

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE CONGRESS OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS AND THE CONGRESS OF BOURGES.

An International Congress of the History of Religions was held in Paris from the 3rd to the 8th of September of this year, under the presidency of the Hon. M. Albert Réville, of the Collège de France. This congress in no wise resembled the Congresses and the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. It had even, owing to the political and religious situation in France, imposed upon itself the express limitation that the history of religions alone should be considered, and that no discussion of matters of faith or confessional interests should be permitted. This condition was faithfully observed; but we had nevertheless an echo from the great Parliament at Chicago in the shape of an animated and enthusiastic address from its president, the Hon. Charles Carroll Bonney, and of a sympathetic communication from Dr. Paul Carus, as well as a few words of reminiscence by M. Bonet-Maury. Would it have been possible, indeed, as M. Albert Réville himself observed, to have omitted from a congress of the history of religions all mention of so historical an event as the great ecumenical council of Chicago?

Numerous communications were made, both in the general assemblies and in the various sections. In the general sessions, for example, M. Goldziher spoke of the relations between Islamism and Parseeism; M. le Comte Goblet d'Alviella spoke of the historical relations obtaining between religion and ethics; M. Sénart, of Buddhism and the Yoga philosophy; MM. Jean Réville and Marillier, of the present state of instruction in the history of religions in Europe and in America; M. Marillier again,—in this instance taking the place of M. Nutt,—of the science of religions and folk-lore; and M. de Gubernatis, of the future of the science of religions.

This Congress was, so to speak, a congress of erudition exclusively. But it accomplished all that could be hoped of it, and furnished convincing proof that the original enterprise had not been entirely abandoned.

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Almost simultaneously with the Congress of the History of Religions, was held in Bourges a Congress of Catholic Clergymen, under the authorisation of the archbishop of that city, and with the benediction of the Pope. The opinions expressed regarding this Congress diverge greatly, and I have nothing to say of the proceedings of the convention. It is the fact of the reunion alone that is interesting to us. A portion of the French episcopacy, perhaps the majority of that body, seemed to have been hostilely disposed toward the undertaking, which was inaugurated by

the Abbé Lemire, deputy from the department of Nord. The idea of convening in free and open assembly the rank and file of the Catholic clergy seemed a dangerous one, and likely to lead to the emancipation of the priests from the necessary and natural tutelage of their bishops. The clergymen who attended the congress, seven or eight hundred in number, disclaimed any such design, however, and discussed in their meetings only affairs which touched their particular mission, and did not wish to be understood as desirous of ventilating questions of theological instruction or ecclesiastical discipline.

To outsiders the cardinal point of interest involved is whether this first Congress is to have a successor, or, in other words, whether a periodical congress of the Catholic clergy will be permitted in the future, and become an established institution. If it is, then a new force and a new organ in church matters will have been created. But every organisation of this kind expresses itself in definite functions and is bound to grow and expand; and while it is impossible to foresee exactly what its ultimate shape will be, it may be safely predicted that there will in such an event be many significant changes in the church affairs of France.

PARIS, September.

LUCIEN ARRÉAT.

FRENCH BOOKS ON PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE.

The French publishing house of Félix Alcan announces a series of expository works on the systems of the *Great Philosophers*. It will constitute in its totality a voluminous history of philosophy, with emphasis placed upon dominating ideas and theories conceived as centers of intellectual and spiritual radiation. The editor of the series is Dr. Clodius Piat, Professor in the École des Carmes. M. Piat is an abbé, and this fact will doubtless lend color both to the character of the series and to the selections made for treatment. As for his own choice, there is nothing of this apparent, he being the author of the initial volume, on *Socrates*, a philosopher whose doctrines he has expounded in a simple and intelligent manner. (Pages, 270. Price, 5 francs.) The second volume of the series has also appeared and is by Théodore Ruysen, sometime Fellow in the École Normale and Professor of Philosophy in the Lyceum of Limoges. M. Ruysen's book is the work of a scholar; and we have been unable on hasty examination to discern anything approaching to a theological bias in his treatment of the great German philosopher *Kant*. (Pages, 391. Price, 5 francs.) Two other volumes are announced for immediate publication, one on *Avicenna* by Baron Carra de Vaux, Professor of Arabic in the Catholic Institute of Paris, and another on *Malebranche* by M. Henri Joly, editor of the series of *Biographies of Saints* which has been noticed in *The Open Court*. The remaining thinkers to whom volumes are to be devoted in this series are Saint Anselm, Saint Augustine, Descartes, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Bonaventura, Maine de Biran, Pascal, Spinoza, and Duns Scotus. It is interesting to note the increased interest which is being taken in educated Catholic circles in the study of the history of philosophy, and it is to be hoped that the above-mentioned books will find numerous readers among their followers.

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The same publishing house issues another *Historical Collection of the Great Philosophers* which is of a different stamp. It contains the excellent translations of Aristotle and Plato, by the late M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire and Victor Cousin; critical studies of Socrates and Plato, by M. Alfred Fouillée and M. Paul Janet; and studies in Greek science, by M. Paul Tannery. The latest volume to appear