LÉON HARMEL

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THIS EDITION

This is an English translation of the original French text, made for the website leonharmel.com in 2026. It follows the original sentence by sentence, without cuts or additions.

The original collection brings together the texts of Léon Harmel published in *L'Association catholique* from 1877 to 1899 (reports, speeches, letters), with the passages of the review that introduce them, translated here in full from their first publication. It has been typeset in the spirit of the original: title pages and headings follow the layout of the original publication.

The numbered notes are those of the original work; here they are numbered continuously from beginning to end. The notes marked with an asterisk * have been added for this edition, to shed light on the historical context.

Léon Harmel, le Bon Père du Val-des-Bois
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Report to the Congress of Le Puy on the Christian Corporation

August 1877
L'Association catholique, vol. IV (1877), p. 372-383

CONGRESS OF LE PUY

REPORT BY MR HARMEL

ON THE

CHRISTIAN CORPORATION

My Lords,
Gentlemen,

The salvation of the workers' family is a noble undertaking, worthy in every respect of calling forth devotedness.

It is the best means of working for the recovery of our country.

For Christians there is a still more powerful motive: the glory of God is at stake in it, and that is enough for our devotedness to shrink from no sacrifice.

Among the workers, those who work in the factories are the most exposed, and they are the ones who receive the least attention.

Until now, the works have recruited mainly in the small workshops; almost everywhere, large-scale industry seems to have been abandoned to hell.

As for us, brought up among factory workers, and in a sense with them, we have known their needs and sounded the depths of their wretchedness. Their sufferings have moved our hearts, and we have tried to relieve and to make better those whom we love.

After many attempts guided by our religious convictions, experience enlightened our action; it settled for us the means best suited to our population, and the Corporation of Val-des-Bois was constituted. It was an act of love made fruitful by faith.

Last year, at Bordeaux, I presented to you the proofs of the *Manuel*, asking for your criticisms and your advice. My request was heard: a great many corrections, a great many observations have allowed me to rework the book, and today I present to you the true edition, completely revised.

In it you will find the precious letters of His Grace the Archbishop of Reims and of Their Lordships the Bishops of Poitiers and Angers. The testimony of these masters of teaching is a sure guarantee whose importance you will appreciate. The letter of Mgr Freppel is an eloquent and complete exposition of Catholic doctrine on the matter. I already consider myself richly rewarded for my trouble, since it has obtained for us this admirable letter, which will have more influence by itself alone than all my labours put together.

Besides, in reading us you will find your own ideas again. The Corporation of Val-des-Bois made its first entrance into the world at the Congress of Nantes; without your encouragement, without your kindly sympathy, we would not have attempted to make known an organisation whose whole ambition was to gladden the sight of God.

Readers will remember that we have factory workers in view. They are the ones we know; it is their special needs that the Christian Corporation satisfies. It is probable, and we do not hesitate to believe it, that the same means will produce the same benefits among the other classes of workers; but that is not our thesis. If we have spoken of it, it is only by analogy. We are determined to remain in the domain of facts, and to rely only on experience.

Some, it is true, have claimed that the countryside and the isolated factory call for other means than the great concentrations of the towns. We judge that these objections are not sufficiently well foun-

ded. Each person knows the difficulties he meets, without noticing that they are identical in other places. Experience, moreover, has given its verdict. Each time people have tried in the industrial centres, the same causes have produced the same results. We have travelled through several manufacturing towns, studying the needs and the wretchedness of factory workers; everywhere we have found the same characteristics, down to the same particulars. This sad uniformity is found among other peoples too. Everywhere the factory worker is the same; we see him surrounded by the same dangers, exposed to the same seductions, dominated by the same influences, crushed by the same personal powerlessness in his isolation.

We possess sufficient grounds to affirm that the Christian workers' corporation, as it is established at Val-des-Bois, will bring about the same moral resurrection in every industrial centre, if it is governed by Christians concerned for the salvation of souls.

We beseech you, gentlemen, to beware of theories. The best minds cannot escape the seduction of certain charming mirages that utopia makes shine before their eyes. What imagination has not been carried away towards the land of chimeras? Now, in the social question, this danger takes on the proportions of a social peril.

Let us not for one instant lose sight of the unchanging truth, the principle of all good, and of the reality of the facts, the source of the particular evils that we must remedy. The unchanging truth teaches us that without the law of God there is neither justice, nor social peace, nor solid prosperity. The reality of the facts shows us that God has been driven out of our society, and that the family is tending towards absolute decomposition. We must conclude from this that the first aim of the Corporation must be to give God back to individuals so as to give Him back to the family, and thus to restore His reign in society. The Corporation will therefore be a religious association at the same time as an economic one.

Here I meet those who disagree with me. Before answering them, may they allow me to thank them sincerely. Those who were kind enough to put their objections to me without reserve have done me the greatest services. I owe them whatever is good in the *Manuel*, and if the question has made some progress, theirs alone is all the merit.

Once again I ask for contradiction. When it is honest, as it always is among us, it forces the idea to come clear. We are all seeking only the truth; what does the success of our system matter to us? When one works for the salvation of souls, God gives victories that make one despise for ever the ephemeral triumphs.

Our opponents tell us: "The Corporation must have only one aim: to perfect the trade, to regulate the conditions of work and of wages." At once they parade before our eyes the brilliant picture of the old Corporations: "Professional skill, the source of mastership, the wardens watching over the quality of the goods, competition held in check by wise regulation, etc., etc."

Are they quite sure that they know these Corporations of which they speak so much? An architect, who died at the very gates of glory, once made a remark to me that has remained engraved in my mind. We were standing before the cathedral of Reims. The explanations of my learned companion made the marvellous monument appear to my eyes in an entirely new light. He said to me: "In spite of all the studies that have been made until now, we have not yet managed to understand the reason for the various parts of this prodigious architecture. We have not yet penetrated to the inner heart of this art, we have not grasped the creative inspiration. I defy the most skilful architect to reproduce one of these jewels that the Middle Ages scattered over our soil. Even if, armed with rule and compass, he applied himself to a slavish imitation, his work will be nothing but a poor copy, which will always sadden the taste of a true connoisseur."

Is it not the same with the old institutions? Are not the changes that have come about in ideas, in habits, in the economic system, in the social setting, so many obstacles that prevent us from penetrating the true cause of their life? Who can flatter himself that he has grasped the invisible soul whose presence all their acts reveal to us? No rule shows it to us, it has left no traces, and yet it is the most important part; apart from it, it is difficult to explain everything.

What we can observe without long study is that the Corporation of the Middle Ages was built on the Catholic rock. Now, as you all know, today we live on shifting ground, where revolutions have piled up rubble; if we wish to build, we must first lay foundations, dig down to firm ground, that is, down to infallible truth. That is why our Corporation is first and foremost a religious Society, and to secure this character for it, the Catholic Association alone gives entry to it. To act otherwise would be to prepare one more force for the Revolution, for every institution that is not for God inevitably turns against Him.

And here allow me a word on liberalism. I have been reproached with winning your sympathies by surprise through attacks, very well founded but out of place, on the modern error. I should be delighted to offend no one, but what is to be done? Liberalism is the only adversary of the Corporation.

In the workshops, it seduces the employers by a false respect for freedom of conscience, and thus prevents them from establishing the freedom to do good.

In the works, confusing the legitimate independence that no one threatens with the isolation that paralyses devotedness, it fights the active union that must be established and organised if one wishes to arrive at *social* action.

In the great undertaking that occupies us, it raises without respite vain objections that nothing justifies. To facts displayed in broad daylight, it opposes imaginary theories and utopias. It paralyses goodwill; its triumph is to prevent generous men from beginning.

Applying its false doctrine of the separation of the spiritual and the temporal, liberalism wants the works to be solely religious and the Corporation solely economic. While it turns the directors away from concerning themselves with the institutions fitted to favour work, the family and life, it means to deny us the right to found Corporations, because we wish to make them in the name of God. It will not accept that one should go beyond the narrow horizon of professional interests, as if the God of hosts were not also the God of large and of small industry, as if we could be safe in a house that the Lord has not built, as if it were not necessary to take care to secure the pre-eminence of the rights of Jesus Christ, in order to guarantee the rights of mankind.

Do we not see that wherever God ceases to be the Master, man is crushed by force? And is not this force all the more brutal and implacable the lower it springs from? Is it not God who, by creating the soul and the body in the unity of each individual, has shown us that, to be perfect, a Society must satisfy the needs of the one and of the other?

If the sum of the best economic institutions without the religious Association is a body without a soul, the Association of piety without concern for temporal needs is a soul without a body.

To be complete, an institution must unite the two elements of one and the same question. The doctrine that divides them is false and impious. Do not be surprised, then, if we ceaselessly attack liberalism; it is the enemy of the Christian Corporation.

Since our opponents reject the accomplished fact because they do not find a Society according to their dream, let them tell us what they wish to put in its place. Do they seriously claim to make industrialists sit examinations, to demand the masterpiece, to regulate wages, to prevent competition? "But," they answer us, "the Corporation is impossible in large-scale industry." — "And yet it exists." — "You alone believe so. Study history, and you will see whether there has ever

been a Corporation like yours. As long as the employer may owe his title to capital, as long as he does not live the life of the worker, no Corporation can exist." — And I answer that peoples and centuries have adapted their institutions to customs and to circumstances.

Our adversaries persist in excommunicating us, and so this countless people is deprived for ever of true Association, of the only one that is complete. Yet what workers have more poignant miseries in their souls and in their bodies? But do not believe, gentlemen, that these objections hinder the movement that is drawing the workers towards the Corporation. While discussions divide us and prevent us from binding all goodwill together into one sheaf, our adversaries act. Wait a few more years, and the factory workers will be enrolled in an immense network of Corporations set up against God; the effort that seems considerable to us today will be impossible tomorrow; we shall have come too late.

Gentlemen, we must have the courage to be of our time. Let us leave to others the task of lamenting the changes that have come about in the economic system. We did not make them, and we are powerless to abolish them.

We stand before an immense expansion of industry. Not only are the spinning of cotton, of wool and of silk, the weaving of textile materials and ironworking becoming the monopoly of the factories, but the trades that seemed bound to remain within the family, such as the making of shoes and other small crafts, are threatened; we can already foresee the moment when the entire working world will be enrolled in the great industries or in the great enterprises, which is all one. The same tendency shows itself even in the retail trade; the small shops seem destined to disappear.

This situation we did not make, and we cannot change it. All the complaints in the world will not prevent a factory from rising. Even if the machine were proclaimed diabolical, unjust and destructive of art, the starting of the thousands of engines that come out every day from

the immense engineering works, active in every country in the world, would not be delayed by one hour. If, by a series of arbitrary acts and numerous attacks on liberty, a government managed to hold back this expansion in its own country, to regulate production, to limit competition, that country would at once be flooded with cheaper foreign products. It would have only one means of defence: to shut itself up behind a Great Wall of China.

And who, then, can reasonably stand against this torrent? It would be an impossible struggle. Instead of attempting a vain and useless resistance, let us go to the machine and baptise it. Let us make the factory Christian, let us change the instrument of perdition; let it become the instrument of salvation!

Our bishops once worked this wonder, when they made the barbarians bow their heads before the cross. Catholicism will let us witness the same marvellous conversion.

Every power in this world must pay homage to the Most High: that is the law of justice, that is the right order. The majestic rocking of the steam engines, the strident noise of the improved tools, the activity of the factories, in short the world of labour, will sing the glory of God, who created man and gave him intelligence and genius. The smoke that escapes in long spirals from our tall chimneys will no longer appear to us as an exhalation from some vent of hell; the Christian will be able to compare it, not without a happy emotion, to the drifting waves that escape from the censers, for it will rise towards heaven as a homage of sanctified labour.

Christian Corporations

Can you begin this transformation tomorrow? Yes, by beginning the Christian Corporation.

Those who have read the *Manuel* have understood what we call the *inner heart* of our institution. They have easily separated the

principles from the details. The first are necessary; the second may vary as much as one wishes.

The Corporation, as we understand it, is a religious and economic Society, freely formed by the heads of industrial families (employers and workers of one and the same trade or of similar occupations), all of whose members are grouped in various Associations of piety.

The principles may be summed up as follows:

A. A professional Catholic Association, without which the employer in large-scale industry can no longer fulfil his duties of patronage.

B. Pre-eminence secured for the rights of God by the Catholic Association, which alone gives entry into the Corporation. Whoever ceases to belong to the Association of piety (and he would cease to belong if he no longer fulfilled its conditions) would, by that very fact, leave the Corporation. Government is entrusted to reliable men, of whom religious guarantees are required before professional merit.

In this way the precautions needed to avoid falling into the liberal rut are taken.

C. The necessity of rebuilding the Christian family, by converting each of its members, by means of affiliated Associations attached to the Corporation. The union of these Associations maintains the same principles in them and a true esprit de corps; at the same time, it creates traditions for them and secures for them a vitality impossible in isolation, without setting up any confusion among them.

D. The legitimate satisfaction of the needs of the soul and of the body, by religious exercises in common, in a church specially assigned to the Corporation, and by institutions relating to education, to the trade, to the family and to all the needs of life.

Such, as a whole, is the Society that we present to you under the name of Christian Corporation. Town and country alike, the great centres as well as the isolated factory, will find in the application of

these principles the marvellous results that we ourselves have found in them.

To reach so desirable an aim, what must be done? Three things: unite, act and pray.

§ I. — Union.

The Master's wish *sint unum*, which we have taken as our motto, does not have the limited sense of a union in which sympathy bears all the cost. No doubt it does not exclude variety in the details; but does it not demand unity in principles and in the general manner of action, which is impossible without a certain hierarchy?

When our beloved father Pius IX said to us: "Unite, union is strength," he did not mean the platonic union of good hearts set side by side, but active union, with a head and arms, for only such a union is a strength.

Now, gentlemen, if you seriously wish to work for the salvation of the workers' family in our country, you must not hide from yourselves that the undertaking is difficult. It will demand considerable, persevering and sustained efforts. One need not examine for long the aim to be reached and the obstacles to be overcome to conclude that we shall not arrive at a social transformation by isolated efforts, without method, without effective support, without the benefit of hierarchy.

So the first means of succeeding is to organise ourselves, for each of us to make the sacrifice of the self-love that isolates, so as to form a vast unity, the guarantee of true independence, the source of the strength we need. In this we are asking a difficult sacrifice of honest people, who are too often divided. In our day, our adversaries seem to have the monopoly of that self-denial which drives the individual to sacrifice his personality to the common interest. Discipline has often given them the victory when, in reality, they were the weaker.

Yet we are living in an age so grave, so decisive, that, as we confidently trust, taught by experience and by their defeats, men of

goodwill will at last feel the need for that hierarchical union which is necessary to coordinate all efforts and to reach victory.

§ II. — Action.

Our second means is action. But for action to be fruitful, it must set itself a defined and complete aim.

When an industrialist founds a large mill, he first studies the needs of his industry, he draws up an overall plan, then he begins. The mill will be complete only after several years, but each of the buildings will rise on the appointed site, will be built for the general purpose, and in this way he will avoid the costly changes and the bad arrangements that may result from a thoughtless layout.

What is true in the world of matter is truer still in the world of minds. Adopt an overall plan and set courageously to work, without losing sight for a single instant of the aim you are pursuing. You will perhaps spend several years reaching the completed Corporation, which reaches each member of the family and satisfies all the needs of body and soul; but not one of your efforts will be lost, you will have nothing to pull down. Your work will advance step by step and will move surely towards its aim.

Let us begin without delay; let us not wait for more favourable laws: they will be prepared by our action, they will be the fruit of our struggle. Let us not demand of an overall plan the answer to all our suppositions. As soon as its principles are in conformity with the doctrine of the Church, as soon as experience shows its results, let us adopt it as a whole. Practice will give us the solution of the difficulties whose importance we exaggerate.

Let us go straight to the aim, despising a vain popularity, never sacrificing the interest of our workers to the fear of arousing discontent. It is part of God's designs to raise up hindrances of every kind against us, in order to test our courage and to strengthen us, for struggle strengthens; and, when it is undertaken for God, obstacles

become means. The more difficulties the work meets, the more certain we are of success, if our faith is equal to our undertaking, and if our perseverance equals our faith.

Let us not wear out our energy in fighting our own people. If a work already founded refuses to come to us, let us respect its free choice and found anew; new building is preferable, and on the whole less costly, than patching up. Let us turn to the crowd that throngs the roads to hell; there we shall find considerable elements. For truly, the more one lives with factory workers, the more one recognises how easy it is to save them, if one is willing to use the true means, which are summed up in three words: God, family, work. Let us resolutely take up the professional Catholic Associations. Let us beware of illusions; the works that leave aside the great human interests will always remain small in their numbers and in their social influence.

