LIQUOR TRAFFIC IN AFRICA

THE accession to office of a government whose Foreign and Colonial Secretaries were known to hold strong opinions on the subject of the liquor traffic with the native races of Africa, gave hope to those interested in the question that the time had at last come when effective steps would be taken to deal with this evil. For it had been chiefly owing to Lord Salisbury's efforts that the liquor clauses of the Brussels (Slave Trade) Act were agreed to by the signatory Powers: clauses which henceforward linked that traffic in the eyes of the world with its sister evil the slave trade. He had also obtained from Portugal the agreement of the 11th of June, 1891 by which the importation of ardent spirits was prohibited to either bank of the Zambezi and Shiré; and he has frequently during the last ten years received, with sympathy and encouragement, the deputations of the Anti-Liquor Traffic Committee advising them to press 'in season and out of season,' upon whatever government might be in power, the reforms which they advocate. Mr. Chamberlain showed no less an interest, and almost his first act at the Colonial Office was to institute inquiries on the subject, while his plain and emphatic condemnation of the traffic in more than one public speech and his guarantees to Khama (during the visit of that chief) indicated to Europe in unmistakable terms the views of the British Government.

On the 2nd of April, 1898 six years will have expired since the notification of the Brussels Act, and it will then be obligatory on the Powers to revise the scale of liquor duties, &c., imposed by the Act.[1] The urgency of the question, however, arises not merely from the proximity of this date for revision, nor yet solely from the magnitude of the existing evil—whether moral or commercial—which is daily being countenanced. It arises rather in a special degree from the great impetus given of late to railway extension in all of our West African Colonies by the energetic and progressive policy of the present Secretary of State. This railway extension, together with the cessation of intertribal wars, the abolition of the heavy tolls, formerly

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levied by various tribes, on goods in transit through their respective territories, and other recent facilities for the transport of goods, will vastly increase the area of distribution of the liquor, and will bring these spirits to countries in which we stand pledged by the Brussels Act to prevent their distribution. At such a moment it may not be inopportune to review such evidence on either side as has been made accessible to the public; and to discuss, as briefly as may be, the arguments used by the advocates of restriction or prohibition of this traffic, and the position of those who defend it.

Among the latter may be named the Liverpool merchants who are engaged in the trade. The Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, in accordance with Mr. Chamberlain's request for information, appointed a committee to inquire into the subject. Their report, dated the 31st of October, 1895, may be regarded as the Brief for the Defence wherein are marshalled the witnesses in favour of the traffic; the report ends, however, with many excellent and useful suggestions. Sir G. Carter in a letter to the *Times* (6th of June, 1895) appeared on the same side, while extracts from the official reports of Sir B. Griffiths (late Governor of the Gold Coast) and Sir C. Macdonald (late Administrator of the Niger Coast Protectorate) have been quoted *usque ad nauseam* in support of the traffic; more recently the distinguished traveller, Miss Mary Kingsley, in a witty and amusing article in the *National Review* (March 1896), added the weight of her evidence and advocacy to the pro-liquor cause.

With these exceptions, African administrators, missionaries, and travellers seem to be practically unanimous in the condemnation of this traffic; and many of the names which I shall quote are those of men of very great African experience, whose opinions are entitled to great weight. The evidence of these experts has created a strong public opinion on the subject in England, to which a definite direction has been given by 'the Committee for the Prevention of the Demoralisation of the Native Races by the Liquor Traffic' (whom I will call in brief 'the Anti-Liquor Traffic Committee'), whose president is the Duke of Westminster, and whose secretary is the Rev. Grant Mills. And this public opinion has found expression in the press—more especially in the *Times*.

I. Demoralisation of the Native Races

The majority of African administrators and travellers—as will presently be seen—base their condemnation of the liquor traffic on its debasing influence upon the natives. The various missions have also urged this point of view with ceaseless pertinacity. Miss Kingsley retorts that 'the missionary party have gravely exaggerated both the evil and the extent of it, in order, I believe, to account for their own want of success,' while she endorses Sir G. Carter's assertion

that 'Christianity and drink usually go together,' and infers that some of the statements in a letter from the Bishop of Equatorial Africa (Rev. H. Tugwell) to the *Times* are simply untrue. Sir B. Griffiths (late Governor Gold Coast),[2] quoting one of his staff (Mr. Hodgson), elaborates figures to prove that the average annual consumption of liquor in that colony is six-sevenths gallon per head, and argues that this contrasts favourably with the consumption in the United Kingdom, and that there is vastly more drunkenness here than in West Africa. Sir C. Macdonald[3] (late administrator Niger Coast Protectorate) again quotes Mr. Hodgson, and adds that he has seen more drunkenness in one day in Glasgow than during thirteen years in East, West, and North Africa.[4] Sir Claude sums up his argument as follows: 'It is the liquor traffic that supplies a revenue which enables the administration to deal with many crying evils. To make head against all of them, a strong and independent administration is requisite; to maintain that administration a revenue is necessary; could the liquor traffic be entirely and immediately done away with, and a sufficient revenue obtained from other sources, I for one would be very glad.'[3]

Are we then to admit that a territory for which Great Britain has voluntarily made herself responsible is to be conducted on the principle here laid down, a principle once attributed to the Jesuits, viz. that evil is lawful if good seems likely to come of it? and that its officials shall remain as collectors of customs on liquor at the coast, while its densely populated hinterland remains wholly unadministered, nor even explored?[5] 'It is,' says the *Times*, 'a scandal in the eyes of civilisation when the administration of a British colony has become almost wholly dependent for revenue upon the proceeds of the sale of intoxicating drink.' Mr. Hesketh Bell (Senior Assistant Treasurer Gold Coast) is the next witness, with the same calculations of the number of gallons imported, and the proportion they bear to the total population, deducing once more the same infinitesimal amount consumed per head. He also again works out very effectively the contrast between these figures and the con-

[2] C.O., No. 88, p. 22, and No. 136, p. 18.

