

## CARDINAL BOURNE'S CONGRESS ADDRESSES

THE success of the recent Ninth National Catholic Congress, held at Westminster, marking as it did the celebration of the Centenary of Catholic Emancipation in this country, lends an added interest to this handy little volume,\* which contains the pith and kernel of those principles so steadily upheld and so well expounded on innumerable public occasions by His Eminence of Westminster.

Catholics in this country have come to look with confidence and affection towards Cardinal Bourne during the twenty-six years in which he has occupied the chief ecclesiastical position amongst them. They can safely look to him not only for the maintenance of Christian principles, but also for opportuneness in the statement of them and wisdom in their application. To these qualities His Eminence adds others peculiarly suited to his position in this country, strong but intelligent feeling for England and the British Empire, and a thorough sympathy with the English character. He is a thorough Englishman, most suited to guide the destinies of the Church in England at a time when Catholics are becoming increasingly numerous and increasingly free to take an active part in the life of their country and of the Empire. To start from this trait, we cannot fail to notice in the volume before us how His Eminence identifies himself throughout with the national life in its widest manifestations, whilst on the other hand his international outlook and above all his position in the Universal Church do not permit him to remain blind to the particular limitations of the British race and to the dangers to Catholic principles which have arisen at the present stage of British civilization.

\**Congress Addresses.* By Francis Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster. (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1929; 5/-.)

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We find throughout the book a warm appreciation of the English language (which reminds us in some ways of another typical Englishman, Mr. Baldwin), and along with it a keen realisation of the mission to which that language, like that of the Roman Empire, has been called in the civilisation of the world. Having paid a glowing tribute to this 'weapon, marvellous and beautiful,' which has been fashioned out of the tongue of Shakespeare and Chaucer, His Eminence reminds us that the English language has been unworthily employed, used, as he says, quoting Cardinal Newman, by the magnificent but rebellious pens of a Milton and a Gibbon, and pressed into the service of a spirit often definitely hostile to the Catholic Church. The apostolic and national ambition which His Eminence has at heart is nothing less than the re-hallowing of that tongue by a splendid consecration to the service of Truth, so that the language which has hitherto been made to serve the disunion of the sects may become in time a powerful instrument for their reunion in the one Church of Christ. The idea seems vast, but it is not too great for Providence, and, as His Eminence said at Montreal and at Norwich, with no little foresight, it is to Canada that we may well look hopefully in the future as the bridge which God has set between the English speaking world and the Church which it has abandoned. 'Until the English language, English habits of thought, English literature—in a word, the entire English mentality—are brought into the service of the Catholic Church, the saving work of the Church is impeded and hampered' (p. 208). And of all parts of the British Empire it is to Canada that we may look with most hope for the work that will effect the change. This interesting idea will be found worked out in the Cardinal's address on 'The Apostolate by means of the English Language,' given at Norwich in 1912, and in the address at Montreal, which is very

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conveniently printed, with Cardinal Merry del Val's letter on the Cardiff address, and the 1906 speech on the Crisis of the Church in France, as an Appendix to these Congress addresses.

A like note is struck in the appeal, at the Cardiff Congress, for interest in the question of the foreign missions in their relation to the Empire. There, Catholics would be only too welcome, but when they fail it is obvious that others will take their place, and the chance for the Church of Christ is lost.

But it is good to note that His Eminence is not deceived, as so many of our fellow Catholics appear to be, by the change in the attitude of the nation towards us. One hoped, at the recent celebrations at Westminster, that the Catholics who made profession of their devotion at Westminster, who packed the Albert Hall and who applauded the social and intellectual work of their societies in the sectional meetings, realised that the attitude of friendly tolerance accorded them by the authorities and by our redoubtable 'Jupiter' itself, was no more than the outcome of the modern creed that one religion is as good as another, and that those whose temperament inclines them to make use of scarlet and mitres and infallibility as an expression of the Unknown God are entitled to do so as long as they leave other people alone. As the Archbishop of Birmingham said in his speech at the Albert Hall, the English nation has not yet realised the unique character of the claim that the Roman Church makes for Herself. Further, their attitude and that of the greater part of the modern world towards Truth is of so hazy and subjective a character that it is very difficult for the Catholic conception to enter in at all.

Of this religious indifference His Eminence is well aware, and he makes it the subject of his address at

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Plymouth in 1913—before the War, let us note. (He has had more to say since.) He touches on the interesting problem of the young man at the Universities, whose chief danger to faith lies precisely in the indifference allied to the natural decency of his fellows. He points out the fallacy of the inference so easily and fatally drawn therefrom, which lies in a disregard of the respective supernatural values of the Catholic and the 'good fellow' concerned. But in another address, that at Manchester in 1926, he sketches a possible solution of the deficiency in our higher education (the only solution it seems to us), *not* a Catholic College at either of our Universities, for such a scheme would deprive us of the unique benefits of their very special culture and atmosphere, but the setting up of a Catholic Faculty of Theology, an Institute at least, where not only the cleric but the average layman could meet with a thorough exposition of the rich doctrine and outlook of the Church in proportion to his standard of general culture. Until this is done there will always be '*crises de foi chez les jeunes,*' or at least their religious understanding will be inadequate to their secular.

But it is with the more elementary problem of education that His Eminence concerns himself repeatedly throughout these addresses. He has never ceased to lay down with remarkable patience the same principles with regard to religious teaching in the schools, nor to approach succeeding Governments with the hope of making them realise the importance to the country of the abolition of the unjust dualism of 'provided' and 'non-provided' schools. Not favouritism for us, but impartiality and fair play for all, is what he has always required. He has proposed schemes remarkable for their moderation and equable character, and he continues to insist that justice is not being done in this matter.

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It is interesting to see throughout these pages, which cover a very important number of years, what the evolution of the country has been in this matter and in its general religious and moral mentality. The present situation is summed up in the last address, at the recent Congress. The tendency in the schools is towards neutral religion, with a distinct shyness, to say the least, where the Divinity of Jesus Christ is concerned. In morality, which may not be much more lax in fact than at other times, the safeguard of principle is fast disappearing and is leaving people defenceless before all onslaughts on moral practice. It would be a platitude to repeat that the Catholic Church stands unique as a Church in its championship of Christian doctrine and Christian morality.

Remarkable passages are the references to the Roman Question, in which the Cardinal Archbishop looks forward to a settlement much on the lines of that which has now been accomplished; the address on Palestine, of which His Eminence speaks with first-hand knowledge, with a clear eye for the dangers of Zionism; and not least the interesting review of his predecessors, in which he notes the characteristic gifts which helped them to build up the Catholic Church in England. This feature is found in the address to the first Congress, held at Leeds in 1910, and is preceded by an opening address of great interest in as much as it is the prelude to the series of Catholic National Congresses which date their inception from this meeting of the C.T.S. at Manchester in 1909. We are left with an impression of the great value of these triennial Congresses for the organisation of Catholic life in England, and for awakening Catholics to the unique importance of the contribution they can make to the welfare of England and the Empire.

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