

# ON THE PROPOSAL TO OPEN THE CRYSTAL PALACE ON SUNDAYS.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM HENRY DAYMAN, Esq.

SIR,—I cannot but admire the manly and independent spirit you have shown in your articles on the Sunday pleasure controversy: and this feeling has been shared by many much esteemed associates with whom I have lately conversed.

The subject appears capable of being viewed under two aspects, namely, How does the proposal to throw open the Crystal Palace on Sundays affect us as citizens? and how as medical men?

To answer the first question, it would not be difficult to produce evidence, drawn from authentic sources, to show that, from the earliest ages of Christianity, the Lord's day has been observed as one of sacred rest, of joy and gladness; and that the first Christians carefully avoided keeping the Sabbath day after the manner of the Jews, which consisted then, as it does now, in following secular amusements. Religious exercises, and the moral training of the mind, were the especial duties of Christians on Sunday. Thus St. Ignatius says, in his *Epistle to the Magnesians*, "Let us no longer sabbatise, but keep the Lord's day, on which our Life arose"; and Lord Chancellor King, in his excellent work on the "Primitive Church", tells us that "the way wherein the first Christians sanctified the Sunday was the employing of themselves in acts of divine worship and adoration". Moreover, there is something revolting to Englishmen in the idea of throwing open a place of public amusement on a day which from time immemorial has been kept holy.

I am well aware, sir, that many excellent men would tell us this is a question with which the legislature has nothing to do, and that "the law of liberty" forbids the civil magistrate to interfere with the Christian's conscience; in fact, that people should be left to follow their own ways, in order to test the sincerity of their faith. To this I answer, that, if the people themselves ask for protection even against themselves, it is the business of the rulers to listen to the appeal. Now, it is well known that the mind of the public is against opening the Crystal Palace on Sundays; and, therefore, if the sense of the community has been taken in the matter, the duty of a wise government is made clear. Let those gentlemen who affect to ignore what is called a *national* religion listen to the words of an old divine, who certainly was not prejudiced in favour of church, or any other principles of an established form. Speaking of Sunday, he says, "On this day, throughout all ages, hath the edification of the churches been carried on, and that public revenue of glory been rendered unto God which is his due. Not only have the wisest and holiest men, who have complained of the sins of their several times and ages wherein they lived, which procured the pouring out of the judgments of God upon them, constantly reckoned the neglect and profanation of the Lord's day among these sins; but such instances have been given of particular severities against them who have openly profaned this day, and that upon unquestionable testimonies, as may well affect the minds and consciences of those who profess a reverence of God in the holy dispensations of his providence."

In discussing the second part of our subject—namely, how the question at issue affects us as doctors—I have no intention of introducing arguments either for or against the proposed scheme on physiological grounds. It may be that the laws of mind are derivative laws, consequent on those of animal life; but this does not appear to me a proper place to engage in an analysis of psychological principles, founded on the imperfect data which physiology at present can furnish. Such an inquiry belongs to the subtle logic of the moral sciences. It is enough to know that six hundred and forty thoughtful practitioners in medicine have given their verdict on this important question; and this fact alone is sufficient to justify the editor of a journal which is supposed to reflect the mind of two thousand gentlemen in drawing attention to the subject, and to command the serious consideration of every right thinking member of the profession.

I am, etc.,

HENRY DAYMAN.

Milbrook, Southampton, July 12th, 1853.

[Letters in defence of Sabbath observance from Dr. ALLISON and Dr. COWDELL have been squeezed out by the advertisements encroaching on our space. They are in type, and shall appear next week. EDITOR.]

\* Dr. John Owen's Preliminary Exercitations, xxxix.

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