

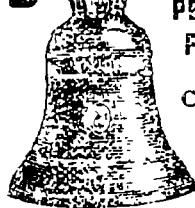
TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

THE BISHOP OF SALISBURY ON ABSTINENCE.

Preaching at the Chapel Royal, St. James', on Sunday week, the Bishop said: There are times in the history of the world and of the Church when abstinence from certain things, in themselves innocent or indifferent, become a matter of conscience in which very large numbers of persons are concerned. The example of the Baptist stands ever side by side with that of our Lord, as the example of a character suited to an emergency, and suited to the influence of a particular luxurious and self-pleasing age. Such an age is our own and if we recognize that such abstinence is not religion, but a means of promoting religion, there is no time so fit as the beginning of Lent to remember it as a practical thing. Now, if we ask 'What is the greatest of those mountains of sin which stop the way of the coming of the kingdom of Christ—what is the deepest of the valleys of waste that requires to be filled up?' we must reply: 'The sin of drunkenness, the waste caused by needless, even when not excessive, indulgence in strong drink.' We do not forget other sins that from time to time have become epidemic, and are always ready to burst forth into prominence and some of which are at this time specially pressing on the conscience of our country; but as there is no common vice which so robs the individual soul of reason as drunkenness, so there is no habit which leads to such unseasonable waste as that of drunkenness. Last year we are told, in 1890, there was spent in this United Kingdom of ours, under this head, no less a sum than close upon one hundred and thirty-nine millions and a half of pounds sterling—one fifth, I believe of the National Debt, one twelfth of the whole estimated income of all persons of all classes in the kingdom. This is the highest sum spent in this way since 1878. When we think, dear brethren, or try to think, of this we may well ask: Is it not in accordance with the wisdom of God that we ourselves should practice strict self-denial, and partial or total abstinence in this matter, especially at this season of fasting and humiliation for sin? Christ has taught us the great truth of the religious importance of social intercourse, of leavening the world by the free contact of good and bad, of rich and poor, of learned and unlearned, as far as such contact can take place without danger to innocence of life. What is it that makes such gatherings difficult, rare and costly? What is it that makes the intercourse, especially of the poor, with one another so dangerous? It is the danger to reason and the waste of money from the use of strong drink. It is this that ruins many of the most quick-witted and lovable, that hardens and brutalizes the strong, that paralyzes those of finer mould, that this is an incentive to single acts of crime, that this alone enables the slaves of vice to continue in their course of sin by overcoming the last struggles of a reluctant sou

—this is that, in Jeremy Taylor's expressive phrase, 'calls off all guards and watchmen from the towers of the soul,' and leaves scope to all the evils to which the heart is naturally inclined, and on which the unreasoning will is set. It is this, we might almost say, that makes the great question of pauperism almost insoluble. Let us not say, 'Because there is no temptation to myself or to my immediate neighbor, therefore it is not worth while.' 'Who is my neighbor?' Christ bids us ask ourselves. If we shut ourselves up in a narrow circle, we may well be free from immediate contact, but there are always servants in a household with special temptations, and even in persons who seem quite outside temptation there is found from time to time a terrible weakness which may end in bringing blight and trouble to a whole neighborhood, or, at any rate, to a whole family and circle of friends. But, above all this, Christ teaches us that our neighbor is not our own circle only. If we follow this example of free intercourse with all, as far as it may be done, we shall soon find neighbors enough who may be influenced for good by our abstinence, especially if they know that it is from no false idea of exaltation of asceticism into the place of religion, no despite to the creatures of God, but even out of pure love to our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, a sacrifice promoting the coming of His kingdom.—Iris Ecclesiastical Gazette.

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