

PART I

THE CHURCH AND LABOR UNIONS

Some people are under the impression that the Church frowns more or less on Labor Unions. Now this impression is contrary to facts. The Church may condemn the spirit and unjustifiable acts of certain labor organizations; but, from her earliest days, she has ever been the workman's friend and has always recommended that workmen be grouped together for their greater welfare. Besides, history attests that the working classes were never happier than at the time of the old *guilds*, formed under the inspiration of the Church.

Christ and the workman

That the Church should be specially interested in the workman is easy to understand.

What is a workman?

A workman is he who toils with his hands, painfully striving to earn a living for himself and his family. Sad was his condition in the truly "dark ages" of antiquity. Pagans treated him like a slave and a beast of burden. But lo! Christ appeared among men and gradually his condition changed for the better. For God Himself became a workman. Leaving His throne on high, He came down and dwelt among men, not in a royal palace surrounded with courtiers but in the humble cottage of a workman. *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?* Yes, Christ was in every sense of the word, a workman. He handled the tools of a workman, He earned His daily bread like a workman.

What a transformation! No wonder the Church cherishes the poor worker as the choicest portion of her flock, since her Lord and Master was himself a workman. Surely he who says the Church looks askance at the working classes must know very little of her early history!