

SABBATH DEFENCE TACTICS

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Sabbath defence tactics by James Bridges

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JAMES BRIDGES

**SABBATH
DEFENCE TACTICS**

SABBATH DEFENCE TACTICS,

A MANUAL;

BY JAMES BRIDGES, ESQ.

"Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

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RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
TO THE OFFICE-BEARERS AND MEMBERS
OF THE
LORD'S-DAY SOCIETY OF ENGLAND.



SABBATH DEFENCE TACTICS.

THE observance of the Lord's day partook largely of the general religious declension which characterised the conclusion of the eighteenth century. Fresh invasions were constantly made on its sanctity; and practices which a century before would have startled the most careless, were unconsciously acquiesced in even by the religious. England, as a nation, never made the large professions of strictness which marked the north, and its remembrance of the day, such as it was, became feeble, as time progressed; while in Scotland, which always had a name as a Sabbath-keeping land, the evil influence grew visibly in its populous towns, and was seen gradually diffusing itself throughout the country. The Post-Office, with its mail-coaches, runners, letters, and newspapers, and the hackney-coach, are among the standing memorials of this falling away. Happily, however, for the cause of every thing sacred and expedient, a revival of religion took place in both ends of the island, which, manifesting itself first in the Churches, did not fail speedily to embrace within its action the great matter of the observance of the Lord's day.

To the honour of England, the practical Sabbath movement among the people began in that great country. A few pious men, taught by its religious societies, of which they were distinguished members, the superiority of united over insulated action, formed themselves into "The Lord's-day Society," which has ever since exercised a very wholesome influence. An early step on its part was to establish a connection with Parliament, through the medium of an influential member who might choose to be officially connected with the Society. After unsuccessful efforts in different quarters, they were directed to the late Sir Andrew Agnew of Lochnaw, Bart., then member for Wigtonshire, who, after many doubts and fears, prompted by the modesty of his nature and his deep sense of the responsibility attaching to every more prominent part in the cause of God, consented to their application; and he soon became established, as he continued to his dying hour to be, the rooted and grounded friend of the Sabbath, and of every institution and effort, whether made by many or few, for its observance.

The author had the happiness to renew an earlier acquaintance with this excellent and distinguished person under the gallery of the House of Commons in the year 1833, when, in the playful language which was a characteristic of the man, he was "enlisted as a Sabbath recruit, the smart-money being a cup of tea in Bellamy's." From that night to the last hour of this lamented gentleman's active life, he had the happiness of serving under him in the struggle; and having seen more intimately than most persons the nature of his principles and policy, which were eminently wise and practical, and their gradual systematising, he records in these pages such particulars as may be of use to others; taking up the pen, as he does, singly, because much that is valuable may *otherwise* be lost, now that death has interposed. If

they be found to refer mainly to the Railway question, this obviously is because the portion of the field which has latterly engaged the chief attention of Sabbatharians, and has demanded most largely their practical combination, is that important point. It will be felt by all, that while Sabbath desecrations of every kind require to be sharply looked after, very many of them are so slight or rare that they may be sufficiently met—as indeed all great as well as small must be—by the blessing of God upon the faithful preaching of the word, and upon the honest indignation of the people in their several neighbourhoods. But where great numbers are united, by selfishness or any other bond, for the protection of any particular Sabbath wrong, they must be met, or at all events they may most effectually be met, by an opposite combination; and therefore these pages, leadingly devoted as they are to the railway, and to the principles and practice of combined acting there, will be found useful in every other serious Sabbath question.

It is proper to add, in order to prevent misconceptions, that this paper in no way bears on, or is affected by, the question of Establishment or Voluntaryism, compulsion or free action. In some quarters the name of Sir Andrew Agnew has come to be so associated with Sabbath legislation, that his general measures have too often been regarded with some prejudice, even by good men yielding to an undefined alarm about voluntaryism. It is due, however, to his memory to say, that while adhering to the last, with fresh constancy, to his original principles on the subject of legislation, he freely, and as faithfully as freely, held these in suspense in all those Sabbath enterprises where men of opposite views on that point agreed to act together. And, in regard to these pages, let no doubt or suspicion arise in any quarter. Their sole object is to promote harmonious action on the part of lovers of the Lord's day in

the practical promotion of its sanctity by means of moral suasion efficiently directed. The Churchman or the Dissenter who objects to this, because it does not compel, or because it is suspected as compelling, is no true friend of the Sabbath.

It has been stated that the agitation of the Sabbath question took its origin in England. It was soon, however, imported into Scotland. Various causes had both delayed the measure there, and at length made way for it. Scotland had long, and for long deservedly, possessed the character of a Sabbath-observing nation; and, notwithstanding its days of declension, the people had been so accustomed to this character, that they lived very complacently on the strength of it. Nor was it till circumstances had awakened them to the sense of the change that had come over their dream, that it was felt necessary to do something in the north actively, as well as elsewhere. The publication of the evidence of Sir Edward Lees, the secretary of the Post-Office, in regard to the Edinburgh mobs which crowded Waterloo Place every Sunday in quest of their letters, and which excited much surprise and not a little displeasure, but was all the while too true, was one of those circumstances which stirred up the Scotch mind to active resistance of the evil. It may also be added, that the very constitution of the Churches in the north tended for a time to lull the people into quietness; for the popular character of these Churches, with their parochial, provincial, and General Assemblies and debates, might well be regarded as in some measure superseding popular agitation. Accordingly, when the English fire crossed the borders, it did not spread at first with any exemplary energy, nor did it burst out with force at all, till a movement took place within the Scottish railway companies to run coaches on the Sabbath-day, in the face of the long-settled convictions and habits of the country. Then, indeed, was shown the efficacy of

the popularly constituted Churches in the north, which, if a cause at first of delayed action by the people, speedily proved themselves to be a stimulating force of no small energy.

The English movement within the railways for Sunday coaching had long preceded the Scotch attempt. But coming in the rear of other prevailing habits, it failed in exciting that indignation which was its rightful due; and so long as the iniquity was limited to the south, the people of Scotland, strong in their imagined security, and slow of uptake as to any new thing—though quite learned enough to know the force and meaning of the *Tuo res agitur dum proximus paries ardet*—failed to take active alarm for a very considerable time. In regard also to England, it of course must be allowed that the religious classes there did certainly feel aggrieved, and took some quiet steps, even within the companies—though of a very courteous, timid, and hesitating kind—to induce these companies to abstain from their railway trading. But with that certain peculiar spirit in public religious things, which, pious and excellent as in itself it is, so often evaporates there in mere adjuration and protest, instead of embodying itself in earnest “contending for the faith,” the *struggle* in England, saving here and there in the pulpit and press, ceased altogether as a public thing; and the very men who had maintained the controversy for a time within the railway companies, mistakingly deeming it Christian to cease from godly strife, withdrew from that field whenever the first success was effected by the enemy. They sold out their stock, under the baseless notion that they would become partakers of the iniquity by remaining at their posts and endeavouring to bring their fallen shareholders to righteous dealing; thus leaving these parties undisputed masters of the Lord’s day, and henceforth acting on the gainsaying public merely by their Lord’s-day Sa-