[3] Africa, No. 1 of 1895, and No. 9 of 1895, p. 13. Also *Proceedings Royal Colonial Institute*, vol. xxvii. p. 31.

[4] This statement appears somewhat disingenuous in view of the fact that by far the greater part of this thirteen years had been spent in countries quite unaffected by the liquor traffic. Moreover, he quotes the sobriety of his police force as a case in proof of the falsity of the statements regarding drunkenness on the coast, whereas they were Yoruba Mahommedans, and Sir G. Carter bears witness to the fact that these men (who come from his colony) abstain on religious grounds. (Africa, No. 9, 1895, p. 5.)

[5] *Vide* Sir John Kirk's report. The 'Opobo trader,' quoted by the Liverpool Chamber (p. 24), says: 'Bende, probably 100 to 120 miles inland, appears to be the great metropolis of this part of the coast, . . . but it is too little known to speak of with any degree of certainty.'

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sumption in England, and winds up as usual with the greater frequency of the spectacle of drunkenness at home. The last witness quoted by the Liverpool Chamber ('an Opobo trader') goes through the same performance once again. Lastly, Miss Kingsley, in the article referred to, informs us afresh that you may see more drunkenness in a couple of hours on Saturday night in the Vauxhall Road than in the whole of West Africa in a week. Miss Kingsley, in combating the diametrically opposite statements made by the bishop and missionaries, remarks, 'I do not say that every missionary who makes untrue statements on the subject is an original liar; he is usually following his leaders and repeating their observations, without going into the evidence around him.' The curious coincidence that every single witness on the other side takes an identical line, suggests a similar suspicion that the following a lead and repetition of statements made by others is not confined to the missionaries.

With regard to the general argument: supposing it to be granted that drunkenness is out of all proportion more prevalent in certain low quarters of some of our large towns on 'Saturday nights' or 'Fast-days,' does the fact offer any reason why we should continue to import intoxicating liquors to the Africans? It must be remembered that the traffic is one which is increasing with extraordinary rapidity.[6] Are we only to pause when the standard reached by some of the worst localities in our large towns on exceptional occasions has been attained? I, and those who think as I do, maintain that the import should be restricted before the taste for alcohol has been implanted in the mass of the people. When once it has taken root their fate will be that of the American Indians, of the Maories and Tasmanians, and of the Hottentots; the dealings of civilised with inferior races afford us object-lessons in plenty!

It is worthy of remark that the comparison instituted between the streets of London or Glasgow and West Africa is most misleading. Drunken persons in England who perambulate the same streets as sober citizens, or make night hideous with their noisy uproar in the public-houses, are exceptionally *en évidence*. The West African village, hidden away in the mangrove swamps, offers no such opportunities for observation, while even in the large but rambling coast towns the European quarter is separated from the places where the natives most do congregate, and it is rare for Europeans (especially traders and officials) to walk about in the

[6] 'The trade in spirits,' says Mr. Hesketh Bell, the official already quoted, 'has increased more rapidly than that of any other article of import, and in six years has almost doubled itself.' This statement is made in respect of the Gold Coast, but the rate of increase both of Lagos and of the Niger Coast Protectorate is proportionally much greater. A correspondent of the *Times* (August 27, 1895) quotes figures to show that the annual import was more than trebled in the Gold Coast in a dozen years, while in the Niger Coast Protectorate it had nearly doubled in less than three years.

heart of a native town, least of all by night. The huts and smaller villages scattered over the vast cultivated area which surrounds the large towns are altogether removed from European observation. The report of the Liverpool Chamber states that 'consumption of spirits by the ordinary native is restricted by the price of the article . . . in the interior the price becomes greatly enhanced by the cost and method of transport. Mr. Bell's statement that rum and gin are only used to any great extent by men of wealth and position is endorsed by the Governor of Lagos, and by traders of long experience on the coast.' These classes would not be seen perambulating the streets in a drunken state, nor would their private dwellings be accessible to Europeans, which may perhaps partly account for the absence of public drunkenness alleged by these witnesses.

As regards the amount of liquor consumed per head of the population. If it be true, as alleged, that in West Africa the liquor is consumed by the more wealthy only, what becomes of the elaborate argument, reiterated by all these gentlemen, which is based on a division of the number of imported gallons into the *total* population, including the poorest and those most distant from the coast? It is obvious that the number divisible must be limited (by their own showing) to the 'chiefs and wealthy nations,' and therefore that the number of gallons consumed will prove to be phenomenally large, instead of being an infinitesimal quantity. Surely it is much more to be regretted that men of wealth and position should be demoralised by this liquor than that the lowest classes (as so largely in England) should be the ones most affected? As trade increases and the country is opened up imports are cheapened, because the produce which buys them is more easily brought to market, and improved methods have increased its volume. Are we then to conclude that *pari passu* with the development of our colonies, gin and rum, at present the luxury of the comparatively rich, will be placed more and more within the reach of the masses? and that the area of distribution will be simultaneously increased? Such seems to me the logical conclusion from the premisses advanced in support of the traffic.

