MR. P. A. TAYLOR’S motion for the opening of the national museums and galleries on Sundays, was rejected, in the House of Commons on Friday, by 229 votes to 87. A large number of petitions for and against the motion were presented ---one of which Colonel BERESFORD had charge, being stated to contain 36,000 names, and to be 1,556 feet in length. Mr. BRIGHT presented three petitions from congregations in Birmingham against the motion. Colonel BERESFORD stated that in Leicester itself (which Mr. TAYLOR represents) a petition, signed by 4,000 in its favour, had been got in the course of a few hours, with one signed by 15,000 against it. We may here add that Mr. MARTHUR, who is Mr. TAYLOR’S colleague in the representation of Leicester, spoke against the motion. It was, moreover, opposed by Mr. W. H. SMITH, on behalf of the Government, while the only leading member of the House who spoke in its favour was Mr. FORSTER. We may safely assert that the movement for Sunday opening has little interest in the provinces, and if a census of public opinion were taken, we surmise that the majority of persons would see no reason why they should introduce a retrogressive principle into legislation just for the sake of obliging those Londoners who desire to enlarge the scope of Sunday amusements. The inhabitants of London are thoroughly able to take care of themselves and to provide for their own delectation and enjoyment; and we are sure that if the Sunday opening movement were very popular in the Metropolis, there would not only be great demonstrations and mass meetings, but the Parliamentary representatives of the various districts would make their voices heard in the walls of the House, and entrust the motion to a politician of more influence than Mr. TAYLOR possesses. We do not say that it is altogether destitute of supporters. Among a very worthy craft it is popular. Mr. POOLE, “the well-known tailor,” has obtained the opinion of 900 men in the principal tailoring establishments of London, and he has only found twelve men opposed to the motion. We would not underrate the significance of this census. Without tailors, most people would be in a pitiable plight, and cut a very sorry figure; but tailors are by no means the pick of the community. We cannot but think that vigorous walking in the London parks on a Sunday, is the most beneficial recreation to men who sit cross-legged six days in the week. They must indeed be an overworked class of men if they cannot spare an hour for a museum or gallery on a week-day. The tailors of Tooley-street can find time to deliberate on public topics in the manner of Westminster. It is therefore nonsense to say that they have no time for the museums without encroaching upon the precious hours of the Lord’s Day. But the tailors of London are not the only supporters of the movement. Among the members of the Sunday League are Mr. BRADLAUGH, Mr. TRUELOVE, Mrs. BESANT, and Dr. WATTS, who are more or less implicated in those alleged indecent publications now before the courts of law. Enmity to religion, and the supreme important of enjoying this life, appears to be the basis of their speeches, writings, and public conduct. When, therefore, we find such persons supporting the Sunday opening of museums, can it be doubted that they intend a blow against religion rather than facilities for culture and recreation? A great many people favour the movement because they think the museums would be a setoff to evil enticements. We cannot agree with that opinion. The museums are open on certain days during the week, but profligacy, drunkenness, and low-mindedness exist to a terrible extent in London, and among classes, it must be remembered, to whom a museum would be a pleasing distraction for an hour, not an incentive to reform, or a preacher to admonish, or a friend to give initial help and advice. What we are asked to believe is that the museums would do on the Sunday what they are unable to do on the week-day, that they would tend to empty public-houses, places of gay resort, and the trivialities in which so many waste the day. It is contrary to common sense to believe this. On the other hand, when we find Mr. BRADLAUGH and his secular compeers on the same side as Mr. TAYLOR, we are compelled to believe that the effect of Sunday opening would be, not to empty public-houses, but to lessen the attendance at public places of worship, where at any rate outward decorum is observed, and a semblance of attention manifest.

The question which the House had to decide, was not so much the influence opening museums and galleries would have, as whether it should depart from the principle observed in our legislation for centuries – the principle, namely, of the integrity of the LORD’S Day. So long as the country possesses an Established Church, a national homage is paid to religion; and for the sake of decency, to say nothing of consistency, the country ought not to set up counter attractions by throwing open the national museums and galleries. The toleration granted to private establishments, and the license given to public-houses during portions of Sunday, are no answer to the objection; since private establishments and public houses form no part of the national property, whereas the museums and galleries, belonging, as they do, to the nation, throw upon the nation the responsibility of guardians and proprietors. We maintain that so long as the nation possesses two things, an Established Church and museums, they ought not to be set up as competitors, and it would be essentially competitive for a museum to bid against a neighbouring church. We believe that other religious bodies have also the same notion that the Sunday opening of museums would compete in greater or less degree with them, and that many a family pew would miss a good discourse while its occupants were gazing at some curiosity in a glass case. Once a principle is conceded, it moves with ever-increasing velocity. It is so, both with a good principle and a bad one. Before the concession be made, therefore, it is best to realize as far as possible the final application of the principle. Now the principle involved in the Sunday opening of museums must eventually culminate in the openings of theatres, music-halls, and other places of public amusement now restricted to six days in the week. We know this conclusion is denied by the supporters of the Sunday League, but they can no more restrain the logical bounds of a principle than they can restrain the ocean with Dame PARTINGTON’S mop. If museums are to cultivate the mind, elevate the tastes, and impart a relish for pleasures not sensual; if they are to make the drunkard sober and wipe from the working man the dust of six days toil, it is surely competent for theatrical managers to argue that the state is infinitely better adapted to do the same things; that a working man would learn more philosophy and receive more pleasure from “Hamlet” at Drury Lane or Covent Garden than in gazing at a stuffed ape in a museum; that “Richard III.” would interest him more than Egyptian monuments or Assyrian inscriptions. The truth is, the people who would go to museums or to theatres on the Sunday in well-dressed attire, and with the desire of spending a pleasant hour, are just those who go to them on week days. The low classes whom Mr. TAYLOR would fain elevate, are not to be reformed by his specific.