

THE
A M E R I C A N
NATIONAL PREACHER.

A
REPOSITORY OF ORIGINAL SERMONS,

FROM
LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY REV. F. C. WOODWORTH.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. XXIV.

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| SERMON | PAGE |
|---|------|
| • DXIV.—God's Moral System Superior to the Material. | 7 |
| By Rev. R. S. Storrs, jr. | |
| DXV.—Responsibility of Enjoying the Christian Ministry. | 21 |
| By Rev. Dr. Spring, | |
| DXVI.—Becoming all Things to all Men. | 29 |
| By Rev. William Adams, D. D., | |
| DXVII.—The Sea giving up its Dead. | 41 |
| By Rev. William R. Williams, D. D., | |
| DXVIII.—The Scripture Estimate of Philosophy. | 53 |
| By Rev. George B. Cheever, D. D., | |
| DXIX.—Christ as a Mechanic. | 64 |
| By Rev. William W. Patton, | |
| DXXX.—Robbing God. | 77 |
| By Rev. Edward N. Kirk, | |
| DXXXI.—Christian Union. | 90 |
| By Rev. Stephen H. Tyng, D. D., | |
| DXXXII.—Christ the Foundation. | 101 |
| By Rev. John Dowling, D. D., | |
| DXXXIII.—Our own Salvation.—The Work and the Encouragement. | 113 |
| By Rev. M. W. Jacobus, | |
| Editor, | 123 |
| DXXXIV.—The Night no Time for Labor. | 125 |
| By Rev. Edwin F. Hatfield, | |
| DXXXV.—Faith Genuine and Spurious. | 141 |
| By Rev. W. S. Leavitt, | |
| DXXXVI.—The Terms of Salvation. | 149 |
| By Rev. Pharcellus Church, D. D., | |
| DXXXVII.—The Place and Importance of an Individual. | 158 |
| By Rev. Albert Barnes, | |
| DXXXVIII.—The Weapons of our Warfare. | 173 |
| By Rev. Samuel Worcester, D. D., | |
| DXXXIX.—The Sufferings and the Glory. | 190 |
| By Rev. George Shepard, D. D., | |
| DXXXX.—The Doctrine of the Cross the Power of God. | 197 |
| By Rev. Noah Porter, D. D., | |
| DXXXXI.—God's Voice to the Nation. | 209 |
| By Rev. A. B. Van Zandt, | |
| DXXXXII.—The Resurrection of the Body. | 221 |
| By Rev. G. W. Blagden, D. D., | |
| DXXXXIII.—Duties of Heads of Households. | 234 |
| By Rev. Joseph F. Tuttle, | |
| DXXXXIV.—Just Men Made Perfect. | 245 |
| By Rev. George Potts, D. D., | |
| DXXXXV.—The Importance of Little Things. | 256 |
| By Rev. William T. Hamilton, D. D., | |
| Editor, | 267 |
| DXXXXVI.—One Thing Thou Lackest. | 267 |
| By Rev. J. M. Sherwood, | |
| DXXXXVII.—Primitive Mode of Evangelization. | 269 |
| By Rev. Clement Long, D. D., | |
| DXXXXVIII.—The Closing Year Contemplated and Improved. | 286 |
| By Rev. Henry T. Cheever, | |

• Corresponding with previous volumes.

THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

I.

GOD'S MORAL SYSTEM, SUPERIOR TO THE MATERIAL.

BY REV. R. S. STORRS, JR.,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE PILGRIMS, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fall."—LUKE xvi. 17.

THE conception of the Material System is naturally accompanied in the mind by the impression of its permanence. Even the child perceives the solidity and hardness of the objects that surround him; and their power at once so absolutely to uphold and to restrict him, may well seem the evidence of their necessary duration. And as he comes to understand more fully the extent, and structure, and the history of the system, this first impression is naturally confirmed. As he learns how vast the Earth is,—not bounded by the horizon as he supposed, but bearing upon its mighty bosom islands, and realms, and empires, and continents even, with fathomless oceans poured round them as their drapery; as he examines the physical structure of the earth, and drives his drill into the granite bars that lock and interlock beneath its surface, or traces the ridges of rock and iron that stretch across it as its ribs of strength; as he follows backward the many generations that in succession have lived and labored upon its globe, and feels how changeless it has been through all their changes,—how absolutely it is now the same as when the Roman eagles traversed its surface, as when the temple of the Sun was standing in Palmyra, as when the hundred-gated Thebes stretched its stupendous front along the Nile; nay, as passing backward from even this computation he learns through what vast cycles and periods, and into what remote, impenetrable abysses, the researches of the naturalist seem to carry its duration:—and most of all, as rising from this view of the Earth, he learns to comprehend in some degree the magnitude of the System in which it is but part,

XI.

THE NIGHT NO TIME FOR LABOR.