As between those who contend that drunkenness does not at present exist to any exceptional extent on the West Coast of Africa, and the missionaries and others who maintain that it does, I am unable myself to give a verdict from personal observation, for my experience in West Africa was chiefly in the interior, and my residence on the coast was not of sufficient duration to enable me to dogmatise on the subject. In the far interior of Yoruba it is undoubtedly true that the chiefs and better class are alone able to buy spirits in any great quantities. One of the finest natives I have met during a fairly large experience in many parts of Africa was the chief of Saki in Yoruba. The disinterested generosity he displayed in lending me succour at a critical time, even at a grave risk to himself, I am not

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I have discussed the views of those half-dozen apologists who deny the deleterious effects of imported spirits on the African races. Let us turn to the evidence on the other side. This includes the emphatic testimony of African administrators of great experience, such as Sir A. Mahony (late Governor of Lagos),[7] Sir Charles Warren,[8] Sir Sidney Shippard (late Administrator of Bechuanaland),[9] Colonel J. M. Clarke (Resident Commissioner, Basutoland), Mr. Rhodes,[10] Dr. Jameson,[11] and others; of notable travellers, including Sir Richard Burton,[12] Commander Cameron,[13] and Mr. J. Thomson;[14] of native clergymen and of missionaries, both in West and South Africa, who, so far as I know, are unanimous in their evidence;[15] of traders and others who have lived

[7] 'This uncontrolled sale has, it is too visible, a very degrading and degenerate effect on the aborigines' (C. 5563 of November 1888).

[8] 'There are many thousands of natives who have been reduced to the lowest depths of poverty and an early death by the drink traffic.'

[9] 'There has been an almost total absence of serious crime throughout British Bechuanaland. . . . This is partly due to strict enforcement of the salutary laws prohibiting the supply of liquor to natives' (C.O. Annual Report, 163, p. 4). *Vide* also p. 12 for emphatic endorsement by Crown Prosecutor.

[10] 'Even apart from humane considerations, I would from a commercial point of view oppose the liquor traffic amongst the natives of Africa. . . . It would be a bad policy to demoralise our workers by drink' (Mr. Rhodes to deputation in December 1894). He reminded them 'that all his legislation had been in the direction of absolute prohibition for the natives.'

[11] Dr. Jameson, writing of Gazaland, says: 'On approaching from Gungunyana's present residence, and coming amongst the kraals of the Gazas, extending over an area of ten miles, what one is impressed with more than anything else is the utter demoralisation from drink of the natives—men, women, and children' (to Imperial Society. Africa, No. 7, 1891).

[12] 'It is my sincere belief that if the slave trade were revived with all its horrors, and Africa could get rid of the white man with the gunpowder and rum which he has introduced, Africa would be a gainer by the exchange.'

[13] 'An African is addicted to getting drunk whenever he has the chance, and some of the chiefs are able to be constantly drunk. . . . This gin is not only spirit, but absolute poison.'

[14] 'In the notorious gin trade, however, lies a still greater evil. . . . We are ever ready to supply the victims to the utmost, driving them deeper and deeper into the slough of depravity, ruining them body and soul (Manchester Royal Geographical Society, January 27, 1886).

[15] The pages of the Anti-Liquor Traffic Committee's pamphlets—from which I have taken many of these extracts—teem with quotations from reports and letters of missionaries, colonial bishops, and native clergymen. Of late Bishop Tugwell (of Equatorial Africa) has written several letters to the *Times*, emphatically asserting the degradation of the natives from liquor. From these voluminous missionary writings I have no space here to quote. Miss Kingsley gives her reason for discrediting them; I name them merely as one among several different classes of witnesses whose motives are by no means identical.

many years in Africa; and last, but not least, of native chiefs and of the people themselves, as shown by the recent memorials sent home to England signed by thousands of West African natives. Of this last class we may quote Khama,[16] Maliki of Nupé,[17] and Gungunyana of Gazaland,[18] each of them chief of a vast territory. Surely these men are more credible witnesses than even Miss Kingsley, wholly disinterested and palpably sincere though she be, or those two or three West Coast governors and officials who have entered the lists to support the backbone of the system they maintain? The list of those who without personal and local experience support the demand for the restriction of the liquor traffic in Africa comprises a vast number of the names which stand foremost in the British Empire. Suffice it to quote the words spoken by Her Majesty the Queen to Khama: 'I confirm the settlement of the case which my minister has made, I approve of the provision excluding strong drink from your country. I feel strongly in this matter, and am glad to see that the chiefs have determined to keep so great a curse from the people.' Memorials have been sent to Lord Salisbury from New South Wales and from Victoria, urging that steps should be taken in this matter. 'As citizens of the British Empire, though in so distant a part' (they write), 'we feel that the honour of our race is touched by the present conditions.' Nay, even the very men who have been quoted as apologists of the traffic are inconsistent in their evidence. The Chairman of the Committee which drew up the Liverpool Chamber's report is stated (in the *Times*) to have said, 'To my mind the West African liquor traffic is a great evil. . . . Every unbiassed mind must admit that the importation into West Africa of alcohol in large quantities is calculated to have a most deteriorating influence on the natives.' Sir C. Macdonald, then not engaged in defending it, alludes to it as a 'pernicious import,' and Mr. Hodgson, whose oft-quoted apology for the traffic forms the very text of the defence, says in a letter to the *Times* (December 31), 'We sell him' (the African native)

[16] *Vide* Khama's appeal to Sir S. Shippard in 1888 against the attempt 'to flood my country with drink after all the long struggle I have made against it, withstanding my people at the risk of my life, and just when they themselves have come to see how great a salvation my drink laws have proved to be. It were better for me that I should lose my country than that it should be flooded with drink. But to fight against drink is to fight against demons, and not against men. I dread the white man's drink more than all the assegais of the Matabele, which kill men's bodies and it is quickly over, but drink puts devils into men, and destroys both their souls and their bodies for ever. Its wounds never heal.'

