

**THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL
POSITION OF CATHOLICS IN
ENGLAND: AN ADDRESS,
DELIVERED TO THE CATHOLIC
MALINES, AUGUST 21, 1863**

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The religious and social position of Catholics in England: an address, delivered to the Catholic Malines, August 21, 1863 by H. E. Cardinal Wiseman

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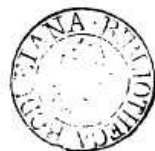
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H. E. CARDINAL WISEMAN

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THE
RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL POSITION
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AN ADDRESS
DELIVERED TO
THE CATHOLIC CONGRESS OF MALINES,
AUGUST 21, 1863.

BY H. E. CARDINAL WISEMAN.

Translated from the French.

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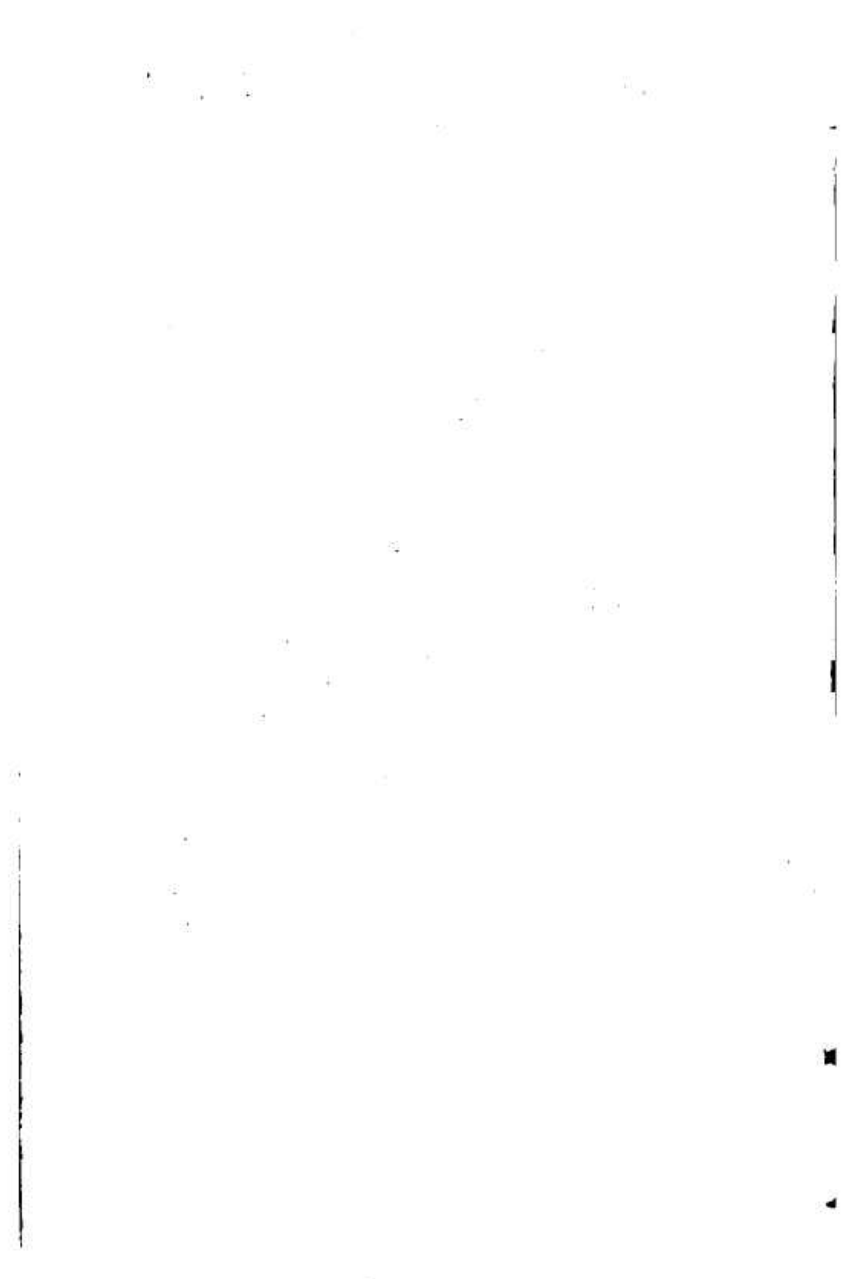
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ONE of the subjects proposed to be treated in the great "Catholic Congress," held at Malines, in the month of August last, was the situation of Catholics in different countries.

England, so variously and pleasingly allied with Belgium, could not fail to take a prominent place in this class of topics; and it naturally fell to the author of this Address to appear as the representative of English Catholics.

The speech, as taken down by the shorthand writers for the *Compte-rendu* of the meeting, has been corrected, and in some places expanded; since, though it occupied a long time in delivery, the speaker found it necessary to compress his thoughts occasionally. Delay in publication has been caused by waiting for the French proofs, and by ill health.

London, December 11th, 1863.



THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL POSITION

OF

CATHOLICS IN ENGLAND.

MY LORD CARDINAL, MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

If practised and accomplished orators have felt constrained to express to you the emotion excited within them, on standing in the presence of this immense and majestic assembly, with what apprehension must I, a stranger (so far as a Catholic can be a stranger in the midst of Catholics), in feeble health, and speaking a language not my own, approach the task of treating, before you, a subject no less vast than delicate. I can assure you that in doing so I fear to appear rash and even presumptuous. One thing, however, reassures me : I do not come here as an orator, nor do I aspire to win the palm of eloquence. I am a simple reporter, who comes with a few plain figures to occupy your attention, or, it may be to weary you, for a few moments. I am about simply to relate to you facts

which I believe to be worthy of the interest and sympathy of all Catholics ; and the kind reception which you have already given me assures me of your patient indulgence.

I have undertaken to speak to you of the religious, civil, and social condition of the Catholics of England. But, before I enter upon my subject, permit me to say that, far from coming here to teach, I am come, on the contrary, to learn and to admire. Whenever I visit Belgium, as I occasionally do, I am amazed at the sight of all the beautiful and useful works which distinguish this country, and render it great, notwithstanding the narrowness of its territory. I must even confess that I am somewhat humbled for my country, although I cease not to thank God for what He is doing there for His Church.

When I contemplate your magnificent cathedrals, and the ceremonies continually celebrated within them ; when I look at the episcopate of your country, at those illustrious prelates, so exemplary for their piety, their devotedness, and their zeal ; when I consider this numerous body of clergy, so indefatigable in their ministry and in their defence of religion, labouring indefatigably, day and night, for the welfare of their flocks ; when, lastly, I behold

this marvellous assembly of Belgian Catholics, both laymen and ecclesiastics, united for an object which is truly sublime, I confess that I feel overwhelmed by the noble and consoling spectacle of Catholic Belgium, especially at this moment, which seems to put the finishing stroke to her religious glory.

You are aware, gentlemen, that Catholicism in England is in a progressive state. This is a truth not only recognised by all the members of the Catholic Church, but admitted also by those who do not belong to her. Everybody in England seems to acknowledge that Catholicism is daily gaining ground upon Protestantism. In fact, this admission is the ground of many important proceedings on the part of our religious adversaries. Gigantic societies and institutions are founded for the avowed purpose of impeding our growth ; and speeches in public assemblies sound the alarm, and strive to excite the national mind by this topic. Still a few facts will enable you better to judge of the importance of this progress, and these facts will consist of simple statistics carefully framed. There is no eloquence more conclusive, or more persuasive, than that of figures, on a subject like this ; and all fear of exaggeration will be thus entirely avoided.

We may fix on three epochs, each of which