BY REV. EDWIN F. HATFIELD,
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"The night cometh, when no man can work."—JOHN IX. 4.

THE Sabbath is a day of rest. The labor, that is lawful and proper on other days of the week, must then be suspended. "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work."

The sin of our day is to set this divine law aside; to treat it as part and parcel of a venerable code, once in use, and of great value to an ancient people, but long since abrogated, and of no present obligation. Or, if it be retained as a part of the moral law, its sanctions are, for the most part, disregarded, and its claims neglected. But, in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, it was far otherwise. So strictly was the very letter of the law regarded, by Scribes and Pharisees, and the great body of the Jewish people, that even works of necessity and mercy were treated as transgressions, if performed on the Sabbath.

This erroneous interpretation and application our Saviour endeavored to correct, and frequently rebuked, even at the hazard of being himself treated as a Sabbath-breaker. We have an instance of the kind, in the chapter from which the text is taken. The interview with the man born blind, as here narrated, and the restoration of the man to sight, took place on the Sabbath. Knowing well what use his enemies would make of the transaction, and determined to put the seal of his reprobation on a superstition so inhuman and wicked, as well as to set an example of doing good at all times and on every occasion, he introduces his intention with this justification of the proceeding,—“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” He then gives sight to the blind, and dismisses him to his home.

Thus he teaches, most emphatically, that no opportunities of doing good are to be lost, or deferred, on account of the sacredness of the

day ; that doing-days will soon be gone, and that doing good is the great errand of life. This errand is to be executed diligently, while it is day,—before the night comes, when no man can work.

Such were the occasion and design of the language of the Redeemer, to which your attention is now to be directed. When he says,—“The night cometh when no man can work,”—he appeals to a well-known and universally-recognized law of nature. Work is to be done by day, and not by night. The night is the season for rest ; the day for labor.

In accordance with this principle, and sustained by this high authority, I shall proceed to show, that

THE BUSINESS OF THIS WORLD SHOULD ORDINARILY BE TRANSACTED BY DAY, AND NOT BY NIGHT.

A state of labor is the natural state of man on earth. Necessity is laid on him to put forth his powers of body and mind in vigorous exercise. Even in paradise, surrounded with abundance of nourishing fruits, and under no necessity to provide, by the labor of his body, for the gratification of hunger and thirst, a work is given him to do. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” Employment, an active, vigorous employment, of the powers of both body and mind, and a daily succession of such occupations, are essential alike to the health of the body and the comfort of the mind. When Paul wrote to his fellow-servant in the gospel, that “if any would not work, neither should he eat,” he might have referred to the constitution of man’s nature, that forbids to the indolent that relish for food which results from vigorous exercise. It is an established law of our physical system, that labor, exercise, motion, activity, are indispensable to health, to vigor, to enjoyment. It is seen, in the case of the child, ever in motion, and never at rest, save when asleep.

Labor may be regarded as the first great law of our being. It is demanded in every season of life, more or less, according to our capacity. Every station and every class in society are subject to the law of industry, and none can disregard it with impunity. Wealth, honor, wisdom, virtue, and every blessing of mortal life, as well as the joys of heaven, are ordinarily made dependent on labor. “Industry,” it has been well observed, “is a virtue of a very diffusive nature and influence, stretching itself through all our affairs, and twisting itself with every concern we have ; so that no business can be well managed, no design accomplished, no good obtained without it.”

The capacity and the opportunity to labor are, therefore, to be acknowledged as a positive blessing ; and, when our circumstances imperatively require it, the necessity is to be regarded as a great good, and not an evil. It is a price put into our hands to obtain the richest blessings of life.

"No good of worth sublime will Heaven permit,
 To light on man as from the passing air;
 The lamp of genius, though by nature lit,
 If not protected, pruned, and fed with care,
 Soon dies or runs to waste with fitful glare.
 Then be thy thoughts to work divine addressed;
 Do something—do it soon—with all thy might;
 An angel's wing would droop if long at rest,
 And God himself, inactive, were no longer blest."

Labor gives a zest to all our enjoyments. It makes the plainest food savory, gives buoyancy to our spirits, and sweetness to our sleep. "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet." That for which we labor, on which we bestow our strength, which has cost us much anxiety, thought, and effort of body or mind, acquires a peculiar value in our estimation. The fortune that we have earned by our own exertions is far more prized than the inheritance received from a friend departed. "The substance of a diligent man is precious." "In all labor there is profit."

We are not, therefore, to be understood as advocates for idleness, if we suggest, that the season for labor may be too greatly disproportioned to the season for rest and recreation. Our purpose is the very opposite, as will yet appear. We do not forget, that an apostle in the name of Christ has enjoined upon the followers of Jesus, exhorting and commanding them, "that with quietness they work and eat their own bread." No bread so sweet as your own—that which you have procured by your own labor. The religion of the gospel demands a full occupation of all our powers in the service of our God, and our fellow-men. It gives no countenance to those disorderly professors, who are described as "working not at all, but are busy-bodies"—not at work, but over work; as in the original. Its language is to one and all—"Study to be quiet, to do your own business, and to work with your own hands: that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." It speaks, in language of not unmerited severity, of those who "learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house: and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not."

