
The Pope and the Encyclical on Labor

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THE POPE AND THE ENCYCLICAL ON LABOR.

BY JOHN GRAHAM BROOKS.

The literature of the various Catholic congresses upon the social question since 1865 shows clearly that this famous "charter of the fourth estate" is the result of wide and careful study of labor problems in their modern aspects. The Pope brought to this subject the experience of quite twenty years of thoughtful examination. The utterance deals with the nature of the problem and with remedies. Its criticism of the present industrial régime is as sharp as if from the pen of the doughtiest socialist. Socialism is then dealt with only to be rejected as economically and morally worthless.

Private property, in interest, rent and profit bearing forms, is defended as vigorously as by the Liberty and Property Defense League. The function of the state is fully considered, the principle being stated that the state should not act except at the point where the private initiative fails. It should act in the case of Sunday labor, and the door is thrown wide for further activity (as with women and children in industry), if special proof can be given, at the time and under the circumstances, that private and self-help methods are inadequate. This opportunism has been greeted with enthusiasm by *la Ligue Démocratique* and by all radicals upon social questions within the church.

The frank admission of the Pope that independent trade unions must be recognized, is even a bolder tribute to the radical element. The principle of the "family wage" is evidently approved, and, in ideal at least, the principle of wage "according to needs."

It thus appears that the Pope's letter to his bishops is a disturbing document to the more strictly conservative

party. In Italy (see *l'Osservatore Romano* of 9th May), France, Germany, and Belgium, the advanced church party show a delight with the Encyclical which is its best interpreter. In the attempts of this party to secure the "minimum wage," obligatory insurance for workingmen, shorter hours, etc., they rightly feel that the august Head of the church has come mightily to their aid. Upon principles which he has laid down, the reformers have now only to make out their case for state interference and positive legislation. The whole system of "voluntarism" must, by the Pope's sanction, yield to a kind of progressist policy so far as the facts of place and conditions warrant. One signal result of the Encyclical is thus to intensify a more minute study of the economic and industrial conditions among laborers in centers of industry. See as an illustration of this tendency the very able "Memoire sur La Situation de l'Industrie," by the business men (*l'Assemblée des Patrons Catholiques Belges*), published in Brussels, 1894, Rue Treurenberg 16.

COMPETITION AS A BASIS OF ECONOMIC THEORY.

BY PROFESSOR FREDERICK C. HICKS OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI.

Aside from the criticism upon competitive economics by those who condemn it because of its evil possibilities, the accepted view of the place of competition in economic theory is substantially that held by Mill. The existence of free competition is the hypothesis upon which a theory is constructed, whose conclusions, applied to actual conditions, are to be corrected for their probable error. But the prevailing tendency to concentration of