

Oct. 27th, 1893.]

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dial reply made for the Congress by the Bishop of Worcester. In the course of this reply the Bishop recognized the assistance the church had always derived from Non-conformists, and referred to spheres of Christian usefulness in which both could work together harmoniously without either making any sacrifice of principle. This certainly points to a much more practicable and hopeful means of promoting Christian union than the formulation of impossible articles and dogmas, as was done a few years since at the Lambeth Conference. A second peculiarity of this Congress was the fact noted by the President, the above-named Bishop, that it was more than any other a working-men's Congress. For the first time working-men had been invited to choose the subjects for discussion at the working-men's meeting. Not a very wonderful concession, one might say, yet as it was now done for the first time it none the less signified progress. A surprise to many of his hearers would no doubt be the President's hearty acceptance in its main features of what had been described as an "insidious attempt to introduce the thin edge of disestablishment and disendowment unawares"—the Parish Councils Bill. So far from taking this view, the Bishop regarded it as the natural and necessary corollary and supplement of the County Councils Bill. He warned his hearers against the tendency to hastily assume that measures were hostile to the Church. Some so regarded had turned out to be either beneficial or innocuous.

Coming to the question of Disestablishment itself, the President admitted that "it was in the air." Disestablishment in Wales was only a step to disestablishment in England. There was no such body as the Church of Wales. The Church in Wales, he declared, was as much a part of the Church of England as the Church in Yorkshire or in Cornwall. The Bishop may be pardoned for thinking that disestablishment, whether partial or complete, would be a blow to England and to the national life. But when he went on to say that "it was not one which they ought to contemplate with alarm, as if it were irreparable, and must of necessity paralyze or cripple the power of the Church," and to declare that "her life and power did not depend on establishment or endowment," he was greeted with applause which was very significant. It showed that the sentiment struck a responsive chord in the minds and hearts of the members of the Congress. Having gone so far, it is a pity that the Bishop could not have seen his way clear to go farther and advise his hearers to accept disestablishment and disendowment in advance, and discount the effects beforehand, instead of declaring their determination to do their utmost to resist the inevitable. It is pretty clear, however, that the defence is not likely to

be very long or very strenuous, when the defendants so plainly foresee and confess that the battle is going against them. Still, after this admission, it is scarcely too much to hope for that the members and adherents of the Church will yet go enough farther to see that right is on the side of those who are denouncing the establishment as an injustice and demanding that all churches be put on an equal footing. It would be a grand spectacle to the world, and save the nation a vast amount of hard feeling and bitterness, could the Church but acquiesce in the will of the majority, and voluntarily resign the invidious advantages it now holds. Such a step in the interest of religious equality, freedom and brotherliness, would be a spectacle for the nations.

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY.

For weal or for woe, both the spirit and the methods of democracy are gaining ground rapidly throughout a large part of the civilized world. Every new extension of the suffrage in constitutionally governed countries is, of course, a step in that direction, and every such step is practically irrevocable, for whether the result prove beneficial or the opposite, it is useless to expect that any considerable class of the people, having once obtained a share in their own government, will ever voluntarily relinquish it to return to its former state of political impotency, while any attempt on the part of those previously accustomed to rule to restore the old order of things would, almost surely, be the signal for a struggle in which the many would be pitted against the few, the masses against the classes, in unequal contest.

Whether universal suffrage would be a boon or a bane to those who are demanding it in various countries is not just now the question. That would no doubt depend upon circumstances. But that the current is setting strongly in that direction in various European countries is too clear to admit of doubt. To say nothing of the radical measures now on the Liberal programme in England, or the progress of socialism in its various phases in Germany and elsewhere, it is but a short time since Belgium, in the adoption of its new constitution, made a great stride towards democracy. Just now the Liberal Cabinet of Holland has a reform bill on its programme and actively promoted by its Prime Minister, which will increase the votes from three hundred thousand to nearly a million, which means practically universal suffrage. As the movement in Belgium no doubt stimulated that in Holland, so the example of Holland, in its turn, will not fail to have its effect upon other countries. Other influences, such as international trade-unionism, will tend powerfully in the same direction. Thus the movement goes forward, gaining momentum as it goes.

What will be the effect of all this upon the legislation of the future? It is already sufficiently clear that the ideas of the coming rulers are widely, radically different from those of the old, in respect to almost every important function of legislative bodies. Slowly, in the nature of things, but no less surely, these new ideas must make themselves felt. In the past, when parliaments and legislatures were composed almost exclusively of the land-owning, professional, and titled classes, it was but a natural consequence that the spirit and aim of law-making should tend to the conservation of property and privilege. This means simply that the law-makers looked upon questions which came before them from their own standpoint. The trend of legislation in all progressive countries has been for many years steadily in the direction of larger regard for the rights and the general well-being of the laboring masses. Nowhere has this tendency been more marked than in Great Britain and her colonies. But as in most countries the balance of governing power has still been in the hands of the "classes," the reforms introduced and carried out from time to time have been rather in the nature of concessions to popular demand than the outcome of the adoption of new theories of government. But the indications are clear that, when the representatives of the workingmen shall have attained the ascendancy which their numbers will give them under universal suffrage on the "one-man, one-vote" principle, they will no longer be content with this kind or rate of progress.

In a recent article, the London Spectator comments with much severity on what it calls the "levity" of the Trades-Union Congress at its late meeting. It is disappointed to find working men among the number of those who are ready to try the most momentous experiments in government, without the hardest thinking and the greatest clearness of view with regard to what the end will be. Yet it finds in the Belfast Trades-Union Congress more than three hundred delegates—representing, they say, more than nine hundred thousand workmen—accepting principles which, if carried out, would at once revolutionize the conditions under which labor is carried on throughout the entire kingdom. One resolution, for instance, was carried by 137 votes against 99, affirming that all labor candidates, if assisted by the party, "must pledge themselves to support the principle of collective ownership and control of all the means of production and distribution"—"that is," says the Spectator, "must support by votes and speeches the most gigantic of all revolutions, the transfer of all lands, all mines, all factories, all shops, and all fruitful capital, to the State, which is to become the sole employer of labor. We wonder how many of the three hundred delegates had ever thought for an hour on what that tremendous proposal meant; had ever