

THE CHURCHMAN

November, 1912.

The Month.

Church
Congress.

THE meeting of the Church Congress at Middlesbrough, "a very modern town in a very ancient diocese," seems to have been a great success in the best way. In his introductory address, the Archbishop of York, who was not only the President, but in a very real sense the inspiration, of the Congress, told his hearers that "it was not the business of the Church to take sides, but to implant in the consciences of men a new spirit, new moral and spiritual truths"; and, on the whole, the Congress followed the Archbishop's lead. The Church of England has suffered severely in the past from the fact that it has been commonly associated, in the minds of men, with one political party. To many minds our advocacy of religious education, and our protests against religious spoliation, have lost some of their effectiveness from this same fact. Some of our efforts on behalf of the Welsh Church have lost value because they have appealed too much to the enthusiasm of the Conservative Club—too little to the religious instincts and the real sense of justice of the Liberal and the Non-conformist. We must change all that. It must be possible for a Liberal or a Labour man to be regarded as loyal a son of the Church of England as the most old-fashioned Conservative. It is the Church of England, and therefore must welcome within its borders all Christian men willing to enter, whatever their political opinions, so long as they be honest and honour-

able. The Church stands above party politics, and must know nothing of their more sordid side. Just now, without its seeking, it is engaged in a controversy which has a political aspect. All the more important, therefore, that the Church Congress should rise superior to the merely party point of view; all the more urgent the Archbishop's plea for a new spirit; all the more welcome the fact that in the papers and speeches at Middlesbrough there were abundant signs that that spirit is coming, if it has not already come. The atmosphere of a great industrial centre seems to have been conducive to this new spirit, and we are glad, for it bespeaks new life and new power for the Church.

One of the most important discussions at the **Miracles.** Congress was that on Miracles. The papers were read by Dean Strong, Professor Sanday, Dr. Headlam, and Canon Carnegie, while the Bishop of Oxford devoted his Congress sermon to the same subject. The papers are worthy of serious attention, and we confess that we should like to see them published separately, together with the Bishop's sermon, and Dean Wace's article in the *Record* for October 11. Dean Strong cleared the ground: miracles are possible; the world is not governed by a mechanical materialism. Professor Sanday followed and raised a serious question; he made a distinction between the abnormal and the supernatural:

"On the one hand, I for one—but I believe really most or all of us—shall be ready to make the utmost allowance that can possibly be made for the presence in the world of a unique personality.

"But, on the other hand, I for one—and I expect some though not so many, with me—shrink from what is really abnormal. I mean, what we are obliged to regard as abnormal from our modern point of view. I need not say that there is not the slightest blame upon the ancients for setting down things that may be so described. They followed their ideas, and they could not do otherwise. But we also cannot help following our ideas. And the whole problem of miracles seems to reduce itself to this: To find the exact point at which the supernatural ends and the really abnormal begins; to determine in any particular case exactly what amount of allowance has to be made, and to reconstruct the narrative as best we can and as far as we can accordingly."

Professor Sanday is engaged upon a perilous quest, and he evidently felt it. His paper ended: "I hope before long to be able to go a little further." Dr. Headlam and Canon Carnegie, who followed, were much clearer and much more definite. We reverence, as do all, the caution and the learning of Dr. Sanday; we are glad to share his thinking as far as it has gone. We appreciate the immense service he does in showing sympathy to those who are finding their way to truth, from a "reduced" to a full Christianity, but we must definitely dissociate ourselves from the view that our conceptions of the abnormal are to be the tests of the miracles of the Gospel. Perhaps we do not quite understand Dr. Sanday's point. But he does seem to suggest that if something in a miracle seems to us to be abnormal we may begin to reconstruct. We venture to ask whether any history could stand if its testimony were always to be so subjective. Little wonder that Prebendary Webb-Peploe and Canon Skrine protested on behalf of the "Parochial Christian." Little wonder that the Archbishop felt obliged to remind the Congress that "the real meaning of the miraculous was that it was the assurance to us in our world that ultimately the Divine being was free and master in His own house; and that it was the coming forth of that fact into the world that carried with it the consequences they called miracles."

The *Record* for September 20 published an article "A Practical Policy," by the Rev. H. A. Wilson, in which a question is raised of greatest significance for Evangelical Churchmanship. We trust that the article will not be forgotten, but may lead to some concerted and decided action. Its title is, "A Practical Policy for Evangelicals," and the gist of it is that we ought to take more active and practical steps than we have as yet attempted to take in the direction of fraternal intercourse with our Nonconformist brethren. It is quite true, as Mr. Wilson points out, that hitherto there have been more signs of amity between Nonconformists and High Churchmen than between Nonconformists and Evangelicals. And yet, in the

vital question of the Ministry and the Sacraments, the Evangelical holds a view that is nearer to that of the Methodist or Presbyterian than it is to that of the extreme Sacerdotalist. It may be that we are far distant, at present, from the realization of any scheme of corporate reunion. But in face of all the world's great and increasing need of Christ, it is little short of criminal on our part if we do not do all that it is possible, by social intercourse and by joint prayer and study, to prepare the way for combined and confederated action in the Master's service.