Labor, therefore, whatever the indolent, the purse-proud, the slave-driver, and the petted child of fashion, may deem it, is honorable in all; in the prince as well as the peasant, the master as well as the servant, the mistress as well as the maid, the employer as well as the laborer. How busy is universal Nature! The heavens and the earth are incessantly at work, fulfilling the great purpose of their creation. "The heavens," says one, "do roll with unwearyed motion; the sun and stars do perpetually dart their influence; the earth is ever laboring in the birth and nourishment of plants; the plants are drawing sap, and sprouting out fruits and seeds, to feed us and propagate themselves; the rivers are running, the seas are tossing, the winds are blustering, to keep the elements

sweet in which we live. Every living creature is employed in providing for its sustenance ; the blessed spirits are always on the wing in dispatching the commands of God, and ministering succor to us ; . . . yea, God himself, although immovably and infinitely happy, is yet immensely careful, and everlastingly busy." "My Father," saith Jesus, "worketh hitherto, and I work." So that it is literally true, that "all things are full of labor."

Well for us that it is so. What would this world be, but a wilderness, and its people but barbarians, were it not for the labor both of hands and heads ? It is labor that has made man and the world in which he dwells what they are. We owe to it whatever is useful, curious, elegant, grand, and admirable in our edifices, equipage, furniture, modes of transit, and means of social and intellectual enjoyment. Labor is the source of all our wealth and worldly comfort.

Discard, then, at once and for ever, the thought, that it is mean, shameful, or a disgrace, to labor. Nothing is more honorable. No calling is more worthy of regard than that which demands laborious service. The man, whose labor and skill give increased value to the soil, or any of its products, is more to be honored than any idler, or even than he, through whose hands those products pass unchanged. Cherish the love of labor. Hold it in high esteem. It is the palladium of Independence, the parent of health, of energy, of virtue even, and a noble inheritance derived from the founders of our republic.

Be ashamed, not that your circumstances have made it necessary for you to toil, but that you are doing nothing, that you eat the fruit of other men's labors, that you render no equivalent for your dependence, that you live a life of idleness, are a mere drone in the hive, a hindrance and an incumbrance, a consumer but not a producer, a burden and a pest, a moth, and not a bee :—

"How doth the little busy bee improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day from every opening flower !
In works of labor, or of skill, I would be busy too,
For Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

See to it, then, that you have something to do, that you do it, and that you do it well ; that you waste not your life in idleness, and spend an eternity in shame. The charge of the Great Master to all his servants is, "Occupy till I come."

But the wise man has very pertinently observed, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Man cannot always work. The pure ethereal spirits round the throne may without ceasing, day and night, for ever continue the work of praise, or be ever on the wing. But these animal frames were not so made. They cannot endure incessant labor. The body soon feels the need of rest and relaxation, when its powers are tasked. It must frequently be recruited with food and

sleep, or it will lose the power to labor. Exhausted nature, when denied these indispensable means of relief and restoration, will flag and sink, crushed beneath the insupportable burden.

The all-wise Author of our being has made a two-fold provision for the alternation of labor and rest. By his own example in the beginning of the creation, and by positive enactment, he requires one seventh part of all our time to be given to the purposes of devotion, and exempted from ordinary labor. "In it thou shalt not do any work." "The Sabbath was made for man"—for man's comfort, health, strength, and salvation. It is the laborer's friend. It interposes between the master and the servant; and demands for the stalled jade a cessation from toil. Admirable provision! How wonderfully it promotes the vigor, and efficiency,—how greatly it prolongs the life, of him who keeps it! The man who breaks it will find that he robs himself more than his God. In keeping this commandment there is great reward.

Of the remaining portion of our time, it is said, "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work." But it is not to be expected that the whole gross of hours is to be incessantly occupied. Nor is such the meaning of the injunction. All our daily labor is to be done during the six days, and not on the seventh. Of these six days, as already intimated, a portion only can be given to work. Food must be taken; sleep, also; and recreation. Time, of course, must be allotted for these purposes, and in a certain ratio. It must be ample for the ends to be secured—must bear a reasonable proportion to that which is given to labor, or the power to labor will be diminished, and ere long exhausted, and life itself be unduly shortened. These laws of our being have been put to the fullest proof. They have developed themselves in universal experience.

