

scribed the shower of gold that would fall into the laps of those who were bold enough to try their fortunes in the Southern Seas. To clinch his argument he said "the rivers are so full of fish that it was no unusual sight to see the wild pigs catching and eating them." When the gallant Lieut-Col. sat down, the Chairman essayed to try his hand at painting the lily white. Trout up to 37lbs could be caught with rod and line. Kingfish ran up to 80lbs, and Sir James asked his audience to close their eyes and imagine the sport an 80lb fish would give an angler on the road and line. The next advertiser was the Hon. A. M. Myers, member of the New Zealand Ministry, 1915-19. According to this gentleman, unemployment was unknown in New Zealand. Free access to land was given to people of comparatively small means. Failure in N.Z. was next to impossible, or words to that effect. We have no wish to hear New Zealand cried down, but we hope that in the hurricane of international advertising about to commence the Publicity board will neither overlook nor submerge the statement of the Government Statistician that "in New Zealand one person in every seven is living in conditions which at the worst are distinctly dangerous and at the best are unfavorable to the maintenance of a proper standard of health and decency." There is an old proverb which counsels us to tell the truth and shame the devil. Let us hope that the Publicity board will paste that proverb on its office wall, and that when it is designing picture posters it will look at it often and ponder it deeply.

The Guild System

Socialists who have been disillusioned as to the Utopia proposed for them by German dreamers now and then turn their attention to the past and ask themselves if the revival of the ancient guilds would help to solve their problems and free them from the dangers of the Servile State, into which all the victories won by Labor seem to be leading the worker by the pathway of compromise. As Mr. Belloc points out in his famous book, when united action and persistent agitation win for the men better hours, better homes, better wages, and better treatment, the result seems invariably to be a loss of economic and political independence which, did they but realise it, is not made up for by their material victories. The point is precisely there: their gains are material, and their losses are on a higher plane. The old guilds certainly gave men independence and dignity, and it is not astonishing that thinkers should turn towards them when they realise how they are losing these priceless things in the grasp of the modern Servile State, which is the State of the present day. No doubt the guilds originally sprang from the need men felt of uniting their forces to defend their interests. There were guilds of a sort in pagan times, but it was under the influence of Christianity that the medieval guilds acquired their power and their beneficent influence. In truly Christian times each guild had its own patron saint and its chaplain and its religious aspects, just as Hibernians have in our time. And all the workings of

the guild were inspired and quickened by Christian faith and by Christian charity. When men talk of what the guilds did and of the chances of reviving them, it is important to remember that fact; and to consider that in our time, when States are frankly atheistic, and when religion means nothing for the masses, to revive the guilds would be but to bring back the lifeless skeletons of the ancient institutions. Moreover, the men of the ancient guilds were not, as the men are to-day, always insisting on their rights, for they also recognised their duties, and religion moved them to fulfil them conscientiously.

Religion the Mainspring

Without religion it is impossible for men to regain the honest, unselfish outlook of the ancient workers. What hope is there of persuading the average worker of our time that it is verging on usury to seek for profit beyond what is sufficient to maintain a man and his family in the decent affluence which befits their station in life, whatever it may be? That, which is the standard set by Leo XIII. is precisely the condition with which the men of medieval times were content. They regarded usury and the seeking after hoarded wealth as something wrong and sinful. Christianity taught the rich that they were but trustees and that they had certain binding obligations towards their poor neighbors—a matter which troubles the consciences of but few capitalists of our day. In the old regime to overreach one's neighbor in dealing was dishonest. It is still the same, but unhallowed custom has made it a respectable sort of robbery. In the old days the cost of production and the maintenance of the producer were the factors which determined price: to-day price is determined by an estimation of how much can be extracted from the pockets of the buyers. We know of an instance in which a New Zealand lady went into a drapery establishment and asked the price of a fur coat. She was told that it was eighty guineas. As she turned away the vendor came down to sixty-five, and finally to fifty. In this case, which is a type of many others, there was, in plain words, an attempt to rob that customer of thirty guineas. And yet the proprietor of the establishment held his head high, and would resent being called what he was at heart—a thief. Against such sharp dealing the old guilds made a determined stand. They had heavy fines which they imposed on any guildsmen who tried to "have" customers by such fraudulent practices. All misrepresentation of the value of goods, all falsification, all efforts at passing off shoddy as the real thing were heavily punished. The old worker took a pride in his work and did not try to extort unjust gains from his customers. Compare that state of things with what obtains commonly now, and ask yourself what hope there is of making the guilds what they once were?

Medieval Methods

Mr. Maynard, in a very enlightening article in the *Catholic World*, thus tells us how prices were fixed in medieval years:—"In the early days of the crafts the customer would engage the artificer to do a

certain piece of work, paying him not by the day or the hour, but for the completed article, for which the customer would supply the material. Thus a man who wanted a coat would take his cloth to the tailor and bargain for the finished article, or the wood to the carpenter who would undertake to supply a table. Later, with the development of trade, craftsmen made coats or tables, as they had time, for prospective customers, thus maintaining a regular supply of work. They began to employ journeymen and indentured apprentices. For the work done the bill would be made out somewhat as follows:

Journeyman's or 'prentice's time (charged at actual cost). Plus Master's time (at a higher rate but not more than double). Cost of material and incidental charges.

No profit was made on the material, except when there was some small amount to cover the time spent in purchase, and there was no profit on the labor of the journeyman. To have charged such would have seemed usurious to the master. Perhaps the spirit of the crafts may best be described in the words of a proclamation issued during the reign of Edward III: "That so no knavery, false workmanship, or deceit shall be found in any manner in the said mysteries, for the honor of the good folks of the said mysteries and for the common profit of the people." [Mysteries here mean guilds.] The guilds grew powerful, and their strict regulations and their sterling honesty kept them powerful. Mr. Maynard describes how they worked, thus: "If to the world at large the guilds brought the certainty of a fair price and honest workmanship and to its members protection against the dangers of external competition and internal roguery, the result was based upon and attained by the principle of mastership within the guild. A boy was apprenticed to a craft for seven, three, or two years, according to the craft and the stage in its history, and became, on the expiration of his indenture, a journeyman, which he only remained until, by habits of industry and thrift or the fortunate chance of marriage with his master's daughter, he could set up as a master himself. The relationship of the master to both apprentice and journeyman was that of a father to his family. This status was not permanent because their normal expectation was that, when the legal bond of the apprentice had expired and capital and experience were acquired, they too would gain their independence and the full freedom of the guild. The modern workman's economic philosophy is bounded by tolerable and secure employment and the wages envelope on Saturday: to the medieval workman wages marked but a stage towards frugal and honorable independence." The Reformation plundered the guilds and the monasteries, and out of the "fat of sacrilege" grew capitalism, and religion died. Not until the old Christian spirit which was killed is revived will the guilds be what they once were in Europe.

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