

# *a community called ...*

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## SHALL OUR RUM BE KEPT OUT OF AFRICA ?

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THE Boston *Record* of February 14, 1889,  
contained the following :

Steamship *Nithsdale* is loading at Pier 4, Charlestown, a large cargo for the west coast of Africa. It includes 1,120 packages of New England rum, 700 hogsheads already having been loaded, some tobacco, and a few barrels of flour. The Liberian government wanted the *Nithsdale* to carry across four missionaries, but did not furnish any passage money, so the agents refused to carry them. The government loses by drawback, at twenty-three cents a gallon on this rum, \$103,000.

I have directly learned, from the very best authority, that a distillery firm within three miles of Massachusetts State-house has a contract to furnish 3,000 gallons of rum daily to the African trade for the next seven years.

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This would be equivalent to almost one million gallons annually. My interest in Christian missions in Africa, and in the late campaign for a constitutional amendment in Massachusetts prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors for beverages, led me to investigate the internal revenue reports of the manufacture, home consumption, and exportation of rum. This, the most powerful of all the distilled liquors, containing fifty per cent. and upward of alcohol, is the only liquor exported from the United States to Africa.

It will be a surprise to many to learn that almost all the rum manufactured in the United States is made in Massachusetts within five miles of the State-House. During the last six years the total quantity manufactured and deposited in the distillery warehouses of the country was 11,133,704 gallons, an average of 1,855,617 gallons yearly, of which total the distilleries around Boston made 10,460,120 gallons, or 94 per cent. of all made in this country.

Of this total amount manufactured in the last six years, 6,196,706 were taken from the

warehouses by paying the government tax and entered into general consumption, an average of 1,032,784 gallons of rum drank, or otherwise used, yearly by the people of this country.

In the same time 4,618,207 gallons of rum were exported from the country. Of this amount not over 400,000 gallons went to other countries than Africa; 171,304 gallons went to Constantinople and Smyrna, chiefly to the latter place; about 200,000 gallons went to Liverpool, and is said to be shipped from Liverpool to Africa. And, besides, all this exportation of rum during these six years (except less than 100,000 gallons from New York) has been sent from Boston. A little has gone from Boston *via* New Bedford, but even that has been Boston's evil trade. The amount of rum exported from Boston to Africa in the last six years has been 4,138,284 gallons; an average of two thirds of a million gallons annually.

1. Almost all the liquor sent from the United States to curse Africa is sent from Boston. No other liquor than that most ac-

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cursed of all liquors, Boston's rum, is sent from America to the "Dark Continent." The lurid distillery flames which darken our suburbs are fitting symbols of the damning shadows Boston's boasted civilization casts over the gloomy continent! If Africa is, as sometimes called, a land of paradoxes, how much more is Boston a city of paradoxes.

2. Almost all of this most accursed of all liquors, New England rum, consumed in the United States, or 94 per cent. of the whole, is made close to Boston, only a little in New Hampshire, a little in New York, and a trifle in North Carolina. While we send to Africa two thirds of a million gallons yearly we curse our country with a little over one million gallons yearly.

3. We see in the light of these facts the duty of Christian people to rid ourselves of all complicity in the curse of alcohol in Africa by prohibiting its manufacture. And it is an accepted law of ethics that an opportunity is a duty. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not it is sin."

4. The general government should help us, by prohibiting the exportation of rum to Africa, though its action has been adverse. There lies before me a document which came officially to me from the "Native Races and the Liquor Traffic Committee" of Great Britain, which states that when Lord Granville, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, through her majesty's representatives in France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Russia, and the United States, addressed to each of those governments an inquiry "as to their readiness to enter into an international agreement for preventing the sale of arms, ammunition, dynamite, and alcohol to the natives of the Pacific Islands," favorable answers were received from all those powers except [to our shame be it said] from the United States."

April 11, 1885, Mr. Secretary Bayard replied:

While recognizing and highly approving the moral force and general propriety of the proposed regulations, and the responsibility of conducting such traffic under proper and

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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 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 effect of this decision,” says the official document referred to above, “has been to compel her majesty’s government to abandon its scheme for the conclusion of an international agreement,” and it was so announced in the House of Lords in August, 1887. “Thus,” continues this document, “the flagrant abuses caused by the traffic in arms and spirits are now being perpetuated by the refusal of the American government to take part in an undertaking which the European powers generally support, and which we believe calls for the active sympathy of every friend of justice throughout the world.”

5. I quote from the report on temperance presented to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in May, 1888:

The advent among the heathen of men educated under the light of the Gospel is associated with the blackest curses that have blighted the lives of those for whom Christ died. While in one pathetic sense Ethiopia has stretched forth her hands to God, in one other sense the "Dark Continent" may well stretch forth her hands in prayer for protection against those who have stained her shoes with a trail of blood that reddens "the middle passage" between Africa and our inconsistent republic. Little wonder that poor Africa shudders at the name of "Christian America." "Worse than night attacks; worse than chains for innocent babes; worse than the prostitution of mothers; worse than the wailing caravan; worse than the sweltering baracoon; worse than the stifling slave ships; worse than the shameless auction-block; worse than the fetter, the whip, and the separation of families; worse than the traffic in human muscles and souls, is the inhuman trade in *rum*, which now crowns the outrage to which the natives of Asia and Africa are



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subject at the hands of nominally Christian votaries!"

And all under what is profanely designated "Christian commerce," which makes native chiefs curse the day that announced the advent of the white man. Well did Sir Richard Burton, the famous African traveler, declare: "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 the gainer in happiness by the exchange."

6. But it is possible for us to shut up the fountains of rum among us, and stop its importation to Africa from our ports, by prohibiting its manufacture for home use or for exportation.. This has been done in Iowa, where the right of a State to prohibit the manufacture of intoxicating liquors for either home consumption or for exportation has been decided by the highest courts of the State and of the United States.

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