These seasons of rest from labor, moreover, must recur at regular intervals, as appears from another provision of the Author of our being. The earth has, in a most wonderful manner, received from the Creator an impulse that, from the beginning, has driven it, once every 24 hours, around its axis, presenting to every portion of its surface a regular alternation of day and night. The light of the sun, so necessary to labor, is thus, at stated intervals, withdrawn. Obedient to the demands of their physical constitutions, all the orders of animated nature, with very few exceptions, seek, as the light departs, a season of repose. The fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, and man, also, find a law within them, requiring a cessation from labor. The brute creation obey this primeval law, and reap the reward of obedience. Man, too, when not corrupted by luxurious habits, and the laws of despotic fashion, obeys the requirements of his nature, and yields to the divine impulse.

This is the law to which the Saviour of man refers in the words of the text. That law requires all our work to be done by day, as much as the divine enactment of the Sabbath requires all our work to be done during the six days, and not on the seventh. "I must

work . . . while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work." He appeals to a law, an established law, of nature; a law written on man's constitution;—to the universal sense of mankind. That sense has been fully ascertained, and put on record. Nothing pertaining to man has been more fully determined. Everywhere, and in all ages, the doctrine has been maintained, that the day, and not the night, is the time for work.

It is not asserted, nor does the Saviour mean to affirm, that work cannot be done at all by night. No one, surely, would risk his reputation by such an affirmation. We know it can. We know that it is done to an extent that demands investigation, inquiry, and even interposition. The text is one of many similar ones, in which the inability spoken of is not strictly of a physical nature. Work can be done by night, but not with impunity. It is such a transgression of a fixed law, as must result in serious injury to the transgressor. No man can sin against his own nature, and not feel the effects of it. Sooner or later the injury will be developed. When, therefore, it is said, "The night cometh when no man can work," we are to understand the Saviour as teaching, that, agreeably to a well-known and divinely-established law, man's daily labor is ordinarily and properly to be suspended by night.

Thus far we have unquestionable authority for our position. The will of God, in this matter, is fully ascertained, and in all respects concurs with man's best good. It is never safe to violate any law of God, much less a law of our own nature. It matters not who does it. Their doing it does not make it right. It still remains the law—the truth—that the night is the time for rest, for sleep.

The extent, to which the violation of this requirement is carried, is affecting very seriously the health and energies of the people. It is very common, as most of you know, for the lovers of pleasure, of both sexes, and all grades in society, to occupy, occasionally, nearly the whole night in the labor of the dance, and in the exciting and exhausting diversions of the ball-room and pleasure-party. The night is converted, by artificial means, into the brilliancy of the day, and the time that should be given to repose is squandered on the passion for mirth and folly. With a good constitution, you may endure it for a season; but "ye have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out." Sooner or later, according to the strength of that constitution, you will reap the fruit of your folly, with unavailing regret.

When it is remembered, that this devotion of a large portion of the night to folly, and at some seasons, and in certain circles, several nights of every week, is demanded by the laws of fashion, and that these laws are implicitly obeyed,—when, too, it is known, that they, who are subjects of the realm of fashion, are, for the most part, the offspring of constitutions thus broken down, and carry with in them the consequent infirmities of such a birth and training,—

is it to be thought strange, that the deadly consumption sweeps away so large a portion of the young and lovely before they have lived out half their days? Must they not pay the forfeit of their folly, and suffer for the violation of the inexorable demands of their nature? Need we wonder that so many parents are called to weep in sackcloth over the dust of their manly sons and blooming daughters, cut down in the morning of their life, when they themselves have taught them to transgress this imperative law of their being? When shall it be, as God has ordained, that men will learn that the night is the time for rest?

It is greatly to be deplored, that so many of the trades are carried on by night—that many employers think it to be for their interest to keep their machinery in operation by night, as well as by day. It is a very great drawback to the pleasure with which we peruse the morning paper, that, in order to furnish us with the gratification, scores of our fellow-men have been obliged to labor all the night, or the greater part of it, in the setting of type, in the press-room, in the procuring of expresses, and the like. To them, it is a serious evil. It draws upon their very life-blood. But great as is the evil, I can now only allude to it.

In determining the proportions of time that may properly be devoted to labor, we have thus far been able only to distinguish between the day and the night, and to ascertain that our daily labor is ordinarily to be done "while it is day." We are yet to ascertain, by a separation of the day from the night, the proper proportion of time to be given to work. If the day be measured by the shining of the sun, it is nowhere of a uniform length. It differs in different latitudes, and in the same latitude at different seasons of the year. In such cases, it is obviously proper to ascertain the average relation of the day to the night throughout the world, and so to determine the question. Such was our Saviour's understanding of the matter. Thus he asks the question, on another occasion, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Such was the understanding of the world then, and such it is now. Twelve hours of sun, and twelve of shade, divide and fill up the day.

The day, therefore, is practically to be regarded as of twelve hours' duration, and no more. This is the portion of time during which labor is to be performed. A greater amount is in no sense requisite. It is enough for all practical purposes. During that time, the whole business of the day may and ought to be transacted. The labor of man need not, in an ordinary state of society, be prolonged beyond this rate, for the purposes of a comfortable sustenance.

