

TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

THE BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH ON INTEMPERANCE.

The Bishop of Peterborough, in continuing his Visitation for Leicester and districts, referred at his visit to Loughborough to the question of Temperance and enforced Sunday closing. He said that a great deal had been done, morally and religiously, to check intemperance, and the Church of England claiming, as she did claim, to be the Church of the nation, had taken her part largely in the good cause of Temperance. He himself believed that the tide was turning, that intemperance was on the wane and not increasing, and for that they were most thankful. The Church of England exhibited that wise moderation and catholicity of spirit which was characteristic of her. She recognised the great liberty of all her children, and she had formed a standing protest against those who taught that alcohol was a thing absolutely evil in itself, and that to partake of it was in all cases absolute sin. They were aware that efforts were made from time to time to bring about the closing of public houses entirely on Sunday. He was very anxious that the members of the Church, and those who spoke on their behalf, whatever view they took of Sunday closing, should not use arguments for Sunday closing which seemed to him to be of a somewhat questionable nature as regarded their bearing upon religion and religious questions. For instance, the advantages of Sunday closing were very often urged upon the ground of the shame and evil of Sunday intemperance. Now that appeared to him to proceed upon the false principle that intemperance on a Sunday was a greater sin than intemperance on a Monday. Intemperance was a sin of itself, and it seemed to him an unsound thing to say a man who was drunk on a Sunday sinned more against God than he would on another day. They must sanctify Sunday, but take care that they did not degrade other days in the week, which were God's days also. They must also lay down the principle that it was not the duty of the State to repress and punish sin: but he was not now entering upon the question whether, upon other grounds, the State must prevent intemperance itself. For the Church to denounce intemperance as a sin—and on that ground to ask the State to close public-houses—was to ask the State to do the work of the Church. It was the duty of the State to preserve itself against crime, but it was the duty of the Church to endeavor to reform and suppress sin and vice. And again, there was an argument for Sunday closing with which he was wholly unable to agree—that public-houses drew away many from church. That might be quite true, but it was not the duty of the State to force people into the church. They might deplore the fact that the people did not go, but that was not a reason why the State should close public-houses. It was not the duty of the

State to force people into church or chapel. Therefore he was wholly unable to adopt the argument, that because public-houses drew men away from the church the State should close them. There was one reason which, in this matter of legislation, they might all consistently urge; and that was, that he had never been able to see why the owner of a public-house should claim an exceptional privilege of being open and carrying on his business on Sundays while other trades were compelled to suspend theirs. Whatever persons might think as to publicans being exceptionally favoured, it had always seemed to him to be a matter of common sense and justice that any man claiming an exceptional privilege from that of other citizens should be bound to show exceptional reasons for that privilege. Therefore, the onus lay not upon the other trades and citizens, but upon the publican to say why his house should not be closed. On that ground, and on that alone, he thought they might justly ask the Legislature to close public-houses on Sundays. On these grounds the demands for Sunday closing were perfectly legitimate, and, that being so, he thought they were bound to consider the collateral advantages to religion and morality, so that when public-houses were closed they might be thankful.

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