

TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

LIQUOR TRAFFIC AMONG AFRICAN RACES.

In the House of Lords on Monday the Duke of Westminster called attention to the evils attending the introduction of foreign spirits among native races in Africa, and appealed to the Government to continue their efforts to mitigate them by restriction, and, where possible, by prohibition of the liquor traffic. In the debate which followed the Archbishop of Canterbury said they did not bring this matter forward as in any way connected with the home temperance movement or the total abstinence. They asked for nothing but what they really believed the Government could effect. They did not want to embarrass the Government. The natives were not only children that needed to be protected, but children endowed with passions of a most fiery kind, and they had little self control to begin with. Last year the Church Missionary Society sent a commissioner to Africa for the purpose of observing what was going on in relation to this traffic, and nothing could exceed the vivid horror of the report which that gentleman has since furnished. He saw canoes in hundreds coming down by river laden with the most precious products of the interior, and returning with nothing but filthy drink. The ground was strewn with gin bottles and capacious glass jars which had contained spirits, and the very seats of the Church were constructed of the boxes in which the liquor had been carried. Some of the native chiefs were allied with the most ardent enthusiasts on the side of suppressing the evils of the trade. They did not ask for the total prohibition of the traffic. That would be impossible, and many of them believed it would be an absolute gain, but they did urge the Government to impose a duty on the importation of spirits, and thus aid the native chiefs who, though just emerging from the darkness of Africa, saw the ruin that the drink traffic was inflicting on their people. He believed that, if her Majesty's Government continued its noble and generous efforts, the civilization of England would be, as it ought to be, a blessing, not only to itself, but to all other parts of the world.

The Bishop of London said that the mischief brought about by the liquor traffic in Africa was increasing, and it was not therefore a time to hold their hands and consider for a long while what it was they ought to do. It should be remembered that year after year the influx of this intoxicating liquor into Africa was gaining ground, and that the examples which had been quoted were only examples of what was occurring generally. In a very few years the importation of intoxicating liquors—of rum of the worst kind—into Africa had risen from about 400,000 gallons to 1,200,000 gallons, the quantity imported the year before last. The increase was still going on, and

they ought, therefore, to be very strenuous indeed in their efforts to put it down, and not fancy that the evil was one which would bid their time, because it would not. Where British power was planted it was inevitable that the methods by which the native races had hitherto protected themselves should be come impossible. We could not allow those methods. The natives protected themselves very often by violent methods which were inconsistent with our notions. Instead of putting down the liquor traffic, for instance, by means of physical force, we stepped in and required that everything should be done in an orderly way. We thus robbed the natives of their usual methods of resisting the invasion of anything of which they strongly disapproved, and we did not supply them with any methods of our own. He wished to impress this point upon the House and upon the Government. Then they must not lay too much stress on the argument which was natural to statesmen generally, and to those who mixed much in political life—the butcher's dog argument. They ought always to be on their guard against it. The butcher's dog, when his master's meat cart was attacked by a very large number of dogs, found it hopeless to resist the attack because the attacking dogs were so numerous. Therefore he joined them in devouring his master's meat, and when the master came out and drove the dogs away and killed some, his own dog pleaded that it was for his master's interest that he should have his share of the meat and join the others dogs in consuming it, seeing that he could not prevent them from doing the mischief. He could not help thinking that there was a little of that argument very often present in the minds of statesmen in matters of the kinds. What they wanted to do was to bring men to a sense of something that was morally higher than the rule by which they were living. They should try and persuade men to join them in what was morally good; and they might depend upon it that they would hinder their own endeavours considerably if they allowed too much stress to be put upon the argument that, because they could not stop other people doing mischief, therefore they were to join them in doing mischief. It should be made plain that they were ready to make sacrifices in such a matter as this, and he wished very much that all those who entered into negotiations should endeavour to attain a high moral standard in the name of England.

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