

The Civilization of the 13th Century.

(Continued.)



WE are living in an age of industrial reform. Day after day the workingman is coming into a more equitable share of the wealth, in the production of which his labor contributes. It is something less than a century ago, however, that England, the foremost country of Europe in the progress of popular rights, removed the parliamentary restrictions that prohibited the combining of craftsmen for the purpose of bettering their wages. With the removal of those restrictions, there sprang up the labor unions which constitute the army of the craftsmen to-day.

But trades unions are no latter day novelty. Far back in the days when that perfect type of Pope, Innocent 3rd, occupied the papal chair, the Church organized the laboring men into honorable, chartered corporations, and in every way encouraged and assisted them in their pursuits. In those days when the Church was powerful and when she was free to exercise her beneficent and civilizing mission, and to mould social institutions according to her ideals, she bestowed on workingmen the most precious privileges and immunities. Trade guilds sprang up under her sanction in every city and quickly advanced to large power and influence. In the city of Florence at this time the arti or craftsmen became so powerful that it was impossible even for a noble to secure any public office unless he was enrolled among some of the major or minor arts.

President Eliot of Harvard, high minded and zealous social philosopher, as I believe him to be, has tried to preach to workingmen the gospel of love of work. But he is only echoing the counsel of the ancient Church. The men of the Thirteenth Century seemed to have applied themselves to their work in a spirit of love. We know, at all events, that they were contented with their lot, proud of their craft, satisfied and happy.

Europe in the Thirteenth Century was not Utopia. Misfortune, poverty, and oppression were no more extirpated then, than they were before or have been since. But poverty was regarded in a somewhat different light then. It did not make men the objects of ridicule and sneers. Moreover, they bore up with greater fortitude

Kindly Patronize Our Advertisers.