[17] Maliki, the *Mahommedan* Emir of Nupé on the Niger, wrote to Bishop Crowther in 1884 as follows: 'Rum has ruined my country; it has ruined my people. It has made them become mad.' He urged him to 'beg the English Queen to prevent the bringing of rum into this land . . . to spoil our country.'

[18] In June 1891 Gungunyana sent envoys to England. Huluhulu stated that imported 'liquor brought up by the Inkotuanzi River west of Delagoa Bay degraded and destroyed whole tribes along its banks.' The chief in reply to a letter from the Anti-Liquor Traffic Committee wrote in the same sense.

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'semi-poisonous compounds under the name of gin.' It were easy to multiply this evidence almost indefinitely, but enough I think has been adduced to prove that the liquor traffic is debasing to the natives.

It is also important to ascertain the truth regarding the quality of the liquor imported. Sir G. Carter says, 'It is not a poisonous, unwholesome compound, but a safe and palatable stimulant if properly diluted.' No other of the witnesses quoted by the Liverpool Chamber can be found, apparently, to endorse this statement. On the contrary, I have already quoted Mr. Hodgson's description of it, while Mr. Bell frankly admits that 'it is to be feared that the quality of the French and German rum is of the worst description.' Dr. Easmon, chief medical officer, Gold Coast, writing to the *Times*, is still more emphatic.[19] Of the liquor imported into South Africa and the Transvaal since the opening of the Delagoa Bay Railway, and generally known as the 'nigger-killer,' the *Times* (September 9, 1895) speaks as follows: 'It acts in some cases as a direct poison, and one night of hard drinking will, we are informed, suffice to kill the stoutest of Zulus.' Miss Kingsley gives the analysis of a bottle of trade gin made by an expert analyst. 'The present sample,' he said, 'differs in no material particulars from, and was neither more nor less deleterious to health than, the gins purchased in different parts of London.' The Liverpool Chamber report speaks of the 'higher classes' and the 'lower classes' of alcoholic liquors imported. If there is a difference in the quality of the imports, we must suppose that Miss Kingsley's specimen bottle was of the better sort. Sir R. Watson, a Glasgow merchant, at one time engaged in the transport of this liquor, told me that he had made careful inquiries regarding the nature of the spirit, and he found that its cost per dozen case, including bottles, corks, packing-cases, &c., was under 2*s*. So poisonous did he consider the liquor to be that he abandoned all connection with such a traffic. Nor was he singular in this action, for Mr. Imrie of Birkenhead adopted the same course from the same motives.

It is urged by those who defend the liquor traffic that if the natives had not the opportunity of buying imported European spirits they would merely manufacture a native spirit from grain, or the sap of various palms, &c. The principle on which this argument is based is, in fact, that an immoral but lucrative traffic is defensible because if we do not assist in the evil that evil will nevertheless take place. Public opinion will, I think, rather maintain that drunkenness due to locally manufactured liquors is an evil (like the many great evils with which a civilised administration has to contend in Africa) it will be our

[19] 'What is true of the Gold Coast, however, and equally true of other parts of Africa, is the vile quality of the spirits sold to the natives. I desire especially to emphasise this point, for herein lies the only practical solution of the problem (*Times*, August 18, 1895).

duty to cope with and to restrain. Miss Kingsley makes much of this argument, and contends that the drunkenness caused by native-made spirit is worse in its effect than that produced by European liquor, and gives rise to renal disease.

It is common ground with all the apologists I have quoted that the African native is not, naturally, greatly addicted to intemperance. Sir Charles Warren states that 'it is an absolute fact that by our laws we force the drink on their territories which was disallowed under their own laws.' In the interior of East Africa many tribes in the banana countries of Uganda, Usoja, &c., brew a pleasant cider from the fruit, and this (especially when mixed with grain) can be made very intoxicating. It is, however, generally, I think, preferred in its milder form, nor have I seen any great amount of drunkenness in those countries. Miss Kingsley, while describing the native liquor of the West Coast as worse, in her opinion, than the imported liquor, yet admits that an enormous quantity must be consumed to produce intoxication. Native beer (Pombé or Merissa) is made from millet and other grain, and is usually a thick and not unwholesome gruel, with no very great intoxicating effects. It is, as Gungunyana's envoy said, 'as much a food as drink,' and throughout the greater part of Africa is the only native-made liquor. The Sudanese from Emin's province, whom I brought to Uganda, distilled whisky, an art taught them by Sir S. Baker, as related in his works. The fiery liquors made from the 'madafu' (or young cocoanut) in East Africa (and elsewhere from the sap of the date and Elias palm) are very pernicious in their effects. The former is brewed surreptitiously by slaves in the cocoanut plantations of the coast Arabs. In this part of Africa the Mahommedan prohibition of strong liquors is strictly observed, and the restriction of this illicit traffic would be in accord with the feelings and wishes of the Arab owners. Were these men compelled to exercise a somewhat stricter supervision over their estates, and fines (payable by the owner of the estate) instituted for the manufacture or sale of this spirit, the traffic would soon cease to exist. The cocoanut palm is not found inland, where the only varieties which occur are the Borassus, date, and Hyphoene. So far as my memory serves me, it is only in Unyoro that I have seen the sap of either of these palms collected, and in that country the memory of the distillery which Baker taught Kamrasi to make may still survive. In Nyasaland the usual drink is the native beer. In South Africa, throughout Bechuanaland and Ngamiland, I have hitherto seen no drunkenness attributable to native-made liquor. It is worthy of notice that the chiefs whom I have quoted as appealing against the terrible effect of the white man's spirit found no cause of trouble with the native-made liquors denounced by Miss Kingsley and Sir C. Macdonald. Their countries were not ruined by these, and even after the craving for spirits had been created by the imported

