

## ART. III.—CHURCHMEN AND THE OPIUM TRADE.

SUCH was (in effect) the subject discussed at the Newcastle Church Congress last month. Many doubted the wisdom of introducing such a subject before such an audience. They feared that it would hardly be considered at present a burning question by Churchmen; although on the other hand the fear could not be suppressed that if England and the Church of England fail to make it speedily a burning question, the fair fame of England and the very energies of the Church itself may be withered by the smouldering plague.

The event proved that the Subjects Committee had acted wisely in venturing on the experiment. There were counter-attractions, many and strong, at the very hour fixed for the Anti-Opium Meeting. The great Town Hall Meeting to discuss Church work in the Durham Diocese compelled the absence from the Anti-Opium discussion of that warm advocate of the cause, Bishop Lightfoot. Nevertheless, the Section-room was well filled by a large number of attentive and sympathetic listeners when the hour arrived. The name of Sir Bartle Frere ("one of the best of men," as Lord Shaftesbury so truly and fearlessly calls him) doubtless attracted many; and some left the room when Sir Bartle's unavoidable absence was announced; but the interest of the subject itself sufficed to keep together the greater proportion of the audience to the very close.

The effect produced by Sir Bartle Frere's paper (read in his absence by Canon Martin) was shown by the prominent notice taken of this discussion the next morning by most of the daily papers. It was a striking phenomenon, which could not be ignored, to find that a distinguished statesman, ruler, and financier, like Sir Bartle Frere, should, with the calm though sad confidence of truth, charge England with all the shame and all the crime in this opium business that the most perfervid opponents of the trade have ever ventured to allege. "We have repeatedly gone to war, and caused enormous damage to the Chinese nation; . . . and, as victors in these wars, we have failed in our duty, as of one nation towards another, in our dealings with the Chinese as to this matter of opium." It was equally striking to find that Sir Bartle Frere refused to be appalled by the finance panic; believing that the Indian Government might "speedily withdraw from all direct connection with the manufacture and sale of opium, without real financial risk."

Not less phenomenal was the meeting held at the Mansion House a fortnight later. The Indo-Chinese opium trade seemed condemned and doomed as well when four such men as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Mayor of London, the Earl

of Shaftesbury, and Cardinal Manning, stood side by side, and, with consentient voices, denounced this trade.

And the conclusion is a fair one—that a question which unites such different elements in so unanimous a protest cannot possibly be dismissed with a mere sneer at “sentimental morality.”<sup>1</sup> There *must* be some grievous wrong-doing to account for the phenomenon. It was this consideration, no doubt, which led the Rev. H. Scott Holland, in the opening sentences of his very thoughtful and elaborate paper, to deny, almost with scorn, the necessity for an examination into the merits of the question. “We are no longer discussing and disputing, attacking and apologizing; we are facing what we *know* to be a dismal tale of perilous injustice.” But unfortunately everyone is not so well informed as Mr. Scott Holland; and great numbers of Churchmen know nothing at all of the subject. Denunciation, based upon assumption, even when assumption in the mind of the denouncer is based on facts, will not carry much weight with the critical and ill-informed listener, because a counter-assumption is possible for such a critic, and he may argue thus: “If it be assumed that the loud protest now raised against the opium trade proves from its unanimity and fervour that the trade must be bad and immoral, on the other hand it may be equally fair to assume that the very fact of the long life of the trade under the English flag seems to suggest that there *must* be another side to the question, and that some justification for the traffic must exist or have existed.” The remark with which the discussion at Newcastle was opened may be accepted, therefore, as correct—namely, “that those who have studied the history of the opium trade, and are acquainted with the arguments urged in its defence, can alone join intelligently in the attack which is now daily gathering force in England.” And the practical suggestions with which the first paper closed were surely pertinent—namely (1), that the clergy should master this subject for themselves; and (2) that they should carefully and persistently draw the attention of their people to the subject.

An historical review cannot be attempted within the limits of this brief paper; but we may point out a few landmarks in the dismal tale, the intervals between which may be filled in by examination of the now considerable anti-opium literature.

I. It is well to remember that 120 years ago the opium trade with China, at that time in the hands of the Portuguese, was insignificant, and sufficient only for medicinal purposes, consisting of 200 chests annually, instead of the 80,000 of the present day.

<sup>1</sup> See “Report of the Debate in the House of Commons, April 29, 1881,” p. 20; published for the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade.

