

TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

A LESSON FROM THE STATUTE BOOK OF THE LAWS OF ENGLAND.

(Continued.)

A very remarkable debate took place in the House of Lords in the year 1743. in which the then Bishop of Oxford spoke most strongly of the necessity of not only diminishing, but of restraining altogether the liquor traffic. and in that wonderful debate—he thanked God for it—no less than eleven bishops of the Church of England took their part as the strongest, firmest, and most temperate advocates of temperance. So late as the year 1834, a most important committee sat in the House of Commons for twenty-one days, and, after going fully into all the evidence that was brought to them from all quarters, they reported that it was the duty of the Government, without delay, to bring in some Act which should restrain the awful drunkenness that existed. He believed that an indictment of this sort to be found in the annals of the Houses of Parliament was a far more striking and forcible indictment than any other which could be brought forward. He thought it might be wise to show, not what he might feel personally, not what the Temperance League might feel, but what the conscience of the Houses of the Legislature have felt—and strangely enough, never acted on. That to him was a mystery; but we had not to go far for the cause. We read the history of the times when these words were written, and we find that the men who used that strong language were not in earnest. The bishops might have been—he believed they were but if we would rightly gauge the value of these extracts from Acts of Parliament and Parliamentary reports we must bear this in mind, that the persons who then were violating speech were themselves in many instances given to the vice of intemperance. The man must be free himself who would strive successfully to free his brother from any sin. Let them carry their minds back to the scene in Galilee, and try to conceive legion casting out legion, devil trying to convert devil. When they saw the absurdity of it, they began to see perhaps why it was that the legislators of the past failed—they were not in earnest.

But there was something more than this. They had not gauged the real evil. In almost all the Acts to which he had referred, drunkenness was spoken of as the vice of the "inferior classes"—the artisans; and yet it was the day of the three and four bottle men. The very fact of their speaking of this vice as being the vice of the lower orders, was abundant evidence to him that they had not grasped the truth that in dealing with this we had to deal with a great common sin, the outcome of the cunning machination of him who is not the working man's enemy only, but the enemy of the

rich man too. They dealt with it as a moral and social question, and merely looking at it from this standpoint, and not as a tremendous sin against the holiness of human nature and the goodness and love of God, they failed altogether. He believed that Almighty God was teaching us by all this that this great cause is a cause which He commits to His living loving Church; that we must not trust to legislation, or deal with this question simply as a moral question, or strive to fight it out as a great social problem, but that we must deal with it and fight it, not with the weapons of carnal warfare, but with the spiritual weapons entrusted to His Church. He believed we should never fight this fight by the warlike criticisms of the temperance platform, by the exaggerated vituperation of those who went about preaching a Gospel of their own. He believed we should never fight this fight successfully until we learned to fight it not under the sceptre of the State, but under the standard of the Cross, until we believed that the great foe which we have to fight will only go down before the Gospel spear, only go down before the Gospel of Christ.

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