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Great as I hold to be the evil of the importation of cheap spirits into Africa, there is an evil even greater, from which I am glad to say that, so far as I am aware, that portion of Africa over which the British flag flies is as yet free. This is the formation of distilleries by Europeans in Africa. We hear of 'six distilleries in full working order in Gazaland (Gungunyana's) . . . and another very large one in course of erection at Ressano Garcia, with a plant of the newest type, and of a size able to manufacture enormous quantities of liquor' for sale to the natives. This is in fact the poisonous stuff called 'nigger-killer' which I have already spoken of.[20] The article from which I quote adds that the competition (resulting from the importation of this liquor into the Transvaal) 'will give a much-needed fillip to the distilling industry in the Transvaal.' Thus European nations, not content with importing, are to vie with each other in producing on the spot a liquor whose effects on the natives are possibly fatal in a single night, and have resulted in a great increase of native crime in the mining districts.[21] The Volksraad has, however, recently passed a most enlightened and beneficial law absolutely prohibiting the sale of liquor to natives, and it is to be hoped that this will put an end to the terrible and continual intoxication at present so prevalent among the natives on the Rand, the accounts of which (vouched for by innumerable witnesses) are sufficient evidence *per se* of the demoralising and utterly debasing effects of drink on the native.[22] I hope also that this new law (which puts Cape legislation to shame) may indicate a new departure in Transvaal liquor legislation; and that the Government will no longer allow their frontier to be used as an asylum, where storekeepers on the Bechuanaland (British) side may erect shanties, and ferry their customers across the Limpopo, or smuggle liquor for

[20] A correspondent of the *Times* (August 8, 1896) states that it is composed of 'bad whisky, mixed with Indian arrack, cayenne paper, tobacco juice, blue-stone, &c.'

[21] The same writer says: 'From statistics placed at my disposal by the Chamber of Mines it is clearly shown that 15 per cent. of the mine labourers are daily absent from work through drunkenness, and another 5 per cent. are rendered inefficient. . . . Murderous assaults and faction fights are of daily occurrence. It is a well-known fact that hundreds of deaths occur annually through the sale of this liquor to natives.' Mr. Dicey writes, 'The manager of one single mine reported recently: "We have in our employ about 1,500 natives; on an average 375 of these are daily unfit to enter the mines through the vile liquor which they have every facility for obtaining"' (*Nineteenth Century*, May 1896, p. 733).

[22] 'The Zulus and other natives are temperate, steady, honest men in their own countries, but when they come up to this mining centre for employment they generally succumb to the temptation of drink, and rapidly lose their self-respect and become callous and degraded' (*ibid.*).

illicit sale in spite of the Bechuanaland laws, and of Khama's efforts to keep out the drink. This illicit traffic, however, cannot be difficult of detection and effective punishment by the British protectorate authorities were they so minded. Finally, in regard to this subject of local distilleries, I may remind my reader that the ninety-third article of the Brussels Act imposes an excise duty, equal in amount to the minimum import duty ($6\frac{1}{2}d.$), on all spirits so produced, and that the signatory powers undertake by the same article to ensure its collection.

The Liverpool Chamber's report says that 'hardly one substantial fact' has been adduced in support of the contention that the quality of the liquor imported into Africa is bad, and that it demoralises the natives. I hope that an impartial reader will concede that I have to some extent supplied the deficiency.

II. The Liquor Traffic and Trade

I have endeavoured to discuss the question of the demoralisation of the native races, for any treatment of this subject which took no account of that question would be an inadequate one. Nevertheless, for my own part, I consider that one of the chiefest of the objections to the liquor traffic is based on grounds wholly apart from these. Even were it to be granted that the demoralisation of the natives is a chimera, I should still stigmatise the liquor traffic as a bar to civilisation and progress in Africa, a short-sighted and perilous commercial venture, and as destructive of that legitimate expansion of trade and creation of new markets which is the ostensible reason of our presence in Africa. (*a*) In the first place the importation of liquor enormously decreases the importation of Manchester and Birmingham goods. The cry is for 'new markets,' and the daily papers teem with unpleasant statistics which go to prove that our trade supremacy is being wrested from us by Germany; yet here in our Crown colonies and protectorates we forego the market that might be ours, and substitute foreign-made goods for our own, from which we derive no profit except such as accrues from a small portion of the carrying trade. 'Rum and gin are imported' (says Mr. Hesketh Bell) 'from foreign countries—the United States, France and Germany—the liquor is carried mostly by foreign shipping, and is principally sold on the coast by alien factors. West of the Volta' (he adds) 'the natives prefer gin, and two-thirds of the liquor is supplied by American sailing vessels.' To the East 'the spirit trade is almost entirely in the hands of Germans, who import rum and gin from Hamburg in German shipping.' French factories are established at Kitla, Adda, and Accra, 'and sell large quantities of French rum. The increase of trade (liquor) at Kitla turns only to the profit of foreign traders, who use foreign capital, employ foreign clerks, im-

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port foreign goods, and give freight to foreign ships.' Such is the evidence of the Gold Coast official quoted as an apologist of the liquor trade!