People often say: Found youth clubs, circles and employers' societies everywhere. Well, I who am an employer, who live with employers and workers, declare to you that if your religious Associations are not professional, they will never reach more than a very small number. I beg the heads of workshops present here to recognise with me this truth, confirmed by the experience of all ages. I ask the military chaplains who hear me: would they have any chance of succeeding in their admirable apostolate if their meetings were shared with the inhabitants of the town? if they themselves did not take care, in their language and in their instructions, to use terms and images borrowed from the military state?

Ah! I know it, it is a step forward that is a little frightening. The timid proclaim that it is impossible. They do not consider how easily professional Associations are formed around them. They do not realise the considerable influence that the Revolution has gained over the masses by raising the professional banner high. Do you know what I find impossible? It is to carry on the works as they have been carried on until now. The miracle is to see the works live and grow while

taking no interest in the human aspirations of the natural order. At the sight of this wonder, one wonders what buildings would have to be built to hold the crowds that would come to us if, returning to the traditions of the Church, we united the great interests of the present life with the great interests of eternity.

The professional Association will soon lead us to the Corporation, and we shall arrive at the *Christian organisation of labour*.

§ III. — Prayer.

Prayer is the most important means. Without it there is no true union; without it our action will be sterile, because it will not be blessed. At the Congress of Reims, on 28 August 1875, His Grace the Archbishop of Reims, visibly inspired by God, resolved, to close that fine assembly, to give Mary to the employers and the workers as their special protectress; in order to bear witness that the Mother of the afflicted feels a particular tenderness for the most forsaken, he chose to call her *Our Lady of the Factory* (*Notre-Dame de l'Usine*). That day, Mary was placed at the head of the crusade, and her intervention is for us a pledge of victory.

A vast association of prayer was founded under the name of *Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Factory*; its centre was placed in the basilica of Saint-Remi, in the midst of the workers. It was fitting that the factory should be baptised by the successor of St Remigius, in that same church where the great apostle of the Gauls had baptised France.

Pius IX, always eager to show his affection for the labouring classes, enriched the pious association with numerous indulgences. The archconfraternity has as its aim to bring back to God, and therefore to happiness, the entire world of labour, employers and workers.

Already the great idea of our pious archbishop has been understood, and the association counts many members from various dioceses.

Last Tuesday, 7 August, the first day of this Congress, in the presence of a large number of bishops, the Bishop of Viviers[1] blessed the first chapel erected under the title of Our Lady of the Factory. This sanctuary stands not far from here, at the centre of one of the oldest and most justly renowned of our national manufactures. It bears witness to the piety and the zeal of the employers. We are happy to salute the chapel of Our Lady of the Factory at Vidalon-lès-Annonay; it appears to us as the first trophy of victory raised in honour of Mary, queen and protectress of the factory.

To the progress that our archconfraternity makes will correspond the progress of the Christian Corporation. Be, then, its zealous propagators; make it known everywhere. If not all can act, all can pray. It is through prayer that the effort will be powerful; we shall move God through Mary and, in spite of our small number, in spite of the obstacles that seem to bar our way, we shall have the joy of seeing accomplished the marvellous transformation that we would wish to buy at the price of our lives. Our workers will find their brother Jesus again, and with Him happiness, the joy of the family, and the remedy for all the many evils that have fallen upon them since they were drawn away from God.

At the end of the sixteenth century, taking advantage of the divisions caused by the Reformation in the various countries of Europe, the Turks were advancing everywhere as conquerors. They were threatening Venice, and they had already sworn to subject the whole of Christendom to their odious domination. The holy Pontiff who presided over the destinies of the world saw the danger and resolved to avert it. Pius V turned to the Christian princes. Only two answered his call. The Pope himself gave them their standard: a Christ on the cross with this inscription: *In hoc signo vinces*. You know how the battle of Lepanto was won by a small number of Christians against a

1. Mgr Bonnet, Bishop of Viviers.

formidable army, until then invincible, and what the consequences of that memorable combat were.

Today the Revolution has invaded the world, taking advantage of the internal divisions brought about by liberalism. A holy Pontiff watches over the salvation of society. A worthy successor of Pius V, his illustrious patron, he reproduces his great virtues. His inspired gaze has seen the danger; he has invited the heads of the nations to fight the scourge. As in the sixteenth century, the governments have despised his counsel; we have witnessed the misfortunes that followed his warnings.

The immortal Pontiff has asked of the devotedness of his children the effort that the powerful refused. Our battalion, like that of Lepanto, has received the cross with the inscription: *In hoc signo vinces*.

It is a matter, as it was in former times, of defending Christian humanity, Catholic society, against barbarism. As in former times, it is a matter of breaking the chains of an immense number of captives, the Christian workers reduced to slavery by revolutionary tyranny. Let us fight with the cross; on each of our vessels, in each of our works, let us invoke the *help of Christians*.

Let us not be discouraged if our adversaries stir up the popular storm against us. It is only a smoke that may blind us for an instant; but let us persevere and take courage: the sun and the smoke will turn against the enemies of Christ. Let us often invoke Our Lady of the Factory, and have her invoked around us; her support will make us invincible.

From his prison in the Vatican, the august old man often turns his eyes towards France. If you are willing to unite, to act and to pray, soon, oh yes, soon, our beloved leader will see in the night the sign of triumph, and his inspired voice, like that of Pius V, will repeat these famous words: "Hasten to give thanks to God, our army is winning the victory!"

The Christian Corporation of Val-des-Bois in 1881: Meeting of the Industrial Commission and Annual Reports

13 June 1881

L'Association catholique, vol. XII (1881), p. 134 and 139-152

Industrial Commission. Meeting held at Val-des-Bois on 13 June 1881.

At the time of the General Assembly of the Association, Mr Harmel had invited a number of industrialists to come and visit Val-des-Bois, to see there at work the various associations of which so much had been said in the course of the General Assembly; the president of the Industrial Commission, who was also to take part in this interesting journey, considered that, because of the closeness of the dates (visit to Val-des-Bois, 12 June; meeting of the Industrial Commission, 15 June), it would be almost impossible for him to hold the ordinary meeting in Paris, and he decided to gather in Commission the 12 or 15 industrialists (5 of them from Lille) who had answered Mr Harmel's invitation.

The day of the 12th was devoted to hearing the reports of the various sections that make up the Christian corporation of Val-des-Bois. *L'Association catholique*, in its issue of 15 June, reproduced the first part of these reports. Today's issue contains the continuation of this interesting document.

On the morning of the 13th the meeting of the Industrial Commission took place; it first concerned itself, quite naturally, with the remarkable results observed the day before and obtained by this truly surprising organisation of associations embracing the worker's whole family and meeting all moral and material needs; then, at the request

of the Central Office of the Union of Works for Workers, it took up the study of the programme of the special Commission which is to deal, at the next Congress of the Union, with the question of "the Christian organisation of labour"; it decided that only two questions would give rise to preliminary reports: "the duties of patronage, the wage," already treated at the General Assembly of the Association of Circles, and which seem to deserve a prolonged and complete study. The Congress of the Union is an excellent occasion offered to us to take them up anew. 2. Two of our fellow members of the Industrial Commission will be entrusted with these reports. The secretary's correspondence is then read.

[...]

Continuation of the Annual Meeting of the Christian Corporation of Val-des-Bois. 15 May 1881.

Document no. 6. — *Economic institutions. First division. Mutual Aid Society.*

Our Society is at present composed of 563 members, namely:
151 who pay a subscription of 75 centimes a fortnight.
111 » » » of 50 to 60 cent. »
100 » » » of 25 to 35 » »
191 » » » of 15 cent. »
Our Society has as its aim:
1. To provide the care of the doctor and medicines for sick members;
2. To pay them an allowance during the time of their illnesses;
3. To pay them an additional allowance in case of accident, which is added to the first;
4. To provide for their funeral expenses;
5. To supply school books and school materials free of charge to the members' children.

We shall speak only of the allowances in case of accident and of the schools.

On 30 September last, the general meeting of the members decided almost unanimously, by secret ballot, that the insurance concluded with the Royale Belge would be modified from 1 January 1881.

This proposal, which came from our commissioners, had been long studied and discussed within the Council, which had adopted it as very favourable to those of us who may meet with a misfortune. Indeed, the new insurance guarantees to the injured person who has lost the use of the thumb and two fingers of the right hand, or who has a similar injury, a minimum pension of 300 francs a year, which may rise to 600 or 800 francs a year according to the age and earnings of the injured person. This pension is drawn wherever the injured person may reside.

On the other hand, the premium to be paid to the Company has been fixed at 0.40 fr. per 100 francs of wages instead of 0.18 fr., that is, for a hundred thousand francs a quarter, 400 francs to be paid instead of 180 francs.

Our employers have taken six centimes upon themselves, that is, 60 francs (on a hundred thousand francs). The increase therefore comes to 160 francs a quarter.

No one will complain of this extra expense, which can render such important services to the misfortunes most worthy of our concern.

Schooling, as you know, has been given free to our children for nearly twenty years, in schools and an infant school whose hours are arranged so as to make family life easier.

Our children receive not only a solid education, attested by the certificates of study obtained (in 1879, 2 boys; in 1880, 3 boys), but, what is better still, a thoroughly Christian upbringing.

From twelve to sixteen years of age, the children who work in the mill and who have the certificate required by law still attend school for one hour a day, thanks to the sacrifice of half an hour of working time made by our employers. Our children are thus preserved from a

twofold evil: ignorance, which comes very quickly when nothing more is done to keep up the small store acquired at twelve; and the loss of their good upbringing, which is all too easily spoilt at the first contacts of the workshop, when no precaution is taken to counterbalance the dangers of the sudden transition between school and workshop.

The mutual aid society pays for the school supplies. The expense may be estimated at three francs per child per year.

We have at present in our schools 155 pupils for whom we pay the school supplies, namely:
81 boys, of whom 39 are over twelve;
42 from twelve to sixteen;
74 girls, of whom 48 are under twelve;
26 from twelve to sixteen.

The infant school takes 58 children, namely: 26 girls and 32 boys.

The evening schools have taken 32 boys.

Total of the pupils attending our schools: 245 pupils, of whom 100 are girls and 145 boys.

Every fortnight, the list of latecomers or absentees is handed by the Brothers and the Sisters to the commissioners of the relief society, who are responsible for making the necessary remarks to the parents. Unfortunately there are sometimes fathers of families who show themselves too indifferent to the schooling and upbringing of their children; a warning given in time puts an end to their carelessness.

Our schools have undergone a new trial this year.

You remember the administrative closure ordered by the departmental council in October 1879.

This year, an epidemic that raged in the valley brought about the closure of the schools and of the infant school from 22 February to 25 April. It is a real loss for the pupils; we are counting on the help of the parents to assist the teachers, so that the end of the year may make up for this long interruption.

Here is the summary of the expenditure and receipts of the relief society since 1 October 1876 (the year begins on 1 October and ends on 30 September):

	1876-77	1877-78	1878-79	1879-80	1880-81 (7 months)	Total, 4 years and 7 months.
Allowance to the sick	1,950.85	1,751.65	1,543.05	2,562.85	1,687.85	9,496.25
Doctor, midwife	1,263.55	1,266.55	1,226.35	1,483.45	1,075.00	6,314.90
Funeral expenses	218.75	335.25	188.00	307.25	435.25	1,494.50
Royale Belge[2]	502.75	733.40	512.00	891.15	339.95	2,979.25
Medicines	200.30	330.30	395.65	307.30	291.30	1,534.85
Sundries		87.00				87.00
School supplies		422.70	326.40	464.55	317.00	1,530.65
Expenditure	4,136.20	4,926.85	4,201.45	6,016.55	4,146.35	23,427.40
Balance in hand	1,788.70	2,115.50	3,008.45	2,993.40	3,014.50	3,013.50
Total debit	5,924.90	7,042.35	7,209.90	9,009.95	7,159.85	26,440.90
Receipts						
Cash in hand	544.50	1,788.70	2,115.50	3,008.45	2,993.40	544.50
Subscriptions and fines[3]	6,380.40	5,216.15	3,781.90	5,764.00	3,928.95	25,071.40
Interest on invested funds		37.50	112.50	37.50	37.50	225.00
Honorary members			200.00	200.00	200.00	600.00
Total credit	5,924.90	7,042.35	7,209.90	9,009.95	7,159.85	26,440.90
Total wage bill	310,174.30	296,830.15	287,164.80	374,004.05	249,314.10	1,517,487.40
Average subscription per 100 of wages	1.73	1.76	1.64	1.48	1.56	1.65

The last period was terrible: we had a great many sick people and many funeral costs; yet the cash in hand did not fall. We therefore hope to keep level, in spite of the increase in the accident insurance.

The commissioners are also responsible for supervising the baths and wash-houses, but on that account they incur no expense; the firm

2. The figure entered for the Royale Belge is the total expenditure made by the Society, without taking into account the allowances received from the company and paid to the injured, nor the life pensions.

3. The fines amount to about 45 to 50 fr. a year.

takes care of the necessary repairs.

Document no. 7. — *Economic institutions. Second division. Approved suppliers.*

We shall give as an example the agreement with Mr Charlier:

Between Mr Charlier-Hanrot and the Christian corporation of Valdes-Bois, represented by Messrs Harmel frères, the following agreement has been made:

Article One. — Mr Charlier is the approved supplier of the corporation for the following goods: groceries, haberdashery, printed cottons, hosiery, footwear and wines. However, for the sales exhibitions that will take place twice a year, the corporation reserves its full freedom, as it does for articles of cloth or clothing for which very advantageous opportunities might be found in the course of the year.

Art. 2. — Mr Charlier undertakes to supply goods of good quality at the lowest prices.

The prices of the groceries will be posted up in the offices of Messrs Harmel frères, and may not be increased unless the increase has been posted up at least eight days beforehand.

The selling prices of the other articles will be marked in plain figures, and will never exceed ten per cent gross profit.

Art. 3. — Payments will be made in cash, either in corporative currency (the *vouchers* are worth one franc; the *half-vouchers*, fifty centimes; and the *change tokens*, ten centimes), or in coin, or by deductions made from the pay of the members of the corporation by the office of Messrs Harmel frères.

Payments in coin and the deductions made by Messrs Harmel frères will be entered in the corporation passbook.

All these payments will give rise to a rebate of five per cent, which will be collected by the treasurer of the corporation.

By payment in cash we mean payments made within the week and within the month. All the sums for which Messrs Harmel frères un-

dertake to make deductions are also considered as paid in cash.

However, in order to give a guarantee to the members of the corporation, Mr Charlier may not withdraw the rebate of five per cent from a debtor who has owed for a month until ten days after a warning.

This warning will be given officially by the treasurer of the corporation, by means of a note bearing the date of the purchase, its amount and the date of the warning. If, within the ten days following the warning, the debtor has not paid or has not provided Mr Charlier with a guarantee from Messrs Harmel frères, the rebate of five per cent will be withdrawn on the purchase indicated. The treasurer of the corporation will take note of this withdrawal.

Mr Charlier will have the right to refuse to sell further goods to the member of the corporation who has incurred this forfeiture and who is still a debtor for the sum that brought it about.

Art. 4. — Mr Charlier formally undertakes to make no rebate on his quoted prices other than the one stipulated in article 3, and only at the office of Messrs Harmel frères.

Should he contravene the present agreement, either by giving the rebate directly to a member of the corporation or by giving any rebate whatever to other retail buyers, he binds himself to pay, for each infringement, a fine of ten francs for the benefit of the corporation of Val-des-Bois.

Art. 5. — All disputes that may arise concerning the present agreement will be judged in the last resort by two arbitrators, who will be chosen, one by Messrs Harmel frères and the other by Mr Charlier. If they are divided, the two arbitrators chosen will appoint a third, and they will judge together by a majority of votes and without appeal.

Art. 6. — The treasurer of the corporation will be bound to inform Mr Charlier in writing of the departure of a worker or clerk as soon as he learns of the notice of departure.

On the other hand, Mr Charlier will grant the discount of five per cent on the deductions made on his account from workers who are not of the corporation.

Art. 7. — The present agreements may be terminated by either party giving the other two months' notice.

Art. 8. — The present agreement in no way limits the individual freedom of all the members of the corporation, who remain free to buy wherever they please. It limits only the freedom of the corporate body formed by the corporation, which may not take any other approved merchant, nor itself set up the sale of the goods specified in the present contract, without the authorisation of Mr Charlier or the cancellation of the present agreement.

Done in duplicate at Val-des-Bois, 19 March 1876.

Signed: HARMEL frères. CHARLIER-HANROT.

Our first agreements date from 1875. Here are the sums of the corporative bonus distributed to the workers and coming from the approved suppliers:

Years	Baker	Butcher	Grocer	Total
	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.
1875, 9 months.	695.25	303.10	733.40	1,731.75
1876	901.75	663.05	1,893.05	3,457.85
1877	1,501.05	747.65	2,111.35	4,360.05
1878	1,397.05	852.50	1,980.55	4,230.10
1879	943.45	918.55	1,702.95	3,564.95
1880	1,951.45	1,132.90	2,090.40	5,144.75
1881, 3 months.	982.40	269.30	403.15	1,654.85
Six years.	8,372.40	4,887.05	10,884.85	24,144.30

Document no. 8. — *Economic institutions. Third division. Cooperative Society of the Christian corporation of Val-des-Bois, with variable capital.*

Report of the manager to the General Meeting of 1 May 1881.

