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A NEW-ENGLAND SABBATH.  
(By Miss Sedgwick.)

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The observance of the Sabbath began with the Puritans, as it still does with a great portion of their descendants, on Saturday night. At the going down of the sun on Saturday, all temporal affairs were suspended; and so zealous did our fathers maintain the letter, as well as the spirit of the law, that according to a vulgar tradition in Connecticut, no beer was brewed in the latter part of the week, lest it should presume to *work* on Sunday.

It must be confessed, that the tendency of the age is to laxity; and so rapidly is the wholesome strictness of primitive times abating, that should some antiquary, fifty years hence, in exploring his garret rubbish, chance to cast his eye on our humble pages, he may be surprized to learn that even now the Sabbath is observed in the interior of New-England, with an almost judicial severity.

On Saturday afternoon an uncommon bustle is apparent. The great class of procrastinators are hurrying to and fro to complete the lagging business of the week. The good mothers, like Burn's matron, are plying their needles, making "ault claes look amaist as weel as the new;" while the domestics, or help, (we prefer the national descriptive term,) are wielding, with might and main, their brooms and mops, to make all tidy for the Sabbath.

As the day declines, the hum of labor dies away, and after the sun is set, perfect silence reigns in every well ordered household, and not a foot-fall is heard in the village street. It cannot be denied, that even the most spiritual, missing the excitement of their ordinary occupations, anticipate their usual bed-time. The obvious inference from this fact, is skillfully avoided by certain ingenious reasoners, who allege that the constitution was original-

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ly so organized as to require an extra quantity of sleep on every seventh night. We recommend it to the curious to inquire, how this peculiarity was adjusted, when the first day of the week was changed from Saturday to Sunday.

The Sabbath morning is as peaceful as the first hallowed day. Not a human sound is heard without the dwelling, and but for the lowing of the herds, and the crowing of the cocks, and the gossiping of the birds, animal life would seem to be extinct, till, at the bidding of the church-going bell, the old and young issue from their habitations, and with solemn demeanor, bend their measured steps to the meeting house.

The family of the minister—the squire—the doctor—the merchant—the modest gentry of the village, and the mechanic and laborer, all arrayed in their best; all meet on even ground, and all with the consciousness of independence and equality, which breaks down the pride of the rich and rescues the poor from servility, envy, and discontent. If a morning salutation is reciprocated, it is in a suppressed voice, and if perchance, nature, in some reckless urchin, bursts forth in laughter, “my dear, you have forgot it’s Sunday!” is the ever ready reproof.

Though every face wears a solemn aspect, we once chanced to see even a deacon’s muscles relaxed by the wit of a neighbor, and heard him allege in a half-deprecating, half-laughing voice, “the squire is so droll that a body must laugh, though it be Sabbath day.”

The farmer’s ample waggon, and the little one-horse vehicle, bringing in all who reside at an inconvenient walking distance—that is to say, in our riding community, half a mile from the church. It is a pleasing sight to those who love to note the happy peculiarities of their own land, to see the farmer’s daughters blooming, intelligent, and well bred, pouring out of these homely coaches, with their nice white gowns, prunella shoes, leghorn hats, fans and parasols, and the spruce young men with their plaited ruffles, blue coats, and yellow buttons.

The whole community meet as one religious family, to offer their devotions at the common altar. If there is an outlaw from the society—a luckless wight, whose vagrant taste has never been subdued, he may be seen stealing along the margin of some little brook, far away from the condemning observation and troublesome admonitions of his fellows.

Towards the close of the day or (to borrow a phrase descriptive of his feelings who first used it) “when the Sabbath begins to *abate*,” the children cluster about the windows. The eyes wander from their catechism to the western sky, and though it seems to them as if the sun would never disappear, his broad disk does slowly sink behind the mountain, and while his last ray lingers on the eastern summits, merry voices break forth, and the ground resounds with boundless footsteps. The village belle arrays herself for her twilight walk; the boys gather on “the green;” the lads and girls throng to “singing school;” while some coy maiden lingers at home, awaiting her expected suitor;—and all enter upon the pleasure of the evening with as keen a relish as if the day had been a preparatory penance.