Furthermore, it is capable of proof, that, where this proportion of time is exceeded habitually, the human frame ordinarily gives way, and suffers injury. It cannot endure it. I have already intimated, that exercise is indispensable to perfect health. This exercise, however, if unduly prolonged, or too active or laborious, becomes

hurtful, destructive of health. By careful observation from age to age, by extended investigation on the part of medical science, and of civilians, results have been attained, which clearly develop the fact, that the human system cannot ordinarily endure continued labor more than twelve hours daily, including the time needful for the taking of food.

So deep-seated and so general has been the conviction that such is the case, as to constrain the legislatures of enlightened nations to interpose between the avarice of the employer and the over-tasked laborer, by enactments defining the number of hours that shall ordinarily be reckoned as constituting a day's work. In the fourth year of Queen Elizabeth, A. D. 1563, it was enacted, in respect to laborers, that "if they work by the day or by the week, they must continue working from five in the morning till after seven at night, from the middle of March to the middle of September; and all the rest of the year, from twilight to twilight: only, from March to September, as aforesaid, they are to be allowed two hours for breakfast, dinner, and drinking; and from the middle of May to the middle of August, half an hour more for sleeping; and all the rest of the year, an hour and a half for breakfast and dinner: and for the absence of every hour, the master may stop one penny out of the wages." The utmost that could, even in that age of hardy, robust, and athletic men, be required, in the most favorable season of the year, as a day's labor, was twelve hours; while the average for the year came short of eleven.

In several of the States of our Union, laws have been passed in relation to the labor of convicts, the necessity of which has grown out of the same general fact to which I have alluded. In New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and Georgia, the following humane enactment has found a place among their laws:—"Such offenders (convicts), unless prevented by ill health, shall be employed in work every day in the year, except Sundays, and such days when they shall be confined in the solitary cells; and the hours of work, in each day, shall be as many as the season of the year (with an interval of half an hour for breakfast, and an hour for dinner) will permit; but not exceeding *eight* hours, in the months of November, December, and January; *nine* hours, in the months of February and October; and *ten* hours in the rest of the year." Nothing but a decided conviction of the inhumanity of exacting more than the human system will endure, could have prompted such an enactment, in the case of men whose crimes had made them amenable to the punishment of imprisonment at hard labor.

In the consolidated Slave Act of Jamaica, W. I., passed March 2d, 1792, provision was made for the allowance of several holidays to the unfortunate bondmen, and one day in every fortnight, exclusive of Sundays, to cultivate their own provision-grounds. Besides these provisions, it was enacted, "that every field-slave, on such plantation or settlement, shall, on work-days, be allowed,

according to custom, half an hour for breakfast, and two hours for dinner; and that no slave shall be compelled to any manner of field-work upon the plantation, before the hour of five in the morning, or after the hour of seven at night, except during the time of crop, under the penalty of fifty pounds." These laws were made by slaveholders, for the regulation of their own slaves, from whom they had every inducement to exact all the labor that could be performed, without seriously impairing their health, and shortening their lives. Yet the most that they dared to require was, a daily labor of eleven hours and a half, in at least two portions, with an interval of two hours for rest.

Such facts are not to be passed over in silence. They speak volumes for the position that I have now taken. It would be difficult to find any civilized people, at the present day, who would venture to enact a law requiring even convicts to labor at any other than in the day-time. Our own Revised Statutes simply demand, that they "shall be kept constantly employed at hard labor during the day-time, except when incapable of laboring by reason of sickness or bodily infirmity." It would be regarded as inhuman to require them to work by night.

The modern legislation of the British government has been in accordance with these views. In the 42d year of George III., 1802, an act was passed, at the instance of Sir Robert Peel, himself a manufacturer, by which the labor of apprentices in factories was limited to twelve hours, and not permitted at night. In 1816, the same distinguished commoner procured the passage of a resolution for a committee of the House of Commons to make investigation into the evils of the factory-system. Deep was the indignation, when the report of this committee brought out the fact, that great numbers of children even were worked from five in the morning till eight at night, all the year round; and that, in making up lost time, they frequently worked from five in the morning till ten at night. The inquiry resulted in the passage of an act, making it unlawful to require of any factory laborer, under eighteen years of age, more than sixty-nine hours of labor during the week, or eleven and a half hours daily.

In 1832, it was proposed to reduce the time to fifty-eight hours in the week, for all under eighteen years of age. This proposition gave rise to another commission of inquiry, fifteen in number, five of whom were of the medical profession, commonly known as the "Factory Commission." A vast amount of facts, bearing on this question, was thus collected, by which it was ascertained, that the hours of labor in Scotland were from twelve to twelve and a half; in the north-eastern district of England, twelve; in Manchester, twelve; and in the West of England, often not more than ten.