II. For at least sixty years—viz., from 1799—1860, it was a distinctly *illegal traffic*: and was carried on (though known to be such) under the control and direct superintendence of the East India Company. The flag of England floated over contraband goods, and the thunder of her guns was ready to awake in protection of smugglers.

III. In the year 1860, after two disastrous wars, opium was legalized by China, and admitted under the new tariff rules.

IV. For twenty-one years now the trade has been expanding, and the growth of the poppy in China has been rapidly extending. But the Chinese Government have shown unmistakably their continued hostility to the trade on at least four important and critical occasions since the Treaty of Tientsin, October 24, 1865.

As a brief summary of the positions taken up by the defenders of the trade, we may mention:—

I. That the *honesty* of the Chinese has been doubted from the very first. Forty years ago, when Lord Shaftesbury raised that protest which, from the same lips is ringing still against the trade, Lord Palmerston made light of the Chinese wish for a “poppy monopoly.” But if such a protectionist idea were truly the cause of their opposition, one is inclined to ask why the Chinese have never gone to war in defence of Chinese cotton fabrics against the invasion of Manchester goods? Why have they never declared lucifer matches contraband in jealous anxiety for the old trade in flints? Why not ensure by all the force at their command the junk interest against the inroads of steam? The fact is that no Chinese statesman could afford to ignore the moral sense of the nation, which condemns opium smoking as a vice and a crime; a point of the first importance in this discussion, and one which Bishop Burdon tersely expressed in his forcible summing-up of the debate at Newcastle. “A Chinaman,” he said, “never touches his opium pipe without shame.” The only Chinese advocate, so far as I am aware, who has ever defended the trade in opium, was the well-known Heu Nai-tsze, President of the Sacrificial Court, who in the year 1837 memorialized his Imperial Master in favour of the legalization of the Opium Traffic, on the very ground adopted by many English advocates of the present day—namely, that many luxuries are deadly in the excess, but that because of that excess it would be wrong to deprive the temperate of their enjoyment. Yet even he denounces the practice of opium-smoking as “*a bad practice; a path leading to the utter waste of time and destruction of property*”; and he petitioned that the ruling classes—the *literati*, that is—and the army, “be absolutely prohibited from its use.”

The leading statesmen who were contemporary with Heu

Nai-tsze, almost unanimously recommended *death* as the punishment for persistent opium-smoking.

Further, supposing that the evidence with reference to the cultivation of the poppy and the smoking of opium in Western China for many centuries should turn out after all to be correct, yet, even so, Chinese honesty would not be seriously damaged. For Western China is not Eastern China; and surely a charitable, if not an obvious, conclusion from these facts would be that the Emperor Tao Kwang, knowing something of the injury wrought in his western dominions by opium, desired to protect the eastern seaboard from the plague, a desire in which he was thwarted by the action of Christian England. Mr. James Cropper, M.P. for Kendal, did good service at the Congress in drawing attention to the action of the British Government in Burmah, where, yielding to the earnest petition of influential natives, they have closed two-thirds of the opium shops. And the charge of dishonesty against China comes with ill grace from the lips of English statesmen, who, whilst admitting that opium is "*almost an unmitigated misfortune*" everywhere but in China, refuse to believe Chinese protestations that it is an unmitigated misfortune in their own borders, and for fiscal reasons catch at any despairing argument in defence of the trade.

II. We are told that it is now *too late* to attempt any remedy for an acknowledged evil: (1) Because (in Mr. Scott Holland's words) "the habits that we have fostered in the Chinese have become ineradicable." (2) Because the Chinese find already poppy-cultivation too lucrative to be given up; and will feel this all the more if England withholds the Indian supply. (3) Because the revenues from opium sale and taxation are too profitable for both the Indian and Chinese exchequers to be abandoned without serious financial collapse.

But, in reply, I may remark (a) that the great object of England and of English Churchmen should be not so much to cure the Chinese of the vice of opium smoking as to rid Christian England of the long shame of pandering to this vice. And though the path of penitence and reformation is (as Mr. Scott Holland forcibly pointed out) hard to traverse, yet a distinct national return to uprightness and morality may, "by the pitifulness of God's great mercy," aid the Chinese in the contest with this moral plague, although, alas! our hundred years of wrong-doing have assisted to "tie and bind them with the chains" of the sin. (b) Should the Indian trade be formally abolished, or gradually diminished, it will be only fair to ask the Chinese Government to enter into a stipulation such as that suggested in 1839 by Commissioner Lin. "We," said he in his celebrated letter to the Queen, "We in this land will forbid the use" (and now must be added, the cultivation) "of opium, and

