

THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT ABROAD

FORCES THAT ARE SHAPING THE FUTURE

The second annual general meeting of the Birmingham branch of the Catholic Social Guild was held at the Bishop's House, Bath street, Birmingham, on January 31. After other business had been transacted the president of the social guild, the Right Rev. Mgr. Parkinson, addressed the meeting on 'The Social Movement in Other Countries.'

When (said he) I promised to address you upon this subject, I did not realise the immensity of the task I had undertaken. It is remarkable, too, how very silent the press of England keeps upon the saner forms of social movement outside this country. In our papers we read little of the general social upheaval that is gradually becoming more apparent. It is making itself evident in the legislature and in civic life, and while conscious of difficulties, is advancing both on Catholic and non-Catholic lines. The predominating feature of the Catholic movement is its earnest and religious spirit. Its action is particularly noticeable in Germany, America, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Chili, Mexico, and Ireland, and it is curious to notice how in the different countries various phases of social decadence loom, dwarfing all others, and call for concerted action. In Germany, the social movement is hampered by the enormous pressure of Socialism. In America housing and sweating demand attention. In New York more rooms are inhabited which are hygienically unfit for human habitation than in any other city of the world. In France pornography and the white slave traffic are receiving particular attention, whilst Italy is faced with a difficult emigration problem.

It is noticeable that the social movement is becoming more religious in its tone; all social reformers agree that the integrity of the family must be maintained, and everything should be directed to its development. Everywhere, and particularly in Catholic countries, great effort is being made towards bringing Catholics into close professional organisation. This movement is described by the term 'Syndicalism.' Members of the various trades and professions must face difficulties by forming into groups. Social action at the present stage of our progress converges on the workman, for his case is most urgent; yet we have gone astray not only in the lower, but in every class. It is hard to realise how

Far Behind England

the workman in other countries is placed in regard to labor. In this country we have not the unsatisfactory conditions of child labor which obtain elsewhere; at a recent congress one of the cries was to agitate for the 'semaine Anglaise'—the English week—that is, rest on Saturday and Sunday.

The need of co-operative organisation is widely recognised, and also the need of insurance against invalidity and unemployment.

Another point of vital importance is the want of leaders—men capable of pointing the way, of instructing others on these economic questions. Catholics look always first to their clergy, and that they may be ready to meet this want social science is being taught in the seminaries of France, Spain, Italy, Ireland, and England. Last, and not by any means the least, is the influence of women. Their assistance is acknowledged by leading authorities as essential, not merely ornamental, but necessary, and this is being carried into practice in France, Belgium, United States, and New Zealand.

Let us now review the means by which these changes are being effected in different countries. The first, and one by which most enthusiasm is being created, is the congresses. In France, Austria, Belgium, and Holland they have the 'semaine sociale,' or social week, and the *modus operandi* is to send during the week lecturers into various cities and towns expounding the principles of true reform. Socialism is usually not directly attacked, but the Catholic spirit, the true social spirit, is inculcated, so that the Socialists may see we have more practical ends in view than their illusory Utopia. The aim is not destructive, but constructive. Study circles are carried on extensively,

whilst in many countries a section of the press deals exclusively with Catholic matters, especially in the direction of social reform.

In Germany

Bishop Ketteler was the pioneer of the movement. During fifty years the country has been transformed from an agricultural to an industrial nation. In the half-century from 1860 to 1910 the population jumped from 37,000,000 to 64,000,000, and the workers reached a total of 34,000,000—men, women, and children who are, or may be, influenced by social action not under our purview. The women alone amongst the Socialists of Germany number 150,000, and they are more vehement in their clamors than the men against the present social order. Much work is before the Catholic social reformer in Germany, for not only are the Socialists numerous, but their funds are great; their income during 1910 was £4,000,000, whilst the reserve fund totals £3,000,000.

The Christian Trade Unions include some 300,000 members; but this is far too small. Great stress is being laid upon the education of the working man. The elite of the working men have more influence over their fellows than have those of a higher class. The directing organisation, the 'Volksverein,' or the 'People's Society,' is the finest of its kind in the world. During 1909-10 there were 650,000 members. The society held 50,000 conferences and distributed 20,700,000 books, pamphlets, and leaflets.

Another feature of German action is the 'Gorres'—an association busying itself in regard to the middle classes.

In Austria a recent congress was attended by 26,000 men. There are in that country 5,600,000 women workers, of whom not less than 445 per 1000 are married. It can be easily understood that the conditions under which home work is carried on are very bad, and the leaders regard an international league of women as a great desideratum.

In 1909 the Hungarian Catholic social reformers numbered 225,000 men. They assist in the diffusion of literature and undertake the legal defence of the working classes, and, formed into 277 groups, they in 1910 held 2500 meetings. The congress in 1909 at Czezed was attended by 70,000 persons.

Switzerland is the Rival of Germany

for priority in social work, and the keynote of action in that land may be summed in the words of Decurtins: 'To build up society on Christian principles, not by industrial competition and unrestrained capitalism.'

With the Swiss education is a passion, not merely elementary, but higher, not reserved to the wealthy, but obligatory on all. More is expended upon it than upon the army. The result is that they have arrived at a state of social progress we might well envy. It is worthy of note that Catholic Fribourg educationally takes the leading position in this country. We read of Switzerland: 'She has elaborated for herself a system of continuation schools that might be taken as a model by all Europe—briefly, no boy is free from educational supervision until at the age of nineteen he enters the citizen army for his obligatory training, and no girl is free till she has passed through two years of domestic training.'

Belgium is probably more advanced than most countries in social matters, and can show the most complete system of charitable work. They have practically no unemployment, and there is a difficulty arising from the question of bad Catholics. Insurance has made great strides, whilst agricultural syndicalism is more extended in Belgium than elsewhere in Europe. Father Rutten has done much to establish social guilds. One of the features of social reform is the intellectual development of those interested in social work. A miner speaking at the International Congress in Paris raised a cultured audience to the point of enthusiasm by his vigorous and masterly style of dealing with his subject. We, too, should aim at educating our workers to be ready, clear, and argumentative orators.

Activity in France.

France is a country of which we should be proud. We know little through the press of what happens