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PERIODICAL DIV.

Build Today.

All are architects of fate,
Working in these walls of time;
Some with massive deed and great,
Some with ornaments of rhyme.
Nothing useless is or low,
Each thing in its place is best;
And what seems but idle show
Strengthens and supports the rest.
For the structure that we raise
Time is with materials filled;
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build.
Build to-day, then, strong and sure,
With a firm and ample base;
And ascending and secure
Shall to-morrow find its place.
—LONGFELLOW.

The Clergy and Memorial Day.

The clergy are very alert to oppose whatever tends to restrict their influence and to favor any movement or suggestion which is in their interests. In this respect they are only like the members of all other professions. Class interests come next to individual and family interests. Clerical zeal for the religious observance of Sunday is due mainly to the importance of "the Sabbath" and its associations to the position and pretensions of the clergy. It is useless to argue with an ordinary christian preacher in regard to Sunday, to try to show him that Sunday observance is not authorized by any passage in the scriptures, that nature does not rest and never did, and that sacredness is not a quality of time. A sufficient reason for all the absurdity about the Sabbath which he defends, is that Sunday is the day set apart for religious service to which he is necessary, and which is necessary to him as a preacher. You might as well directly oppose his method of earning a living as to oppose Sunday observance. Jesus denounced many acts but Sabbath breaking was not among them. In the time of Jesus and of the New Testament writers, the practice of preaching on Sunday and for a salary, was unknown among christians.

With the decay of theological belief there is decline of interest in preaching and decline of clerical influence. The clergy, as best they can adjust themselves to changing conditions. They modify their preaching, often unconsciously under the influence of the time-spirit; they interest themselves in secular affairs and in secular movements; they more and more confine their preaching to the pulpit or to places and occasions where, as a perfunctory performance, it is still regarded as "the proper thing."

With all their conservatism the clergy are now ready to listen to a

proposition for any innovation which promises to add to the attractiveness of their churches or to bring them personally close to the people and to extend their functions beyond those merely of the theological teacher. Formerly the minister was supposed to confine himself to "preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ," and by that was meant that he was not to discuss in his sermons, nor to allude in his prayers, to secular matters of current interest, such as slavery, the fugitive slave law, temperance reform, etc. Sunday was too sacred a day and the pulpit was too sacred a place for the consideration of anything except Satan, the fall of man, the atonement, heaven and hell, and cognate subjects.

Times have changed. On Sunday, May 29, some of the churches gave up their usual evening services that appropriate words might be spoken in memory of the soldiers who fell in the War of the Rebellion. National hymns were sung, and some who attended spoke of the services as, on the whole, most appropriate. Several of the regular sermons were mainly in accord with the occasion.

Some of the clergy have expressed themselves in favor of having the Sunday nearest May 31 selected as the time to pay tribute to our dead soldiers. They would have a memorial service in the churches generally. The music of the brass bands, the grand parades, the bicycle racing, etc., might come into a program for some day preceding the Sunday observance of memorial day. One of these ministers, a Baptist, wants the Fourth of July, when it occurs on Sunday, to be celebrated on that day. He would have Saturday the day of secular celebration. "After having fired off all our enthusiasm in this line, we could," he says, "observe the memorable day again Sunday. Then the church would be pronouncing the benediction on the occasion and we could listen to sermons at the close which would be better than any fire works in reminding us of the deeds of our ancestors and our present responsibilities." This preacher would have a sermon take the place of the Fourth of July oration which once was a prominent feature of the Fourth of July attractions.

The growing custom of having games and festivities on memorial day seems to be producing a feeling of reaction, and it is this feeling of which the clergy are taking advantage

to make the pulpit and the church more conspicuous and more indispensable in the observances of the day. A Congregational preacher said recently: "If we are to have road races let us set apart a special holiday, a wheelman's day if you please, but I protest against the appropriation of decoration day by the bicyclists. The tendency even now is for the rising generation to forget the lessons of the past. What will it be twenty years hence if this sort of thing continues? Let us reverence the memory of the dead soldiers, not by a wild scramble across country to see who can be first at the tape, but by appropriate exercises that shall tend to inculcate a love of patriotism in the hearts of the young, with a reverence for great and noble deeds accomplished."

Another preacher (Methodist) said: "So far as the decoration of the resting-places of our soldiers is concerned, it can be done Sunday. In fact, the celebration of memorial day on the Sabbath is perfectly in place. I preached a sermon in accord with the thought of the day Sunday evening, giving up the evening service to it. My subject was 'The Messages of Decoration Day.' There is no better place than the church in which to honor the memory of the men who died to save this nation and for us to learn the lessons taught by their lives."

As one of the surviving soldiers of the war of the Rebellion, as well as an American citizen, I am glad to see anything like an appreciation and appropriate commemoration of those who died in the struggle to maintain the union of these States. It is true that every generation has its own affairs to tend to, its own duties and responsibilities, and we cannot expect the mass of the people of today to realize fully the sacrifices and achievements of a third of a century ago, and every successive year, we may expect, the exercises of Memorial day will become more and more formal until finally they may be discontinued, from lack of interest by general consent. Still it is well to encourage the observance of this day so long at least as comrades of those who fell are still alive, in courtesy to them perhaps, and to the relations of the dead, as well as in commemoration of the services of those whose graves are decorated.

While these commemorations are fit occasions for patriotic addresses,

by the clergy as well as by others, they ought not to be diverted from their purpose and made occasions for preaching theology. I would not listen, without protest, to such preaching, if I had anything to do with the arrangements, or any legal right to object.

The readiness now of the clergy to preach patriotic sermons on Sunday, to give prominence in the pulpit on that day to national events, to make their meetings commemorative of soldiers fallen in battle, indicates the extent to which the pulpit has become secularized, and yet commemoration in churches, on Sunday, under the direction of orthodox preachers would be too theological in thought and manner to be quite acceptable to Freethinkers. In the more liberal churches the exercises, under the direction of men like Chadwick, Savage and Jones, would be unexceptionable, but generally the orthodox clergy would be in control.

If the suggestions of the ministers above quoted shall ever be acted upon, Freethinkers may find it desirable in many places to arrange a program of memorial exercises of their own, entirely free from any theological teachings or implications, and thoroughly commemorative and patriotic in its character. Many, probably the majority of the surviving veterans of the war would prefer a non-sectarian "service" of this kind, as would multitudes outside the ranks of the old soldiers who value their services and those of their dead comrades.
B. F. UNDERWOOD.

Anecdote of Thomas Paine.

One day Thomas Jefferson invited a number of choice friends to dinner. Almost at the last moment he was distressed to find that he inadvertently overlooked Thomas Paine. He at once dispatched a favorite servant in all haste to Paine's lodgings, with an emphatic apology for his neglect to send an invitation at the proper time, and an urgent entreaty that he would overlook the fault, and come at once to meet a party of congenial friends, adding that it would be a grief to himself and to them if the hero of two hemispheres was not present at the dinner. Paine at once began to make preparation to attend.

"Will your honor allow me to assist you in getting ready?" the servant asked.

"It is not necessary," responded Paine; "I shall be ready in a moment."

"I thought that perhaps I might brush your honor's coat," persisted the servant.

"Oh," said Paine, "if it is only my clothes you want, I can put them in a bundle for you, and I can stay at home.—Freethinker.