

The first thing that strikes us, even though we are used to things being done on a large scale, is the attendance. The question of accommodation is a serious one with the Catholic congress. Indeed, halls large enough are only to be had if specially built. Seven or eight other halls are usually also secured for the meeting of the various societies which hold their annual conventions at this time. As many as ninety thousand persons have come into the convention town as visitors; the number of resident attendants varies, of course with the population and Catholicity of the place. And right here it should be noted that the congresses do not necessarily always go to the largest towns, or to those that have the largest Catholic population and so could give them best setting. Local effort is stimulated and Catholicity strengthened by these gatherings wherever they take place, and these considerations outweigh all others in determining the selection of a town.

Another remarkable thing about these congresses is that they run on without a hitch. Here in America a meeting called for eight o'clock seldom gets down to business before nine. Here with the best of transportation and every other kind of service, there is always some delay in getting to the convention, always some trouble about getting a seat in the hall, or hotel accommodation or something else—all bound to irritate the visitor and divert his attention from the main point which brought him to the convention. In Germany as many as seventy to three hundred and forty workmen's associations have sent delegates to the congress; twenty and thirty thousand men have paraded and held their own meetings, to say nothing of the numerous other societies that send large delegations to the congress, but—all goes without a hitch. Americans may well mark how this is done.

A central committee for the congress was instituted in 1868, but during

The Days of the Kulturkampf

its work was entrusted to Prince Lowenstein. The selection of Lowenstein was most fortunate. His was indeed a rare genius for organisation. The delegates of one congress had hardly reached their homes, when he was in their towns to see that the resolutions that had been adopted were adhered to, and to prepare for the next congress. When in 1898 Lowenstein became a Dominican, the Central committee was revived. It consists of nineteen members, of whom fifteen are permanent, chosen to represent the widest possible interests of the congress. This is why the congress is not only always thoroughly awake, talking and acting to the point, but even anticipates attacks and problems. The other four members are always the presidents of the last two congresses and the president and vice-president of the local committee of the next congress. This local committee, working through perhaps a dozen sub-committees, looks after the speakers, publicity, attendance, accommodation, finance, building decorations, and all details of the meeting. The moment the congress opens these two bodies give way to a managing board, which the congress itself appoints at its first session. Besides this main committee the congress also appoints committees on the liberty of the Church, social questions, Christian charity, Christian education, etc.

They are direct, clear, definite, practical, sensible, they avoid 'sweeping generalisations, pious exaggerations, vague sentimentality.' They are the work of specialists, whose general knowledge of principles has been brought down to particulars. Thus is the 'social-sense' cultivated among German Catholics. The congresses are

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that the Volksverein 'drills and drills persistently' during the year. No efforts are wasted. The Volksverein does not clash with the hundred other German Catholic societies; it works with them and helps them. It does not absorb them; it promotes their growth; it sets a pace for them. That the whole German Catholic body should be one alert and intelligent social organism is the aim of this magnificent 'legacy of Windhorst.'

The meetings of the congress are admirably adapted to facilitate work and create enthusiasm. To begin with there are the Masses, the processions. These are followed by a great demonstration meeting to which everyone is admitted. These force on the general mind the conclusions arrived at in the meetings, which are only open to members. Here the real work of the congress is done. The speeches are limited both as to length and themes—no time and energy are wasted. A 'leit-motif,' a central theme, one single idea is made dominant, and all the speakers must keep to this. Publicity need not be solicited. The German newspapers, Catholic, Protestant, Socialist, all have their representatives on the ground. The proceedings are published and distributed gratis to the members of the congress and at a low price to all others. The resolutions adopted at each congress aim to suggest new work and further develop the tasks already in hand.

And all this is done by the laity. Priests and bishops attend, but they have no direct hand in the work. Fifty years of plain speaking and aggressive doing have not been marred by a single term or act of disloyalty. Prayer, a deep, tender piety, a wholesome faith mark the proceedings.