The Evangelical Task. Mr. Wilson's message comes as a trumpet-call, and we trust that it will not fall on deaf, unheeding ears. The Evangelical School of thought has had its distinctive message in the past, in its emphasis on conversion and a life of personal holiness. May we not say that it is now called on to emphasize the Catholic character of the Church, the true significance of the Body of Christ? We are well aware that the Tractarian Movement has had much that is good to contribute to Church life and thought, and we should be the last to underestimate what it has accomplished of permanent benefit. But this sentiment of gratitude must not be allowed to blind us to the essential weakness of the extreme High Church position, its defective apprehension of the Church as Catholic, and its inability to grasp the Pauline conception of the Church as the Body. A firmer apprehension of these truths is the great need of our age, and, so far as the Church of England is concerned, Evangelical Churchmen are those who may well undertake the task of giving them their proper place and emphasis. We hold, as we believe, a conception of the Church which is both primitive and Scriptural—a conception which makes it possible for us to arrive at a large and true synthesis unhampered by false and misleading ecclesiastical theory.

A Word of Counsel. Mr. Wilson pleads earnestly for greater social intercourse, in which Anglican and Nonconformist ministers should meet as friendly acquaintances for frank discussion. May the writer of these words, who has had

personal experience for some years of such a friendly gathering, offer a word of counsel to his brother-clergy of the Anglican Communion? The counsel is this: To avoid with the utmost care a slight air of condescension, a faint *souppçon* of gentle graciousness, which so often seems to breathe from the youngest Anglican in his dealings with the most aged and venerable Nonconformist minister, and which cannot fail to be distinctly irritating to those on whom it is inflicted. This air of beneficent toleration may be quite unconscious. It is the explicit manifestation of an implicit conviction: "The Dissenters are queer people; their thoughts and habits are strange; but we must be friendly, and do all we can to make them comfortable." The Nonconformist who has a sense of humour is not unobservant of this. He knows his Anglican brother means well, and, if he is large-hearted enough, he forgives him for his manner, and no great harm is done. But our intercourse will be more real, and our sympathy more profound, if we can break down the barrier of this unconscious mannerism, and fraternize with ease as fellow-servants of Jesus Christ.

Owing to the fact that the Report of the Royal Marriage Commission has been delayed, the discussion on Marriage was eliminated from the programme of the Congress. It is still much in the minds of Christian men, and when the Report does come, serious questions will have to be faced. With a small party in the Church it is the fashion to use very strong language, and to pretend that that language is really the voice of whole Church. It has been done in connection with the Banister *versus* Thompson case, and we cannot believe the result will be good. If Churchmen use extravagant language where it is out of place, we shall not be listened to when a really forcible protest is needed.

The two great schools of thought in the Church must not differ on so fundamental a question as marriage, and they will not differ if we exercise prudence in statement. For such prudence we should like to refer to some words of Bishop Collins quoted by Canon Mason in his interesting sketch of the Bishop's life.

The quotation is long, but it would not be fair to give it except almost *in extenso*. Bishop Collins gave directions to his diocese as follows :

“ One such Rule or Law of the Church, which is expressed in, but does not originate in, the 99th of the Canons of 1603, forbids the marriage of a man to his deceased wife’s sister. Formerly this was enforced by the law of the land ; now it is no longer so enforced. But the law of the land, as we have seen, explicitly recognizes the fact that it still exists ; and it is hard to see how anybody can suppose that it can be altered but by the action, explicit or implicit, of the Church itself.

“ Yet it is not to be wondered at that the position of the English Church in the matter has been so largely misunderstood ; and, as usual, we are ourselves largely to blame. The use that has been made in the past of the argument from Leviticus cannot but seem unreal to those who reflect that we should never dream of conforming our social life to some other precepts of the Hebrew ceremonial law. . . . There has been far too much loose and irresponsible speech about ‘ the law of God,’ as though, with our partial vision and imperfect sight, we were able to lay down dogmatically what is and what is not justifiable for other men, who stand and fall before their own Master, and not before us. In question-begging ways such as these we have largely incapacitated ourselves for bringing home to the consciences of men what are the real objections to the new law ; and yet we are in no doubt as to what they are. Briefly, we hold that it makes a grievous and unnecessary inroad upon the family circle ; it introduces an unfair and unjustifiable distinction in the treatment meted out to women by men ; and it sows the seeds of future dissension by introducing a contradiction between the marriage law of the State and that of the Church.