Gentlemen,

In accordance with article 19 of the statutes of our Society, we come to give you an account of our management during the third half-year, which closed on 31 March 1881.

Total sales amounted to the sum of 27,920.10 fr. We sold the flour and the bran to the consumers with no other advantage for the Society than a slight commission intended to cover the share of the general expenses attributable to these operations. The buyers have therefore profited at once from the gain resulting from these purchases, and consequently must not take a further share in the profits. Hence, in order to determine the bases of the distribution to be made to the cooperators, we must deduct from the total figure of sales, amounting to 27,920.20 fr.

1. The proceeds of the flour	650.25 fr.	
2. The proceeds of the bran	1,559.70	
3. Embers, baking charges, yeast, etc.	196.20	
4. Amount of the sales made to persons other than the cooperators (art. 2)	7,671.35	10,057.90 fr.
Net sales giving a right to the distribution		17,862.20

Goods account

Assets.

20,578 bread vouchers,
2,603 1/2 loaves sold for cash.

23,181 1/2 loaves of 3 kg, or 69,544.50 kg, at the average price of 1.10 fr. per 3 kg[4]	25,533.55
Flour: 1,403.90 kg at 45 fr. per 100 kg	630.25
Bran	1,599.70
Embers, wood and sundries	196.60
Goods in stock	6,586.75
Total assets	34,560.85

Liabilities.

67,640 kg of flour. Average price: 37.33 fr.	25,226.75
10,487 kg of bran. Average price: 14.80 fr.	1,527.80
545 kg of rye flour. Average price: 32.25 fr.	169.15
Labour: 524 1/2 sacks at 3.50 fr.	1,847.55
Wood: 290 steres at 9.50 fr.	2,813.20
Rent, trade licence, insurance, sundries.	703.35
Total liabilities	32,287.70
Profit and loss	2,219.15
Sum equal to the assets	34,506.85

Inventory.

Assets.

Flour: 80 sacks at 37.50 fr.	3,000.00
41 sacks at 36 fr.	1,492.90
Bread: 43 at 1.10 fr.	47.65
Bran: 488 kg at 14 fr.	68.30
Middlings: 579 kg at 17 fr.	98.45
Wood: 190 steres at 9.50 fr.	1,805.00
Embers: 31 sacks for	50.00

4. Of which 17,862.20 to the cooperators (art. 2) and 1,671.35 to buyers who are not cooperators.

Printed bread vouchers	22.50
Sundries	2.30
Goods in stock	6,586.75
Furniture and fittings	602.60
Total assets	7,189.35

Liabilities.

Paid-up capital	3,325.00
Statutory reserve	272.05
Owed to Harmel frères	1,373.15
Total liabilities	4,970.20
Balance	2,219.15
Sum equal to the assets	7,189.35

Average yield.

23,186 1/2 loaves of 3 kg, that is, 69,544.50 kg of bread for 52,389.10 kg of flour used, which gives 44.24 loaves per 100 kg of flour, or 132.720 kg of bread per 100 kg of flour.

Balance sheet.

Assets.

Goods in stock	6,586.75
Furniture and fittings	602.60
	7,189.35

Liabilities.

Paid-up capital	3,325.00
Statutory reserve	272.05
Owed to Messrs Harmel frères	1,373.15
Profit and loss	2,219.15
	7,189.35

In view of this result, your board of directors proposes the following decisions to you:

Appropriation of the profit and loss account.

Balance at 31 March 1881			2,219.15
Interest on the capital: 3,325 fr. for six months at 6 per cent a year		99.75	
Interest on the reserve: 272.05 for six months at 6 per cent a year		8.15	
Writing off of the value of the furniture and fittings		602.60	710.50
Net profit			1,508.65
Income tax of 3 per cent, that is, on 239.40	7.20		
To be deducted, paid in July and October	2.50	9.70	
To the statutory reserve, 10 per cent on 1,508.65		150.85	
Extraordinary reserve for works to be carried out		231.05	
To the cooperators, 7/8 of 1,122.05, that is, 5.50 per cent on 17,862.20		982.40	
To the shareholders, 1/8 of 1,122.05, that is, 4.20 per cent on 3,325 fr.		139.65	1,508.65

The return on the share, interest and dividend, is therefore 7.20 per cent for six months.

The reserve account would stand as follows:

Reserve at 30 September 1880	272.05
Interest, 6 months or 3 per cent	8.15
Its share of the profits of this financial year	150.85
Total of the reserve at 31 March 1881	431.05
Plus extraordinary reserve for works to be carried out	231.05

So then, gentlemen, if you approve our proposals, the shareholders will receive 239.40 fr., that is, 7.20 fr. per fully paid-up share and

1.80 fr. per share on which 25 francs have been paid.

We declare to you, as the statutes of our Society require, that no allowance has been granted to your directors.

We have several serious events to report to you since the last financial year.

First of all there is the change of baker. The chairman of the board of directors will tell you of our anxieties, and how the directors settled the situation.

From this serious trouble there emerged the need for more complete rules, the need for a security deposit, and a new organisation of which I shall inform you in a moment.

In our new baker we have every guarantee that we could desire; we hope that our Society will no longer be disturbed by such mishaps.

The second event is the enlargement of the premises.

Our employers, ready to sacrifice their interests to those of their workers, have given up a large dwelling, which was nevertheless very necessary at this moment of absolute shortage, when these gentlemen are obliged to build in order to house their workers; but, as you know, my dear friends, we are so used to the kindness and generosity of these gentlemen that we find the thing quite natural.

I myself, who am your manager, and Mr Guilbeaux, your cashier, how would we manage, either of us, if we could not take from the time that we owe to the mill? Let us therefore always remain united with our beloved employers; and by working energetically for the success of our Society we shall show them how much we appreciate their efforts.

Document no. 9. — ***Economic institutions, 4th division: direct purchases, corporative bonus.***

1. Direct purchases (half-year from 1 July to 31 December 1880).

Coal	Purchase	Fr. 6,133.10

	Sale	» 7,370.85	Bonus. Fr. 1,237.75
Potatoes.	Purchase	» 3,874.45	
	Sale	» 3,965.60	» » 91.15
Clothing	Purchase	» 8,281.20	
	Sale	» 8,664.25	» » 383.05
Sundries	Purchase	» 704.50	
	Sale	» 728.60	» » 24.10
Profit			1,736.05
Corporative bonus distributed			521.55
Remainder for the corporative fund			1,214.50
There was in hand on 1 July			48.25
The approved suppliers gave a rebate of		2,857.00	
The bonus distributed to the workers is		2,577.55	
Remainder for the corporative fund			279.45
Total of the corporative fund for the 2nd half-year of 1880			1,542.20
In the 1st half-year, the fund paid for 5 life insurances.			500.00
making a sum of			2,042.20
paid into the corporative fund in 1880.			

We think it useful to recall how this sum is produced. Our selling prices, as we said in our report in 1879, are 10 per cent higher than the cost prices; that is to say, an article bought for 90 centimes is sold for 1 franc.

The 10 per cent is used as follows:

1. All the families that belong to the corporation receive a rebate of 5 per cent on the amount of their purchases; this is what we call the corporative bonus distributed to the workers.

2. The remaining 5 per cent is paid into the Corporative Fund and shared among the workers' councils of the associations.

No doubt part of these profits ought to be used for the costs of management, accounts and correspondence. But our employers, whose hearts are aflame with the fire of divine charity, wish to help us in every way. They give us the help of their clerks free of charge; they lend us the money intended for the purchases; and for the deductions to be made from the pay they do not shrink from the trouble of a multitude of accounts.

The profits made are handed over in full to the *Corporative Fund*, whose management belongs to the 5th division. It will give you its report. As you will see, it insures the members over 18 years of age for 100 fr. on their lives, and it shares out the rest: 35 per cent to the Catholic circle, 30 per cent to the Christian Mothers, 20 per cent to the Children of Mary, 15 per cent to the little circle. During the two years 1879 and 1880 we paid in 5,283.65 fr.

It rests with you alone, gentlemen, to reach a better result still. Let us be more and more united; we shall raise the receipts of the corporation and, better still, we shall become people of independent means.

That is the desire and the wish of our dear employers.

2. Corporative bonus.

The 2nd division has given you the details of the corporative bonus provided by the approved suppliers. To complete it, we must add to it the bonus distributed on the direct purchases:

Years	Direct purchases	Approved suppliers	Total bonus
	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.
1875	703.80	1,731.75	2,435.55
1876	1,456.60	3,457.85	4,914.45
1877	805.90	4,360.05	5,165.95
1878	875.60	4,230.10	5,105.70
1879	910.75	3,564.95	4,475.70

1880	1,127.70	5,144.75	6,272.45
1st quarter 1881	273.80	1,654.85	1,928.65
Six years	6,154.15	21,144.20	30,298.45

The first year, 1875, having been only 3 quarters, these totals are therefore for six years.

In 1880, 26 families received from 0 to 10 francs.
38 » » » 10 to 30 »
35 » » » 30 to 50 »
23 » » » 50 to 70 »
19 » » » 70 to 100 »

Altogether 141 families belonging to the corporation received 6,272.15, that is, an average of 44.50 fr. per family per year.

It is in this way that our economic institutions make us see and touch this great truth: Seek first the kingdom of God, and all the rest will be given to you besides. We first sought the reign of God through our religious associations, and these associations have established between us bonds strong enough and deep enough to build the economic edifice.

You have witnessed the efforts that have been made in our valley to organise cheap sales and various arrangements favourable to the well-being of the worker. But as union was the condition of success, these attempts failed. The reason is that union, solidarity and fraternity can exist only where God is acknowledged and treated as the common Father. Everything that is attempted apart from this foundation is fragile and false.

Document no. 10. — *Economic institutions. Fifth division. Provident fund.*

The Provident Fund is of very recent origin; it is formed entirely by the employers, who, in accordance with article 21 of the rules, intend to keep its ownership and management.

The part played by our division is therefore purely consultative; but you know that our employers always set great store by our wishes; we might even say that they know how to guess them, and in every circumstance we recognise their intelligent concern for the old. As long as an old worker can fill any post at all, he is kept on at the mill at his former wage.

The Provident Fund has so far been concerned only with those who are entirely unfit for work.

It pays a pension of 450 fr. to David Hughel, aged 74, who has 40 years of service; it gives a pension of 300 fr. a year to Miss Pigeon, aged 82, who has 26 years of service. Its funds in hand on 1 January 1881 amounted to 16,900 fr., bearing 5 per cent a year. Let us pray God to bless the industrial business, so that our dear employers may satisfy their wishes by increasing the capital, which is already considerable.

Document no. 11. — *Economic institutions. Fifth division. Consultations.*

The Christian corporation renders services of every kind; I wish to say a word to you about marriages, inheritances and investments of money.

I. Marriages.

You know, my dear friends, that for some fifteen years we have helped families with marriages. Formerly all the workers paid the stamp duty for the necessary documents; some marriages were very costly and very laborious. It took months to obtain the papers.

Here is an example that will show you what expense might be reached.

A young man, a *Belgian*, of age, with neither father nor mother living, wished to marry a foreign girl, likewise a minor, an orphan who had lost both father and mother.

For the young man there were needed his birth certificate and the death certificates of his father, his mother, his paternal grandfather, his paternal grandmother, his maternal grandfather and his maternal grandmother. For the girl, the seven documents mentioned above.

Each document had to be drawn up by the clerk of the commune, signed by the burgomaster, then by the justice of the peace of the canton, then by the minister of justice, then by the minister of foreign affairs, then by the French consul in Brussels, and finally by the ministry of foreign affairs in Paris.

Each document cost:

Belgian stamp, 1.50 fr.; French stamp, 1.80 fr.	3.30 fr.
Clerk, 0.25 fr.; postage, 1.60 fr.	1.85 fr.
6 legalisations at 0.25 fr.	1.50 fr.
Total	6.65 fr.

Now seven documents were needed for the young man and seven documents for the girl, that is, 14 documents at 6.60 fr. = 92.40 fr. Moreover, since the girl was a minor, the justice of the peace of the canton had to be brought in to appoint a special guardian, a further expense of about 25 francs, making 117.40 fr. of expenses in all.

What obstacles to marriage! Several had not the money needed to pay the costs, and consequently could not marry. Today, thanks to the printed forms of St Francis Regis, there is nothing more to pay than the postage of letters; we have Catholics in Belgium who are at our disposal free of charge, so that we greatly shorten the delays. Let us add that for a year now the legislators, better inspired, have abolished the useless legalisations.

Acknowledge with me that it is a real service rendered to families to make the marriages of young people easier.

II. Inheritances.

We are likewise at everyone's disposal to save the costly expenses that follow upon inheritances.

How often would a poor father of a family, knowing nothing of business, distraught at the loss of his wife, not be in danger of compromising the household's small savings, if he had no good adviser to guide him? And what are we to say of a poor widow, ignorant of the law, left defenceless against every worry and every trouble?

III. Investments of money.

Good advice is no less precious when it is a question of investing money. The thrifty worker is, especially today, exposed to the self-interested solicitations of a swarm of business agents who covet his savings. You have known some who lost money painfully put by, through a rash investment.

Here again we are at your disposal, and all those who have made use of our goodwill can sleep in peace. They will perhaps not have the fanciful profits that the agents of shady businesses dangle before them, but they will receive an honest income, and their capital will remain intact.

It is in this way that, in all the circumstances of life, the Christian corporation comes to the help of its members, by securing for them the benefits of Christian charity, that is, of love of one's neighbour, the benefits of real and the only true fraternity.

Documents no. 12. — *Economic institutions. — Fifth division. — Circle refreshments.*

The Refreshments Committee has real work to do, for it is no small matter to please everybody; so we have frequent meetings for our purchases and the choice of goods.

We sell at cost price, that is to say, with our room expenses paid, and with a slight profit paid into the funds of the Circle. In return,

those funds pay for the small items of furniture we need.

The *beer* costs us 21 fr. a hectolitre, bottled; we sell it again at 0.20 fr. for a bottle of 65 to 70 centilitres.

As for the *wine*, we buy it at 51 fr. a hectolitre; we have to pay 14 per cent duty on the selling price, which is 0.50 fr. for a bottle of 60 to 65 centilitres.

The *brandy* costs us 1.75 fr., duty paid; we sell it at 2 fr. a litre.

Our account shows a large figure for brandy, which calls for an explanation. We buy only marc brandies, and since we are the only people in the district who sell it of genuine origin, we supply many families with it. We cannot give you the actual figure consumed at the Circle, but it is smaller than the figure of sales to take away.

Here is the summary of the half-year:

Refreshments for the half-year	Fr. 5,705.50	
Stock	» 602.35	6,307.85
Purchases of beer, wines, syrup, brandy	Fr. 5,575.60	
Service, heating, sundries	» 561.30	
Net profit paid into the funds of the circle.	» 370.75	6,307.85

Documents no. 13. — *Conferences of St Vincent de Paul.*

Gentlemen and dear friends,

In the three years since the Society of St Vincent de Paul was established among us, we have each year had to record the admission of new members. This year two new members have come to swell our ranks. As last year, the Conference counts 5 honorary members and 17 active members; it regularly visits 21 families.

Before beginning my report, allow me to greet the gentlemen of the Conference of Rethel, who have kindly added a new lustre to our family feast by their presence. In the name of the Conference of the Val, I must thank them for their kind welcome at the time of our jour-

ney to Rethel. I can tell them in all sincerity that the day we spent among them leaves the happiest memory in our hearts. We have felt once more how true is this word of Holy Scripture: It is sweet for brothers to be together under the same roof.

Now, gentlemen, I shall give you a short outline of the resources we have had at our disposal and of the use we have made of them.

In the month of January 1880 we had in hand 84.90 fr., a very modest sum, it is true, and one that did not leave a large share for each of the 21 families we visit. But we did not lose heart for all that, for you all know that at the Val there is a Providence.

In spite of the modesty of our resources, here is what our expenditure has been:

Bread vouchers	Fr. 283.85
Meat vouchers	» 410.70
Syrups and lemonades, wine for the sick	» 47.95
Clothing	» 108.25
Soup vouchers	» 20.80
Bedding	» 34.55
Heating	» 31.20
Vegetables and other relief	» 127.25
Total	Fr. 1,064.55

which we distributed in the course of the year 1880; and on 1 January 1881 there still remained in hand 489.65 fr., which makes a total of 1,554.20 fr.

You no doubt wonder, gentlemen, how we were able to obtain this sum. Our honorary members provided us with 700 francs. But among them there is one to whom our families and all of us owe a particular gratitude. For a long time now his failing health has kept him away from us, but his memory strikes us every day, because every day he

gives us fresh tokens of affection and sympathy. And so it is always with renewed happiness that we place Mr Ernest Harmel in the first rank of the benefactors of our work.

