

THE LORD'S DAY ALLIANCE AND THE WORKING MAN

The Alliance is criticized as promoting class legislation. Some say: "The rich man has his automobile, but the Alliance would deprive the working classes on Sunday of the privileges within their reach." It would be serious indeed if this criticism were well founded, and it would be most unfortunate, if not well taken, that there should be any misunderstanding between the Alliance and working men. **Such an opinion cannot be maintained when the facts are known.** That all working men do not so view the work of the Alliance is apparent in the general approval and generous support extended by the working classes, and the sympathy expressed by them when the work is presented in their hearing. The relationship of the two—the Alliance and the working man—may therefore profitably come under review.

1. The working man owes to the Alliance his legal guarantee against seven days' toil. The Nations' guarantee to the working man of his rest day is found in the Lord's Day Act of Canada. This act would not now be upon the statute book had it not been for the work of the Lord's Day Alliance. It must not be forgotten that, admirably situated as we were in Canada years ago with respect to Sunday law in the various provinces and territories then constituting the Dominion, the situation was entirely changed when the Privy Council of England, in 1903, gave its decision declaring invalid provincial Sunday laws. The Alliance took up the question and not only secured the consent of the Dominion Government to the introduction of a Sunday bill to Parliament, which was alone competent to deal with the question, but fought the battle, in and out of the Dominion Parliament, that resulted in the passing, in July of 1906, of the Lord's Day Act. As men in earlier times pointed to the Magna Charta as the first great charter of liberty in the Empire of which we form a part, so may we point to the Lord's Day Act of Canada as the first NATIONAL charter **guaranteeing the people's liberty to the enjoyment of their weekly rest day.** If the Day is one of the greatest friends of the working man, in what light should the Alliance be viewed since by its efforts has been gained for the working classes this guarantee of freedom?

2. The recognition of the law by administrative officers throughout the country, for the most part, has been secured by the Alliance. Had the law become a dead letter, the guarantee would have been of no effect. Through its representatives in every part of the Dominion, and by means of correspondence and conference, the Alliance has secured, to the extent to which it now prevails, the active sympathy of Attorneys-General, Police Commissioners, and Police Constables in the enforcement of this statute. **The activity of these officers means much for the working man.** Just as in the discharge of their duty in other particulars they are the guardians of a man's possessions and of his person, so, when enforcing the Lord's Day Act, they stand as the defenders of his liberty.

3. It is unquestionable that, had the Alliance not intervened, interpretations of the law made by some judges would have deprived certain classes of employees of their weekly rest day. Had the decision made by a Toronto judge that "ice-cream is a food and tobacco a drug" been maintained as a governing principle in the interpreting and enforcing of the Lord's Day Act, how many hard-worked men and women in confectionery stores, tobacco shops, grocery stores, flour and feed stores, butcher shops, and other places where food is sold, would have been deprived of the enjoyment of the Rest Day with all its gracious privileges?

4. Every leading incident of Alliance effort has resulted in freedom for the working classes on Sunday. The very day the Lord's Day Act came into force witnessed the obtaining of this liberty for many. Men were in church, or in the enjoyment of Sunday home life, on that day for the first time in y.ars. The closing of the post offices in cities and towns in the West in 1909 resulted in freedom on Sunday for hundreds of clerks and stenographers who, because of Sunday mail, had been compelled to do Sunday work, and, in addition, provided a like release from Sunday toil for many employees of the post office.

In Ontario the employees of electric roads owe it to the Alliance that in the street-car legislation there is adequate safeguard afforded them for their weekly rest day, when on such lines Sunday service is inaugurated. In a number of instances where this stipulation has been ignored, the Alliance has been successful in restoring to men this privilege. How many railway men have been given their weekly rest day through Alliance effort in stopping way-freight trains, work trains and excursion traffic on Sunday? How many of them owe their Sunday liberty to the direct appeal made by the Alliance to their employers? Is there any realm of labour in which working men, in greater or less numbers, have not directly benefited, in the enjoyment of Sunday freedom, by Alliance intervention? When the sale of Sunday newspapers was restrained, newsboys and news agents were set free; when boot-black stands were closed on Sunday, the boys enjoyed their liberty; banks have been communicated with, and their clerks have now Sunday freedom. Sunday sales have been prohibited in stores, and clerks have been set free; construction work on Sunday stopped, and artisans have had their day. Hundreds of our city police are indebted to the Alliance for their rest day. This feature of the Alliance work was the occasion of a contribution made recently by a working man, who said, as he gave it,—“I now see that had it not been for this organization I would be compelled to do Sunday labour.”

It would seem, however, that there is lurking in the minds of some working people the idea that the Alliance has interfered with their particular pastimes and pleasures on Sunday unreasonably, and that concessions have been made to rich people that have not been made to the poor. Consider the cry referred to that the rich man has his automobile. For this the Alliance is not responsible, nor is it responsible for the fact that the poor man has not one. The gulf between the rich and the poor exists independent of the Alliance, and it must not be forgotten that the difference between the rich and the poor continues during the week as well as on Sunday. The rich man, because of his wealth, has privileges and liberties on Tuesday, or Wednesday, or Saturday, or any other day, that the poor man has not. So far as the freedom of out-of-doors is concerned, the working man has more liberty on Sunday, in comparison with the rich man, than he has during the week. The sea and the fresh air are as much his on Sunday as the rich man's, and more his on Sunday than during the week because of freedom from work; but, mark, it is only because he is free from toil on that day. Were he not so liberated, even this privilege would be denied him, and this privilege is his because of the successful championship of the Alliance.

Even some things that appear to be against the working man are really for him. For instance, the absence of excursions, the closing of theatres, on Sunday, are cited as deprivations. These things he has at his disposal during the week as much as the average person, and were they a feature of Sunday life the working classes would suffer most. The rich do not serve on Sunday as conductors, brakemen, engineers, waiters, ticket sellers, actors and ushers. These are all of the working classes, and, like others, ought to have Sunday for themselves. The actor has as much right to Sunday as the bricklayer, and the waiter as the factory hand. Were these diversions to prevail on Sunday they would sadly interfere with the privileges the working man can enjoy on that day alone in fullest measure, namely, the quiet of home life, the freedom of public worship, the advantages of reading and meditation,—in other words, the privileges that more than all others contribute to make a man a man, and to promote his prosperity and happiness.

Two facts the working man may reckon upon,—the Lord's Day Act is the charter and the Lord's Day Alliance the champion of his Sunday liberty, with all its privileges, and therefore this organization may be numbered among his truest friends.

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