

Sunday Legislation.

A Critical History of Sunday Legislation from 321 to 1888 A.D. By A. H. Lewis, D.D. [D. Appleton & Co. \$1.25.]

These chapters upon "the origin and philosophy of Sunday legislation," and its history and nature under the Roman empire, after the fall of the empire, and at successive periods in Great Britain, in Holland, and in the American colonies, with a statement of the present condition of Sunday laws in the several United States, form a work which should be studied by every one who aims to write or speak intelligently upon the subject. In no other way can a better idea be given of the scope of the treatise than by brief citation from the excellent summary in the preface :

The first Sunday legislation was the product of that pagan conception, so fully developed by the Romans, which made religion a department of the state. This was diametrically opposed to the genius of New Testament Christianity. It did

not find favor in the church until Christianity had been deeply corrupted through . . . gnosticism and kindred pagan errors. The Emperor Constantine, while still a heathen — if indeed he was ever otherwise — issued the first Sunday edict by virtue of his power as *pontifex maximus* in all matters of religion, especially in the appointment of sacred days. This law was pagan in every particular. . . . During the middle ages Sunday legislation took on a more Judaistic type, under the plea of analogy, whereby civil authorities claimed to legislate in religious matters after the manner of the Jewish theocracy. . . . The English reformation introduced a new theory and developed a distinct type of legislation. Here we meet, for the first time, the doctrine of the transfer of the fourth commandment to the first day of the week, and the consequent legislation. . . . The Sunday laws of the United States are the direct outgrowth of the Puritan legislation, notably, of the Cromwellian period. . . . Some now claim that Sunday legislation is not based on religious grounds. [As *e. g.* in *Ohio State Reports*, vol. 2, p. 392.] This claim is contradicted by the facts of all the centuries. Every Sunday law [has] sprung from a religious sentiment. . . . There is no meaning in the statutes prohibiting worldly labor and permitting "works of necessity and mercy," except from the religious standpoint. . . . The claim is a shallow subterfuge.

Original authorities are quoted throughout the work with much fullness. In one citation we notice that the word Sabbath is used as late as 1362 by an archbishop of Canterbury as a proper denotation of *Saturday*.