

THE BABEL CONGRESS.

THE solemnity and importance of the subject of re-union amongst Christians renders it difficult to discuss, at times, some of the efforts made ostensibly towards this end, or to criticise justly the utterances of those who seem desirous of helping on the unity of Christ's people. There has been a Congress recently held in the States to discuss this very grave topic, and with all charity to individuals, we must affirm that a more conspicuous display of speculative folly and impracticable theorising was never made by any gathering. This Congress comprised members of the society of Friends and of Unitarians, who aired their hazy and heretical notions in the hearing of Presbyterians, Congregationalists and even of members of the Catholic Church, who listened and talked as though history were a myth, and the Christian Church just about being organised to meet some special phase of humanity in this generation. There was hardly a gleam of a thoroughly clear conception of the bearing of Biblical facts and teaching in the whole proceedings, indeed the discussion seems to have proceeded on the assumption that the Word of God has no message to mankind which we are bound to respect, but that there has been and yet is some organization called the Church which it is desirable to ignore or destroy. The mist at times was as dense as a London fog. Dr. T. F. Clarke for instance, "proposed union round Christ's character, each man interpreting it for himself." What union round a character which each man may interpret for himself means—is indeed a mystery. Another speaker, Dr. Robinson, said, "The historic Christ, a crucified, risen, glorified Person, human and divine has been hidden from the popular mind by the Church." But what Church Dr. R. did not say, but so far as the only Church known to scripture and to history is concerned, the statement is a very scandalous falsehood, and members of that Church would have shown honour to Christ by withdrawing from an assembly where His Body was so maligned. Dr. Penticost we learn desired "union in sectarianism," which is very much like seeking dryness in a perpetuity of damp. Dr. Crosby said that "The vital truths are in all the Churches and must be maintained," which was no doubt comforting to the Unitarian who denies the divinity of our Lord, but whose "Church," says Dr. Crosby, nevertheless held all "the vital truths"—the Divinity of Christ not being a vital one but a dead issue according to this "well known Presbyterian divine." Professor Clarke suggested "an eclectic platform, adopting the good from every creed," but it would be a chase indeed for those who have to organize the brand new Church to select the good from every creed, and out of these tid bits to construct the universal creed acceptable to all! Dr. Minor thought the whole business required simply "such an interpretation of Christianity as presents Christ as a manifestation of fatherly love, assuring every man that God loves him as his own child." Dr. Minor is clearly not far astray so far as the

truth of that is concerned, but how Christendom is going to be united by agreement on one point of view as to the Fatherhood of God, is another mystery. Dr. Hopkins, Episcopalian, said "the unity must be spiritual, real, organic and visible," which sounds like a note of music in a hubbub of discord, or like the words of a keeper amid the confused utterances of a group of the insane. Dr. Porter said that "theology must be free and progressive, the disproved articles must be dropped from the creeds." But Dr. Porter forgot to say from what bonds or restraints theology must be free, and from what point and to what point it must be progressive—surely most vital elements in such a statement for its being brought within the bounds of common sense. Amid all this theological and ecclesiastical and sentimental babble, no one man seems to have lifted up his voice to proclaim the existence from Pentecost even until this day of the Church then founded by Jesus Christ, and which has continued through the centuries, His witness and medium and the Temple and channel of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Crosby indeed proclaimed that "the curse of the Corinthian Church rests upon Christendom to-day." Most true, and that curse was never more magnified than in the Congress at Hartford, where every man shouted out his own pet theory, and no man rebuked them as St. Paul did the Corinthians for their divisions through preference of their personal, private notions, over the teaching and ruling and order of the One Church of Christ.

The way to union is the same road as led to disunion, *only the travelling must be the reverse way.* The disunity of Christendom is simply the ranging at large of men who have strayed from the central, supreme, Divine body, the Catholic and Apostolic Church. Union can only come by the wanderers returning home. A contemporary which assumes to voice the opinions of Evangelicals says, "To find the centre and source of unity in Episcopacy, or any external form of worship or government is worse than a delusion, it is destruction of living Christianity." The members of the Church of England can reflect upon this utterance, which has no other meaning than this, that our claim to be a Catholic and Apostolic Church is a delusion, and that in some way or other "living Christianity" is not found in such an external form of worship or government as are observed by the Church of England. Such downright contempt for the order and claims of the Church is certainly not evangelical, nor has it the sympathy of evangelicals, it is simply the feeling of men who are in the Church but not of it.

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SECOND PART.

HE recognised an element of truth in all parties, and he considered their great evil lay in denouncing the imperfectly understood truths they each possessed. Thus a pupil of his writes, as follows:—"Maurice

thinks this party (the Oxford High Church) one-sided, and says they are under the influence of the destructive spirit of the age, at times endeavouring to pull down other men's truth because it is not the same portion as their own. I heard him say that he had read Pusey's Tract with the greatest pain. . . . Still, he says that Dr. Pusey sets out a most important truth with regard to Baptism—a truth utterly neglected and denied by the Evangelical Party." He puts forth his thoughts to the world in the shape of pamphlets, essays, sermons, and more particularly in 'the letters to a Quaker,' on 'The Kingdom of Christ,' and there is evidence not only that he influenced many individuals, but also theological thought generally. Yet, in spite of definite immovable convictions, one never hears of Maurisonianism as one hears of Puseyism. He strove earnestly to avoid this, for much the same reason, I think, St. Paul did. He believed most firmly that he had a message to deliver, and that the message was from God, and he gave utterance to it rather as a prophet of old, than as the leader of a school of thought or interpretation. If any one who read his books, embraced his message, he received it as being what it was intended to be, what it professed to be, and what Mr. Maurice, without a particle of pride believed it to be, viz. the testimony it was sent to bear. And this was the testimony—"I was sent into the world" he says in an autobiographical letter to his son, that I might persuade men to recognise Christ as the centre of their fellowship with each other, so that they might be united in their families, their countries, and as men, *not* in schools and factions. 'That is,' Mr. Shorthouse adds, in the 19th Century, as I understand him, the bond of interest and union, is not opinion, but that humanity which has been taken into God!

In 1830 the question of subscription to the 39 articles, by undergraduates of Oxford, was much discussed. It brought forth many pamphlets, one of which entitled 'Subscription no bondage' was contributed by Mr. Maurice, in 1835. This was the commencement of his connection with the High Church Party, and was, perhaps, the most important result of the work, for very few, if any, agreed with, or really understood the principles expressed; but the argument being in favor of subscription, attracted the attention of the High Churchmen to the author, as likely to become a useful addition to their party. He maintained that Subscription to the Articles on entrance to the University, was a declaration of the terms upon which the University would teach. Further, he agreed, that they are not terms which bind down the student to certain conclusions beyond which he cannot advance, but are not fit introductions to a general education in humanity and physics, because they are theological.

Drs. Newman and Pusey, were shown the tract, and showed their appreciation of it, by proposing that the Author should offer himself for election to the post of Professor of Political Economy.

There was, however, never any real unity of thought between them, and Dr. Newman's an-