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CARLISLE CHURCH CONGRESS.

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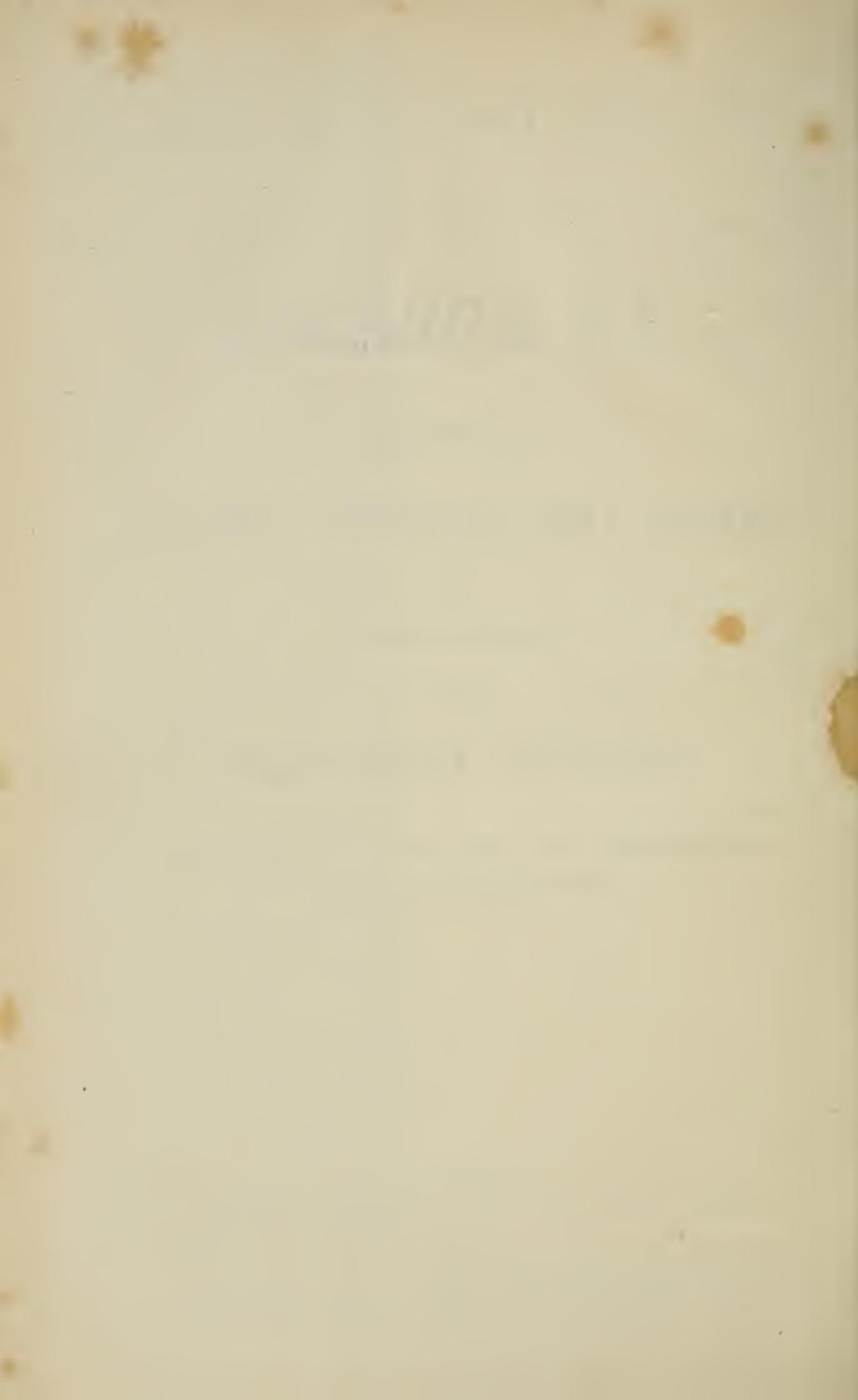
CHURCH CONGRESS

ASSEMBLED IN CARLISLE ON TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 30, 1884.

CARLISLE:

CHAS THURNAM & SONS, 11 ENGLISH STREET.

1884.