In 1841, another commission was raised, called the "Children's Employment Commission," who extended their investigations

into the condition of the laborer, in other trades and manufactures. Their reports, published in 1842 and 1843, are painfully interesting, and develop a vast amount of suffering among females and children, particularly occasioned by long confinement to work, and the occupation of a portion of the night in labor. In relation to the millinery establishments of the metropolis, Sir James Clarke, Bart., physician to the Queen, testified as follows:—"I have found the mode of life of these poor girls such as no constitution could long bear. Worked from six in the morning till twelve at night, with the exception of the short intervals allowed for their meals, in close rooms, and passing the few hours allowed for rest in still more close and crowded apartments—a mode of life more completely calculated to destroy human health could scarcely be contrived; and this at a period of life, when exercise in the open air, and a due proportion of rest, are essential to the development of the system."

No wonder that numerous and most highly respectable medical men should testify, in relation to this over-working and working by night, "Their constitution receives a shock, from which it never recovers. They may leave off work for a period, they may go into the country to their friends, but they never regain their health. Indigestion in its most severe form, palpitation of the heart, pulmonary affections threatening consumption, and various affections of the eyes, great constitutional weakness, indicated by a degree of pallor, or bloodless condition of the body,—prevail." Again, the report says, that "all the witnesses, medical and others, spoke of the very frequent occurrence of consumption, which carries off a large number of victims."

Such are some of the effects of overworking, of occupying a larger proportion of time than is proper in labor, of devoting the hours of the night, in part, as well as of the day, to toil, to close occupation. How truly might the humane and wise Redeemer speak of the night as the time "when no man can work!"—when no man can work, with impunity.

These remarks are applicable, not alone to the trades and handicrafts that require much muscular exertion, but to all kinds of business, and literary or mental labor. Any close and incessant occupation of the mind is labor, the hardest kind of labor, the most wearisome to the flesh, the most exhausting to the spirits, the most injurious to health. When, therefore, we speak of labor, we are to be understood as referring to the daily pursuits of business, whatever they may be. All business of this description should, if possible, be done by day, and not by night; should not occupy more than the twelve hours of the day. Nothing is gained, on the whole, by prolonging the labor of the day after nightfall.

Such is the general conviction of men engaged in mechanical and agricultural pursuits. It would be deemed oppressive and inhuman for the farmer, the builder, the manufacturer, in this land, to

exact more than ten hours, or at the most twelve, from those in their employ. Every morning, except on the Sabbath, you may see the industrious mechanic, and other laborers, pursuing their way, at seven o'clock, to their daily work. If you enter their shops at twelve, or at any time between twelve and one, you find their work suspended; and, as the clock strikes six in the evening, you may see them issuing from their places of labor, and almost thronging our thoroughfares. Their work is done for the day. The evening is theirs. They may recreate and rest. They may engage in the pleasing relaxations of social life, may obtain information and pleasure by reading, or engage in devotional exercises in the place of prayer, or be entertained by religious or scientific pleasures.

Or, if we betake ourselves to country life, the same rule of labor is found to prevail. At the going down of the sun, and as twilight begins, how affectingly does the scene remind us of the lovely picture sketched by Gray:—

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds."

How such a picture recalls the days of childhood and youth, when we, too, whose homes were removed from the whirl and dissipation of city life, were wont to revel in such scenes of rural bliss! Shall it ever be, we are ready to ask, with a long-drawn sigh, that such will again be our favored lot?

Alas! that we have nothing here, in this busy mart, to answer to the poet's sketch! No sweet repose to the wearied laborer, in numerous branches of trade and toil! No rest to the soles of their feet, or to their wearied hands! It is work, work, work; toil, toil, toil! The night, with many, is as busy as the day. From early morn until late at night, the poor drudge toils on, and wears out his life, his heart, his soul. Not an hour can be spared from the everlasting drudgery, for purposes of health. Wealth is all. To obtain it, all else must be sacrificed. Every wakeful hour must be exacted, every social comfort relinquished, everything like mental, and moral, and religious improvement discarded, as out of the question.

It has already been said, that, even in our cities, the daily labor of the mechanic and the craftsman is done at six of the clock in the evening. There are exceptions to be made to this general statement. The men who provide the clothing for our bodies, the shoes for our feet, bread and meat for our tables, and the morning news for our information, with others, must still toil on, and wear out their lives, in working by night for our gratification. Not to

speak of the thousands of seamstresses, of the feebler and gentler sex, whose necessities compel them to labor, of whom we have already heard, in the report of the British commission, and whose worn-out frames are weekly swelling the fearful item of consumption in our bills of mortality,—passing by all these, let me call your attention to the almost numberless shops and stores, by which our principal streets are illuminated night after night, until nine, ten, eleven, or even twelve o'clock. In each of these stores there is an employer—one or more. In most of them there are clerks, seldom less than two, and frequently a score or more. These employers and their clerks are engaged in traffic, exposing for sale the products of every land, and an infinite variety of goods designed for raiment, food, equipage, and convenience. From the earliest hour of the day, their work begins. As the mechanic passes by, at seven in the morning, to his well-regulated labor, he finds these places of business open, and prepared for the traffic of the day. As he returns from his toil, at six in the evening, they are open still. As he goes forth at night, and returns from a social circle, where he has tasted some of the purest enjoyments of life, still he finds that the poor trader and his clerks are yet on their feet, and pursuing their wearisome, exhausting work.