I must also, in the name of our families, thank the firm's suppliers for the generous help they lend us.

Each year the Conference of St Vincent de Paul holds a lottery in favour of the poor families. Each of these gentlemen is kind enough to take tickets from us; the workers will not let themselves be outdone in generosity, the lists are filled, and truly astonishing sums quickly reach us.

This year the lottery gave us 542.20 fr. of net profit. Finally, our last resource, alas, the smallest, is the collection which, according to the rules, must be taken after each meeting. This year the collections together produced the sum of 168.50 fr. It is very little, it is true, but we regret that our purses are not as large as our desire to be useful to our friends, to our brothers. I take this opportunity to remind those of our brothers who do not regularly attend our meetings that they deprive us of a resource that would be welcome first to our treasurer, but above all to our poor.

Let us sum up in a few lines:

Gifts from Mr Ernest Harmel	Fr. 240.00
» from the Good Father	» 60.00
» from the honorary members	» 400.00
» from various persons	» 58.60
Lottery	» 542.20
Collections at the meetings	» 168.50
Total receipts	Fr. 1,469.30

As we said above, there remained in hand on 12 January 1880 84.90 fr., which gives a total of 1,554.20 fr.

In closing, I believe I am the interpreter of all my brothers in taking the liberty of correcting a misunderstanding we have sometimes met with. Some people have confused the conference with the relief fund established in the mill. In case of illness or accident, the relief fund distributes the material help to which the subscription that each of us leaves every fortnight or every month gives a right. It is a right for each person, because each person contributes to increasing the income of the fund.

It is not the same with the help given by the conference. The resources at its disposal come to it from no subscription, as we saw a moment ago. It is therefore free to distribute its gifts as it thinks fit, without anyone being able to claim any right to them.

It is a work of charity founded on love of one's neighbour, for the love of God; now, as you know, charity must have no bounds, and that is why workers of the mill, inhabitants of the village or others, all can be helped by the conference. Wherever there is suffering, wherever there are souls to be brought back to the duties of the Christian, there the disciple of St Vincent de Paul must be found; if he has much, he gives much; if he has little, he gives little, but he gives it with love, he gives it to relieve a friend, a brother, and above all to do good to his soul.

Material help is only an entry, a means. Through it he wins the confidence of the families he visits; little by little they tell him their troubles, they open their hearts to him, and it is then that he spreads the seed of the word of God. It is then that he sows the good grain which in its season bears fruits of salvation.

Letter to *L'Univers* on the Disturbances at Montceau-les-Mines

23 August 1882
L'Association catholique, vol. XIV (1882), p. 345-346

Our fellow member, Mr L. Harmel, wrote to *L'Univers* on the occasion of the disturbances at Montceau-les-Mines:

Val-des-Bois, 23 August 1882.

Sir,

Several newspapers have chosen to see in the events at Montceau a setback for the principles put forward by the Congress of Autun.

For a long time now, the industrial commission formed by the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles has been convinced that the benefits bestowed by employers are powerless when they do not rest on *workers' association*. Experience has even shown that these very benefits, exploited by the cunning and perfidy of the ringleaders, become causes of fresh irritation. Such in particular is the situation of the works at Montceau. The employer there has never ceased to make, for the manufacturing population, the most costly and the most ingenious sacrifices.

One may say that he has loaded it with his benefits; but *the workers have had no part in the government of these admirable institutions*.

One understands with difficulty what one does not touch; how, then, could Mr Chagot's sacrifices be understood?

The system advocated by the Catholic congresses is not that one at all. On the contrary, we have often warned the industrialists who practised it of the futility of their efforts.

In our opinion, the movement at Montceau would have been much more difficult if *associations* for good had put an end to the fatal state

of isolation in which the workers live. In a crowd whose individuals are united by no strong moral bond, the action of the ringleaders meets no resistance, the grossest lies no contradiction; the best workers are placed under suspicion, and all the influence belongs to the bad.

What, then, can become of men who are ill advised, little acquainted with social questions, and as it were abandoned by those who ought to instruct them, support them and put them on their guard against the ambitious and the sectarian?

When there is no association for good, the workers find themselves handed over defenceless to the association for evil, which is always tyrannical.

That is why the Congress of Autun affirmed, with Count A. de Mun, that *the corporative system is the only means of remedying the evils engendered by the anarchic state in which we live.*

The Association of Catholic Workers' Circles is working to restore the *corporative system*, in liberty and in respect for the eternal laws, because this system will give back to the workers a *just share in the management of common interests*, without thereby destroying the legitimate authority of the employer.

It is the family of labour rebuilt by the mutual love and mutual respect of fathers and children, in place of the family destroyed by fratricidal struggles, in which some are armed against others for their common destruction.

Please accept, Sir, my distinguished regards.

Léon HARMEL.

Report to the Congress of Catholic Works for Workers at Autun

August 1882
L'Association catholique, vol. XIV (1882), p. 373-391

DOCUMENT

REPORT PRESENTED BY MR HARMEL TO THE CONGRESS OF CATHOLIC WORKS FOR WORKERS HELD AT AUTUN UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF MGR PERRAUD FROM 7 TO 12 AUGUST 1882.

My Lord, Gentlemen,

The history of our time will provide future centuries with the most convincing demonstration of the futility of man's efforts when he wishes to do without God.

In the economic world, behold: these magnificent discoveries, these astonishing machines that seem to bring the wonders of the Thousand and One Nights to life, in a word, everything best fitted to exalt human pride, is becoming precisely the most active cause of moral and material ruin in mankind.

I. Situation of Labour in Large-Scale Industry.

1. — Large-scale industry has engendered a condition unknown to past centuries: the Proletariat; that is to say, wandering populations, with no tradition and no morrow, with no faith as well as no dwelling, with no family and no settled trade.

2. — In *England* it has been more fatal to the Irish than the legions of Cromwell. The faith of that heroic people, which poverty, exile and death had not diminished, which centuries of persecution had not impaired, the Catholic faith of the Irish could not withstand the noxious atmosphere of the great factories. Ravages in the moral life of families quickly followed the disappearance of the religious

spirit. Too often there remain only beings set side by side who put up with one another as long as it is useful, for in these sad surroundings morality is reduced to usefulness.

Here is the usual state of Catholic families (or families called such). The father is a Protestant but goes to no church; the mother is a Catholic but no longer practises; the father works in Birmingham or Sheffield, the mother in Manchester; the eldest daughter, baptised, works at the other end of the town and will probably marry a Protestant; the big boy is baptised, but in the Protestant church; the little children have been presented to no church, and are left to themselves all day long.

In most families the theories of Malthus, which zealous laymen take it upon themselves to spread among the workers, are widely put into practice. Yet in spite of this sad doctrine, pauperism remains, together with immorality. There is not a country in the world where poverty is deeper and more degraded than in England. The image of Jesus the poor worker has vanished beneath rags worn with idleness and hatred, beneath the stigmata of vice displayed without shame.

As for social relations, lack of trust is general; each man suspects his neighbour of cheating him or of bearing him a grudge. Characters are debased; man has become a useful machine, but this machine thinks; hence strikes and hatreds.

The "*Trade Unions*" exert a tyrannical pressure on the whole people of the workers. Here is what the journal *Capital and Labour* said in 1878:

"The workers who do not join the 'Trade Unions' must truly have a sturdy constitution. They are exposed to as many torments as the martyrs of history. They are taxed, their names are written up on a blackboard in all the premises of the Trade Unions. They are dragged from one workshop to another, they are ill-treated in unspeakable ways; their houses are burned, their tools stolen."

That is how associations from which God is excluded easily become oppressive, because the authority of man soon turns into tyranny when it does not find its curb in the divine law.

3. — *America* has lost its renown as the classic land of liberty since the French workers saw it at close quarters.

The workers' delegates from Elbeuf at the Philadelphia exhibition end their report with the following declaration: "This short journey was enough to undeceive us on many points..... Across the seas we found the same selfishness and the same injustices as in Europe... The North American professes an excessive love of liberty and equality: as for fraternity, we shall not speak of it, and if we were assured that it exists somewhere, the American Union would be the last country where we would think of going to look for it[5]."

This situation goes back no further than ten or fifteen years. The overexcitement of industrialism, through protection carried to excess, has violently overturned the condition of the workers and has caused incalculable evils. The length of engagements was such in 1854 that the manufacturers paid only at the end of each year[6]. Today the employers who pay by the month are reproached by the workers, for whom work by the minute, as in England, has become an ideal.

Formerly, in Massachusetts, a young man would not have found a wife if he had not been able to settle her in a house belonging to him. Today the worker is reduced to the *Tenement-House*, a small flat rented by the month.

Half the population of New York (about 400,000 persons) is housed in 18,500 houses, the dirtiest, the most degrading and the dearest in the world. The mortality there is three times higher than in all the other dwellings of the city taken together[7].

5. *Rapport des ouvriers d'Elbeuf à l'exposition de Philadelphie*, p. 367.

6. Dr Brownson, *The convert, or leaves from my own experience.*

7. Report of the *Metropolitan Board of Health.*

In Boston, one house was found containing 450 tenants, at the rate of seven to a room. Finally, in the regions where it would still be possible to have a home of one's own, the factory worker no longer wishes to buy one, because he would not be able to move. This is the complete application of the economic principles of the mobility of labour; nothing remains but to live in furnished lodgings!

Saving is unknown among these families, where earnings are squandered above all on food; drunkenness causes ravages there of which we have no idea in France.

The cotton mills employ many girls, exposed to all the dangers of promiscuity and to the still worse contact of the older women with whom they live side by side.

In New York, out of 100,000 women workers, more than 50,000 earn 3 and even only 2 dollars a week. What a recruiting ground for consumption, prostitution and pauperism!

Finally, child labour is spreading more and more, in spite of laws that are little or not at all observed.

Overproduction has brought about numerous stoppages and, as a consequence, unheard-of misery among these populations who live from day to day; the result has been, in the industrial districts, a hereditary pauperism, and in the countryside, bands of vagrants called *tramps*, living on the terror they inspire in the isolated farms. It has been established that these *tramps* were former spinning-mill workers. Their number rose to more than a hundred thousand in 1877 in the States of New York and Pennsylvania alone[8].

Has large-scale industry, organised purely for gain, with no concern for souls, produced less bitter fruits in *Russia*, where it has been introduced only very recently?

Allow me to call up some personal memories and to take you with me on the visit to the immense workshops of Carl Scheibler at Lodz.

8. See the articles of Mr Claudio Jannet on America.

The employer died last year, leaving a fortune of 60 million roubles, and the mill did not stop for a single day to honour its founder; there would have been a loss for the heirs. We saw there 100,000 spindles, 1,500 looms, colossal steam engines kept with luxurious care; everything there is marvellous from the point of view of layout, buildings and equipment.

But how different is the appearance of the population that sets all these engines in motion! The children, girls and boys, are employed there from the age of eight; there is a revolting promiscuity of the sexes, especially in the weaving.

When I expressed my surprise at this mixing to the clerk who was showing me round: "That's youth," he answered me, "they spend day and night together." All this people with shameless faces, on which vice has set its livid mark, moves about in a stifling atmosphere, full of dust.

Yes, this is indeed a vestibule of hell. And yet Scheibler is a philanthropist; he has done a great deal for his four thousand workers: workers' housing estates as large as a village, with streets, squares, gardens, schools. Everything is provided for, except the needs of the soul, and these estates are reputed to be a hotbed of complete immorality.

All too often in Russia the workers' dwellings are detestable and become the source of permanent contagious diseases.

Ivanovo-Voznesensk, called the "*Russian Manchester*", has seen 74 per cent of its young men rejected as unfit to bear military service. According to the official reports, one factory of Mr Kloudon is said to have all its dwellings infected by horrible exhalations, with the knowledge of the administration, which is said to find it useful to keep them so, in order to prevent the workers from lingering too long at home. In Moscow the workers of Mr Stchokine's factory are said to live in sorts of boxes one and a half arshins in size, about 1.70 m; elsewhere, in airless dormitories; a glove factory lodges its families in

the cellar where the fleshy parts are scraped from the skins. The colliery workers live in earthen huts impregnated with gases so noxious that even the insects die in them[9].

5. — I long to leave this picture and come back to Germany, Switzerland, Belgium. But there too, in spite of a greater respect for humanity, the ravages of industry are lamentable.

I should have much to tell you about each country, if I were not afraid of taking up too much of your time. A word on the best industrial population in the world, our dear *Alsace*, will allow you to judge the other countries.

In the manufacturing centres of Alsace, the family is in visible decline. It has lost the three guarantees of its integrity: traditions, respect for God, the domestic virtues.

At fifteen the boy becomes rebellious and dissolute. Do the parents try to assert their disregarded rights? "If you don't like it, one can cook elsewhere as well as here." Such is the insolent answer they receive.

Many young boys, and even girls, leave the family to live in boarding houses, which are counted by the hundred in Mulhouse, Thann, etc. The heads of these houses become the go-betweens of marriages condemned as much by public morality as by conscience. As for the parents, they are abandoned and reduced to living on their work, until old age casts them into irremediable want.

The thought of God was once on every lip. "God's will be done! God bless us! Contentment is better than riches!" Such were the formulas, hallowed by the centuries, that were heard at every moment. They have now been replaced by blasphemy, swearing and obscene talk, at the family table as well as in the workshop, in the mouth of the mother as in that of the husband.

9. Extract from the *Courrier Russe*. See the *Journal des Économistes*, April 1881, p. 162 ff.

The impious newspaper and the licentious novel penetrate everywhere.

In certain manufactures the watchword is the persecution of the Christian worker who cares for a "morality too strict or too pure." Under the pretext of tolerance, impunity is secured for all that is most detestable.

People have had to recognise the truth of this economic axiom: No well-being without morality, no morality without religion. In vain has saving been encouraged by every possible means; the official documents are full of lamentable admissions.

According to a calculation made by Mr Engel-Dollfus, the amount of deposits in the savings bank is, in Belgium, 19 fr. per inhabitant; in Italy, 23; in France, 27; in Sweden, 57; in Prussia, 63; in Austria, 81; in Saxony, 136; in Upper Alsace, only 44.

Taking the 12,726 new depositors of Alsace for 1877, we find the following breakdown:

2,200 workers	543,645 m., that is	20.40 per cent
1,524 servants	219,085	8.15 per cent
519 clerks	135,075	5.00 per cent
1,074 soldiers	18,613	3.05 per cent
3,456 various occupations	1,151,504	42.40 per cent
2,907 minors for whom deposits were made	544,065	20.20 per cent
46 savings societies	20,983	0.80 per cent
12,726 depositors for	2,632,970 marks	100.00 per cent

On the other hand, debts are numerous; they discourage goodwill at the same time as they shackle all freedom.

Want, with its sad train of evil thoughts, sits down at the family hearth and there stirs up a temptation that is not resisted: that of changing one's dwelling in order to begin new debts.

Alcoholism causes greater ravages every year.

The international congress that met in Paris in 1879 expressed the wish that there should be only one drink shop for every 2,000 souls. Whereas there are in Alsace one for every 110 inhabitants, and in certain localities one for every 67 or 70. (Statistics give an average in France of 4 litres of alcohol per head per year; in England, 6 1/2 litres; in Alsace, 6 litres, that is, 12 litres at 45 degrees per inhabitant per year. This consumption was ten times smaller ten years ago[10].)

To these evils, which anyone can easily observe, must be added the unknown disorders produced by the crowding together of people.

We can proclaim it loudly to all Industrialists, because we have long personal experience of it: the employers do not know what goes on in their workshops, and in spite of all their supervision it is impossible for them to know it. If in the mill the good workers have not been grouped together to make the freedom to do good respected, vice sets up there a formidable tyranny which meets with no resistance.

The dangers exist even in the workrooms where there are only women. Let us listen on this subject to the report of the Elbeuf workers: "What is worse among us are certain women's workshops, in which nothing is heard but horrible conversations, where the simplest notions of modesty are trampled underfoot with brazen cynicism. Yet the presence of the clerks in these workshops is only occasional; they are all run exclusively by women, sometimes by mothers of families!"

"And yet," the same report adds, "let us say to the honour of France that it is there that one meets the most manufacturers who show some pity[11]."

10. *Revue catholique d'Alsace*. May 1882.

11. *Rapport sur l'exposition de Philadelphie*, Elbeuf 1877, p. 457.

But in France, as everywhere, industry has remained pagan, even among Christian masters; it has therefore produced the same disorders, the destruction of the family, general corruption and, as a result, an ever-growing pauperism.

II. Socialism.

How can we be surprised that the factory, by spreading the proletariat, has given birth to socialism?