The amount of liquors quoted by the Liverpool Chamber's report) imported into British possessions on the West Coast (exclusive of the Niger territories administered by the Niger Company) for 1893 was six million odd gallons, valued at 447,248*l*. For 1894 the returns of only two districts—Lagos and the Niger Coast Protectorate—are given, and these two alone amount to 3,645,459 gallons, valued at 271,095*l*. To this extent is British trade a loser. Native cloth laboriously produced in primitive hand-looms competes successfully with our Manchester cottons, while the native sells his produce for foreign-made gin and rum. One witness states that at a place called Ilaro he found quantities of produce being brought in, for which there was nothing whatever in the factory to give in payment but liquor, so the producers have no alternative, though, as the 'Opobo trader' tells us, they frequently clamour for other goods. Thus, while cheap liquor of foreign manufacture is imported wholesale, cheap cloth and other useful goods are notably deficient, and the appliances of civilisation, the machinery and the organised industry of the Manchester cotton mills, are superseded in the market by the primitive manufactures of 'savages.'[23] The trade returns are misleading in this matter, for even the comparatively small values of the 'cloth stuffs' are largely made up of expensive plushes, velvets, brocades, and satins. The high prices of such goods mean of course a relatively small import. I have myself seen in the hinterland of Lagos what a demand there is for cloth, and the almost complete absence of supply. This is endorsed by Sir G. Carter himself. Moreover the demand for liquor to a great extent kills the demand for other goods, even where the articles of legitimate commerce are available.

(*β*) Secondly, the purchase of an article which—whether it be pernicious or not—is in any case a merely sensual pleasure effects nothing towards the elevation of the race in the standard of living, and does not promote habits of thrift or industry. If utensils, agricultural implements, or suchlike goods were purchased instead of liquor, not only would the African be raised in the plane of civilisation, but the output of his industry, enhanced by improved appliances, would be greater and of better quality. 'In Basutoland' (says the *Times*), 'where it has been found possible to enforce a law of absolute prohibition, the natives have learnt to furnish their huts after the fashion of European labourers, using crockery, cotton fabrics, and agricultural implements. In no native territory to which liquor is

[23] 'From careful calculations it appears that no less than 31,000,000 yards of cloth are annually consumed in Yoruba, of which 30,000,000 are of local manufacture' (A. Milson, Colonial Secretary, Lagos, June 1891, at Manchester Chamber of Commerce).

freely admitted does such a condition of native life present itself.' In a paper which I had the honour to read at the Colonial Institute I advanced these views, which were endorsed by Colonel Carden, Governor of Sierra Leone. 'As to the liquor traffic,' he remarked, 'I can fully endorse all that the lecturer has said, so far as my knowledge goes. . . . I feel convinced that if you would take away from the natives the liquor, other wants would be created, and they would purchase other articles which would be far more remunerative to the British merchant.[24] This incompatibility of the liquor traffic with legitimate trade, and its sterilising effects on industry, is the point of view taken by Sir George Goldie,[25] founder and Governor of the Royal Niger Company, and also (as the quotation I have already given shows) by Mr. Rhodes. It was also insisted on by the late Mr. J. Thornton [26] many years ago.

III. Proposed Action

The ideal which all who think as I do wish to achieve is the total abolition of the spirit traffic in Africa. So far as South Africa is concerned, I hold that this course is immediately feasible, for the machinery for enforcing the law is in existence, and the experiment has already been made with success in various districts. In West Africa, however, I fear that immediate and summary prohibition is a 'counsel of perfection,' and I advocate therefore that the duties in all British possessions should be at once equalised to the level of the highest (3*s.* per gallon), and that this uniform duty should be raised periodically, until it equals and exceeds that levied on high-class whiskies and brandies of British manufacture, at present imported for European consumption only. The duty on these should be fixed at, say, 8*s.* or 9*s.* per gallon (the duty in the United Kingdom being 10*s.* 6*d.* per gallon); incidentally this would possibly have some useful effect in checking the excessive consump-

[24] *Royal Colonial Institute Proceedings*, vol. xxvii. p. 31.

[25] 'I speak from sixteen years' experience, . . . and I say confidently that unless immediate steps are taken to stop this traffic—not by higher duties, but by absolute prohibition—a state of things will soon be brought about that must ultimately lead to the entire abandonment of the country. . . . I cannot believe that the conscience of Europe will long allow that the vast populous regions of tropical Africa should be used only as a cesspool of European alcohol' (Speech, May 3, 1895, at Grosvenor House).

[26] 'Is this a trade which will pay in the long run? Will the country flourish under such a system? To these questions I answer emphatically "No, a thousand times No!" A trade which commences with gin will continue with gin, and will end with gin. Industry and thrift cannot be found in such company, and with the absence of these there can be no development of the mineral and vegetable riches of the country. In these facts lies the secret of the astoundingly small progress our West Coast settlements have made through all the long period they have been in our hands' (Manchester Geographical Society, January 27, 1886).

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tion of spirits by Europeans on the West Coast. This duty on high-class spirits should be stationary, while the progressive increase on 'trade spirits' should cease only with the extinction of the import. The operation of this principle of taxation is not intended to be in any way protective. Wholesome spirits of a high class, whether British made or foreign, would be subject to an identical tax for revenue and economic purposes; and the reasons for the exclusion of this foreign-made cheap 'trade liquor' would be those I have already detailed, viz. its injurious effects on the natives and on legitimate trade.

I have said that (1) *Total* prohibition is the ultimate result at which I aim, and (2) that its sudden enforcement is in my opinion not feasible. (*a*) With regard to the first point. It has been well remarked by Sir G. Goldie that anything short of total prohibition is unadvisable for two reasons: (1) It is impossible to discriminate in the interior between liquor which has passed through the Custom House and paid duty and that which has been smuggled. If total prohibition be enforced, the sale of spirits can at once be made penal, and this would render it far easier to deal with the smuggling question over inland frontiers. (2) Secondly, if total prohibition is enacted, vessels with cargoes of spirits would find it difficult to explain their presence on the coast, since it is not the highway to any other part of the world. Thereby the preventive service at sea would be greatly facilitated. To these arguments the missionary party would add, that if it be conceded that the traffic is a hurtful one to the natives, a power with the traditions of which England is justly proud should stoop to no compromise with 'the accursed thing.'