My Lord Archbishop, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is nearly a quarter of a century since the first Church Congress assembled in Cambridge. I was present at that Congress, and had the honour of reading a paper, to which I turned the other day, with some interest, if not with profit. The perusal of the Report of the infant Congress had the advantage of bringing to remembrance some forgotten facts and supplying some useful topics of thought. It was interesting to observe that one of the papers was written by Richard Assheton Cross, B.A., M.P. for Preston, in connection with the fact that Sir Richard Assheton Cross has done good work both for Church and State since those days and is about to read another paper in Carlisle. I found other names connected with the present Church Congress; I will mention one, because Congresses almost own him as a father and still enjoy his paternal care. I refer to Archdeacon Emery, who holds the office of permanent Secretary, and to whom I should be disposed to apply the words *sedet æternumque sedebit*, were it not that sitting still seems scarcely to describe the Archdeacon's character.

It is a far cry from Cambridge to Carlisle. There is scarcely as much resemblance between the two places as Fluellen found between Macedon and Monmouth; for while both begin with a C, and for that matter both end with an E, the possession of a salmon river can be asserted only of Carlisle. I call your attention however to the manifest contrast between the infant as it was seen in Cambridge and the full grown Hercules which is to be seen to-day, for the purpose of indicating in a few words what are the special

features of this Congress and what have been the guiding principles of those who have been making preparation for it.

I should consider myself to be wasting your time, if at this time of day I undertook to expound the *raison d'être* of Church Congresses. It was necessary to do this in the earlier stage of their existence: it is not necessary now. To assert such necessity would be the most practical method of throwing doubt upon the truth which we desire to establish. The healthy strong man does many things because he knows and feels that they do him good: he takes his exercise, he climbs his mountain, he gets his friends about him and enjoys their society: a medical opinion, signed by some distinguished physician, would chiefly tend to prove that the man was out of health.

I shall assume therefore that the Church of England is following an instinct of health and strength in holding these periodical gatherings, and in discussing those great religious social and moral questions which must ever be rising to the surface and demanding consideration on the part of earnest and thoughtful Englishmen. I shall assume also that these gatherings have incidental advantages many and various, which need no description; and with these assumptions I venture to point out, that while in many ways we must be content to look with humble respect to such a place as Cambridge, and may even fear comparison with the Congress held last year in Reading, with Oxford on one side of it and London on the other, we nevertheless have certain advantages which may justify us in the modest hope that this Congress will not fall below the average in general interest and in permanent influence.

For example, our Border situation is an element not to

be forgotten. The relations between Carlisle and our Scotch neighbours have not always been of the most loving kind : any of you who visit our Castle will see the accommodation which in former days was provided by Reception Committees for visitors from Scotland. Those days have long passed ; and I need not say that we have done what we could in the choice of preachers and the choice of subjects to prove our desire to hold out the right hand of fellowship to those who are willing to grasp it from the other side of the Border. I know that in speaking of holding out the right hand across the Border I have to reckon with the fact, that the religious body in Scotland chiefly interested in our proceedings claims only a small fraction of the population ; but it is a very interesting fraction and one connected with a remarkable history, one having (as I venture to think) great responsibilities and a hopeful future, one moreover enjoying in the minds of thoughtful Scotchmen an increasingly high position. The Seabury Festival to be celebrated next week in Aberdeen will bring to mind that a century ago, when the condition of this poor persecuted Church was very different from what it is now, she was able to confer a spiritual boon upon our transatlantic brethren which was sought from England in vain. But I feel confident, that though it is only Scotch Episcopalians to whom we can consistently send an invitation to take an active part in our proceedings, there are many of our Presbyterian brethren who will feel an interest in this Congress ; possibly some may attend our meetings ; if they do so, I am sure they will receive a welcome.

I have spoken of the Seabury Festival. The date of our meeting was arranged with reference to this event, and it was hoped that the American Prelates might pause on their pilgrimage to Aberdeen for the purpose of attending the

Carlisle Congress. I grieve to be compelled to announce that circumstances have interfered with the fulfilment of this hope. I may say however that all visitors from our great sister country and our sister Church, whether Bishops, Priests, or laymen, will have a hearty greeting. One well known American Clergyman appears in our list of speakers; I trust that others may be induced to take part in our discussions.