Why all this? What dire necessity is it, that compels so many of our tradesmen to pursue their business three, four, and even, in some cases, five and six hours longer in the day than the mechanic and his workmen? Why may not all the busy hum of trade be suspended, in all departments of business, at one and the same hour? Why, when the plane, the saw, the hammer, the sledge, the trowel, and the spade, are dropped, may not the place of merchandise be closed, and the long-confined, wearied tradesman, and his clerks, be set free? If work must be done after working hours, why not employ a double set of hands, as in many of the public offices now, and also in some private establishments?

On this topic you will indulge me for once, I trust, though it may seem foreign to my vocation. It is not foreign. It is one in which I, as a minister of the Gospel, have, and ought to have, a deep and abiding interest. I am set for the defence of human rights, as well as of the Gospel—the rights of man, as well as of God. It is my province to plead the cause of suffering humanity; to interpose between oppression and its victims; to give a trumpet-voice to the command, "Thou shalt not kill;" to remind my fellow-candidates for immortality, "that man doth not live by bread only;" that there are other things to be done in this world besides the getting of gain; and that time must be allowed and taken for domestic duties, for self-improvement, for the culture of the mind and the heart, and for the exercise of the varied social gifts of our Divine Benefactor.

You will indulge me, as one that has a right to speak on such a theme. It is from sad and painful experience that I testify. Are

any of you in the service of the merchant, as his agents or clerks? So was I, for five long years and more. Well do I know the exhausting nature of your employment. Fully have I experienced your privations. To this very day do I suffer from the long confinement of those wearisome hours, when, from six in the morning until ten and eleven at night, I scarcely knew any cessation, any relaxation, from the toils of trade; when, with morbid appetite, my daily food was taken in haste, with scarcely an opportunity for healthful digestion. As one, therefore, of yourselves—as one who, in the recollection of past griefs and grievances, can say, *quorum pars fui*—I may be permitted to speak. I must speak and plead. Humanity and religion alike demand it.

And why must I plead in vain? Will the employer not regard it? He will. He was once himself a clerk, and never can he forget his own privations. If then he was a slave to business, what is he now? A galley-slave. Has he not a home? But he is denied its comforts. Has he a wife and children? How seldom can he indulge himself in their society, save on the Sabbath; and how little can he care for the young immortals committed to his charge! How great the sacrifice to one, who is so constituted as to derive his chief earthly enjoyment from the exercise and cultivation of the tender affections! Oh! no; the employer will not be deaf to our appeals. If some will be, others will not. It was at their request that I gave this subject a place in my pulpit discussions. Many of them are eager for the contemplated change, and have already taken an active and highly-commendable part in the agitation of the subject.

But others still hold out. On what ground? It is urged by some that it will be attended with pecuniary loss to the employer. To this objection it may be replied at once, that, if all trade and business be suspended at six or seven in the evening, ample time will be given in the day-time for the disposal of goods, and none the losers thereby. The trade that is now transacted in the evening will be brought into the day, and the same amount of goods disposed of. Such is now the case with the wholesale trade. No one suffers by putting an end to traffic in these immense establishments, at the going down of the sun.

It is questionable, however, whether, as at present conducted, the evening trade will pay expenses. Shoppers understand that there is a greater liability to deception as respects the quality, color, and completeness of goods, when seen only in the evening; and are slow to purchase them. If wise, they would always take the daylight for such purchases. If the cost of light and fuel be deducted from the profits, it will be found that the gains are small. A merchant, who has pursued the retail dry goods traffic in this city for thirty years, has assured me, that he has not paid his expenses after seven in the evening.

In this calculation, moreover, we are not to forget the saving of

time. Who can tell of how much advantage it would be to the employer to gain every day three or four hours for rest, recreation, social, moral, and religious improvement, and for the exercise of the kindly feelings of the soul? How much must a man earn by night-trading, in order to compensate him for such a loss?

