

Annotations.

PEACE.

The declaration of peace between Russia and Japan gives cause for unfeigned thankfulness. The possibility of these two countries plunged once again into the horrors of one of the most sanguinary wars the world has ever known, as at one period of the negotiations seemed all too probable, was terrible to contemplate. War is a barbarous invention, and between an enlightened and a professedly Christian nation, surely it should be possible to settle differences by methods other than those of brute force. Certainly if the women of the world had their way it would not be long before war was made to cease. When will the nations realise that war is wasteful, cruel, unnecessary? It is not even now a trial of strength, but a question of the highest credit. The nations to-day have reason for deep gratitude to President Roosevelt for his efforts in the cause of peace, which, happily, have been crowned with success.

THE CURSE OF CLOTHES.

The native question in South Africa is dealt with in a contemporary by Miss A. Werner, who draws much important information from the Cape Colony Blue-book for native affairs. In Khama's country she says that a certain physical ailment among the natives is attributed to imported grain. The importation of clothes, however, she regards as a far greater evil, and quotes the following testimonies:—

" . . . The adoption of European clothing does not in my idea tend towards either their general health, cleanliness, or morality. It seems to be a sort of general idea amongst the Missions that a native cannot be a Christian unless he wears European clothes. It is a pity the Missions do not institute another badge to mark their converts, as the same European clothes worn night and day in heat, cold, or rain are not particularly beneficial, whereas the ordinary native costume is far less harmful under similar changeable climatic conditions. . . . The heavy woollen blanket or skin kaross of earlier times would have been thrown aside for vigorous exercise, to be resumed with the first sensation of chill; but civilised attire does not lend itself to equally rapid adjustment, and a marked increase in consumption, pleurisy, inflammation of the lungs, and rheumatism has been the result."

The adoption of European clothes as an evidence of Christianity is not universal amongst Missions. Rather the custom is carefully prohibited and guarded against. Listen to the words of a great missionary Bishop, whose love of the African, personal sanctity, wisdom, and statesmanship cause his name to carry weight

wherever that name is spoken—the late Bishop Smythies, of the Universities Mission to Central Africa

On his last visit to England, in a speech made at the Church Congress on missionary methods, the Bishop spoke as follows:—

"With regard to the way in which we think it right to teach our natives, our desire is to distinguish very clearly between Christianising and Europeanising. It is not our wish to make the Africans bad caricatures of the Englishman. What we want is to Christianise them in their own civil and political conditions; to help them to develop a Christian civilisation suited to their own climate and their own circumstances. For instance, we do not allow any of the boys in our schools to wear any European clothing; it is not our business to encourage the trade in boots by spoiling the feet of the Africans for their own climate. That seems to be what has caused in the minds of many Englishmen a sort of feeling against Missions, because they see so many people of our poor country whose sole idea of perfection with regard to the things of this life is that they must be as much like Europeans as possible. Very often it only ends in a sort of bad caricature."

Again, one of the Acts of the last Synod at which the Bishop presided ran thus:—

"That it is most desirable that we should impress as far as possible on all Africans ministered to in spiritual things by African teachers that it is their duty to furnish their teachers with temporal things, and that we should therefore in bringing up all our African teachers strenuously discourage all Europeanisms and luxuries which the Africans they will minister to will be quite unable to supply them with."

The effect of this policy is to be seen in the wholesome, natural lives of the adherents of the Mission. Not only the laity, but the native clergy dress in simple white clothing, walking unshod, and the inducement to join the Mission is the attraction of the Cross of Christ, not material advantages. The Bishop, who so strenuously set his face against the method of grafting European habits onto the African stock, died at sea, after ten years of arduous work in the service of the African. His tired body rests many fathoms deep under the blue waters of the Indian Ocean, his brave spirit has returned to God who gave it, but his work lives on, and not least of his legacies to the cause for which he gave his life is the tradition which still holds in this noble mission that to attempt to Europeanise the African is an unkindness and an injury, and that the end to be aimed at is to make him a good African, not a travesty of a European.

Simple clothes which can be frequently washed are obviously those which are suited to African life. Moreover, they are becoming. An African in European clothing is usually a grotesque object.

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