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THE CHURCH CONGRESS.

(From our London Correspondent.)

LONDON, Oct. 11, 1881.

The Church Congress is now a thing of the past, and all those who took part in its proceedings are separated, the probabilities being that many will never be spared to see another gathering of the kind. This annual gathering has now attained its majority, and the celebration of the event was in every way worthy of so auspicious an occasion. The Mayor of Newcastle, with that large-heartedness that is the glory and pride of a true Englishman, gave the members of the Congress a right royal greeting, and facilitated the success of the gathering to the utmost of his power. And this is all the more to be appreciated when we say that he himself is a Dissenter. His large-heartedness ennobles his Dissent; he is none the worse Dissenter because he is imbued with true charity and hospitality. In this matter he showed a worthy lesson to some of his compeers, who, it is hoped, may profit by his example.

The glory of these gatherings is that all parties and shades of opinion meet on a common platform and discuss questions that are as wide asunder as the poles, the members taking part in the deliberations being as extreme as the questions are diverse. And yet the conflict of mind takes place without those fatal explosions and ebullitions of temper which croakers have foretold would be the result. One Church paper in particular, notorious for its extreme views and dulness, has gone so far as to impress upon its party the duty of staying away from the Congress altogether, as such unholy alliances as are there to be found must be contaminating to the Orthodox Churchman. Such rubbish is below the notice of any man, and only a mind diseased with party infection and pious Pharisaism could give expression to such absurd sentiments. There was a quiet under-current of opposition between the extreme parties at Newcastle, nevertheless. I see the *Church Times* charges the opposite party with a little sharp practice. It appears the largest available building in the town, besides the Congress Hall, was a building called the Circus. The above paper accuses the Low Church influence on the Congress Committee with engaging the building avowedly for Congress purposes, when the necessities of such purposes did not demand it, the object being to preclude the English Church Union having the building for their large meeting. I do not endorse this statement, but just give it as an instance of the quiet opposition that existed between the two parties. But all this opposition and party feeling was kept in check at the Congress meetings proper, and any indiscreet manifestations that were made by some of the younger clergy were quickly suppressed by the admonitions of their elder and wiser brethren.

Last week I was just able to mail you the particulars of the first day's proceedings. To follow the Congress in all its meetings, and give a bare idea even of the papers read, and the discussion thereon, would far exceed any space you could afford to give the subject, so my notice must necessarily be brief. On the second day (Wednesday) the Town Hall was crowded, in anticipation probably of an animated discussion. The principal session was to be held here, i. e., that devoted to ritual. The friends of Mr. Green turned up in full force, with an evident determination to make their presence felt. Dr. Lake, the Dean of Durham, introduced the subject. Although at the outset he disclaimed being a party man, he very soon struck

a key note, by demanding the greatest latitude in matters of ritual. The temper of the meeting here displayed itself by a shout of applause, and further on in his paper, as the Dean gave expression to similar sentiments, he was cheered to the echo. The demonstrations were so hearty and prolonged as to call forth a remark from the Bishop at the close, when the inescapable bell brought the speaker to his seat, that such manifestations were but cruel kindness, for they prevented the whole of his paper being read. However, perhaps, they did not care so much for that, providing they had an opportunity of giving expression to their pent-up feelings. By the bye, how is it that clergymen, when once they let the passions rise, are so extreme and uncontrollable? The Wesleyans were dragged into the subject by the Dean in his paper, for the purpose of drawing a comparison and conveying a threat to the powers that be. The substance of his argument was that John Wesley went out on account of the opposition of the Bishops, and thus in the present day is that large body lost to the Church. Be careful you do not drive out the ritual party of the present day. It is merely a difference with the Bishops on trivial points of ritual that causes the whole trouble. Was it reasonable, wise, or consistent, he asked, to visit their brethren with pains and penalties because they preferred a chasuble to a cope? I will not enter into the consistency of the argument, but the enthusiastic portion of the audience were evidently in a cheering mood, and the word "penalties" was the signal for a great shout and hand-clapping, in which some of the ladies joined. When the worthy Dean's time was up the sympathetic portion of his audience shouted "Go on" so vociferously that the President allowed him to finish his sentence, but the contrary shouts of "Time" necessitated compliance with the rule, and the Dean had to sit down.