To pass on to the arrangements made for the present Congress. We have followed to a great extent established precedents. In fact the little book which was published after the Derby Congress has made preparation for a Church Congress comparatively easy. We have ventured however upon one innovation. We have allotted to all who have been appointed to read or speak the term of twenty minutes, not dictating to them which form of utterance they shall adopt, and giving up the distinction between readers of twenty minutes and speakers of fifteen minutes, which has hitherto been the rule, while we retain the rule which allots ten minutes as the limit of speeches made by volunteers who send in their cards to the Chairman. We have in fact adopted the policy of the Midland Railway Company, and have abolished second class passengers.

One other innovation—though scarcely an innovation—will be found in our arrangements. We propose to give a more honourable and distinct place to working women than they have had hitherto. In one or more previous Congresses something has been done in this direction. The innovation, and, as we think, the improvement, which we have introduced, is this, that we intend to invite our working sisters to meet in all the dignity of this Congress Hall. We did not feel ourselves justified in contracting our series of

subjects in order to compass this end, but we attain our purpose by holding the meeting on Saturday evening, which, though after the close of the Congress, will, as we believe, be practically convenient; especially if I am successful in persuading a few of our distinguished members to remain behind for the purpose of speaking at the meeting. I trust it will not be regarded as an evil omen that our meeting will be coincident with a total eclipse of the moon.

We have had probably the same amount of difficulty, neither more nor less, which has been experienced on former occasions, in the selection of subjects. Some two hundred were suggested; and this large number was reduced, by a process which has (I trust) resulted in the survival of the fittest, to the required limit of eighteen. Many considerations have to be taken into account in making selection; especially the existence of what are called *schools of thought*, or what in less exalted language are called *parties*. The fact is that in England, not in Church matters only but in many others, we are under what may be described as a dual control: dual at the least, sometimes plural. We have two sides of the house in Parliament: two political organizations in every town and county: two newspapers in each place which can support one: nay we are expected at every railway station to take a side on the important domestic question of mustard; one manufacturer claiming our preference on the ground that his article is universally used; the other on the ground that his establishment is the oldest; while, as if to show that two schools of thought do not always exhaust what is thinkable, we find at some places an appeal from a third manufacturer, who, despising the *semper* of one competitor and the *ubique* of the other, assures you that in his establishment there is *no adulteration*.

The admitted duality or plurality of schools of thought in the Church of England we have of course been compelled to take into account with regard both to subjects and to speakers. May I say that I see no necessary evil in this plurality? If we have *thought* in any true sense of the word, we must have diversities of thought: if men think at all, they will be certain to think diversely, and within limits appropriate to each particular subject diversely: absolute unanimity is not possible in a congress of men: it can only be realized in that perfect unity of utterance which distinguishes the cackling of a congress of geese. We who meet together in this hall to-day recognize our unity as loyal members of the Church of England; we recognize a still wider and deeper unity as members of the Holy Catholic Church of Christ; we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all; but, subject to the conditions imposed by these great bonds of unity and union, we claim for each section, each school, each individual soul within the Church, that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

To pass to the particular subjects which have been selected for discussion. It will not be necessary to dwell at any length upon our programme, the meaning and importance of the constituent portions of which the next few days must elucidate: but a short explanation may perhaps be given with advantage.

Some of the subjects have been suggested by special circumstances. For example, the duty of the Church with regard to the overcrowded dwellings of the poor is inevitably suggested by the issue of a Royal Commission of inquiry, and by the interest with which that inquiry is regarded: the discussion of the Church's duty in this Congress may be regarded as the recognition of this duty, and as the public

avowal by the Church of her willingness to co-operate with the State in a great work of social improvement.

The question of England's religious duties towards Egypt is new, as England's political position towards that country is new. It is not for a Church Congress to discuss political questions, except under special conditions; but when political facts have developed themselves, and when statesmen, whether wisely or unwisely, have brought a nation into new relations with ourselves, we are within our right in asking the question whether those relations are purely political and commercial, and not also emphatically religious.

The lapse of just five centuries since the death of John Wycliffe has suggested a subject, which, though in one sense old, is also in a very real sense new. We have thought it impossible that the many voices which have been shouting out the name of John Wycliffe, and glorifying his memory, should not find an echo within the halls of this Congress. As claiming myself to be of Wycliffe's family, I may perhaps be permitted to feel a personal interest in this undoubtedly remarkable man. But we do not insist upon any glorification or hero worship: we have challenged the consideration of the influence of his work and his writings, and we have invited some eminent students to initiate a discussion upon the great question of the Reformation contemplated from the stand-point thus supplied.

