CHRIST AND DEMOCRACY

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BY

CHARLES WILLIAM STUBBS, M.A.,

VICAR OF GRANBOROUGH,

Author of "Village Politics," "The Land and the Labourers," etc.

"τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν χριστός."

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1884.

DEDICATED

TO

THOSE CHURCHMEN,

WHETHER CONFORMIST OR NONCONFORMIST,

WHO

SHARING THE BELIEF

THAT

OF THE UNSOLVED PROBLEMS OF SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

CHRISTIANITY STILL HOLDS THE KEY,

FIND FOR THE PRESENT,

IN THE COMMON WORK OF SOCIAL REFORM,

THE TRUEST MISSION AND MOST SPLENDID DESTINY

OF

THE CHURCH AND DEMOCRACY.

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NOTICE.

THE first two sermons in this volume were preached before the University of Cambridge, in the writer's turn as Select Preacher, in the October Term 1881; the third sermon was preached before the University of Oxford, on the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor. Of the addresses, three were delivered under the auspices of the Guild of S. Matthew, an association whose chief object is declared to be "to get rid by every possible means of the existing prejudices, especially on the part of 'Secularists,' against the Church, her sacraments, and doctrines, and to endeavour to 'justify God to the People.'" Of the remaining sermons, four have already appeared in a little book published in 1880, entitled "The Mythe of Life," which is now out of print. The addresses and sermons, though by no means intentionally forming a connected series, are in fact all bound together by one leading idea,—the duty of the Church of Christ, in the present democratic age, of declaring, by a somewhat wider range of Christian teaching, the Divine purpose, by which "in the dispensation of the fulness of times" all things shall be "gathered together in Christ," whether Politics or Morals; whether Art, or Poetry, or Science; "whether things which are in heaven, or things which are in earth."

I.

CHRIST AND DEMOCRACY.*

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification."—1 Cor. xiv. 10.

WHAT has English Christianity to say to Democracy? Has the national Church "lost touch" with the people?

These are two questions which seem to demand an answer from any one who believes, as I do most firmly, that among the many "voices" of the present of which the Church is constrained to know the meaning, there is no voice more "significant" than that of the people. It is, at any rate, in the hope of suggesting some partial answer to these questions that I venture to invite you to consider with me, in the two sermons which it is my duty to deliver in this place, the character of that influence which the democratic movement of our day tends to exercise over the spirit of national religion.

It is obvious that within the limits to which I am confined I can treat so wide a subject only in the most general outline. Its importance, however, cannot, I think, well be exaggerated. The social forces of Democracy are forces with which in the future, both in their influence for good as well as evil, the English churchman, no less than the English politician, must of necessity reckon.

It is now fifty years since De Tocqueville described Democracy as a great tidal wave sweeping over Europe, and likened it in its overwhelming force, and the certainty of its onward movement, to one of those great geological changes which have taken place in the surface of the earth. Certainly there is no sign as yet of any ebb in that wave.

* Preached before the University of Cambridge.