

THE MONTH.—THE CHURCH CONGRESS.

THE Unionist cause appears to be gaining strength in "dear old Scotland." At Inverness, Lord Hartington made an admirable speech, replying to Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery. The reputation of Mr. Balfour, as a statesman as well as a speaker, will not be diminished by his address at Haddington.

Speaking at Belfast, the Lord Lieutenant bore an emphatic testimony to the marked improvement that has taken place in the national and moral condition of Ireland. Lord Londonderry contrasted the failure of the attempts to govern Ireland by the "ordinary law," with the striking results which have ensued upon the steady and vigorous administration of the Crimes Act. Two years ago, he said, "crime stalked unpunished" through the disturbed districts. The machinery of the law was powerless to cope with the disorder fomented by a Party which strained every nerve to carry out the threat to "make the Government of Ireland by England impossible." Now, there are fewer cases of boycotting, and more cases of occupying derelict farms. Trade is improving.

Lord Rosebery has spoken well on Imperial Federation.

Mr. Ritchie's appeal to ratepayers to make his Act the means of local good government as well as of local self-government will not, we hope, be made in vain.

At the Chichester Diocesan Conference the following resolution (moved by Mr. W. E. Hubbard, and seconded by Mr. Justice Grantham) was carried unanimously:

That the Chichester Diocesan Association be asked to appoint a committee for the purpose of taking such steps as may be thought best to supplement the efforts of the clergy in insuring their lives, or otherwise making provision against sickness and old age. That this Conference recommends the Clergy Pensions Institution as a suitable means for making such provision.

The Rev. Francis Pigou, D.D., Vicar of Halifax, and Hon. Canon of Ripon, has accepted, we gladly note, the deanery of Chichester.

The visit of the German Emperor to Rome has been in every way a marked success.

This year's Church Congress has certainly been the largest meeting ever held: "perhaps the most successful," says the *Guardian*. "As a demonstration of the influence of the National Church, and of the deep and widespread interest in all that concerns her life and welfare, the Manchester Church Congress leaves nothing to be desired. And it demonstrated also that Church questions have now, in Lancashire at any rate, penetrated far down the strata of society. The Manchester audiences were not at all of the 'picked' description; nor was there apparently so large a clerical ingredient as has sometimes been present."

In an article on "The Congress and the Bible," the *Record* says:

The Manchester Congress will be remembered for the leading place which the great questions of Bible criticism, Bible teaching on the Future State, and Bible Inspiration occupied on its programme and in its discussions. Never before have these subjects been raised so directly or treated so boldly before such an audience. It may be stated generally—and it is a fact which we have not seen reported, a fact which no one not

actually present could notice—that the audience were what may be called more orthodox than the speakers. They listened respectfully, perhaps with half-regretful assent, to the more or less startling notions propounded before them, but every reference to faith was significantly welcomed, or whenever a speaker recalled himself by some word of personal belief in the Saviour or in Revelation, he was certain to be rewarded with the enthusiastic approval of the meeting.

In his closing address the Right Rev. President said :

To God alone must we give thanks for the high tone of thought and feeling and for the godly reunion and concord of this great assembly. The papers which have been read to us have been marked to an unusual degree by clearness of exposition and earnestness of purpose, and some of them seem to me to have carried us to the furthest outlook of thought and hope. Many of the earnest speeches addressed to us have roused in us, I trust, purposeful resolves for more entire dedication to the cause of our Divine Master, and by not a few the brilliant eloquence and heart-stirring power will be long remembered. Nor has the audience been unworthy of the speakers. It has been distinguished for the breadth and quickness of its sympathies, and at the same time for qualities which might seem, but which are not, inconsistent with these ; for its strong attachment to the old services and the ancient ways, and, especially in the working men's meetings, for its attachment to the distinctive principles of the Church of England. Dangerous days may be before us—days of difficulty, and, it may be, of stormy conflict ; but dark days they cannot be if only we carry into them the clear vision, the high resolves, and the glowing faith which have so often found expression in this Congress. I should look upon the disendowment of the Church of England as a great national calamity ; but I do not fear it. In another land I have seen what the Church of England can do without the support of endowment and privilege, and I say to you now that all is well if Christ be with us, if His life be in our hearts and His Spirit in our ministrations.

The *Record*, referring to the subject "To what extent results of historical and scientific criticism, especially of the Old Testament, should be recognised in sermons and teaching," says :

This subject gave rise, as may be supposed, to a discussion of very grave interest—the most important, as it seems to us, of the whole Congress. In that discussion, and still more in the Bishop of Manchester's opening address, we seem to hear the echo of a buried controversy and sharp divergence of opinion which occurred amongst the Bishops at the Lambeth Conference. It has been noted that the published account of the proceedings contains no report of the "Definite Teaching of the 'Faith' Committee," although the subject is referred to in the Encyclical.¹

Some of the "academic" discussions were, to say the least, not likely to do any good.²

In the course of the discussion on Church Finance, the Right Hon. C. E. Childers made an interesting and suggestive speech. He thought the time had come when the Church might claim from the State two things—the first, power, subject to certain definite principles, to regulate her own financial affairs through her own representative bodies, general, diocesan, and parochial ; and the second, authority to treat Church property as a whole.

¹ The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol at his Diocesan Conference spoke out. He said : "This is no epoch for attempting to set before the great body of English Churchmen what at the Manchester Church Congress was termed the well-established results of Bible criticism. Well-established results ! Such things have no existence save in those old and fundamental truths which modern thought is trying to explain away. I rejoice that the Church has not been authoritatively invited to consider any of these so-called results of Biblical criticism."

² "The afternoon spent on Eschatology," says the *Guardian*, "was, perhaps, worse than wasted. Its result would rather be unsettlement and uncertainty than peace of mind or well-grounded hopefulness. It is, however, a sign of the times, and one which evinces at any rate the discernment of the committee that selected it for discussion, that there was no subject all the week which commanded a more general interest. Perhaps it was not the fault of the committee altogether that so little seemed to come of it."