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EDITORIAL

THE KONGO MISSIONARIES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE case of the two missionaries—the Rev. William Morrison and the Rev. W.H. Sheppard—under indictment in Kongo for alleged “calumnious denunciation” of one of the Kongo companies, whom the two missionaries charged with criminal practices upon the natives in rubber-gathering, is arousing a good deal of indignation by the religious press, so-called, the Protestant press in particular.

The papers charge that the suit is practically brought by the Belgian Government which is in partnership with the plaintiff corporation, holding more than one-half its stock; they also charge that the trial is set for a place 900 miles from where the missionaries and 1,000 miles from the district where their witnesses live; moreover, these witnesses belong to the Bakuba, the very tribe which has been so roughly dealt with by the Belgian soldiers and other agents of the Corporation that its people are in terror because of the threats made in case they testify. Hence a fair trial is impossible.

All this may be true; is true. The enraged Protestant press may go even further without doing violence to truth. They may add that the denunciations uttered by the missionaries are incorrect only in that they are too lenient: the Protestant press may add that it is next to impossible to say anything that is too hard against these inhuman Government Corporations, who are treating the natives of Kongo with the ferocity of brutal conquerors.

And yet, what of it?

A good-hearted man will run with buckets of water across the street to extinguish a fire that is threatening his friend's house. No sane man will, however, carry buckets of water to put out some one else's fire when his own house is ablaze. Missionaries do not come from Kongo to civilize us. If any came none would laugh

more uproariously at the sight than this very Protestant press of ours. The attitude itself of this press is proof that they consider the buckets of water must come from a house unthreatened with fire. Yet what are the actual facts?

Read the speeches that are now being made in Congress; read the papers with their repeated reports of starvation and suicide for want. Speeches and papers supplement each other. The Corporations of this country are using America for a Kongo and our workers for Bakubas. And they are doing so with the backing of the Government—just as the Kongo Corporations enjoy the protection of the Belgian Government.

It should seem that we have all the fires at home that we can want, and need, ourselves, all the buckets of water that we can draw out of humanitarian and “religious” wells. What shall we say of the sanity of the people who rush to Kongo to put out fires there, while they leave our own homes aflame?

Or is it not a case of insanity, but rather a case of that peculiar hypocrisy which Horace Greely punctured when he satirized the reformers who are aflame against the distant, while they silently tolerate, because they profit by, the nearby Wrong, away from which they would draw attention?

It is bad enough to have Kongo and her Bakubas treated the way they are treated. Worse yet it is to allow the treatment of Kongo and her Bakubas to be turned to the benefit of our Corporations by causing our indignation vainly to radiate into distant space, with no energies left to combat the conflagration at home.

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