

TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

THE BURDEN OF INTEMPERANCE.

(A Sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, London).

By THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."—Galatians vi. 2.

(Continued.)

Now, my brethren, I desire to speak to you to-night about one burden which very many have put upon them, mainly by their own weakness, partly by bad example, partly by evil instruction,— a burden which they find terrible to bear, a burden from which many of them long to escape, a burden which crushes out all their strength, a burden which all those who know anything of its weight and its cruelty recognizes as of all burdens that men ever had to bear one of the most terrible, one of the most difficult to escape, one of the very hardest to stand upright under. I am speaking of the evil of intemperance, I am speaking of that great sin which, though it be not by any means the worst of sins in itself, yet in its fearful consequences both to the sinner and to all that belong to the sinner, and in its overwhelming power when once it has fastened on the character, seems to stand almost alone. Even impurity, which in itself is a far worse sin, yet even that often and often wears out with advancing years. And other sins there are, which though they wear not out, yet for all that are not followed by such terribly evil consequences. But this sin, so far from wearing out, becomes stronger and stronger with the course of time, and the man who cannot escape it soon finds himself helpless in the grasp of the strong temptation, and often, though he struggles, and struggles hard, yet sees all his struggles to be in vain, in vain unless he can get some other help than he can find within himself. How terrible sometimes those evidences are which we see, if ever we come in close contact with the deadly evil; how terrible are the evidences of its power! How shall I ever forget the man who threw himself on his knees before me, saying: "How can I be ever restored? I am that degraded thing, a drunken priest!" Shall I ever forget the pain with which I saw him, after I had done all that I could, six years after again before me, and again bearing witness to his utter powerlessness to overcome this dreadful enemy? Such things as these stamp themselves on the memory, and make any man who desires to serve his God, and to serve his fellows, long earnestly for some effectual power by which he can face this fearful foe, and deliver his own soul in discharge of Christian duty.

"Bear ye one another's burdens." I call upon every Christian to do what in him lies to bear the burden of these unhappy men. I call upon every Christian to see for

himself what it is possible that he can do. I will put before you the path by which I think that much can be done, but I ask not any man simply to follow the directions that I would take, or that I would give; I ask every man only to do this, to study carefully the evil itself, and to put it before his own conscience. How can he fight this terrible battle with an evil that is ruining the souls of many who long to escape, that is destroying the health, that is destroying the spiritual life of many who are, to begin with, quite innocent of their own ruin. I call upon you to think what can be done for the service of the Lord, for the services of our fellow men, when this is before our eyes. We have tried it, and have found one road which seems to promise at least some measure of true success. We find that preaching is not enough. It is good to preach against every sin, and good to preach against this sin. It is our duty to exhort one another in the name of the Master that bought us with His blood; it is our duty never to fail in putting before all men that we can reach the character of such a sin as this, and all the evil that flows from it. It is good to warn; it is good; with all our power, even to threaten; it is good to do all that can be done by honest exhortation in the name of God; and yet how many there are who are not reached by exhortation! They find in exhortation excellent instruction, true guidance, sound warning, a right aim set before them; they find in preaching that which, if only they could do what they were told, would certainly give them the victory, but they find nothing to strengthen, and what they want is not so much to be told of the evil, of its character or its sequel; what they want is not to have their consciences awoke or their understandings enlightened, what they want is something that will strengthen the will and give them the power to do what they are told. And we have tried the example of those who keep altogether from the sin, who keep clear of it in every detail of life, who never, in the very slightest degree, allow their intellects to be clouded by partaking of what is a pleasant stimulus, and what they will not allow to be anything worse, what they are quite able to keep within bounds. We have tried the example and the example does not succeed.

(To be Continued.)

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