

## SUNDAY REST FOR SERVANTS.

A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION. BY DR. A. R. WALLACE.

I REALLY think in future I shall have to make my own bed on Sunday morning; such at least is the practical moral which many readers will not fail to draw from the admirable paper which Dr. Alfred R. Wallace has contributed to the *Nineteenth Century*, entitled "A Suggestion to Sabbath Keepers." It has long been recognised as a difficulty among advocates of one day's rest in seven, that domestic service places an almost insuperable obstacle to the strict execution of the Mosaic charter of the worker's leisure.

## MAKE SUNDAY WORK A LABOUR OF CHARITY.

Speaking broadly, domestic servants are the only class which is uniformly deprived of the whole or part of its day's rest. How can this difficulty be overcome? Some work must be done in the house, but it by no means follows that that work must of necessity be done by the servant or servants. Why not, suggests Dr. Wallace, allow the servant her Sunday off, and let the domestic service in the one day in seven be performed as a work of charity by the members of the household. He says:—

We have here the clue to a method by which all that needs doing for health, for enjoyment, or for charity, may be done on Sunday without any one breaking the fourth commandment. Almost all this necessary work is now done by various classes of hired servants, who, as a rule, are fully employed for six days every week, and who also have not much less to do on the seventh day. To keep the Sabbath, both in the letter and the spirit, these workers must be allowed full and complete rest; they must do none of their special work on that day. All that portion of their weekly duties which is necessary for the well-being of their employers, and for the rational enjoyment of their lives, must be done by those other members of the household who have spent the week largely in idleness or in pleasure, or if in work, in work of a quite different character from that of their servants. In doing this work; in helping each other; in sharing among themselves the various household occupations which during all the week have been undertaken by others; and in doing all this in order that those others may enjoy the full and unbroken rest which their six days' continuous labour requires and deserves, each member of the family will be doing deeds of self-sacrifice and of charity (in however small a degree), and such deeds do not constitute the "work" which is so strictly forbidden on the Sabbath-day.

## TRUE DIVINE SERVICE.

In the ordinary middle-class household, where there are six or eight in family and two or three servants, all that is necessary may be easily done, and allow every member of the family to go to church or chapel once or oftener. If it were once really felt that the thing *must* be done, that on no account must the commandment be broken by servants doing any of their usual work on Sunday, and that the truest and most divine "service" would thus be "performed," all difficulties would vanish, and the day would become, not in name only but truly, a holy one, inasmuch as it would witness in every household deeds of true charity and mercy, because in every case they would involve some amount of personal effort and self-sacrifice.

## HOW IT MAY BE ARRANGED.

In the larger establishments of the higher classes there would be no greater difficulty, since it would be easy to effect such a division of labour as to render the work light for each. The son or other relative who was fondest of horses and dogs would of course see after their wants on Sunday; another might undertake the fire-lighting; while the young ladies would prepare the meals and do all other really necessary domestic work. Of course the greater part of the servants thus released from their regular work would also visit their friends, and by giving some little voluntary assistance would

take their part in the great altruistic movement that would characterise the day.

## FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS.

Among the more important of these deeds of mercy would be the relief of the nurses in hospitals and asylums, and of the attendants in workhouses and prisons. This would of course imply some general instruction of the young in the principles and practice of nursing, which is much to be desired on other grounds.

In the same way all the national treasures of art and nature in our galleries and museums, our libraries and gardens, might be thrown open to the great body of toilers who can enjoy them at no other time, the place of the week-day guardians of these treasures being taken by volunteers from among the more leisured classes or from the higher ranks of workmen. Of course the police would also be relieved by a body of special constables who would volunteer for the service. This occupation might be restricted to the Volunteer force, whose recognisable uniform and military organisation would render them admirably fitted for the purpose. Further details on this part of the subject are unnecessary, since it is evident that by an extension of the same principle it would be possible to relieve every one whose week-day labour is now extended over some portion of Sunday also.

## ITS SOCIAL ADVANTAGES.

Dr. Wallace says that he has thought over this thing for the last twenty years, but that he has only ventured to bring it to light now. The advantages which follow from his suggestions are many:—

The upper classes would learn, many of them for the first time, how great and how fatiguing is the labour daily expended in securing them the unvarying comfort and æsthetic enjoyment of their surroundings, and how often they cause unnecessary work by their thoughtlessness or extravagance. The need they would have, at first, of learning the duties of the particular department they were going to undertake, would bring them into friendly and intimate relations with their servants; and, in seeing how much care was often required to secure the comfort of the family, they might begin to appreciate that "dignity of labour" which is so often preached to the poor but so seldom practised by the rich. To many this "Sunday service" in their own families, or in that of some of their friends, would be the introduction to some serious occupation for their week-day lives, and thus inaugurate the great reform which the more thoughtful leaders of society see to be of imperative necessity.

On the whole body of the workers the effect would be great indeed, since it would at once bring about better relations with the wealthy classes, and especially with those who teach or profess religion. They would see, what they had hitherto doubted or denied, that the religion of the upper classes had some real influence on their lives, by leading them, not merely to give away a portion of their surplus wealth in charity, or to take part in the public proceedings of charitable institutions, but really to sacrifice something which they have hitherto considered necessary to their comfort, in order to obey the laws of that religion. They would further see, everywhere, men and women of culture voluntarily undertaking various public and private duties, in order to allow all kinds of workers to enjoy repose and recreation on one day in seven; and this great object-lesson in brotherhood and sympathy would lead to a general good feeling between all classes. The harmonious relations which would be thus produced may be of inestimable value when the time comes for those radical reforms in our social organisation which are more and more clearly seen to be inevitable in the not distant future.

Personally, I confess I am very much taken with Dr. Wallace's suggestion; but an old and trusted servant whom I consulted shook her head. It would lead, she said, to many servants being turned out on to the streets on Sundays to save their meals, and it would be very hard on the missus.