There is one other subject which I venture to characterize as new, and which I trust will be found acceptable. We propose to ask in this English Congress what we can learn from Scotland and Ireland in religious matters. The proximity of Carlisle to Scotland, and to a large portion of Ireland, the peculiar and very different positions of the Church in

each of the sister kingdoms from that occupied by it in England, and the presence amongst us of representatives of distinguished ability from each of the sisters, combine to commend this subject as one having a peculiar propriety in the present Congress.

There are several other subjects which I might claim as new ; but I would rather call attention to the pains taken by the Subjects Committee to exhibit old friends with new faces. Thus we hope to have a lively discussion upon the wickedness of pews, in the battle against which we have frequent signals from Lord Nelson, that "England expects every man to do his duty"; but we have so framed our thesis as to indicate that there may be other rights in Church than the right of each worshipper to do exactly as he pleases. Again, we have proposed for discussion the not altogether novel subject of Parochial Missions; but we have tried to cast its enunciation in such a form as to bring under discussion the beginning, the middle, and the end, and to suggest that while the beginning and the middle may be the most exciting, it is the end which is most difficult and which alone is valuable. Again, elementary education has often been discussed; but I think that for the first time the subject has been so formulated as to force the consideration, what can we do to save Board Schools from the curse of mere secularity and to ensure that they shall be truly religious. Once more, Foreign Missions do not strike the ear with a novel sound; but they who know most of the home work of Foreign Missions will perceive that the subject as formulated in our programme touches a point of vital interest, which is of recent growth; I mean, the comparative advantages and the comparative claims of Missions directed by great Societies and of those which have a special organization of their own.

There is only one other subject upon which I think it necessary to make a separate remark. It was impossible not to find a place for the Report of the "Ecclesiastical Courts Commission." The question of legislation is a pressing one; and it is the question of legislation which has been specially propounded for discussion. When Parliament meets, does the Church wish, does the nation wish, that action should be taken upon the Report, or not? There will be wise and honest men on each side of the alternative; and it is well that wise and honest men should have the opportunity of expressing their opinions frankly and endeavouring to persuade others to adopt them. We cannot have monster meetings, such as are held upon secular questions; but we may help to form public opinion; and Church Congresses may endeavour to teach, not only the House of Lords, but, what is almost as necessary, the House of Commons, how it ought to behave itself.

Speaking generally of our programme, I will say that we have endeavoured to act in the spirit of the admirable motto of the City of Carlisle, which has been adopted by the Congress, "Be just and fear not." We have shrunk, so at least we believe, from no subject because it was unpleasantly warm; we have blackballed no suggested speaker on the ground of party; we have tried to hold an even balance with regard to both men and things; if there are some names which might have been expected to appear on our list and do not, I may remind you that the list indicates not all those who were invited, but only all those who were able to accept the invitation; and if there be subjects the non-appearance of which causes surprise, I can only fall back upon the classical example of the groom, who, being required to put five horses into a four-stalled stable, frankly threw up the problem.

And so much for the proceedings which are to take place within our two Congress Halls. But before passing to actual business, I should like to invite you to look with me for a moment outside the Congress, upon the Church from which the Congress takes its name, and the people for whose benefit the Church exists. When the Congress met seven years ago at Croydon, there were few passages in the opening address of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, which more completely carried his audience with him than the following—"The work before us," he said, "is great; the prospects of this Church of ours are not dark. . . . They are bright. Look abroad. What other country in the world would you change churches with? Look at home. Which of the denominations would you prefer? Look back. What age are you prepared to say it would have been more satisfactory to have lived in? For my part, I thank God and take courage. . . . God knows the age has its difficulties, and those very difficulties will, I doubt not, make you more ready to unite more closely in the great work which Christ has committed to this Church of England—that grand old historical Church, happily preserved to us in its distinctive features as they have come to us from the fathers of the Reformation." I thankfully take up such words as these, emphasized as they are by the thought, that the lips and heart which uttered them are now cold in the grave; and I shall be thankful if anything seen or heard or done in this Church Congress shall, by God's blessing, tend to make men feel more deeply the privilege of having in our midst such a branch of the Catholic Church as the Church of England is and may be. I have quoted the bright hopeful language of Archbishop Tait; let me quote a few words spoken in a very different tone, more than forty years ago, by one who was