What is socialism? It is hatred of present-day society, held responsible for every evil; and since this society rests on God, on the family and on property, socialism wishes to suppress these three foundations of all social order, in order to rebuild what? No one knows. According to the definition of one patriarch of the new doctrine, it is the *rehabilitation of the flesh*, that is to say, materialism in all its coarseness, the desire for pleasures in all its greed. "It is a new fanatical Islam, without Allah and without Providence[12]."

This doctrine has not only its scholars and its doctors; it has also its apostles and its army. The International is socialism in action. It is divided into several factions: the possibilists (whose organs in France are the *Prolétaire* and the *Intransigeant*), the radical collectivists (led by Karl Marx, supported by the *Égalité* and the *Citoyen*), and the anarchists (disciples of Bakunin). But these groups have as their common doctrine that all the evils of the social state come from the exploitation of the workers by the capitalists; they have only one conclusion, the war of classes. That is why, while recognising that the means is ineffective, while knowing that its usual result is to plunge the workers into the most frightful misery, they apply themselves to fomenting strikes. When strikes break out, their emissaries hasten to the spot and make the most unrealisable promises, so as to make the crisis more acute, so as to dig the abyss of hatred deeper.

12. Words of the deputy Jörg in the Reichstag, 23 May 1878.

When the strike is over, their work too is finished. As many workers as have taken part in the strike, so many men are won over to the International and to socialism.

If the employers have won the victory, if they have forced the workers to submit to their conditions, so much the better for these apostles of hatred: the vanquished are only the more embittered, and therefore the more surely won over to the cause.

8. — When one observes the rapid progress of the International over the last ten years, one wonders what will become of society tomorrow. It was only in 1862, at the London Universal Exhibition, that this powerful association began; its cradle is in Germany, where it had its doctors: Ferdinand Lassalle and Karl Marx. The latter has remained its leader and its intelligent director. It has penetrated into England, in spite of resistance that lasted until 1875; into Austria, thanks to the unwitting connivance of the government; into Belgium and Holland, in spite of the religious feeling of the population; into Spain, Portugal, America, Switzerland, and Russia, where, under the name of Nihilism, it is the terror of the Tsars.

9. — We shall study socialism (of which the International is the army) in its accredited authors.

The agreement of their programmes reveals the unity of their principles and of their action.

The French workers' party says:

"That the collective appropriation of production can come only from the revolutionary action of the productive class or proletariat, organised in a distinct political party.

"That such an organisation must be pursued by all the means at the disposal of the proletariat, including universal suffrage, thus transformed from the instrument of deception that it has been until now into an instrument of emancipation."

The German, Belgian and American workers' parties say:

"Labour is the source of all wealth.

"Since fully productive labour is possible in society only through Society, the means of production belong to Society as a whole.

"The present system is false, because it allows only the concentration of wealth in the hands of the minority and reserves only poverty and oppression for the majority.

"Since the political parties act only with a view to guaranteeing their privileges to the propertied, the working class must organise itself into a distinct party, whose aim is at last to obtain its economic emancipation. Every movement must tend towards this aim[13]."

No less explicit are the Hungarian, Polish, Spanish, Danish, Italian, Austrian, Swiss, Dutch and English socialists. All are unanimous in demanding the socialisation of land and capital.

"This 'collectivist' mode of production would suppress present-day competition, by placing those parts of the production of wealth that can be carried out collectively under the direction of the professional organisations, and by effecting, under that same direction, the *distribution of the common products* from all to all, in proportion to the social use value of each person's labour.

"The workers would receive emoluments in proportion to their labour.

"The means needed for each kind of production would have to be fixed by the official and continuous inquiry of the sales administrations and by the directing committees of production. Social industry would regulate itself according to these determinations. The occasional deficit or surplus of products would be balanced, from time to time, in relation to needs, by placing them in reserve in the stores, which would become true *public warehouses*[14].

"Such is the quintessence of the social organisation of labour, as opposed to this present anarchic competition" — the cause of every

13. *Le nouveau parti*, p. 14.

14. *La quintessence du socialisme*, p. 17 and 18. — *Ibid.* p. 10.

evil.

A place is provided for the parasites, who will not be lacking in such a society: "Those who would render services of general utility to society, that is, those who would not produce directly, such as judges, administrative clerks, members of the teaching body, artists, *thinkers*, etc., would receive, to provide for their needs, a share of the national product, in proportion to the working time they had given to society"[15].

10. — What are the means preferred by the new party?

Centralisation and agitation.

Compulsory military service, compulsory schooling, "everything that disciplines the masses in a unitary way", everything that centralises, everything that places in the hands of the State all-powerful control over individuals and over the family, "has a great affinity with socialism[16]."

To undermine every authority; to take advantage of the quarrels between Church and State, "in which socialism is visibly the true *tertius gaudens*"; to criticise property and liken it to theft; to denounce everywhere "the exploitation of wage-earners, in which capital plays the part of a vampire, a despoiler, a thief"; to stir up through strikes a war to the death between capital and labour: that is how the agitation is produced which rouses the masses and spreads the new ideas among them.

It is in this way that the revolutionary reformists prepare the ground, so as then to carry by storm the social transformation they desire.

The anarchists, being outside the political movement, have a less visible action. Some "peaceful reformists try to reach their goal through corporative association and through saving. But economic

15. *Idem*, p. 20.

16. *Idem*, p. 27.

realities, more and more brutal, shake every day the optimism of the best of them[17]."

11. — Socialism boasts that it is going to root out completely all the deceptions of the Stock Exchange and of speculation, by suppressing annuities, shares, coined money, securities of every kind, in a word all private wealth and all private capital.

It does indeed seem certain that, everyone being poor, there will be no more wicked rich men.

How would the distribution of the national product be carried out?

"One part would be returned to the collective capital, in compensation for the quantity used in production; another part would serve for the upkeep of the other institutions of public utility (not directly productive)"... (probably to feed the thinkers)...

"This reserved capital would replace the taxes of today; it would be used for the charges of public utility, and would form the permanent basis of the collective capital."

The rest would be consumed by the members of society.

"The share of each producer for his means of existence will be determined by his working time. Working time would then serve as the measure for marking the individual share of each producer in the common labour, and at the same time as the measure of his share of the *individually consumable common products*[18]."

"Collective production, organised independently in trade bodies, could very well also allow a daily, weekly, monthly, half-yearly and yearly statistic of individual and family needs, of the kind that is made today; and according to this statistic, resulting from the free expression of needs, national production could be regulated as regards the quantity of products... It is also true that the State could

17. *Nouveau parti*, p. 17.

18. *Quintessence du socialisme*, p. 36.

radically eliminate needs that seemed harmful to it, by no longer producing for them[19]."

If a shadow of the family still remains under such a system, it will have only one freedom left: that of consuming what the State is willing to give it, as the lion in its cage consumes the meat that has been thrown to it.

12. — The socialist State, moreover, will have nothing to fear, not even the hostile demonstrations of its victims, for as soon as it is master it abolishes all voting.

"For socialism once realised, universal suffrage is not absolutely necessary; no doubt, during the transitional period of its struggle with liberalism, socialism will not renounce this suffrage. But when the unitary organisation of labour has become a reality, it will be precisely the socialist State that will possess, to a higher degree, that solid *organic* system of gears which was the distinctive mark of the Middle Ages[20]."

On the other hand, informing would be the order of the day: "each would receive the more, the more all the others worked in all the branches of production. The worker would then take the keenest interest in the whole of all the branches of industry. Economic control and the discipline of labour, which are becoming more and more impossible under the capitalist system of production, and which this gap makes more and more unstable, would be much better guaranteed in the socialist state by common bonuses, for each person, as regards the receipt of his remuneration and of his bonus, would have an interest in seeing that the idler and the bad worker did not receive full pay. Each would have an interest in the average costs of labour being as low as possible, for the price of the social products would be determined by these costs, and one could, for a given quantity of labour

19. *Idem*, p. 46.

20. *La quintessence du socialisme*, p. 52.

vouchers, have all the more products the lower the social costs of each kind of wealth[21]."

Here comes an objection that the author foresees: If our community is composed of a million workers, my income from social labour depends on my other 999,999 fellow cooperators being as diligent as I am. But, as is the habit of the school, nothing is resolved; we shall see later how matters will be managed.

13. — All the socialist factions are unanimously impious, and pride themselves on the most complete atheism.

"To suppress religion, which gives an illusory happiness, is, as they put it, to claim one's real happiness; for to demonstrate the nothingness of these illusions is to work towards the suppression of a state of things that needs illusions in order to subsist. In other words, the criticism of religion is the criticism of the *vale of tears*, of which religion is the sacred aspect and the moral explanation.

"By tearing from the chain of human miseries the artificial flowers with which religion had covered it, religious criticism has invited man to cast far from him his chain of misery and servitude so as to pick, along the paths of life, the living flower of real happiness, through science, equity and solidarity." (See Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.)[22].

Since the socialists believe that they destroy evil by denying it, why not also try denying sickness and death, so as to work towards the suppression of a state of things so repugnant to human nature, and to pick the flower of immortality?

"It is truly inconceivable," says Schäffle himself, "that the socialists, whose principle presupposes, more than any other, self-mastery, honesty, submission and devotedness, Christian love in its best and purest sense, should be the representatives of a materialism and a

21. *Idem*, p. 3.

22. *Le Nouveau Parti*, page 34.

hatred of religion completely foreign to the masses of the people, who work by the sweat of their brow and know all the seriousness of life[23]."

It is true that they have discovered *Altruism*, the true religion of the future. Let us listen to the story of this discovery.

"Through these long and painful series of iniquities, cruelties and sufferings, mankind has kept its eyes on a torch, whose light, at first murky and bloodstained, grows clearer from century to century. It is the search for physical and moral betterment, which demands collective efforts and makes solidarity a more and more inescapable law.

"From this search was born altruism, whose application socialism pursues, rejecting as unworthy of mankind the vegetable and zoological law of *the war of all against all*, which is realised (with the aggravation of capitalism) in the present individualist order.

"Altruism, or universal sympathy, is at the same time the moral motive on which the socialists base themselves. The old theological motive is finished, since science emptied heaven and filled up hell. The every man for himself and his little ones of bourgeois society is too immoral. Solidarity among human beings and universal sympathy, or at least the concern to spare all that has life useless sufferings, is that not human morality par excellence?

"The socialists could not choose better[24]."

14. — Last year, at the Congress of Le Mans, we tried to refute the ideas of the collectivists on wages. We have not the time today to complete that work by refuting the other errors of the modern reformers.

But can the adherents of the new doctrine maintain in good faith that collective property would be free of abuses?

23. *Quintessence du socialisme*, page 107.

24. *Le Nouveau Parti*, p. 38.

Will the wage system cease to be odious because it will be the lot of all men without exception? Will industrial concentration be less harsh because it will be universal instead of being divided as it is today?

Will the transformation of property be the transformation of mankind? Will men cease to be selfish and passionate?

When individual property, that is to say the most powerful stimulus to work, has been taken away, will men work better? Will they be more conscientious in their work, more equitable in their sharing, more moderate in their pleasures, more resigned in privation?

15. — Through an inconceivable fault, through a stupid blindness, the fruit of their apostasy, most governments seem to have made it their study to favour socialism.

An almost universal persecution takes pleasure in pulling down, one by one, the stones of the social fortress: religion and the family.

In the presence of the peril that grows every day, what hope of salvation can we find in present-day society? One of the leading lights of the new party has painted our society with rare vigour; I ask your leave to quote: "The liberal or radical society that governs us would like to persuade itself that it is strong, whereas it is the déclassés come from everywhere, picked up from here, there and everywhere, who at this hour hold in their hands what little power there remains to hold, and who share out among themselves, without conviction as without shame, the crowns of the budget and the gold braid of the uniforms.

"..... Since the discovery of steam, the face of society has changed. There are now only two brute forces that govern it: the machine and the cannon; the cannon, son of the machine, which always comes howling to defend its mother when those she kills rise up again.

"..... It is not one of the thirty-six known parties that will change anything in this terrible truth. The poor will die of want in the industrial penal colonies just as much under the radical republic

as under the tricolour republic ..... We care little for the petty politicians swarming between the two camps; whether they wave the red rag of the Montagnards or the white handkerchief of the parliamentarians! Old junk, all of it!"[25]

What a striking picture, and how it makes us see and touch the powerlessness of our liberal society!

Our masters have hypocritically decked themselves out in the cloak of liberty. But they know how to make nothing but laws of proscription. If, pressed by the public voice, they try to satisfy opinion, they surround what they concede to liberty with so many restrictions that they succeed in imposing a new chain, reducing still further the little that remained to us of our most sacred rights.

They have driven God out of society, and they have promised mankind the happiness of this world in exchange for the joys of the other life. And behold, never has man been so unhappy on earth as since he renounced heaven!

The wretched compensation they had promised, they have not been able to give. Everywhere nothing is heard but cries of hatred and despairing complaints.

III. The Christian Solution: The Corporative System.

16. — Is there no salvation for society, and are we reduced to keeping the liberal industrial system that gave birth to pauperism, or to submitting to the socialism that threatens to destroy everything? Clearly not.

Socialism, communism and the International are in reality nothing but the living and active expression of the burning antagonism between the poor and the rich, an antagonism for which the Gospel alone had been able to provide a remedy.

25. Preface to the *Nouveau parti*, by Jules Vallès.

This antagonism has an intrinsic cause that has always existed and will always exist: inequality among men. Inequality shows itself everywhere: in intelligence, in natural talents, in physical strength and moral strength, in length of life, in stature, beauty, skill, health, etc. A single one of these inequalities would always oblige some to resignation, others to effective compassion. It is impossible for the most convinced socialist to affirm that it is in the power of men to make all these inequalities disappear. That of fortune is only one more of them.

Since, clearly, man cannot change a fact inherent in our very nature, we must look elsewhere for the principle of reform. This principle we find in the extrinsic causes, the only ones that can be modified, and which are summed up in the three following facts: the apostasy of the nations, the idolatry of gold, and the excesses of large-scale industry. The solution of the social problem therefore requires three means: the restoration of the Christian social order by honest governments, the practice of the duties of social paternity by the employers, and finally the organisation of a corporative system fitted to give back peace and true prosperity to the world of labour.

17. — Social evils need social remedies.

No doubt the Church will always be able to save individuals, as she did during the first three centuries, when she redeemed the world with the blood of her children.

But in order to produce social effects, religion had to become a *social institution*.

Thus, in her struggle against slavery, she was able to preach charity to the masters and patience to the slaves; she was able to obtain many individual emancipations; but the abominable principle of slavery would still subsist today if Christianity had not been socially and civilly accepted by the nations, if it had not been the inspirer of the laws.

Christianity came to bring to the earth the freedom of the greatest number. It favoured the weak, by surrounding their infirmity with the respect and love of the powerful.

The world saw, not without astonishment, poverty emerge from the deep contempt to which men had relegated it, and appear clothed in a sacred majesty. Still more astonishing, this strange royalty had its court and its courtiers.

How far our society is from these generous and lofty ideas!

The canonisation of the great poor man of Amettes scandalises it. It no longer understands anything of the respect with which the Church had surrounded the weak; the little are crushed, the poor despised, and the arsenal of our liberal laws has not left a single liberty standing. I am mistaken: care has been taken to remove every curb on licence, every hindrance to the poisoning of bodies and souls.

Liberalism knows only the freedom to do evil and the oppression of good. In the economic world, it is the enrichment of a few, the poverty of the greatest number. As a remedy, war has been legalised, and in the family of labour, employers and workers ruin one another and kill French industry in the name of liberty. That is why our society will not be able to recover an assured peace and prosperity without the help of a Christian government that frankly draws its inspiration from the principles of the Gospel.

18. — The idolatry of gold, the second cause of the social malaise, comes from forgetfulness of God.

The divine law had made love of one's neighbour a strict obligation. Once that restraint was removed, human selfishness appeared with its insatiable greed. If the socialists, who had so much trouble discovering Altruism, would only open the Gospel, they would find in it, everywhere, the admirable doctrine of charity. We shall cite only two instances of it.

There was a man who had amassed a great fortune, probably in all honour, for he is not accused on that count. He spent it, which is not

forbidden, and in this way he gave a living to a great number of workers employed in the furnishing and clothing trades, and so on. Why is this man called the wicked rich man? Why is he buried in hell? Solely because he neglected to take care of Lazarus. Yet he had not ill-treated him, he had not had him put in prison, as is done in our liberal society with beggars and the homeless; he had merely failed to take the trouble to give him the scraps from his table.

Catholic doctrine proclaims that everything comes from God; therefore we owe everything to God, and if we do not pay the Creator in the person of his poor, we defraud him of what is lawfully due to him, we steal his share, and he takes his revenge.

How admirable this doctrine is, and how well it reconciles the rights of the poor with the rights of the rich!

Another instance appears to us in the account of the Last Judgement.

At that solemn assize, the Judge seems to disregard individual duties and to concern himself only with social duties. To clothe the naked, to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty: three material needs which are the figures of the three great spiritual needs: love, the clothing of souls; truth, the food of souls; hope, the drink of souls. As far as the spirit is above the body, so much more terrible will the curse fall on those who have neglected the three great spiritual miseries of their brothers.

