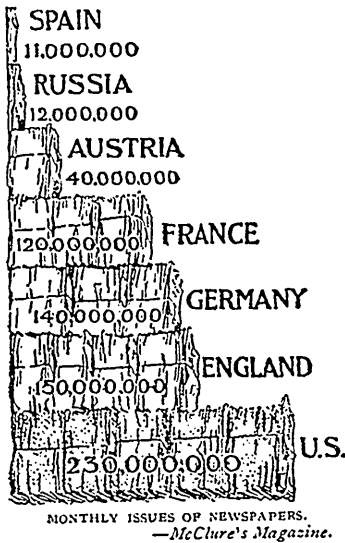


THE RELIGIOUS PRESS.*



A GAUGE OF INTELLIGENCE.

The circulation of newspapers is about as good a criterion of the intelligence and progress of a people as can be conceived. The McClure's Magazine, by means of a chart drawn to scale, indicates this in a very graphic manner. Spain, with a population of 17,000,000, circulates 11,000,000 copies per month. Russia, with a population of about 120,000,000, has only 12,000,000 copies per month, showing that Colossus of the north to be the most illiterate of all the great nations. Great Britain, with a population of 40,000,000, has a monthly circulation of 150,000,000, which makes her relatively stand at the very head of the whole world, with nearly four papers per week for every man, woman, and child. The United States, with a population of about 75,000,000, has only about three papers per head, and Germany a less number per head.

The times have changed since the father of Mary Read objected to her marrying Benjamin Franklin because there was already a paper published in Boston and another in Philadelphia, and he did not think there was room for a third.

Many persons express great alarm

* A part of this article was contributed by the Editor to the Jubilee number of the Northwestern Christian Advocate, Chicago.

lest we shall be drowned in the flood of books which pour from the press, but these are as a rill compared with the tide of journals and papers that inundate the world. Mr. Dana computes that about 10,000,000 books are sold every year in the United States, but the 4,337,000,000 newspapers and periodicals contain as much material as two billion books as large as "David Harum;" that is, about two hundred times more matter is published in the newspapers than in book form.

Some of these papers are sensational or silly, some of them are venal or vile; but most of them perform an important service in educating the public mind, in moulding thought, in imparting useful information. The influence of a free press in a free State has been overwhelmingly for good. Watchful with more than the hundred eyes of Argus and strong with more than the hundred arms of Briareus, it has been vigilant in detecting wrong and bold and brave in resisting oppression. Like the infant Hercules strangling the serpents around his cradle, it grapples with the vices that menace the commonwealth.

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It is of infinite importance that the Church of God should make wide and wise use of the press. Infidelity and vice have used it largely to destroy the foundations of the Christian faith or debauch the souls and bodies of the young and unwary. Voltaire and Paine and Ingersoll have endeavoured "to sap a solemn creed with solemn sneer;" and the spawn of the gutter press, like the frogs of Egypt, fill the houses and the bedchambers, not to say the beds and the ovens and kneading-troughs.

The Church has not been unmindful of the call of duty; nor disobedient to the heavenly vision. Foremost in this wise use of printers' ink has been the Methodist Church. More than any other man John Wesley anticipated the cheap press, which has been such an incalculable benefit to mankind. "So far as we can ascertain," says Dr. Punshon, "the first man to write for the million, and to publish so cheaply as to make his works accessible, was John Wesley. Those who rejoice in the cheap press, in the cheap serial, in the science-made-easy, which, if he so choose, keep the working man of the present day abreast of the highest thought and culture of the age, ought never