Again, I ask, Why must we plead in vain, when we ask that a ten or twelve hour law be enacted, by common consent and imperious custom, in behalf of tradesmen and their clerks? It is objected, that it would be hazardous to the morals of the clerks. I know full well that the morals of the young men in our city are exposed to great hazard, and that many yearly fall victims to the destroyer. But is that a reason for treating them worse than convicts or slaves? Why not, then, keep all at work,—apprentices and journeymen, as well as clerks? Are the latter less intelligent than the former?—possessed of less firmness, self-control, and self-respect? It is not to be admitted for a moment. If it is safe in the one case, it is in the other.

Or, is it to be supposed that this over-working will favorably affect their morals? Recreation they will have. You cannot prevent it. It is inhuman to deny it to them. Their nature demands it. If you keep them employed until the hours for social visiting are past, and halls of instruction are closed, you drive them to the saloons, refectories, porter-houses, and houses of ill-fame, with which our city abounds. You create the very evil which you profess to guard against. All this I have seen, and affirm from abundant observation.

But treat them as other young men are treated; work them no longer than others are worked; give them the evening, after the toils of the day are past, and I will answer for them. They will abundantly repay your kindness—nay, your sense and exercise of justice. Many of them have families of their own, as well as yourselves, and will gladly be welcomed at home, where, in the exercise of the social affections, they will be all the better fitted to serve you on the morrow. Others are of that period of life when the heart naturally turns to the softer sex, in search of a companion for life. Now you compel them to occupy the Sabbath, or a part of it, in the needful endeavor to become thoroughly acquainted with the object towards whom they have turned their desires. Let them have their evenings, and they will seek admittance to the society of respectable females, than which there can scarcely be a greater safeguard to virtue. It is, next to divine grace in the heart, the best of all safeguards. Let them be admitted to the confidence and affection of virtuous, refined, and high-minded females, and they will strive to deserve it. They will not—they cannot, come reeking from the stews into such a presence. They will scorn it.

Opportunities will also be given, and embraced, for mental improvement. "The child is father of the man." The clerk is to be the merchant. It is of great importance that the merchant be in-

telligent, well trained, for the responsibilities of business and of public life, and accurately informed in all that pertains to a good education. It is demanded by the reputation of our mercantile community. But many of our clerks are obliged to seek employment at an early life, and before they have had the thorough discipline of education. If ignorant, they must continue so, according to the present mode of doing business. Give them the same opportunities that are enjoyed by the apprentice and the craftsman, and they need not remain in ignorance. Let them have the evening of every day, and you give them an impulse to improve themselves. They may then frequent, and with profit, the Mercantile Library, established for their special benefit; the vast and valuable stores of which the retail clerks can now enjoy scarcely at all, unless they give the sacred Sabbath to reading. Lectures and evening-schools may then be visited; and other opportunities for storing the mind with useful knowledge be embraced. Why should these privileges be denied them?

Last of all, let me plead with you to remember that the getting of gain, so far from being the great object for which we come into this world, and with which we should occupy ourselves here, is one of the smallest. When we make it the chief thing, the one only thing, as so many do, we sin against our own souls; we prefer the less to the greater, and suffer ourselves to be made the slaves of Mammon. It is enough, surely, to be thus occupied by day. The remainder of our wakeful hours are needed for higher, better purposes. We are not to forget that we are candidates for eternity, and that we have need to be daily engaged in preparation, in laying up treasures for heaven. The Christian may be greatly profited by the social devotional meetings of the evening. Our churches can scarcely thrive in spiritual matters without them. And yet the retail merchant and his clerks must be, for the most part, denied the profit and the pleasure of such means of grace; while our churches must be deprived of the attendance of a large portion of their brethren, because the business of the world must be extended into the night.

Let the desired reform be put into practice, and we shall have healthier, more vigorous, and more intelligent merchants, happier homes, more sociability, more refinement, and more opportunity for every species of mental, moral, and religious improvement. None will be impoverished,—all enriched by the change. None will be losers,—all gainers. Shall the reform be carried?

We put the question, not to the merchants alone, and shop-keepers, but to their customers. Just as soon as night-traffic ceases to be lucrative, it will be given up. The merchant will not keep open his store, merely to illumine the streets, nor to preserve the morals of his clerks. His public spirit and his philanthropy are not so fully developed. Whenever it costs him more to keep his clerks employed by night, than he makes by their labor, he will

close before night. Such a result may soon be brought about. Let the community resolve to abandon evening shopping altogether, and the shops and stores will all be closed. In the name of humanity, then, I call upon you to pledge yourselves to a **TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM EVENING SHOPPING**. Buy all that you want by day. Have pity upon the poor prisoner behind the counter. Compel him not to wait and tend until nine and ten at night. Treat him not worse than you would the man that digs, or paves, or sweeps the streets, or carries the hod. Make him not a slave. Give him time to breathe the healthful air, to taste the sweets of domestic life, to improve his mind, to polish his manners, to enjoy the means of grace. Let him go free at night-fall.

May the time soon come when it shall be written over the door of every factory, shop, and store, and on every heart, "The night cometh, when no man can work."