The Archdeacon of Warrington now afforded the opposite party an opportunity of displaying their lung power. Mr. Bardsley is a good, taking speaker, and a powerful one in controversy to boot, and as his weighty argument told against the favourers of extreme ritual some hisses from the young clergy were audible, and cheers and counter-cheers were plentiful; altogether there was a lively time of it whilst Archdeacon Bardsley was on his legs. He quoted Dean Burgon, to the effect that the concession of the ritual that was asked for by the High Church party would be the introduction into the Reformed Church of something indistinguishable from the Roman Mass. This evoked a marked display of difference of opinion. A concession of the ritual of Edward the First's book, he said, would be a surrender of differences, but he denied that it was in the power of the Bishops to concede variation of Ritual, and it was no use asking what they had no power to give, or to claim what they had no right to expect. Bishops were bound to render legal obedience, and even if they had power to do what was asked, the people were not likely to acquiesce. He held that there was a stern resolve amongst the people that they would never have implanted in their midst a system which their forefathers at the Reformation had once and for ever renounced. It was an approach to the consummation which they suspected in Ritualism. He concluded by inviting Ritualists to make a declaration of attachment to the Reformation principles, assuring them that if that were done no pains would be spared to make the path of obedience easy.

That learned and consistent layman, the Earl of Nelson, followed. His address had a soothing effect upon the troubled waters, and his demand for the right of accepting or rejecting ritual was generally received with favour. A most amusing speech came next from the Rev. Berdmore Compton. He treated ritual as a science, and severely censured the ill-informed amateurs who make it ridiculous. Peals of laughter greeted his descriptions of the bad taste of those clergymen, who, in a small ill-appointed church, affect a service adapted to a Cathedral; who organize a procession in an aisle where two persons cannot pass abreast, and where the banner-bearers have to dodge the arches and gas burners, who have great celebrations in a small sanctuary where the priests jostle each other, and who wear gorgeous copes and chasubles in a church where the housemaid and sweeping brush would be more in place. About a dozen cards were here sent to the President from gentlemen anxious to speak, but time was short, only about forty minutes being available. Bishop Perry (late of Melbourne, now Canon of Llandaff), Mr. Beresford Hope, M. P., the Bishop of Bedford, Dr. Bardsley, the Rev.

Malcolm MacColl, and Canon Hoare spoke, all of whom were necessarily short. Bishop Perry offended the susceptibilities of the audience by his reference to Ritualistic law-breakers, and the President had to interpose to ensure him a hearing. Taken altogether, the discussion was a marked advance upon previous years for its toleration and order, and showed how much that spirit has grown with the growth of the Congress.

At the afternoon sitting, the Bishop of Edinburgh presided. Papers were read by Sir Bartle Frere on the opium traffic, who strongly condemned any countenance to the debasing custom, and by the right hon. Sir A. Cross, on "the adaptation of the parochial system, and of public worship to the requirements of town and rural districts." The right hon. gentleman read a severe lesson to patrons of livings, and condemned the sale of next presentations.

A number of curious illustrations of life in our northern counties were given in the town-hall afternoon sitting, at which the special work of the Church among the sailors, miners, and country labourers of the diocese was discussed. According to the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne, the morality of Northumberland thirty years ago in the item of illegitimacy was the worst in England, with the exception of Cumberland, and the cause was the Border marriage system of Greta Green. A gradual improvement had gone on since the stoppage of the evil, but it will take another fifty years for the religious element of the marriage ceremony to be fully recognised by the poorer classes. Another peculiarity is the hiring system. The people hire themselves out for a year, not as in statute hirings of the South, but *en famille*. Parents and children offering themselves on the 12th of May are taken *en bloc* and the employer at once sends his harvest waggon and removes the family and furniture, including the helplessly aged and young, to his farm. The clergy have in this sense to operate upon a shifty lot of parishioners, though of course there is the advantage that shepherd and flock have scarcely time to get tired of each other. The parishes, moreover, are immense in area, giving the clergyman plenty of saddle work.

In the evening, a large meeting was held, when the Town Hall was crowded in every part, to discuss the question of Church and State. The Bishop of Carlisle, the Dean of Manchester, and the Rev. Dr. Bardsley, read papers. The speakers were numerous and representative, of whom was Bishop Mitchinson, late of Barbadoes. Mr. Malcolm MacColl, and Mr. Lawrence, brought the meeting about their ears by injudicious extremes. The latter boldly charged the clergy with being opposed to great political and social movements, and caring for the rich, rather than the poor. The spirit of the meeting was decidedly in favour of the connection.

A large meeting was held in another part of the town in the afternoon, under the auspices of the E. C. U., to give the supporters of the Rev. S. F. Green an opportunity of blowing off steam. To say that the meeting was large and enthusiastic would be superfluous, as that would, as a matter of course, be the case. The matter and arguments that went to make up the speeches have been so repeatedly put forth that nothing would be gained by an attempt to give a summary of them. There was the same determination evinced to maintain firmly the position they have taken up, and thus by creating the semblance of martyrdom forge weapons that shall break down that law, which they are otherwise helpless to oppose.