then, what I would that he were now, a Priest of the English Church—I mean John Henry Newman. “O Mother of Saints,” he cries, “O school of the wise! O nurse of the heroic! of whom went forth, in whom have dwelt, memorable names of old, to spread the truth abroad, or to cherish and illustrate it at home! O thou, from whom surrounding nations lit their lamps! O virgin of Israel! wherefore dost thou now sit on the ground and keep silence like one of those foolish women who were without oil on the coming of the Bridegroom? . . . O my mother, whence is this unto thee, that thou hast good things poured upon thee and canst not keep them, and bearest children, yet darest not own them? why has thou not the skill to use their services, nor the heart to rejoice in their love? how is it that whatever is generous in purpose, and tender or deep in devotion, thy flower and thy promise, falls from thy bosom and finds no home within thine arms? Who hath put this note upon thee, to have ‘a miscarrying womb and dry breasts,’ to be strange to thine own flesh, and thine eye cruel toward thy little ones? Thine own offspring, the fruit of thy womb, who love thee and would toil for thee, thou dost gaze upon them with fear, as though a portent, or thou dost loath as an offence;—at best thou dost but endure, as if they had no claim but on thy patience, self-possession, and vigilance, to be rid of them as easily as thou mayest. Thou makest them ‘stand all the day idle,’ as the very condition of thy bearing with them; or thou biddest them begone, where they will be more welcome; or thou sellest them for nought to the stranger that passes by. And what wilt thou do in the end thereof?” I am not going to criticize or weigh these terrible words: but that they should ever have been spoken by such a man is a fact of tremendous significance. What I should like to do

however is this : to pass from the denunciation of barrenness and the prophecy of evil, which I have quoted from a sermon preached forty years ago, to the later utterance of Archbishop Tait and to our own experience of to-day. Look upon that picture and on this. Which corresponds more nearly to the actual truth of things ? Where is the indication of the miscarrying womb and the dry breasts ? where the jealousy and fear and distrust which are represented as paralyzing all healthy action ? where the evidence of children compelled to stand idle, or cast out, or sold to strangers ? Let the answer be found in the work actually going on in our own country and throughout the world : let our churches and our mission rooms, with all their varied services and their efforts to bring the Gospel into contact with the souls of men, our organizations in favour of soberness temperance and chastity, the self-sacrificing labours of holy women to lift the fallen and to save those ready to fall, let India and Africa and the isles of the Southern Sea,—let all these give answer : nay let us appeal to the programme of this great Church gathering, and when we have examined the catalogue of subjects to be discussed and the names of the men who are to discuss them, and still more the fact that men and women come from all parts to listen, then let us ask with hearts of thankfulness and gladness, Where are the signs that God has put the curse of barrenness upon our dear spiritual mother ? Causes for anxiety, sources of weakness, calls to watchfulness, the presence of enemies in divers forms, dangers from the allurements of the world and the flesh and from the craft of the devil,—these things and the like belong to the condition of the Church Militant in our own country and time, as in all countries and in all times ; but these sorrows are different in kind from the sorrow of

sterility ; they involve no curse, they imply no sin ; they are simply the conditions under which the great battle is to be fought, for the fighting of which the Church exists. Why then should we quail with fear, or sink despondent, or lose heart and hope concerning the Church of England ? Why not rather praise God for what she is and what she is able to do, and pray for increased blessing upon her ?

O my mother ! sorrows have been thine in times past and are thine now ! thou hast foes without, lukewarm hearts, divided counsels, and too much of the world within : thy face is scarred, thy garments are soiled and torn : but thine is not the curse of the miscarrying womb and the dry breasts : God hath given thee the blessing of sons and daughters, and the wide world is their possession and inheritance. In days of trouble, of rebuke, and of blasphemy, thy testimony to the truth is the chief bulwark of the Church of Christ : the best hopes of the world are bound up with thee and thy steadfastness in the faith once delivered to the Saints : we thy children are not ashamed, but we rejoice in thee and praise God for His goodness. " We will not fear though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea." God is in the midst of thee, therefore thou shalt not be removed ; God shall help thee, and that right early. The Lord of Hosts is with thee ; the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ will be thy refuge now and for evermore.

