

THE CATHOLIC PRESS IN OTHER LANDS

The following paper was read at the recent Catholic Congress at Plymouth by Miss Irene Hernaman:—

The propaganda of the good Press in France is carried on by two important societies, the Bonne Presse, of Paris, and the Action Populaire, of Rheims. The Maison de la Bonne Presse was founded by an Assumptionist Father in the year 1873; he launched the first Catholic newspaper in France, *La Croix*, which has now the fourth largest circulation in the country. We have all heard of how the infidel Government in 1908 laid hands on the property of the Bonne Presse, and of how the Catholics of France, from the poorest to the wealthiest, subscribed three and a-half million francs to buy it back. The Bonne Presse published upwards of twenty-five papers and magazines; there are also stories price sixpence each (their circulation during 1912 has doubled), and larger books for parish libraries, while a special department is devoted to cinematograph films, of which 10,000 metres can now be hired. The methods of distributing this mass of literature are admirable; forty-one departments have their cantonal committees; in many places the organisation rests in the hands of the Ligue Patriotique des Femmes Françaises—the Catholic Women's League of France, whose boast it is that they are the workwomen of the good press. In so short a paper it is impossible to give

Any Idea of Their Activities;

many of them personally meet the newspaper trains every morning; others, business women, take round their bundle of papers before going to work. At Versailles, on the eve of the municipal elections of 1912, the press committee addressed and distributed 6000 newspapers in twenty-four hours—250 in an hour! The League has 250 circulating libraries, in which excellent work it is assisted by the Œuvres des Bibliothèques Catholiques at Paris, which makes a donation of thirty books to struggling parish libraries. The Bonne Presse receives valuable spiritual help from the 100,000 members of the League of the Ave Maria, who say one 'Hail Mary' every day for the good Press, and many priests offer Mass monthly for the same intention. The Action Populaire is so well known to English Catholics that it only needs brief mention. Its numerous publications range from the weighty *Année Sociale Internationale*—a mine of information for the social student—to a host of tracts on every conceivable subject written by experts. The latest comer, a monthly magazine, in its one year of existence, has gained 8000 readers. The Children of Mary and other confraternities are taught that they cannot consider themselves abreast with the times unless they assist the apostolate of the good press. In three towns they have succeeded in almost eradicating the anti-clerical paper.

The German Volksverein

is the model of all press organisations. Founded in 1890, numbers over 700,000. By an elaborate system of pro-

vincial delegates, managers, and committees, the Volksverein keeps in touch with its members while encouraging them to support their local Catholic press. At the central office a literary staff, all possessing degrees of political economy or theology, edit and prepare the seven magazines; one of the largest, *Soziale Studentenblätter* for university students, has a circulation of 10,000. The output of pamphlets in 1912 showed an increase of eight millions over the preceding year. Another important work is the supplying of articles on apologetic and on social questions to 400 Catholic weeklies. There are, roughly speaking, about 250 Catholic dailies in Germany; good press propaganda is carried on by the Augustverein, a society of over 1000 Catholic journalists, and by the Frauenbund and the Catholic Women Teachers' League; the two last publish literature, and distribute leaflets, exposing the dangers of the bad press, while the flourishing Borromeanverein is responsible for many hundreds of libraries. Another useful institution is the Central Information Bureau, which in 1911 denounced 715 scandals against priests and nuns.

The Piusverein of Austria

closely resembles the Volksverein; its object is to assist Catholic papers out of its funds. It was founded in 1906, at a moment when Catholic journalism was at its lowest ebb. In two months it gained 45,000 members; in 1910 the number had risen to 125,000. There are now two important dailies and some 90 weeklies. The Piusverein issues thousands of leaflets urging the importance of press propaganda; the Press Bureau sends articles to Catholic papers, and even supplies sermons on the apostolate of the press. The Volksbund started in 1910 and has lately been federated to the Piusverein; it seeks to educate its members, who are chiefly working-people, in Catholic principles respecting social problems; in 1911 it numbered 14,547 associates. The Christian syndicates have sixteen papers.

The Catholic Alliance of Hungary,

founded eighteen years ago, has its press section, which actively combats the bad press and assists popular libraries. The People's Catholic Alliance is educational in its aim; every month it distributes pamphlets to its 300,000 members, who are ardent supporters of the good press. There are also several excellent libraries under the management of the Catholic Women's League and Mary-Elizabeth Society; one of the latter has 3000 volumes in five languages for the educated classes. Catholic press propaganda in Hungary has to overcome enormous obstacles; the majority of the newspapers and libraries are under Jewish and Masonic control, and the Catholics, weakened by Calvinist environment, lack that enlightened grip of their religion which is so vitally important in the present day.

Catholics in Poland,

in spite of religious persecution, are very earnest over their press; the Catholic Association of Posniac, which

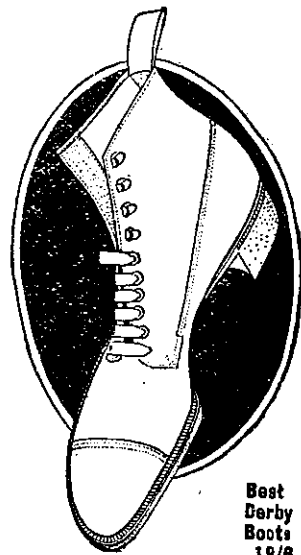
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