And if these forsaken ones, instead of being simply the least of our brothers, are in particular children whom God has entrusted to us; if these poor are destitute of everything only because we ourselves have stripped them to enrich ourselves, how much more terrible will the curse be on the last day?

I beg the industrialists who hear me to reflect. No doubt it was neither you nor I personally who created the factories and their dangers, but on the day we took over their management, we took

upon ourselves their terrible responsibility. No excuse can relieve us of it.

I ask you, gentlemen: if these doctrines were taught and practised by employers, instead of the monstrous selfishness bred by forgetfulness of God and of our duties, what an immense change we should see take place in the world of labour!

19. — The excesses of large-scale industry, the third cause of the present evil, are not due only to this greed for gain, to this idolatry of wealth of which we have just spoken. They are also brought about by a social state in which everything seems organised for war: war of the workers against the employers, war of the employers among themselves, unbridled and pagan competition, in which dishonest means are too little repugnant to relentless competitors. Success no longer seems compatible with anything but the crushing of others. Hence a general ruin prepared for all by each.

This anarchic state finds no other remedy than the corporative system.

As early as 1875, at the congress of Reims, the Rev. Fr Marquigny reached the same conclusion in his learned studies on the corporation adapted to the present conditions of labour:

"When Christ reigned over society and over the workshop," said the eminent rapporteur, "the union of the classes, strengthened by the sense of Christian brotherhood, served as the basis of public institutions and of national prosperity.

"The Church and the monarchy, by their combined support, gave the workers' institutions a stability that defied all revolutions. That abuses crept into this system of labour is in no way surprising. But it must be acknowledged that society owes it eight centuries of peace. Let everything that was privilege and subjection be removed from the organisation of labour: we raise no complaint on that score; but we should like to restore that brotherly community of effort, that moral and material solidarity, that unity of social life, without which we

shall go back to paganism and barbarism." (*Rapport sur la corporation ouvrière*. Reims, 1875.)

That is the programme we have never ceased to pursue since 1875.

20. — Can the corporation exist in a factory? It has been tried, and one can see that it has restored peace and union where there were, as everywhere, hatred and mistrust. The Association of Catholic Workers' Circles has defined the characteristics of these corporations: they must be Catholic in order to be fruitful; hierarchical in order to bring about the reconciliation of the classes; associated in order to form a homogeneous body; professional, since we are speaking of a single factory; familial, in order to reach all the members of the working-class family and to rebuild Christian homes; owners of property or capital, in order to have stability; and finally legal, in order to exercise a social influence.

One of the first founders of the Association of Circles expresses himself thus:

"By corporative system we mean the economic and political system in which the Christian corporation of the factory will be recognised as a constituted body, not only as a legal person but as a political unit, and will have a vote (direct or at several degrees) on all the questions put before parliament concerning the system of labour, property, trade, etc. Do we mean by this that entry into this corporation must be compulsory? Never in the world; it could then no longer be Christian, because no one can be compelled to be a Christian, nor can a Christian association be compelled to receive into its bosom a member who is impious or resistant to its spirit[26]."

It is therefore a free corporation, but one recognised by the State.

When similar factories are thus organised as Christian communities, could they not unite with one another by a union in order to

26. *Association catholique*, 15 April 1882, p. 476.

study general questions? I believe, with our eloquent orator, Mr A. de Mun, that this would certainly be the means of solving many of the difficulties that perplex us: for example, of moderating competition and making it Christian, of developing our exports and giving the products of the unionised factories a reputation and consequently a well-deserved popularity, and of ensuring, by various common regulations, that protection of the family which is the greatest social need among manufacturing populations.

We therefore call to us the industrialists of goodwill, to study with them how the application of the corporative system in large-scale industry can be begun. This will be the means of fighting at the same time, and on practical ground, on the one hand against the State socialism that is overrunning us, and on the other against the ardent demands, several of which are justified.

The initiative of a few generous employers would be enough to mark out the way for all the others, who no longer know what to do. To work, then!

Let our industrial commission bring together all the men who can usefully take part in the reform of the factories. Let annual regional meetings be organised in each of the manufacturing centres of France, at which we shall study, with competent men, what is immediately possible in each region.

In this way we shall prepare the salvation of France, by beginning to establish a Christian corporative system through the free initiative of employers and workers.

27. — We cannot hide it from you: we shall have to struggle against the apathy of the good. "The pursuit of comfort has become a serious study, the pursuit of earthly goods a noble passion, independence an idol to which everything is sacrificed, submission a shame to be fled or concealed; and finally sensualism, like an impure atmosphere, pervades on every side a society which seems to have resolved to abolish even the memory of the cross. Hence so many perils for

this society, which dreams of conditions other than those God has willed to impose on it. If the Gospel is divine, how could men take the opposite course to it without provoking heaven to hurl upon them those scourges which crush when they do not save?

"Economic science may do what it will: willy-nilly it has to reckon with God. It seldom speaks of him, and he seems to consent to being forgotten; but 'he that keepeth Israel shall not sleep!' Let him withhold his beneficent hand, and our works of which we are so proud, our crops, by means of which we boast of having made famine impossible, are at once struck with barrenness. A disease whose source will remain unknown will suddenly fall, as we have seen, upon the fruits of the earth; and that would be enough to starve the nations, enough to bring about the most terrible upheavals in a social order which has freed itself from the Christian law and no longer has any other reason for standing than the divine compassion."

Dom GUÉRANGER.

(*Le Temps pascal*, vol. III, page 177.)

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Here is the declaration drawn up following Mr Harmel's report, which was acclaimed by the assembly:

1. The directors of the Catholic workers' associations, gathered at Autun, renew the resolutions adopted by the congresses of Reims and Bordeaux for the restoration of the workers' corporation, adapted to the present conditions of labour.

2. They declare themselves unanimously convinced that the corporative system is the only means of remedying the evils bred by the anarchic state in which we live.

The essential characteristics of this system are: a moral bond freely agreed between the employer and his employees; a material bond of common and inalienable property between the same; a customary bond between the workshops of the same trade thus consti-

tuted; and a function recognised in the State for the corporation that would combine these three characteristics.

3. In agreement with the industrialists present at the congress, they are convinced that the corporative system can be applied to large-scale industry, namely: within the factory itself, by the corporation organised like that of Val-des-Bois; between similar factories, by unions which would be the starting point of a general action for the moral and material prosperity of large-scale industry.

4. They adhere to the doctrines set out in the speech of Count A. de Mun at the close of the last general assembly, and they express the wish that all men of goodwill should support the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles, which is called to be one of the most powerful instruments of the Christian reorganisation of labour. They consider it very important for the Catholic cause to multiply without delay the examples of Christian corporations, in order to prepare *the corporative system*, the true solution of the labour question.

On the Role of Secondary Authorities in the Factory

1884

L'Association catholique, vol. XVII (1884), p. 124-132

No. I

On the role of secondary authorities in the factory. — Report by Mr Léon Harmel.

Gentlemen,

1. — The debates on the law on professional unions have echoed from Parliament throughout France[27]. They have brought to light the profound differences that separate Catholic doctrine from the revolutionary school on the social question.

We have heard the noble and broad exposition of our ideas in language worthy of such a cause. Our great orator was able to remain in those serene regions where true love for the working people appeals to every kind of devotedness, without distinction of party, without political concerns.

As was to be expected, our adversaries evaded the question; they masked their powerlessness and the emptiness of their solutions with violent attacks on clericalism and on the old regime. They cannot bear that, in the very middle of the 19th century, anyone should dare to seek first the kingdom of God and to expect the rest to be added unto him; and they do not notice that they are providing history with the most terrible example of the degradation into which a great people can fall when it ceases to seek the kingdom of God.

These masters, who laugh at the name of God, tremble at the slightest riot and grovel before the smallest threat from abroad. They

27. Sittings of the Chamber of Deputies, 12, 16, 18 and 19 June 1883.

proclaim themselves the friends of the worker and, pretending to confuse hierarchy with tyranny, they reject every distinction in the name of equality, as if man's liberty did not rest precisely on those social differences which are the very condition of human nature.

Is not paternal authority, the highest after that of God, the privilege and the honour of the humblest worker? It is a royal crown which the revolutions had already lowered, but which our tribunes have finished degrading by breaking it and trampling it underfoot.

The equality of the revolutionaries is the God-State hovering over the vile multitude. Their liberty is the worship of man in the place of God, that is to say, blind submission to human authorities, unstable as the waves of the ocean, proclaiming by turns evil what was good and good what was evil, according to the pull of the passions, the whims of a will without rule and of a reason without sure light; whereas the Christian finds liberty in noble obedience to eternal laws, known, unchanging and wonderfully adapted to the good of mankind.

No, we are not engaged in class politics; no, we do not want to return to the old regime; but we love the worker with all our strength because we see in him not only a brother according to nature but also another Jesus Christ. That is why we have no need of human motives such as fear, interest, honours or gratitude. We expect everything from Him who willed to live and work for thirty years in the humble workshop of Nazareth.

I

2. — We have never ceased to proclaim it for ten years: for us the solution of the social question is summed up in one word: the corporation, that is to say, the union of the employers with their workers.

You do not expect from us, gentlemen, a complete picture of the internal corporation in the factory as we practise it, with its religious associations, its economic institutions and its moral and material res-

ults[28]. We think it more useful to confine ourselves today to speaking to you of one essential principle: *the importance of secondary authorities in the factory.*

This subject will seem to you highly topical if you consider how many industrialists have a false notion of authority, and if we add that this is the most serious obstacle the corporation meets with among men of goodwill. Our century of materialism and pagan centralisation has lost the sound traditions. It no longer understands that the principal authority, in order to be strong, needs to set up solid secondary authorities which enlarge it, multiply it and make it penetrate the whole social body.

3. — Allow us to recall a few principles, in order to shed light on the practical conclusions we shall have to draw.

Authority comes from God; it proceeds from three attributes: goodness, the very source of authority; wisdom, which organises; power, which executes.

Authority is worthy of the name only in so far as it conforms to justice. The head of a factory who commands against justice commits an act of tyranny, not of authority. The rampart of force has always proved insufficient. This truth, a thousand times borne out by the most striking facts, nevertheless still remains unknown. Among our fellow industrialists there are some who imagine that the firmest supports of their power are omnipotence and the ease of banishing the worker from their factory. But how many can flatter themselves that they have real authority over their staff? Do we not see masters who submit to the law of their inferiors, like those leaders of groups whose whole concern is limited to following their subordinates?

If we studied closely the authorities that are disregarded, we should often find that they lack the three necessary attributes.

28. These details are set out in the *Manuel d'une Corporation chrétienne*. At the Secretariat of the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles, 262, boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris.

Goodness does not exclude the duty we all have to make our enterprise succeed; but how far that legitimate desire is from the selfish and blind motive of a narrow interest which seeks only itself, without regard for the good of others!

Wisdom forbids us to put our fortune at risk, but it puts everything in its proper order. It shows reason that economic facts are often only consequences; therefore it leads the employer to concern himself more with higher causes.

Finally, is brute force power? Is it not rather weakness? Have we not seen moral power, alone and unarmed, overcome triumphant force? Without having recourse to the great facts of history, this phenomenon appears every day in private life, in families and in every gathering of men in which moral power is worthily represented. It is worthily represented when the one who exercises authority has faith in it. That is a way of having faith in God, from whom all lawful authority emanates. This feeling leads us to respect the power that is assigned to us, to keep as far from abuse as from desertion, because it makes us appreciate at its true worth a good that is only entrusted to us and for which we shall one day render an account.

To restore the true notions of authority, of its role towards inferiors and towards superiors, is to do the social work par excellence. For what is restoring the sense of responsibility, if not reforming ideas about authority, which is spread in various degrees throughout the whole social body? As soon as two men are face to face, there results an authority, in fact or in law, and consequently a responsibility.

Let us work to make these truths known, deeply obscured as they are by the anarchic ideas with which we are infected more than we think. When the sense of responsibility comes to disappear, human dignity is shipwrecked; nothing remains but servility or revolt, which comes to the same thing.

4. — These premises laid down, let us study the role of secondary authorities in the Corporation. We find a striking image of it in

ourselves. The life of our body is sustained by the blood that leaves the heart; an admirable branching of vessels carries it to the extremities, where it accomplishes its mission as completely as at the centre; then it returns to the heart without interruption.

So in the corporation, the secondary authorities, becoming more particular as they descend and never ceasing to receive the same impulse, gently penetrate to the extremities, from which they return to their source. They develop initiative and everywhere accomplish their beneficent mission in the liberty of order.

Let our fellow industrialists not fear to restrict their power by delegating it; on the contrary, that is the means of strengthening it and multiplying its action.

5. — Centralisation is essentially revolutionary; it stifles initiative and destroys liberty, while ruining authority. Even when the master is good, the details escape his knowledge; therefore wisdom cannot guide his conduct with regard to facts he cannot appreciate, and his power is held in check by a thousand obstacles against which he stumbles without seeing them.

Let us consider how God acts, He who is wisdom and power by essence, as He is infinite goodness. He governs everything without being involved in anything; He calls forth noble devotedness, He kindles generous ardour, and the secondary authorities form as it were an immense ladder which has no limits, in breadth and depth, but the very limits of mankind.

The employer, after the example of God, must delegate his authority without losing interest and without abdicating. The mandate he entrusts is not a dispensation he grants himself from ever intervening; but at the same time he is imbued with the idea that there is more danger in failing in respect and deference towards the lower authorities than towards the higher authority. No doubt, in either case, the principle is violated; but in the first case the fault is harder to repair than in the second.

If the lower authority goes astray, if it must be corrected, the head of the factory will do so in the name of wisdom, and not as master in the name of force. Such an intervention is no longer tyranny; on the contrary, it is the safeguard of liberty; it keeps authority within the divine circle that makes it start from God and return to God.

But if authority meets layers into which it does not penetrate, it acts on inert matter and its action is, so to speak, without effect. Thus, to recall a comparison made a moment ago, the limb in which the blood no longer circulates regularly ceases to thrive; it withers and seems no longer to receive any benefit from that active life, from that continual renewal which the circulation carries through the body. That is what happens when a head of a factory concentrates all power in himself and wants to do good to his workers without having created, by a wise hierarchy, the secondary authorities. His activity is spent in vain efforts on inert minds without gaining any serious influence. He builds on the shifting sand of individuals instead of resting on the solid ground of association. The number of his benefits only increases the improvidence of the indolent, and his constant intervention irritates those who claim to secure their own well-being themselves. The politicians then have an easy game against the best of employers. Venomous words meet no one to contradict them. There are no secondary authorities; therefore no fortress for liberty, no courageous voices to vindicate slandered authority, and one day the master becomes aware of the general disaffection of his workers, for whom he has made so many sacrifices.

II

6. — Let us apply these principles to practice.

The corporation is a social body hierarchically organised and composed of homogeneous elements.

This organisation applies to professional, moral and economic interests. It follows that the head of a factory who wishes to found a

corporation must begin by establishing this threefold hierarchy.

It will be understood that in fact these three divisions indicate three orders of ideas and not three kinds of staff. The foreman, in receiving a professional delegation, receives at the same time a moral delegation, and nothing prevents him from taking part in the corporative institutions. The worker who belongs to the economic council also has a share of moral responsibility. Finally, the member of an association of piety does not lose interest in the material well-being of his brothers, either in the workshop or in the family. But, to be clear, we must consider each order in turn.

7. — From the professional point of view, the employer is not only a father but also an owner, and the power of the secondary authorities will necessarily be limited by the right of property. Two pitfalls are to be avoided: either abdication, all too common and often set up as a principle, which abandons the higher power to the clerk; or monopolising, which suppresses initiative and diminishes the principal authority by making it intervene in every detail.

The employer trains his foremen, teaching them their duties towards their superiors and towards their inferiors. The Christian industrialist finds in his faith the understanding that the interests of God and his own are morally and materially bound together. He therefore teaches his assistants to make the name of God and his Law respected, at the same time as the name of the master and his rules; to give themselves to technical work and to efforts for production, but in the manner of the farmer who, after sowing, raises his eyes to heaven to ask for the rain that makes the seed fruitful. He shows them in their inferiors not only agents of production, but above all children. These ideas of respect for God and of social paternity open new horizons; they are a light that clearly marks out duties almost always unknown; they raise the foreman's power, make it accepted and render it beneficent. It can be seen that the workers' irritation is often caused by secondary authorities which have become tyrannical

and odious because they no longer proceed from goodness, are no longer governed by wisdom and no longer have moral power. Having no faith in themselves, they have no other support left than force, and they breed discontent and hatred.

See in the army what importance is attached to solid cadres[29], and you will understand how necessary it is to set up secondary authorities that are truly strong and influential. For the employer's authority they are the guarantee, the very condition of power.