(*β*) On the second point: it is to be borne in mind that large interests are involved, which, perhaps by our negligence or selfish indifference, have been allowed to grow up during a long series of years, and that these must be treated equitably and not arbitrarily, and a period of transition allowed, during which merchants and traders may get rid of their stock, and gradually substitute other merchandise.[27] Moreover the sudden enforcement of total prohibition would cause great discontent (and possibly disaffection) among the native consumers, a result which would be largely avoided (owing to the apathetic and acquiescent nature of the African) if the restriction were enforced more gradually. A sudden deprivation to those habituated to the consumption, and upon whom had grown a craving for the liquor, might not improbably lead to attempts (possibly with skilled assistance) to produce a similar fiery intoxicant locally, and to such an extension of the manufacture of home-made liquors as might subsequently be difficult to restrain.

[27] This would not apply to British merchants at home, who have no such stocks on hand.

Considering these arguments on either side, I think that if the duty were raised 9*d.* or 1*s.* annually the best result would be obtained.[28] It would, however, be essential that the intentions of Government should not become known, or that a maximum amount should be fixed (based on the average of past years) which any single firm would claim to import during the year; otherwise the same vast consignments would be made in anticipation of the rise in duty as were lately effected in the Niger Coast Protectorate. It might also effect some good if it were enacted that the spirits sold to natives should be adulterated with some 50 per cent. of water, and if the sale of any spirit containing a larger percentage of alcohol than this were made penal.

In reply to Miss Kingsley's argument that some stimulant is necessary in the malarial swamps and creeks of the West African Coast region, where the food of the native is poor and insufficient, and meat is rarely obtainable, it is sufficient to remark that Nature has provided for the wants which she creates, and the mildly stimulating native beers &c. will supply the need of a stimulant when required from climatic causes. Miss Kingsley herself insists on the fact that the bulk of the spirit is imported up-country beyond the delta area.

Mr. Chamberlain in his letter (April 17, 1896) to the Anti-Liquor Traffic Committee says: 'His Government are quite ready to agree to the imposition of higher duties, but no satisfactory agreement such as the Committee desire is possible unless the French and German Governments are also willing to increase the duties in their possessions to the same extent. His Government are in communication with the French and German Governments with a view to inducing them to join in raising the duties, but no agreement has yet been arrived at.' Herein lies the difficulty. It is urged that if we increase our duties the whole of our trade will pass into the hands of our rivals, since (it is alleged) it is practically impossible to prevent smuggling across the frontiers. It must be remembered that Germany has a far greater pecuniary interest in this traffic than England has, for the spirits are very largely manufactured there. Public opinion has, however, expressed itself very strongly in Germany in condemnation of the traffic.[29] The 'Colonial Council'—a deliberative

[28] This method of securing eventual prohibition would also meet the difficulty pointed out by Colonel Carden: 'In Sierra Leone the negro colonists enjoy equal rights as citizens with the European population, and would resent anything that accentuated race differences.' There would be no discrimination between the two races in the application of the proposed legislation.

[29] The *Cologne Gazette*, commenting on Mr. Chamberlain's words about the liquor traffic, remarked that 'practical schemes which should be binding not only on Germany but on England would be submitted to a very sympathetic examination, and there is nothing to hinder England from laying proposals before the powers interested.' It is to be noted that while spirits are apparently prohibited in German

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body chosen by Government, whose opinions 'have often in the past exercised decisive influence on the policy of Government'—expressed incredulity at the statistics on this subject disclosed by the *Times*, and promised to institute a thorough inquiry. Its tone was sympathetic, and it expressed conviction that 'Germany at any rate does her duty by the Brussels Act.' So long ago as the 14th of May 1889 the Reichstag passed a resolution 'to request the Federal Governments to again take into consideration whether and how the trade in spirits in the German colonies can be effectually opposed either by prohibition or limitations.' Moreover, in August 1894, in reply to a memorial addressed to him, the German Emperor replied that 'the Imperial Government carefully keep in view to check by every possible means the evils arising from the liquor trade with uncivilised nations, . . . and have issued regulations aiming at the suppression in the German Protectorate of the trade referred to.' These Imperial and official pronouncements cannot be lightly set aside, but presumably the influence brought to bear by the Hamburg manufacturers has hitherto prevented any effective action. French writers, as was to be expected, speak in an equally sympathetic way, and recently one of them cordially endorsed a suggestion of a uniform 5*s*. tariff. Sir G. Goldie remarks that 'the Niger Company naturally have commercial relations with various interests in France; they also have strong reasons for watching carefully the currents of feeling in colonial circles there, and a large number of their shareholders are French. I am informed from many quarters that public opinion there is now ripe for this question.'[30]

The spirit duties in the German West African possessions (Togoland and the Cameroons) are about 9¾*d*. per gallon. In consequence of this low tariff on the narrow seaboard of Togoland, the English Gold Coast colony on the one side has reduced its duty east of the Volta to the German level, while the French on the other side, in the colony of Dahomey, impose only the minimum tariff permitted by the Brussels Act (6½*d*.). The French, however, levy a 3*s*. duty in the Gaboon, while 'along the whole of the portion of the coast which falls within the angle formed by the bend of the Niger, a further "consumption tax" is levied, varying according to degrees of strength, and ranging from about 4½*d*. per gallon on rum 48° u. p. to 3*s*. 6*d*. per gallon on alcohol 87° and stronger' (*Times*).[31] The British duties are as follows: Gold Coast west of the Volta (which

South-west Africa (F.O. Miscel. Series 382, p. 36), we import spirits into Walfisch Bay, a British port in the centre of the German coast (*ibid.* p. 33), while in East Africa the German police are engaged in preventing the sale of spirits to the natives (p. 34), and in the Marshall and Caroline Islands the export is entirely prohibited.