German Catholicity was Great when Persecuted; it is greater in its days of triumph. But there is a perpetual congress in Germany designed to keep alive the enthusiasm engendered at the annual conventions, an institution which reduces Catholicity to everyday life for Germans. This is Windhorst's legacy. His last efforts, as an old man of eighty years, were directed to drafting the statutes and fixing the purposes of the Volksverein. That was in 1890. In 1892 it had 120,000 members; in 1894 400,000 members, and two years ago 610,800—and only adult men are eligible. What a force! And why? 'To meet the new foe,' the grave errors and revolutionary tendencies that threaten the foundations of public and private life. 'Let us unite and form one great coalition which shall comprise all parts of the Fatherland. This union must see to organising our forces and increasing our means. It must systematically direct and increase our activity in popular meetings. Thus our adversaries will find even the remotest village prepared for their advent; and errors will be at once confronted by the power of truth throughout the country. Every member ought, therefore, to work for the objects of the association, first in his private life, then in public by writings and speeches.'

The aim of the Volksverein is not only to protect from false doctrines, but to promote and to put into practice the right principles which underlie all social questions.' Thus wrote Windhorst. But the Volksverein found that it had not merely to defend Catholicity against the inroads of the Social Democrats, but to develop an interest in social work, nay, even to ground men in the religious principles upon which Christian social theory rests. To succeed an organisation had to be created and provision made for a wide and almost gratis distribution of a good popular literature. Both were built up.

There is a Central Board of Thirty-three Members.

This board appoints a Director for each State or diocese. The Director appoints a manager for each town or group of towns. The manager appoints a promoter for each of twenty or thirty families. He is generally a man who has some influence over the men in his group; and it is he that rounds up the stragglers, if there be any, that distributes the literature and collects the annual dues, which are only nominal. Three or four times a year the promoters meet to discuss their work and report their progress to the manager. Thus we might go on to analyze the working of the Volksverein from the promoter, the nerves, to the brain, the Central Board of thirty-three members which sits at Munchen-Gladbach, and what a brain that is!

Salaried specialists in economics, literature, apologetics and all that has to do with the Volksverein, are there devoting all their time to the work. Then there are three score clerks and statisticians, the librarians, the printers, the binders and mailing clerks. Then there is the Question Bureau. A workman has a difficulty about his insurance. He goes to Munchen-Gladbach. Someone wants material for a lecture. He goes to Munchen-Gladbach. A student is in distress, or a controversialist is caught on the horns of a dilemma. They go to Munchen-Gladbach. The specialists—and no one who is not a specialist can become part of the brain of Munchen-Gladbach—are there to meet the demands of all.

Fortunate is he who can go there himself. There is the library well stocked in social and economic literature. There are the lectures. And on every hand are the experts ready to give you their time and attention.

The Volksverein Does Not Wait to be Pushed.

It anticipates the actions of its adversaries. Someone reports that atheistic Socialists are besetting a certain village. At once the town is inundated with Christian literature, lecturers go down, money is advanced, and every effort is made to start the Volksverein. Thus a Catholic phalanx is formed to withstand the attack. Not only does the central Bureau provide lectures at Munchen-Gladbach, but it arranges for lecture courses in other places. It founds Catholic libraries. It helps parishes.

It co-operates with worthy undenominational enterprises, excepting, of course, those of the social atheistic democrats.

Great as is the work of the Volksverein we have thus far outlined, its literary activity is greater. A magazine goes to every member eight times a year. Four hundred Catholic papers are furnished with social and apologetic articles every week. There is a monthly magazine devoted to the direction of men's, women's, and young men's clubs. A series of pamphlets deals in a popular manner with questions like insurance, tariffs, education, labor unions, social democracy. Another series deals with apologetic subjects; another still supplies material for lectures. Then there are the pamphlets instructing managers and promoters. Fifteen million publications are issued every year, and not one descends to mediocrity in style, or in manner of treatment.

A report from Baltimore says definite shape has been given to plans for the building of a new structure, to be known as the Cardinal Gibbons Memorial Hall, at the Catholic University, Washington, D.C., to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Cardinal's consecration to the priesthood.