you in the countries under your dominion will forbid its manufacture."<sup>1</sup> (c) To touch in a word or two on the Anglo-Indian side only of the financial question: observe, *first*, that if the Indian Government adopt Sir Bartle Frere's suggestion, and, abandoning the monopoly, "assimilate the practice in Eastern India, to that actually existing in Western and Central India;" taxing, that is, the opium of private speculators, but not engaging in the trade as an eager principal, then, in all probability, there will be no great loss to the Indian exchequer for some time to come. *Secondly*, that the 700,000 acres now monopolized by the poppy will not be turned into desert land if that crop be uprooted. Sugar cane is said to clear sometimes eighty rupees per beegah as compared with the twenty rupees cleared on an average by opium. The tree mallow also has been suggested as a profitable substitute. And, *thirdly*, should the opium trade be *suppressed* (and we must confess to a feeling of strong sympathy with Cardinal Manning in his dread of governmental surrender of the monopoly if that implies the uncontrolled license given to private speculators to push the trade)<sup>2</sup>—if it be suppressed and opium smoking in China be eradicated, it will imply the setting free of some £25,000,000 now spent on opium, foreign and native,<sup>3</sup> for the purchase of foreign manufactures and the general development of trade. And, *lastly*, observe (in Mr. Holland's words) that "to get rid of the poison we must lose something; we must risk some damage." "Who ever expected that penitence for an old sin would be an easy affair?" And if England must provide £60,000,000 to enable India to bear the strain, it will not be more, in proportion to her present wealth, than the £20,000,000 given fifty years ago to abolish the slave trade.

The people of England, no doubt, must be *educated* before such self-sacrifice can be even suggested. And this task of awakening the conscience of the nation is committed, by God's providence, largely to the hands of the clergy of the Church of England.

Is there no reparation to be offered to China for the wrongs which Lord Elgin (who knew, if any man knew, the subject he wrote on) deplored in his letters with almost passionate indignation? "I am sure," he writes, "that in our relations with these Chinese we have acted *scandalously*." "This *abominable* East; abominable, I mean, because strewed all over with the records of our violence and fraud, and disregard of right."

<sup>1</sup> *Chinese Repository*, vol. viii. pp. 11 and 497-593, quoted in "The Opium Question," a pamphlet published by the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade. See also Sir Bartle Frere's Paper.

<sup>2</sup> See Sir Edward Fry's warning on this subject, *Friend of China* for November, p. 407.

<sup>3</sup> *Friend of China*, October, p. 394.

Lastly, shall not Churchmen be strongly swayed by the Archbishop of Canterbury's words, "I have, after very serious consideration, come to the conclusion that the time has arrived when we ought most distinctly to state our opinion that the course at present pursued by the Government in relation to this matter is one which ought to be abandoned at *all costs?*"

A. E. MOULE.



#### ART. IV.—THE PRESENT ASPECT OF THE RITUAL STRUGGLE.

IT is proverbially hard for the actual combatants to gain any general notion of the battle in which they are engaged. Whether or not we consider ourselves combatants in the hot contest now raging around us, we cannot avoid being involved more or less in its confusion. We cannot choose but hear the noise of the strife dinning in our ears, and, as Churchmen, there are few of us who can withhold the keen interest which the gravity of the crisis is worthy to inspire. But what is near always seems great, as compared with what is far off, and so the very height of the prevailing excitement only makes it more difficult to stand quietly aside, and, viewing the *mêlée*, as it were from without, to endeavour to compare the past with the present, to note the changes which late events have made, and to strive to ascertain whither the tide of battle is sweeping us. But although it may be hard, there is surely no more useful or needful work for each of us individually to perform, if we would restrain ourselves from being betrayed into an extravagance not less hurtful to our own souls than to the Church of which we are members. History will supply many instances of contests undertaken perhaps for the sake of great principles, but so conducted that the real issue has been soon forgotten. Men and parties who began to contend for the truth have been found in the end to be only fighting for victory, and so nothing but loss and sorrow has ensued to the cause sought to be defended. It is with the hope of preventing any such disaster amongst those who are now contending for the principles of the Reformation, that an attempt to grasp the present situation is recommended. Let us consider some of its leading features.

The first thing that strikes us is *the fact of a crisis*. If we look back for a little more than twelve months we shall perceive an entire change in this respect. No doubt the relations of different parties in the Church towards one another were strained, and the attitude of the Ritualistic clergy was extremely embarrassing to the Bishops, but still matters could not be