therefore, the more surprising that so much has been accomplished by the League in so short a time. In 1896 it numbered 4,750 members, and

each year since has received fresh accessions. It has adherents, and has branches in at least seventeen towns, including the most populous and wealthy centres of trade and manufacture, such as Bordeaux, Marseilles, Lille, Lyons, etc. In all these local committees are seeking, through the press, the pulpit, the platform, and private canvassing, to enlighten and direct public opinion, and to persuade employers and employed to consider each other's welfare, and, as far as possible, secure for all the benefit of Sunday rest. The headquarters of the League are, of course, at Paris, where the central committee, under the distinguished presidency of M. Trarieux and M. Denys Cochin, is composed of men eminent in law, medicine, engineering, and literature, besides the Abbé Garnier, Pastor Mettatal, and others. In the selection of these the utmost care has been taken not to give the movement a clerical colouring, as that would be fatal to its acceptance with very many whose co-operation is especially important. Popular feeling on this point runs so high in France, and happily in England we have no counterpart to it.

Another peculiarity of the movement is that fête-days, religious and secular, must be linked with Sundays in this crusade. A manufactory, office, or shop which closes on Sundays must do so on those days as well if public convenience is to be met. The generality of Frenchmen do not recognise any distinction between them; this is in fact a serious obstacle to the reception of what we as English Christians regard as the special claims of the Lord's Day. The Church of Rome in her catechisms expounds the fourth (or, as she calls it, the third) commandment as applying to Church festivals as well as Sundays. Indeed, some of the former are more strictly kept than the latter. Practically to a great extent Church authority has overshadowed the Divine command. If this paramount Divine obligation of the Christian Sabbath were more distinctly insisted upon, it would be far easier to secure its proper observance. Some, however, of the French clergy have of late years begun to assign it its rightful pre-eminence. The Archbishop of Paris, for instance, when commenting on the notion so common amongst artisans that Sunday laws are an infringement upon their liberty, boldly declared that "the Sunday rest is the charter of freedom for the working classes."

The Abbé Garnier, too, has on many occasions proclaimed the distinctive authority of the Lord's Day. Thus, speaking of the losses which compliance with duty in this matter may involve, he observed that "Even if such results are inevitable, the objection ought never to be urged by a Christian conscience. A thief," he said, "will use the same language. Evil-doers do wrong for the sake of interest. It would be easy to show

that the profits of Sunday work, like those of thieving, are little worth. What is gained by wrong means never profits." The Abbé Lamaire, Deputy for the Nord, not long since said, at a meeting of Christian Democrats, that he claimed for working-men sixty hours of work weekly, and rest from Saturday afternoon to Monday morning. Other equally strong expressions of opinion might be quoted from other eminent French ecclesiastics. Still, such is not the view generally entertained, and this League has no doubt acted wisely in placing fête-days in the same category with the Sundays. It is essentially a popular movement, and its leaders have adopted a wide platform in order to combine opposing elements for a common cause.

It remains for us to briefly inquire what success has hitherto attended their efforts. A few interesting facts out of many may be mentioned. At Bordeaux, where one of the oldest and most prosperous branches is at work, more than half of the shops, and those the most important, now close on Sundays and fêtes. This, however, is felt to be insufficient to insure permanent improvement. The refusal of the rest to follow suit makes it more difficult for even the majority to close without serious loss. Accordingly, two syndicates of the masters and of the employés have made special appeals to their fellow-townsmen to fall in with the general desire for Sunday rest, and with good prospect of success. Similar steps are being taken at Marseilles and other large towns. At the General Assembly of the League at Paris, in 1897, it was stated that there was scarcely a town in France where those employed in business are not moving actively in the matter, and not uniting in the demand for Sunday rest and freedom. In many places of both town and country they had covered the walls with placards appealing to the public in these terms: "Be humane. Buy no longer on Sundays. You will give liberty to the employés." At Tours and Amiens they have sent on general holidays through the streets an advertising car, preceded by trumpeters, to awaken attention to the subject. Nor have these and the like measures been without effect. Not only have private employers in many cases consented to close their houses and shops, and their customers acquiesced in the arrangement, but Government officials, post-office authorities, and railway companies are seconding the movement. In Lille, the Manchester of France, an increasing number of houses of business, offices, shops, etc., now close partially or entirely on Sundays and fête-days. A reduction of the postal deliveries from five to three has also been there obtained, and the municipal council is now proposing to close the post-office after noon. Like measures of relief for the post-

office clerks and carriers have been granted in Paris and elsewhere. In this respect there seems to be a growing disposition to follow the example of London. Great efforts have also been made throughout France to arrange for the closing of the railways' goods-offices, at least of the *petite vitesse*, after 10 a.m., on Sundays and fêtes. Indeed, a general order to that effect was issued not long since by the Minister of Public Works, and although it is evaded by the clerks being kept at work inside, this evil it is hoped will ere long be remedied. In 1893 the largest shop in the world, the "Grand Magasins du Louvre" in Paris, sent out a circular letter to 10,000 of their customers, asking if it would be inconvenient to them should goods bought on Saturdays be delivered on Mondays instead of Sundays, and 9,780 negative answers were received, with expressions of approval of the new arrangement. It is, then, evident that this excellent movement is slowly but surely advancing. The public mind is being gradually educated on the subject, and probably before many years have passed this precious boon and rightful heritage of the sons and daughters of toil will be generally enjoyed. Still, so long as theatres, exhibitions, and places of amusement remain open on the Lord's Day, and excursion trains, trams, and omnibuses carry their hundreds of thousands of passengers on that day, the pleasure of the million must involve the slavery of many. A day of amusement must be more or less a time of grinding labour to a large number.

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#### ART. V.—TESTIMONIES TO THE NATURE OF CHRIST.<sup>1</sup>

"Who is this?"—ST. MATT. xxi. 10.

ON the last occasion when I addressed you, I endeavoured to put before you some thoughts concerning the being and nature of the awful, omnipotent, and omnipresent Spirit, who is antecedent to all things, and in whom all things consist. To-day I wish to ask you whether there is anything theoretically improbable in the belief that this Almighty Power, the Eternal, has concentrated one aspect of Himself into a human intelligence for the instruction, inspiration, salvation, and elevation of those creatures, so marvellously capable of improvement, whom we find inhabiting this earth—the only one, of the million or more of globes which extend

<sup>1</sup> Preached before the University of Oxford, May 8, 1898.