[30] Grosvenor House speech, May 1895.

[31] The duty in the Congo State is about 6½*d*. The total import in 1892–93 was only 206,262 gallons, of which nearly five-sixths was less than 50 per cent. u. p. (F. O. Annual Series, 1450).

offers a frontier easily guarded), 2*s.* 6*d.*; Sierra Leone, 3*s.*; Lagos, 1*s.*; Niger Coast Protectorate, 1*s.*; Gambia, 2*s.*; Niger Company, 2*s.* (total prohibition above lat. 7°). A general consideration of these figures leads to the conclusion that England and France have shown a desire to increase their duties in some at least of their colonies, while Germany has shown no such inclination. If Germany could be induced to agree to raise the duty on her small Togoland seaboard only, it might be possible to equalise duties along the whole coast from the Gambia to the northern frontier of the Cameroons, a distance of 2,000 miles along the coast, where the traffic is worst, for France could forego her 'consumption tax' in favour of an enhanced tariff. Or again, if France should object to raise the tariff on the Ivory Coast and Senegambia, the inclusion in the new scale of duties of Dahomey only (whose seaboard together with that of Togoland is less than 100 miles) would secure an uninterrupted coast line of over 1,000 miles from the western frontier of the Gold Coast to the northern frontier of the Cameroons. In the event of any such agreement, the only frontiers to be guarded would be the extreme ones at either limit of the area. Such a uniformity of duties would tend to do away with much friction and expense in the preventive service against smuggling.

Actual experience, both in Sierra Leone and Lagos,[32] has proved that an increase of the spirit duty, so far from causing a diminution, results in an increase of revenue, while decreasing the import of spirits. The progressive increase, therefore, would have reached a very high level before a diminution in revenue on that account would be anticipated, and meanwhile other imports would be in course of substitution for spirits. The experience of the Niger Company proves that any check to trade, even in the case of sudden and total prohibition, is but temporary. 'Trade,' says Sir G. Goldie, speaking of the liquor prohibition north of lat. 7°, 'soon recovered itself, and has steadily grown, and is now far larger and more important than before the prohibition of the liquor traffic.'

Supposing, however, that France and Germany refuse to co-operate in any way, the question remains: Is it impossible for England to act alone in the interests of humanity and civilisation, as well as to her own true commercial advantage? I maintain that it is by no means impossible, and (to quote Sir George Goldie once again, than whom no one is more qualified to give an opinion) 'there would be expense but no insuperable difficulty' on the inland frontiers, and as regards the seaboard the risk of smuggling has greatly diminished of late years.' Experience has already proved that it is feasible. Sierra Leone has maintained a duty of 3*s.* (with a consequent increase of revenue) in spite of the low duty obtaining in the territories on either

[32] C.O. Annual Series, No. 58 of 1891, p. 29.

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side of her frontiers. The Gold Coast, though coterminous with the German frontier, has, west of the Volta, maintained a 2*s.* 6*d.* duty, and could in the same manner maintain any higher impost. The Niger Company in their delta district have maintained a 2*s.* duty and a high license tax, though the Niger Coast Protectorate on either side of their seaboard has only a 1*s.* duty,—and this notwithstanding the fact that the whole delta area common to both is a network of creeks, which afford facilities for smuggling such as no other inland frontier presents. Lagos would have to maintain an effective preventive service on her Dahomey frontier, but already her spirit-tariff is nearly double that of her neighbour, and the Niger Coast Protectorate would similarly have to guard its southern frontier towards the Cameroons. But these West Coast possessions are among the richest of the British Empire, and could well afford to spend a certain sum upon this service, in order to place their trade on a sounder basis and to vastly increase the volume of British-made imports. I confidently believe that the expense incurred would be more than recouped, and that within a very short period. Lagos and the Niger Coast Protectorate would only have one frontier each to be guarded, while the Niger Company would cease to require any preventive service, and such deplorable incidents as the attack upon one British settlement by the natives of another (due to repressive measures against smuggling) would then cease to be possible. This smuggling across inland frontiers is the only real obstacle to be overcome—though undoubtedly a considerable one—for, owing to the difficulty which large vessels experience (and the liquor can only be brought in large vessels) in approaching close to the surf-beaten coast of West Africa, little fear need be entertained of illicit importation. Their cargoes must either be discharged into boats far out at sea, or they must enter the recognised ports, and in either case the landing of contraband goods would be difficult. Moreover, since England (in common with France and Germany) maintains gunboats in the West African seas, the cost of patrolling the coast would be small.

I have said that the date on which the tariffs imposed by the Brussels Act must be subjected to revision will be the 2nd of April, 1898. It is to be remembered that five only of the seventeen signatory powers have any possessions in Africa. The connection of Holland, who for so long refused to sign the Act and jeopardised the work of the Conference, is limited to the vast market she finds in Africa for the cheap liquor she manufactures. Since, therefore, we may count on her strenuous opposition to any increase of spirit duties proposed at an international revision, it becomes the more necessary for France, Germany and England, whose territories are affected by this import, to come to an understanding independently of any such international revision, or in default of this understanding for England to prove her sincerity by taking the initiative. Shall we appeal in

vain to those two great nations who march in the van of European civilisation and progress? With their co-operation all difficulty vanishes. On the other hand, if our appeal be futile, shall we continue to pursue this immoral and commercially suicidal policy from fear of the extra cost of a preventive service on the extreme frontiers of colonies well able to pay the charge?

F. W. LUGARD.

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