

LIVERPOOL AND ITS CATHOLIC CONGRESS

(By A. HILLIARD ATTERIDGE, in America).

In the days preceding the World War, long before the liners went to Havre and Southampton, Liverpool was the gate of Europe for thousands of Americans, the starting point for America for thousands of emigrants and visitors from old Europe to the New World. One may say, indeed, that the wealth and prosperity of Liverpool was largely built up out of the trans-Atlantic trade. One older department of that trade was not a creditable one either to the Liverpool merchants or their American correspondents. Liverpool had close business relations with West Africa in the later years of the eighteenth and the opening years of the nineteenth century. Liverpool ships conveyed many a cargo of slaves from Cape Coast Castle and Acora, Goree and Sierra Leone to Charleston, Savannah and New Orleans in the days when the trade in "black ivory" was still legal. The Goree Piazzas looking out on the dock front were the centre of the trade. An office near there still keeps as a relic of evil days a set of slave fetters. The Corporation of Liverpool once ordered the publication at the expense of the ratepayers of a sermon by a local Protestant minister, which proved that slavery was Scriptural, and that it was a benevolent act to convey the Negro from the darkness of a pagan land to a Christian country where he would be taught the habits of regular industry and hear the Bible read and expounded on Sunday.

When the slave trade was abolished Liverpool grew rich on the importation of cotton from the Southern States for the mills of Manchester. During the war of secession that source of supply became scanty. Liverpool did some business in blockade running, and developed a large trade with India, and the close-packed bales of cotton from Bombay became a feature of its busy quays. The first liners for America had started from Liverpool, and the first iron and steel ships built in England were launched on the Mersey. The city became one of the world's greatest ports, with its miles of docks on both sides of the broad tidal estuary. It grew rich on cotton, salt and coal, and on the emigrant and passenger trade across the Atlantic.

It is really a very modern port. It has grown up in 200 years from a small fishing town with a trifling coasting trade. In 1750 its population had expanded to 18,000. The number is now well over 750,000.

But for Catholics the most interesting fact about Liverpool is that it is the most Catholic of the large cities of England. The Catholic population of the city and its suburbs is over 200,000. And by far the greater number of these are Irish by birth or descent. At the recent Catholic Congress one speaker truly said: "If all the Irish Catholics in Liverpool were to return to Ireland there would not be very many Catholics left in the place." It was the misfortunes and sufferings of Ireland that led to the formation of this great Irish Catholic colony on the shores of the Mersey. The Irish, all through the earlier years of the nineteenth century, emigrating from their own land to seek a mere livelihood elsewhere, found their way in thousands to Liverpool, where there was plenty of work for strong men as dockers, carters, navvies, railway hands. They came in utter poverty. They had to live for long years under conditions that we can now hardly imagine. In the first half of the last century the poorer quarters of English ports and factory towns knew nothing of modern sanitation. In Liverpool the workers lived in tenement houses where each room was often the home of a family, where even the cellars were crowded. Speculative builders ran up houses in what were known as the "courts." A Liverpool court had a narrow entrance from a street, often a very poor street. This archway led to a small yard round which were built tall narrow-fronted houses, crowded from garret to cellar. The Irish famine of the forties, the "bad years," as they are still called, sent in a new exodus from the ruined villages and farms of Ireland. The overcrowding and poverty became worse than ever and the immigrants brought with them the "famine fever," typhus. The people died like flies. And the priests died for them and with them. In front of St. Patrick's Church a Celtic Cross shows on its base the names of ten of these martyrs of charity. In the Jesuit Church of St. Francis Xavier a statue of the Good Shepherd is inscribed with the words "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His flock," and below are the names of three priests who died for their people in the fever year. Typhus was endemic in Liverpool for long after, and the death-rate was forty per thousand in normal years. Since then better sanitation and improved housing conditions have made Liverpool a healthy city. Its Irish Catholic people have "made good" and prospered, and of its forty churches at least thirty-four have been built, not by any

rich benefactor, but by the generous alms of the Irish workers. To them too the city chiefly owes its crowd of colleges, schools, convents and Catholic charitable institutions.

The Catholic Congress was to have met in Liverpool in 1915, but these annual assemblies were interrupted by the war. The first of the new series of congresses met in Liverpool July 30, and was in session till August 3. The general meetings were held in St. George's Hall, the greatest public hall in the city. The sectional meetings of the various Catholic societies were held in the class-room of the Convent of Notre Dame. The convent has an immense range of buildings erected for the community, its high school for girls and its training college for teachers. Two large rooms were set aside for an exhibition of Catholic art and literature. Cardinal Bourne, Cardinal Gasquet and all the Bishops of England were present, but the most striking feature of the Congress was the number of Catholic laymen who took a leading part in the sectional meetings of the various Catholic societies. These meetings were well reported in the press, and even a local daily paper noted for its Protestant zeal gave a friendly record of the Congress and devoted a special article to Cardinal Gasquet's sermon on the Sunday—noting with surprise that the congregation had to wait to enter the church till another large congregation came out from an earlier Mass, and adding, "I am told that this is what often happens at Catholic churches."

One meeting was not reported in the press. There was only a brief mention that it had been held. I was present and I think that though it was the smallest of all the meetings it was not the least important. It was the meeting of the Catholic journalists. There were 25 men and two ladies present with the Bishop of Salford in the chair. In order to secure a frank and free discussion it was decided that there should be no press report. Rev. Father Garesche represented the American press, and there were journalists from Belgium and Holland. Mr. Edward Eyre read a brief report on the organisation of the Catholic press in America, and this became the basis of a discussion on the possible organisation of the Catholic press in England so as to link it up with the Continent and America and create a Catholic Press Agency. Finally it was decided not to adjourn to the next Congress but to a special meeting to be convened in London within the next three months. A good foundation was laid for practical work in the near future. Without breaking away from the arrangement made that there should be no report of the proceedings, I may say that there was a unanimous expression of opinion that in an international Catholic press organisation American co-operation was mainly essential to success.

S L I G O B A Y.

Father and mother pace the shore;
The children, racing on before,
Hold a red kerchief to the breeze
That sweeps in from the seas.

The breeze creeps to one heart and cries
A tale of starry destinies,
And the red flares of heaven burn,
Bidding one strayed return.

Shall the great words the west wind said
Be prisoned in a kerchief red,
And all the sunset's proud desire
Burn in a cabin fire?

Bird of my thought, fly, fly away
Ere twilight closes in the bay.
The ebbing waters bid you come:
Not here but there is home.

—SUSAN J. MITCHELL.

A few weeks ago a London newspaper stated that everybody but the English Government knew that English rule was forever at an end in Ireland. That can be said no longer. The English Government is fully aware of the fact, and hence the military and police are encouraged to wreck homes, shoot down men, women and children, set creameries and factories ablaze and give the piled up harvests to the flames. The Government of England seems determined that if Ireland must be abandoned, it will be a depopulated and ruined Ireland—a shortsighted and blundering policy. How can any Englishman, however, thick-witted, imagine that such an Ireland could ever become England's friend?—Exchange.

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