

Temperance Column.

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE C.E.T.S.

Sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral by Rev. Canon Lloyd, Vicar of Newcastle.—Continued.

Where is truth? Where is honesty? By what standard do we transact our business? Is it the standard of the moral law of God, or is it the self-made standard fixed by our greed of gain. Is it not true that dishonesty from the highest to the lowest is well nigh an acknowledged fact in transacting business? Custom of the trade, tricks of trade! How much, my brethren, of our commercial enterprise of our trading with one another could bear the light of the great white Throne? We hear a great deal said about the deceitfulness and dishonesty of the poor. It is not fair to charge them with a fault which is practised wholesale by the very class who condemn them. This trade depression may be accounted for, I doubt not, in many ways, and will be differently accounted for according to the standpoint from which it is viewed. Let us not forget that there is a Christian standpoint. That above and beyond all the natural causes there is the will of God. That the breaking of any moral law brings its own necessary punishment just as surely as the breaking of a natural law. Think you there is no breaking of a moral law in the gratification of the sinful lusts of the flesh? And swiftly with some, slowly with others, but surely with all, does the punishment come—in the ruin of the higher parts of his nature. He yields to the animal within him at the expense of mind and spirit. Pre-eminently is this so in the love of strong drink, which is, indeed, a curse to our country, a curse to our trade, a curse to every parish, I had almost said to every family, nor should I be far wrong. Like the plague spot of Egypt there seems scarcely a house where one has not been stricken. Go where we will we meet it. High and low, rich and poor, men and women, boys and girls; amongst all sorts and conditions of men, in secret and in public. Ask whom you like, governors of gaols, of unions, of madhouses, clergy, husbands, wives. Listen to the testimony of the impartial judges of our assize courts, and you will hear the same miserable tale. From the cell of the prisoner, as he waits his doom; from the cage of the maniac, from starving wives, broken-down husbands, wronged little children, there comes a cry sweeping past us on its way upwards to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; and what saith the answer of God? Listen: "Cast ye up, cast ye up; take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people." This is no overdrawn picture, only simple, horrible facts, to the truth of which numbers who hear me can bear testimony. And what do we? What have we done? Mourned over it at home? Worried of reading the sickening details? Taught sobriety in our schools?

Preached it in our churches? Suspected those who tried honestly, perhaps not always wisely, to do what they could to stop the evil? "Take up the stumbling-block." Whatever may have been our conduct in the past, the conscience of our people seems to be stirring at last to see the evil and to rise to action. At least, the fact that the Church of England has organized within her communion a special agency to which, I believe, all her Bishops belong, proves that she recognizes the necessity and acknowledges her duty. The 24th anniversary of the C.E.T.S. we are keeping at this time. Enough there is to make us heartily thank God for in the years that are past, during which we have prayed and worked. But more than enough to make us anxious for the future, and to stir us up to still more faithful prayer, more earnest work. The fact that the drink bill of our country has in the last few years diminished by some twenty or thirty millions is a matter for thankfulness by whatever cause produced. But the fact that still over 100 millions are spent by our countrymen yearly in the consumption of this one luxury, is more than enough to stop at once any thought of boasting. Which ever way you look it seems equally ugly. If the bulk of this is spent in the abuse of a luxury, then you are face to face with a horrible fact. If the bulk is spent in the moderate use of a harmless luxury, then we are face to face with the fact that for one single article of diet, and that a mere luxury, we spend more, far more, every year than the sum total of all religious enterprise whatever! Scarce one hundredth part of this sum can be given yearly for the work of spreading the knowledge of God among the nations who have not yet learned to call upon His name. My brethren, surely this ought to make every thinking man amongst us think more deeply and prayerfully what he can do to help wipe out the stain which must rest on us as a nation so long as this state of things is allowed to remain. For a nation, after all, is only the people in that nation. You and I, and our neighbours, and so forth. As far, then, as we are wrong, we do our worst to make the nation wrong. If, without giving up for a moment our Christian liberty, but in the exercise of that Christian liberty, we choose to restrict ourselves in the use of a luxury for the needs of "the present distress"; if, as time and opportunity is given to us, we use both as best we can, by example, by speech, by personal influence, in the narrow circle of our own homes, where our charity begins and our first duty lies; or, going out into the highways, and offering to lend a helping hand to those poor brothers and sisters who would often gratefully grasp it if held out to them: if by these and other ways we work and pray, then we are doing our best, not only for ourselves and our neighbors, but for our country and our God. (To be Continued.)

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