“ Personally, nevertheless, I can think of it as quite possible that the rule of the English Church in the matter might be altered in the future in the direction of the new law. I have the strongest sympathy with what has been said by the Bishops of Hereford and Carlisle, as to the extreme undesirability of anything which should narrow down the position of the English Church into that of a mere section. We might, of course, be compelled to take up such a position, in the interests of the Faith, or of morals ; but I had rather that it should be done in the interests of the central truths of the Faith rather than of some particular point of doctrine, to vindicate some great moral principle rather than to preserve a particular point of practice upon which, highly as I esteem it, minds after all may differ.

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“ Whatever the future may bring forth, what I have said only places in clearer relief the fact that the rule of the Church against such marriages is, at the present time, clear and definite ; and the rule is one which can be lightly esteemed by no faithful son of the Church.

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“ I think it is important that we should dissociate ourselves entirely from the language which has been used by some people in this matter, as though

marriage of this description were no true marriages, or even worse. Such an attitude is surely unworthy and unjustifiable, and would seem to be based upon a misapprehension of our message. For here, as elsewhere, the Church is called upon to bless, not to ban; not to deny what others have, but to defend what God has entrusted to us. The function of the Church is not to appraise marriages, but to proclaim the sacredness of marriage in itself, and to set before men the ideal towards which all marriages should be conformed. Moreover, it does not appear to me that it can reasonably be contended that they who have contracted a marriage allowed by the laws of the Christian land to which we belong are 'open and notorious evil livers,' in the sense of the rubric at the beginning of the office for the Holy Eucharist; and I must hold that none are to be rejected from Communion on the ground that they have contracted marriage with a deceased wife's sister."

Bishop Collins did not belong to the school of thought that this magazine attempts to represent, and we are all the more glad in consequence to commend the sanity of his words.

We referred in our September issue to the *The White Slave Traffic*, Slave Traffic Bill, at present in the hands of a Parliamentary Committee, and the topic is of such grave and momentous importance that we make no excuse for renewed allusion to it. Men who differ widely about Tariff Reform, Home Rule, and Welsh Disestablishment, can surely agree on the urgency of the need to stop, at all costs, this infamous and demoralizing traffic. The present situation, in brief, is this: The Bill in its original form made it possible for a policeman to arrest any individual found to be, or suspected to be, tampering with young girls. The amendment in Committee reserves this right of arrest to a sergeant of police only. The ordinary policeman may not lay hands on a procurer when in the pursuit of his loathsome calling. Mr. Harold Begbie has written an impassioned protest against this in the *Daily Chronicle*, and we gladly endorse the closing words of his appeal:

"It is not yet too late. If the clergy in England, the newspapers, and every individual in whom chivalry and courage are not dead, if every virtuous woman to whom the good name of womanhood is more dear than a hundred votes, if every honest man and decent woman in the country will but do their plain duty, we can save the Bill.

"How can we do it? First, by speaking out on every possible occasion against the cowardice of the Committee; secondly, by writing in favour of the original Bill to the Members of Parliament from the constituencies in

which we live; and, thirdly, by urging every public man, every preacher and teacher of our acquaintance, to take up this matter and force it on the slumbering conscience of the nation. We can save the Bill by making ourselves missionaries of national self-respect.

“ But unless the nation speaks its mind, be sure the cringing and truckling Committee will have its way, and the Bill will become Great Britain’s charter to vice. That is the menace. As a nation we shall declare ourselves powerless for virtue.”

On October 14 an influential deputation interviewed Mr. McKenna, and received from him the assurance that he and the Home Office agreed that the clause limiting the powers to special police officers should certainly be restored to its original form. He added, however, the significant reminder that it was impossible to speak for the majority in the House of Commons. Therefore Mr. Begbie’s advice about bringing pressure to bear on private members remains as urgent as ever.

It happens that the Editors of this magazine *First Curacies.* are both men who are entrusted with the training of those who are presently to be ordained to the ministry. Theological Colleges are frequently the objects of criticism—perhaps deservedly so—but we are not prepared to admit that all the ills of the Church are due to them. They are often the recipients of friendly advice, and we are glad indeed to attempt to profit by it. But we cannot conceal our satisfaction at some recent words of the Bishop of Liverpool, intended for those who receive our students from our hands. The Bishop was thanking an incumbent for his care of his junior colleagues, and added :

“ Some Vicars, excellent men though they were, ought never to have a Deacon, entrusted to them. It was a very great help indeed to a Bishop, when young men applied to him for ordination, to be able to send them to a clergyman who would care for them as an elder brother, would teach them all he knew, and would seek to the best of his ability to make them good ministers.”

A man’s first curacy often makes or mars him, and accepting our own responsibility as we gladly and solemnly do, we are glad to reproduce these weighty words, not to cast our responsibility upon others, but to ask others to help us—may we dare to say, a little more than they sometimes do—to bear it.