8. — In the moral and economic sphere, the employer is not an owner; therefore he cannot, in the name of his authority alone, lay down laws in an order that is not that of the trade. Yet a strict duty weighs on his conscience: that of leading his workers' family to happiness, that is to say to God, the source of all good things, even on this earth.

To accomplish this noble task we know only one means: to form associations. These will be able to legislate fruitfully, since every society has the right to impose special obligations on its members, provided that they offend no higher law and tend towards the particular end of the society.

It is very important that these associations be founded on liberty, the only fruitful lever of all responsibility. The head of the factory must remain a father in them, while leaving the widest initiative to the secondary authorities. Let him nevertheless beware of losing interest in things; but let him strive to imitate the action of God, governing everything without being involved in anything, calling forth *goodwill*, and filling hearts with the spirit of charity.

9. — From the economic point of view, the employer's role is limited to stirring up the zeal of his workers and helping them with his

29. *Extract from the military regulations:* The members of the military hierarchy, at whatever degree they are placed in it, must treat their inferiors with kindness, be benevolent guides to them, take every interest in them and show them all the consideration due to men whose worth and devotedness bring about their successes and prepare their glory.

experience and his credit. He will do greater good if he strives to make the institutions prosper by themselves rather than to support them by his largesse.

In managing the common fund, the worker learns to administer; he brings back to the home a concern for the interests of his family that was formerly unknown; disorder gives way to a better balance between earnings and expenditure; the wage, hitherto powerless to fill the gulf dug by daily waste, soon suffices to build up savings. Why then should the household not put money aside, if it is managed on the same principles as the section run by the worker, which is making its fortune?

Such a result shows that it is of the greatest importance to form as many sections as possible in the economic institutions. No doubt a single company store can meet all the needs of a population; but it is preferable for the operations to be divided into categories, each giving its separate profit, in order to multiply the councils, which will make it possible to train a greater number of fathers of families. Is not this management of common interests the best school of wise administration? Besides, here plurality in no way harms unity, any more than, in the large commercial houses, the different departments assigned to certain groups of goods prevent unity of management.

It is easy to understand that such an organisation no longer has the sole result of procuring an increase in wages, as happens in the institutions managed by the employers, but that it becomes a practical remedy against ignorance, carelessness and prodigality, the most frequent causes of poverty.

10. — In Parliament, amid ironic applause, the following statement was quoted of an idea on which we wish to insist:

"It is a fact of experience that to attempt the creation of economic institutions before having founded religious associations in the factory is to lay up many disappointments for oneself. Workers who have been given habits of thrift and saving are not the easiest to bring

back to the practice of their religious duties; and purely economic institutions have in no way established social peace[30]."

Indeed, we have learned it by experience: apart from Christian ideas, charity, that is to say the love of our brothers, is a rare virtue among thrifty people. They easily incline towards avarice, which hardens hearts and turns them to stone. Wealth also brings estrangement from God. What need has a rich man of the good Lord, since everything is assured to him?

Now we, who love the workers, could not be content with a human virtue that stifles so many generous feelings: religion, filial love, compassion for the unfortunate. On this subject we recall a profound saying of Louis Veuillot: "Blessed are the poor; let there be poor!" Indeed, we observe in the worker who owns nothing a greatness of soul and a generosity equal to his lack of concern for the morrow and to his destitution. We have known workers burdened with families, possessing no savings, who did not fear to adopt orphans. Every day miseries are relieved by other miseries, with a delicacy and an affection that are deeply touching.

The religious idea alone is capable of maintaining these noble feelings in the man who grows rich, because it alone has enough sway over hearts to keep them from falling into avarice.

Yes, we want to have thrifty, comfortably off workers who own property, but we also want them to remain devoted sons to their old fathers, generous brothers to a brother burdened with a family, charitable neighbours in the face of crying poverty; and all that is impossible if hearts are not imbued with the love of God. That is why we dare to repeat it: Begin with the religious associations, otherwise you will lay up many disappointments for yourselves, and you will risk ending with unnatural sons and individuals without compassion.

30. Mr Charles Floquet, Sitting of 19 June 1883.

11. — We come to the most important secondary authorities, those of the moral order. Their mission is to restore freedom to do good in the factory, to restore the family, and to bring back, through the reign of mutual love, peace and happiness to the world of labour.

Our adversaries mock freedom to do good, implying that the word covers a constraint: they are either in bad faith or ignorant of the human heart and of social influences. When man turns aside from the good, it is because his liberty meets an obstacle that makes it give way. This struggle is perfectly expressed by the saying of the Latin poet: *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* (Ovid.) That is why authority must come to the help of liberty, to remove the obstacle or at least lessen it.

If man's liberty is hampered by his passions alone, how much more is it hampered by the pernicious influence of unhealthy surroundings? A man handed over defenceless to a band of brigands is less exposed than the soul of a worker in the factory. He is not free to be a Christian, he is not free to be a faithful husband; he is not allowed to keep for his wife and children the wage he has painfully earned; and if tomorrow some ringleader demands it, work will be forbidden him and he will have to starve without complaining.

Evil is arrogant and oppressive. Good, on the contrary, is timid and fearful; it needs a protecting shelter that allows it to assert itself without danger, otherwise it is reduced to hiding. Therefore, to restore freedom to do good is not to compel people to do good; it is to set up a barrier against the tyranny of the wicked, who mean to force others to do evil.

Virtue respects the rights of others; and when vicious men pretend to dread the oppression of the good, they remind us of the fable of the wolf that complains of the lamb in order to find a pretext for its vengeance.

The importance of this first moral action in the factory demonstrates the necessity of associations of piety in the workshop. Indus-

trialists would therefore be wrong to think they were doing a complete work by establishing, through Catholic circles common to several factories, associations that would have no autonomy and consequently no life within the factory.

The seat of the evil is in the common room where the daily work is done; that is the place to be conquered, not only outwardly by religious emblems, but above all morally by active secondary authorities, which make the liberty of honest workers respected by showing themselves vigilant guardians of the rights of God.

12. — We can see that the family has collapsed in proportion as religious feeling has declined. Homes where God is not honoured know neither sweet tenderness, nor gentle authority, nor noble obedience. A Christian social order has to be restored in these little kingdoms, so humble and yet called to such high destinies.

We shall teach them that the father's kingship keeps its imprescriptible rights, even when it might seem diminished by moral weakness or bodily infirmities; that lawful authority belongs not to the worthiest but to the one whom God has chosen, after the admirable model of Nazareth, where the one who commanded was the least great of the august family.

As soon as the knowledge of paternal dignity has given back to parents the notion of their responsibility, and to children the spirit of Christian solidarity, happiness and union will resume their place in the domestic home. We have had many *examples* of this, and we can affirm that nothing is more encouraging than to witness the transformation of households from which the intimacy and joys of family life were absent. In our surroundings, the devotedness of the best employer would have been powerless for such a work; it was the associations that opened hearts and enlightened minds, and then the secondary influences completed the conversion by an almost hidden labour, so discreet was it.

13. — To bring back peace and happiness to the world of labour, the perfect means is the charity of Jesus Christ.

Allow us, in closing, to speak to you of the valiant secondary authorities who have drawn from this charity an astonishing wisdom, a victorious power. They are the apostles of the factory, workers with generous hearts who have heard the call to devotedness. They seem to have received their delegation from God himself. It was enough to touch these minds to make spring forth from them the heroism that was germinating unknown.

We have seen them, these apostles, now at their daily work, counting as nothing the hard labour of the workshop, tireless in the service of their neighbour, compassionate towards every sorrow, ingenious in bringing back to God brothers who, alas, were more ignorant than guilty; now nailed down by a cruel illness, joyful in suffering, willing victims for the redemption of their brothers; now, finally, about to leave the earth, changing the poignant sadness of their last days into hours of gladness, making heaven appear on their transfigured faces, and departing with a smile: there, Christian employers, are the all-powerful secondary authorities who will make the mercies of God shine forth in your factories.

The other day, in the Chamber of Deputies, someone asked how much our Communions cost. They cost the sufferings of our willing victims. And if we are told that this is a ransom hard to find, we shall answer: Sow Jesus Christ, and you will reap Heroism.

Letter Announcing the Death of the Good Father

4 March 1884

L'Association catholique, vol. XVII (1884), p. 536-537

Obituary.

A deep sorrow, which will find a painful echo in the hearts of all our fellow members, has just struck the Harmel family and the workers of Val-des-Bois. — Mr Jacques-Joseph Harmel, the man whom, with touching familiarity and by a tradition half a century old, people delighted in calling the *Good Father*, has just left this land of trials to go and seek, beside his divine Master, the reward of his long efforts and of his patient virtues.

Mr Léon Harmel announced the sad news to the Committee of the Association in these terms:

Val-des-Bois, Tuesday morning, 4 March.

Mr President and dear Fellow Members,

We write to share our great sorrow with you. The Good Father left for heaven yesterday, Monday, in his 89th year, which was drawing to its close. We had planned a magnificent celebration for his 90th year; it would have been beautiful above all for the tokens of love that would have risen from hearts to lips and eyes. God did not will it!

After blessing his former workers one after another, in small groups, from Tuesday to Saturday, on Sunday, feeling his end approaching, he wished to give a new blessing to the whole workers' family, represented by the Internal Council.

It is impossible to convey to you the touching and poignant, and at the same time sweet, details of these meetings. These men were deeply moved before that serene majesty of paternity, uniting the crowning glories of age, of holiness and of that power acquired by

long command over a great number of people. Never had the Good Father seemed more beautiful than on his bed of suffering, admirably lucid, delightfully tender towards each one, going towards God without anxiety as without bravado, with the deep humility of the Christian, the affectionate trust of the son and the simplicity of a child.

He has left us an admirable testament in which he sets out for each of us our duties. Allow me to quote one sentence from it:

"Love our dear workers; they were my children; you will take up my paternity; you will continue to lead them towards God and to do them good."

Every day he said his Rosary and, after each decade, he recited a short special prayer for the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles. He is one more protector of our Association in that sacred college of the saints where we already have so many friends.

[...]

Letter to Mr Hervé-Bazin on the Government of the Association

31 December 1888
L'Association catholique, vol. XXVII (1889), p. 367-373

⁂

We reproduce here the letter addressed by Mr Harmel to Mr Hervé Bazin a few days before the latter was taken from the Association. The instructions contained in these pages remain useful for everyone, and our fellow members will draw precious advice from them.
G. de G.

Val-des-Bois, 31 December 1888.

My dear friend,

It is with joy that I give you the fraternal embrace. I thank Our Lord Jesus Christ for having bound you more closely to the life and government of the Association.

Receive my affectionate good wishes at the beginning of this new year. What does it hold in store for us? The will of God, and that is enough for us. We are happy to be in the service of the Master, and our devotedness will never be enough to repay this privilege. You know how, on this point as on so many others, our hearts beat in unison, you with the breath of an eloquent soul, I with a more modest expression but a feeling just as keen.

You ask me how I understand the government of our dear Association. It seems to me that it can be summed up in three words: God, family, trade; three ideas unequal no doubt, but all three holy, and which answer the inmost aspirations of our people of France, maddened by the sectarians who have betrayed them by taking from them these three higher goods.

I

The first term no doubt points us to submission to the Church in the persons of the Pope and the Bishops, and to an affectionate deference towards the Clergy. But from the practical point of view, on what must we insist? On two questions, it seems to me:

A. With regard to the clergy, on its role in the present situation of society, from the points of view of study and of action. We wish to see the clergy at our head, and all our efforts are limited to making easier for it a mission that would allow it to give back to the Church her social influence.

Study. — The Church has economic and social doctrines. It was by these doctrines that she overthrew the old pagan economic order based on slavery and usury. It was by them that she organised the society of the Middle Ages, with its guilds, its popular institutions and its liberties. Janssen's book, *L'Allemagne et la Réforme*, reveals to us, in the world of the 14th century, the magnificent flowering of the human mind and of popular prosperity which the Holy Father Leo XIII has summed up in one of his admirable Encyclicals. It is because modern society has disregarded and violated these doctrines that it is sinking into the abyss. Have you not been struck by one thing, namely that the defenders of Catholic liberalism, even when they profess to be Christians, never rely either on the language of the Fathers of the Church or on the acts of the Popes or the councils? They set up as a principle the tolerance made necessary by the harshness of the times. Now, if the Church tolerates error, she never recognises any right in it; thus, in the questions of usury and the abuse of property, the Church's tolerance in no way alters the economic doctrine she never ceased to proclaim throughout all the centuries during which her social kingship was recognised by the nations. If she is now silent on certain points, it is only because she has ceased to be free, I mean to be Queen; for where the Church is not Queen, she is oppressed.

Let us never cease, then, to ask the priests and religious who are willing to understand our efforts to study the doctrine and to make it known, so that we, the servants of truth, may be enlightened on our way. (St Thomas dealt with all these questions.)

Action. — On the social action of the clergy, we have not only the example of a glorious past (the centuries that preceded the Renaissance); we also have examples in the modern world: the small Catholic cantons, where the priests draw up, together with the laity, the laws favourable to the worker; Canada, where the parish is the principle of social groupings and the priest puts himself at the head of colonisation; Germany, where the memory of Mgr Ketteler and of Kolping has produced a clergy deeply imbued with social ideas. All our associations and our corporations can give back to the people their faith and their morals only if the clergy, ceasing to stand aloof from the social life of the people, resumes its beneficent and guiding action.

Our friends must therefore neglect no opportunity of taking advantage of the goodwill of Their Lordships the Bishops and of the directors of the Major Seminaries, in order to bring the experience of our efforts into these sympathetic circles. By awakening the attention of the young clergy to the great social problems, we shall enable it later to bridge the gulf of separation that the Revolution has made between the people and the priest. How could it achieve this, kept as it is by its very way of life outside the life of the people, if it does not study social science, that is to say the practical science of works, of social relations and needs, as well as of the wonderful foundations by which, in past centuries, the Church improved the material lot of the workers?

B. With regard to ourselves, this first term imposes on us the spirit of faith, a spirit so rare even among those who have the faith; it is a supernatural light which allows us to judge what surrounds us and to decide the direction of our action. From it we draw a confid-

ence equal to our sense of our own powerlessness and of the omnipotence of God. Humility gives us an invincible certainty. Is the work of christianising the people undertaken by our Association necessary? Yes. Can it be accomplished without the work of a few devoted men? No. Therefore we shall succeed; for the omnipotence of God mingles with human action in the measure in which the end pursued by that action is necessary. Away, then, with the prudent and the timid, who see impossibilities where God has sown difficulties only out of mercy, in order to spur on our ardour and to bring out our courage. They call for saints to every echo, and their eyes, weighed down by naturalism, do not see a particular tenderness of Jesus Christ for the time in which his Sacred Heart is loved and honoured; holiness, which was the privilege of a few, has come down into the masses. The spirit of reparation and sacrifice has penetrated to the marrow of our sensual society. If we seek with the spirit of faith, God will make known to us what He hides from the world: chosen souls in every rank, souls that know how to understand suffering and reparation. Let us gather these chosen souls for the benefit of our undertaking, and let us repeat: If God is for us, who shall be against us?

II

The reorganisation of the family is the necessary means of social restoration. The family is not only the divine type of perfect associations; it is in itself the fundamental association, the only one powerful enough to react against the others, influential enough to stamp its image on all social groupings.

The family hearth is a sanctuary where God, after the Church, wishes to be specially adored. That is why the divine Lawgiver took particular care to ensure its perpetuation, to make it the source of Christian education, that is to say of the supernaturalising of souls through the knowledge and love of God, and through that apostolate which, in large families, is exercised by the elder children over the

younger. It is the family that brings about the sanctification of its members, that establishes a centre of mutual love and of strength, where the afflicted find consolation, where the weaknesses caused by deaths and reverses find their recovery, where the disinherited and the incapable meet with a shelter. In every family organised according to the divine plan there is that feeling of predilection for misfortune which Our Lord expressed by his *Misereor super turbam;* it knows that its higher interest is in agreement with its generous aspirations, while narrow selfishness, with its petty calculations, leads to ruin.

The family is a creation of God, the first in date and in importance. It would therefore be folly to think of improving society without its help. To judge by the relentlessness with which the Revolution works to destroy the family, one may conclude that it knows no greater enemy. By a persistent satanic action in the laws and in morals, this stronghold of human dignity and liberty has been dismantled. The father can no longer be either administrator or sovereign; the laws have taken all power from him, and the idolatry of legality that reigns in France makes these laws accepted as the expression of justice.

The evil is as great in the ruling classes as among the workers. It is through our lady patronesses that we shall reach our goal, by asking them to enter an active league against the great evils that devour families: luxury in furnishing and in dress. Is servile obedience to costly fashions worthy of woman? And is not simplicity the distinctive virtue of Christian families, which must stand clearly apart from the showy and selfish luxury of upstarts? Frivolity is the second evil to be fought; it absorbs life in a host of useless things, visits outside, companionships in which duty plays no part; it breeds complete ignorance of the divine role of woman and makes the wonderful gifts of God be squandered on trifles. Finally, is not the abandonment of children to hirelings a characteristic evil, even in good families? Is it not the mother's first duty to pour her heart into the

heart of her child, to awaken in it noble ardour and holy enthusiasm for the good and the beautiful? How can she achieve this if she does not devote all her time to it? As the family is, so will society be, for it is only an assemblage of families and not of individuals. Since we want a society in which devotedness and generosity flow to overflowing, the mother of the family must develop these feelings in her home.