In the evening a most successful workingwomen's meeting was held in the Circus.

On Thursday the Congress proceedings opened in Section 1, sitting in the Town Hall, with a subject which developed in interest as it progressed. It was "The Ecclesiastical Courts, the principle on which they should be constituted, and the methods by which their decision may be more effectual."

The Right Hon. and Rev. W. H. Fremantle discussed the changes which seem to be needed in our ecclesiastical judicature. It was undesirable that the law should be put in motion for very small matters, but when interpreted by the courts of law it must be obeyed. Men were allowed to remain in the ministry long after they had forfeited the chance of doing good service, and some scandalous cases of this kind had been known of late years. The Chancellor of the Diocese (Mr. H. Cowie, Q. C.), who followed, said that imprisonment could not be regarded as an appropriate punishment for disobedience. It was not only ineffectual but posi-

tively mischievous. If a clergyman felt that he could not conscientiously carry on the duties which he had undertaken, then the law ought to relieve him.

The Hon. C. L. Wood submitted that the ecclesiastical courts, by whatever ecclesiastical names they might be decorated, represented only the authority of the State, and not that of the Church. In point of fact, there was only one valid excuse which could be made for their relations as a Church to the Privy Council, and that was the fact that they had drifted into them. The principles which must govern any satisfactory reform seemed to him to be as clear as they were simple. First, in some reform or other, the government of the Church must rest with the Episcopate and the synods of the Church. For this purpose there was a general agreement that the diocesan courts, archidiaconal and Episcopal, should be revived. In regard to the general function of the Bishop himself, the distinction which formerly obtained should be still regarded. Much of the more secular business that would come before him might well be settled by a chancellor, spiritual matters touching the faith and worship of the Church being decided by the Bishop in person, with the counsel and consent of a body of chosen presbyters representing the clergy of the diocese.

Sir Wm. Worsley held that the Church was a distinctly constituted kingdom; that in virtue of this status she possessed certain inherent rights—the right of legislation, the right of executive power to carry out her laws, and the right of judicial decisions in regard thereto. He strongly favoured diocesan synods being generally brought into use by the Bishops, and of the Archbishops' courts being rehabilitated. He believed, in nineteen cases out of twenty, these courts would be amply able to decide ecclesiastical causes with satisfaction to the parties concerned and for the welfare of the Church.

In the Town Hall, at the morning sitting, the Rev. J. Ingham Brooke initiated a debate on "The temperance work of the Church, especially in relation to its parochial organization and to the local administration of the licensing laws," and offered various suggestions of a practical character for the establishment of parochial societies. He was succeeded by Canon Ellison, of the Church of England Total Abstinence Society, who gave a retrospective account of the work of the Church in reference to the total abstinence movement, and drew from it various lessons for future guidance. Mr. Edward Lawrence, of Liverpool, dealt principally with the legal aspect of the question. He urged the necessity of a codification of the existing licensing laws, which he had the greatest confidence in stating were in such a state of confusion as to render impossible their administration with anything like regularity.

At the afternoon sitting of Section 2 the Rev. Dr. Gritton read a paper on "The proper attitude of the Church towards Sunday observance." What the Church had the world needed, he said, and, needing it, was poor and miserable even while seeking enjoyment in the architecture of Rome, the music of Milan, the galleries of Munich, the treasures of the Louvre, the wondrous beauty of the Swiss mountains, the riches of the British Museum, or the till-now-unimagined marvels of the Paris Electrical Exhibition. Towards the Sunday and its observances Christians could observe but one attitude—obedience to the will and law of her Supreme King, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day." The Rev. H. R. Haweis contended that the attitude of the Church should be one of freedom and flexibility. The Rev. Brooke Lambert pointed out that the Church had not in any of its formularies pronounced any decision on Sunday observance, and pleaded for the opening of collections of art and science on Sundays. The Rev. R. C. Billing maintained that the two preceding speakers would simply degrade the spiritual to the secular. The Rev. Canon Shuttleworth said he had learnt more from pictures and oratorios than from sermons. Commander Davidson asked some of the clergymen not to rob the laity of their Sunday.

At the evening meetings the subjects were: "The modes in which religious life and thought may be influenced by art, architecture, music, painting, and sculpture," and "The first decade of the Elementary Education Act, its results and lessons."

On Friday there were large attendances at the Congress meetings. In the Town Hall, where the Bishop of Durham presided, and requested that there should be no expression of applause; the subject for consideration was "The help and hin-