

from Sydney. To the credit of the British name it is recorded that, without waiting for the convention which we cherished hopes of securing in order to put an end to both traffics, regulations were introduced in 1884 by the Governments of Queensland and Fiji making it penal to supply arms to natives. These regulations were not introduced without much murmuring on the part of British subjects who had been engaged in the traffic. It was urged that the prohibitions, which could of course only affect British subjects, would simply have the effect of transferring the trade in arms and gunpowder to foreigners, or of causing it to be carried on by unscrupulous Englishmen under a foreign flag. Something of the sort has, in fact, resulted, although not perhaps to the extent anticipated by discontented English traders. The commander of Her Majesty's ship "Miranda," which was despatched on a cruise in the Western Pacific to enforce the regulations, reports that foreigners are actually taking it upon themselves to report the delinquencies of British traders to British officials. Without sympathizing with our unscrupulous countrymen, we may wonder at the consummate impudence of Germans, Americans, and other foreigners, who obtain the punishment of their English rivals for doing that which they are probably doing themselves in perfect safety. While we were thus setting a good example we were endeavouring, though not with overwhelming energy, to secure the concurrence of France, Germany, and the United States, the three Powers principally interested besides ourselves in the Western Pacific, in the principle of prohibition. France gave her adherence almost immediately, on condition of the consent of the other Powers. At Berlin the proposal seems to have been pigeon-holed; at all events, no answer was received. Mr. Bayard, on behalf of the United States, returned the following answer, which is a highly-edifying specimen of morality: "While recognising and highly approving the moral force and general propriety of the proposed regulations, and the responsibility of conducting such traffic under proper and careful restrictions, the Government of the United States does not feel entirely prepared to join in the international understanding proposed, and will therefore, for the present, restrain its action to the employment, in the direction outlined by the suggested arrangement, of a sound discretion in permitting traffic between its own citizens in the articles referred to and the natives of the Western Pacific Islands."

The United States has long borne a reputation for declining to subscribe to principles to which other States conceived it their duty to assent. It has stood out from this proposed Convention, just as it stood out from the Declaration of Paris, the International Copyright Convention, and the Sugar Bounties Convention. The United States must, jointly with Germany, bear the responsibility of allowing this disgraceful traffic to continue. Foreign countries will continue to compete for the honour of demoralising the Western Pacific islanders the quickest. The depopulation of these islands, which will be the inevitable result of a continuance of the trade in arms and alcohol, ought to form a material consideration in determining the policy of the interested Powers. The example of Jamaica shows to what distress a colony may be reduced which is deprived of a bountiful labour-supply. It is very convenient to invent a law by which semi-barbarous races disappear before the stronger; but it is extremely probable that this so-called law is only a euphemism for dealings which are a disgrace to civilisation. To find our own Government striking an independent blow in the interests of humanity is, at all events, satisfactory.

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