Let us therefore encourage one another in the reform of our own families; let God resume his place in them, through his image in every room, through prayer in common, through the reading in common of the Old or the New Testament (one or two pages), through the old customs, betrothals, anniversaries, family books; let paternal authority resume its rank and its dignity, with its responsibility; let our sons become the reward and the honour of their mothers.

Let us miss no opportunity of recalling, in our meetings and at the workers' sessions, that the family is the holy Ark outside which mankind can find no salvation. Let us make use of the works of Le Play; this man of genius had the courage to tell his century the truth and to overthrow the revolutionary idols. Unfortunately, today, he is more praised than read. We shall thus help to create a current of opinion which may one day lead to wiser laws. In any case, the spreading of these principles will have its immediately salutary effect, by causing duties that are better understood to be better practised.

To embody our idea in action, we shall organise family associations and works. By grouping fathers, mothers, sons and daughters in distinct associations, we shall be able to teach each one his or her particular duties in the home; we shall insist above all on the sacred rights of paternity, which a man is not allowed to abandon, because they are the rights of God, and because he will render an account of them.

Let our associations echo affectionately the joys and sorrows of the family: at the birth of children, at First Communion, at marriage, at death. Let us take an interest in the schools through prizes pub-

licly awarded. Let us organise the institutions that help the family in sickness, accidents or old age, and for cheap living.

In a word, let the family be the constant object of our concerns and of our organisations.

III

Labour has its origin in the command of God, a command given to Adam before the Fall. It is the condition of our moral perfection; and if it has become a punishment since sin, it has nonetheless remained the condition without which man cannot reach his end. That is why the trade, which is the application of labour to a definite object, is, after God and the family, the first good of the people. Without the Christian organisation of labour we cannot fully reach our goal. Indeed, the abandonment of the faith and the breaking up of the family among the workers have been the direct and rapid fruits of professional disorganisation.

God had instituted labour to unite men, to bind them together from the top to the bottom of the social ladder, each one needing all. Labour turned from its path has become the principle of division, of hatred and of fratricidal struggles. The Gospel says to us: "Love one another." Modern economics says to us: "Destroy one another." So the divine plan is overturned. What was to give birth to liberty brings about slavery; what was to raise human dignity degrades the worker. Isolation has bred mistrust and jealousy; social harmony has turned into terrible struggles in which the customer, the employer, the worker and the fellow tradesman are by turns rival enemies. Let us therefore hasten to take advantage of the law of 1884 to form professional groupings immediately and everywhere. Wherever we unite, by affectionate and regular relations, a few employers of the same trade, or one or two employers with a few workers, we shall have laid a toothing stone for rebuilding the social edifice. Let us not wait for

numbers if we cannot reach them at once. Let us begin: practice will teach more than all studies.

Experience has already proved that the mixed union is an effective means of securing social peace: it unites the workers among themselves, it reconciles the worker with his employer, it makes it possible to restore the prosperity of the trade by suppressing a dishonest and unbridled competition which ruins everyone without enriching the consumer; it reconciles the world of labour with the ruling class, to which it offers a means of being seriously useful. The mission of the ruling class is threefold: it is exercised when there is need of conciliation between the two parties, who find in it a disinterested judgement; in direction, to which its leisure allows it to devote the necessary time; and finally in the protection of labour that is christianly organised and christianly practised. The drawing together of the classes is so easy and so natural on this ground, which arises from the grouping itself!

The professional institutions aim at organising apprenticeship, Sunday rest, union for purchases and sales, the confidence of buyers through collective professional guarantees, security of work, and agreement on all the questions that divide. You know all this by experience, my dear friend, and you have understood for yourself what a field of action lies before us, vast, attractive, touching every interest.

You have told us more than once: the union is the future. Where we cannot find employers, let us begin with the workers alone. Experience has shown that the employers follow afterwards. Our circle rooms will serve as meeting places. But as workers' associations, our circles must be transformed as soon as possible, so as to cease being simply confraternities and to become professional associations as well as religious ones. The membership of each of our circles is enough to start at once as many unions as there are trades among their members, even if there were only two or three of each. Each small nucleus

once formed will then recruit within the trade, while the Committee carries on propaganda among the employers. Through the mutual apostolate, organised according to the methods of the workshop delegates, we shall reach our goal, which is to make our circles a centre radiating over the whole town. The enemies of God are working energetically to group the workers everywhere by trade, on the pretext of protecting their labour, but in reality to organise them into engines of war against society. Let us show the employers who have kept some feelings of faith that common sense itself obliges them to give us active support, so as to form, as soon as possible and at every point, Christian groups that can react against the evil that is overrunning us.

Professional organisation is forced upon our Association as a question of life or death. What use would we be without it? Let us set about it, then, with feverish activity, if we do not want our society to collapse in irremediable ruin.

IV

What are the means of reaching our goal?

1. For the ruling class. In recruiting our Committees, let us remember Mr Le Play's definition: "The ruling class is the body of persons who, by their doctrines or their acts, give the impulse to a society." Let us not think, then, that our recruitment must be confined, by a sort of systematic exclusiveness, to this or that class of persons who owe their position only to birth or fortune; we must seek out devoted men and take them even from that middle class which springs from the people, and in which one finds at once knowledge of the people's needs, a sincere desire to relieve them and an effective generosity.

Let us also prepare the recruitment of our Committees through youth associations that have their roots in the secondary schools.

Works are not made with administration alone. Some of our friends think they have accomplished their social mission by regularly attending the weekly meetings of the Committee and by rendering a few administrative services, such as collecting money, doing research for regulations, supervising this or that building work, making contracts, etc. All this is no doubt very praiseworthy. Others go further: they study social questions in the best authors in order to rid themselves of the errors that clutter their minds; that is better still, it is even essential, for it is disorder in ideas that has bred disorder in facts. But it is not entirely sufficient.

The first service to render to the working classes is to bring one's heart close to the hearts of the workers, to make it beat with the same emotions; every shared emotion multiplies joy tenfold, quenches the bitterness of life and makes pain bearable. The perfect science is the science of the human heart, a science as vast as the world, in which the intellect always has discoveries to make and the mind always finds new horizons; it is above all in this knowledge that true eloquence finds its nourishment and its power, because there it learns the way to the heart. It seems to me that if confession is so wonderful and so powerful an institution, it is not only because it brings the penitent the immense relief of forgiveness and the great benefit of direction, but also because it gives priests necessary occasions to come into intimate contact with the least of men, to devote themselves constantly to the study of the human heart, and to draw from that study the true science, the one that makes it possible to lead peoples. Now, the training of the workshop delegates, of the councillors and of all the offices in which the spirit of apostolate is necessary provides natural occasions. By this means a member of the Committee can enter into intimate relations with a small number of men, at hours and on days that suit both the family duties of the one and the working obligations of the other, if need be in a private house within easy reach of all. In addition, family celebrations and home visits make it possible

to take an interest in everything that concerns the children and the home in general.

2. For the employers and the workers: to organise the mutual apostolate with a clearly defined aim, limited enough not to exceed the strength of each; to develop initiative; to seek to establish a kind of hierarchy in the groupings, so as to reach a whole town, or at least a whole district. This is the method followed by the Freemasons. The perfect nuclei govern the imperfect ones, and so on step by step to the indifferent associations. We can cite complete transformations obtained in hostile surroundings where Christian influences were successfully brought in. — To organise unions everywhere.

I am happy to call myself, my dear friend, your most affectionate

"Léon Harmel."

Letter from Rome to the Committee of the Association

1 November 1889

L'Association catholique, vol. XXVIII (1889), p. 721-722

Appointments in the Committee.

In the last *Chronique* we made known the changes that have taken place among the holders of important offices in the Committee; in accepting the post of head of the First Section, Mr Léon Harmel wrote a letter which we must reproduce here; it shows only too well the devotedness of its author and the cordial relations that unite the members of the Association with one another:

"Rome, 1 November 1889. My dear friends, as long as the pilgrimage lasts it is impossible for me to attend seriously to anything else.

I nevertheless wish to be present in thought at your first meeting on 6 November.

Like each of you, I have devoted my life and my efforts to our fine Association, and every day I thank Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has made me meet among you friends whose devotedness is beyond all expression.

Our valiant and much-loved leader Albert de Mun has asked me to accept the First Section. I have accepted out of a spirit of discipline. In our ranks there must be neither false modesty, nor fear of work, nor a just sense of inadequacy that makes one refuse an order and takes from the leader the freedom he needs to lead our Association.

I ask our excellent friend de Marolles to keep charge of action until the December meeting. After that I count absolutely on him for the press.

Here I have been able to appreciate our excellent fellow member Mr Lorrin; I have seen him at work, active and intrepid, and I have understood what use we can make of such goodwill. I shall therefore ask him whether he will kindly enlist in the First Section, to carry our ideas into the circles that his intelligence allows him to enter.

I still count on Mr de Moy and on those who are already serving in our ranks as members of the First Section.

Here in Rome we have already spoken to the Holy Father of our Association and of our dear Secretary General; we shall speak of them again at an audience we are to have on Sunday or Monday. Tomorrow I am to see the Cardinal Vicar, our protector.

Believe me always, my very dear friends, your most affectionate and most devoted

Léon Harmel."

Letter to the Rev. Fr Bailly: Electoral Ground for a Truly National and Patriotic Parliament

1892

L'Association catholique, vol. XXXIII (1892), p. 716-718

In a public letter addressed to the Rev. Fr Bailly, director of the newspaper *la Croix*, Mr Léon Harmel sums up his views in a final chapter devoted to the subject indicated by the title above.

[...]

With only very slight differences of shade, our friend and fellow member Léon Harmel, whose *confessional* soul no one, we suppose, will suspect, takes his stand on the same ground as we do in indicating the conditions for the practical triumph of our politico-religious ideas, in questions that concern the revival of the Catholic principle as much as the rebuilding of our civil institutions. We leave the floor to him:

The learned author of the *persécutions*[31] shows us the two societies face to face: the pagan State without a defined programme, pursuing a course full of incoherence and contradictions; — the Church, on the contrary, with her own policy, which never belies itself; she claims and gradually obtains her place in Roman society.

31. *La persécution durant les trois premiers siècles*, by Paul Allard. — Lecoffre.

Today the roles are reversed: Jewish Freemasonry has a clearly defined aim*; its means have been skilfully studied and are put into practice with a perseverance that no event can distract. — Catholics, on the contrary, are always taken by surprise; they do not agree, at least on the means, and the number of their defeats can no longer be counted.

It is time to change tactics. We have practised the negative policy long enough, which consists in railing at our adversaries to console ourselves for being defeated; it cannot take us very far. We need an active policy, a programme clear in its aim and precise in its means.

Our first series of demands concerns the *rights of conscience*. Let us never cease to demand:

Individual liberty, with the guarantees that surround it in England and in the United States;

The liberty of the family;

The liberty of the school and of education at every level;

Decentralisation, so as to arrive at the communal autonomy we enjoyed in the Middle Ages;

Freedom of association for all.

These are the broad lines of a wide programme in which everyone is at ease.

The second series of our demands bears on the *rights of labour*. Those who work with their hands (in the fields and in the town) form

* NOTE This collection covers twenty-two years (1877-1899). The passages hostile to Jews, whom Léon Harmel often associates with Freemasons, are concentrated in a letter of 1892 and in speeches and letters of 1895 (p. 98, 110, 115, 117 and 118); the editors of *L'Association catholique* themselves use similar language in introducing the Montmartre address. None is found in the earlier texts of the collection. This language, fed by the success of Édouard Drumont's *La France juive* (1886) and of his newspaper *La Libre Parole* (1892), was then widespread in a large part of the French Catholic press and Catholic circles; from 1894 onwards, the Dreyfus affair, which arose from the unjust conviction for treason of a Jewish officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, inflamed it further. We reproduce these lines out of fidelity to the document: they belong to their time, and this edition does not make them its own.

the necessary base of every society; therefore respect for their rights must be the first concern of a Christian legislation.

Here we are faced with two schools whose errors, though opposed in appearance, lead to the same contempt for souls: the liberal school, daughter of the Renaissance, speaks loudly of the duties of the workers and disregards their rights; the socialist school denies the duties and speaks only of the rights.

The Church teaches us that duty is the reason and the measure of right. Therefore, if we wish to know the extent of the worker's rights, let us measure the extent of his duties.

By studying the duties in the various trades, we shall discover the rights of each of the categories of workers.

For example, to the duty of knowing and serving God corresponds the right to religious instruction and to Sunday rest.

Obliged to keep himself, to feed himself, and to keep and feed his family, the worker has a right to a just wage.

The responsibility he bears for the souls and the health of his wife and children gives him the right to demand from society protective laws for work in the factories.

To his duties towards his country corresponds the right of association and of oversight of public affairs.

To the payment of taxes corresponds, for the workers of the towns and of the countryside, the right to require the public authorities to purchase in France supplies of every kind, arms, food, clothing and footwear, for the army or for the administrations. It is known that too often these purchases are made abroad, to the detriment of national labour.

The farmers and the workers have the duty of working conscientiously, to produce as well and as much as possible, so as to ensure for the whole nation an abundant and easy life. In return, farmers and workers have a right to professional representation. Until it can enter into our customs and our laws, they have the right to demand

that henceforth the political Chambers, composed for the most part of incompetent men, may no longer make laws concerning professional groups, whatever they may be, without those groups having been compulsorily consulted by a sort of referendum.

We never cease to press parliament to attend to our affairs instead of wasting its efforts in the personal rivalries that absorb it.

The abolition of night work, the limitation of working hours, the right to own property conferred on the mixed unions, arbitration boards, legislative measures suited to promoting the moral and material improvement of the workers: that is what the wishes of the country energetically demand.

It is Catholics who must be at the head of all these demands, for we should not be true disciples of Jesus Christ if we were not the defenders of the liberties and the rights of the small and the weak. Our leader, the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII, has invited us to this many times.

To work, then! Let us not be distracted by attacks on points of detail, by sterile disputes; let us go boldly straight to the goal: the revival of the fatherland through the emancipation of the workers.

Yours sincerely,

Léon Harmel.

Letter on the Regional Workers' Congress of Reims

26 February 1893
L'Association catholique, vol. XXXV (1893), p. 487-488

Regional Workers' Congress of Reims.

At the instigation of Mr Léon Harmel, a *Regional Workers' Congress* will meet at Reims on 20 and 21 May next. This bold innovation does honour to Mr Harmel's faith as much as to his confidence in the generous feelings and the good sense of the mass of the workers. It is therefore with joy, and sharing the confidence of the initiator of this undertaking, that we reproduce its preliminary documents, which deserve the most serious attention and the kindest welcome from the world of labour.

Val-des-Bois, 26 February 1893.

Sir,

For some time now, Christian social study circles have been set up in Reims on the very initiative of a few intelligent workers, struck by the many errors of which their comrades are the victims.

With that great good sense which comes so naturally to working people, they wanted to have the priest among them, so as to possess the living truth and thus be able to produce fruitful institutions. They were right, for facts are born of ideas, and error can produce only baneful organisations. We see it in liberalism, which has heaped up so many ruins and sanctioned so many tyrannies in the name of liberty; we see it in the godless socialism that seeks to take hold of the masses of the people. They excel at setting out the evils from which working people suffer, but what remedies do they offer? This German import, which seeks the destruction of religion, of the family and of

property, offers as a universal panacea only a communism that disguises a slavery worse than the slavery of antiquity.

The members of our Circles have grown firm in the truth, which they continue to study; they have undertaken several excellent institutions and they form among the masses of Reims an intelligent and active elite which tends to bring back peace and concord around it.

Is not this the fruitful way of the future?

To give an impulse throughout the region to these popular bodies, so necessary today, they thought of a Regional Workers' Congress.

After several meetings at Reims and at Val-des-Bois, we agreed on the rules and the programme which we are sending you.

We trust that you will kindly associate yourself with this plan and help us with all your power in this undertaking, which is eminently useful to the workers. We wish to call to us not only the Catholic associations but all honest groupings, those that are enemies neither of religion nor of the family.

Would you be so kind as to put us in touch with the workers' groups of your region: Mutual Aid Societies, Unions, Circles, Cooperative Societies, etc.?

We have little time and we must make haste.

Please accept, Sir, the assurance of my affectionate devotedness.

Signed: Léon Harmel.

Speech at the Closing Session of the General Assembly of the Catholic Workers' Circles

June 1895

L'Association catholique, vol. XL (1895), p. 74-81

We reproduce below the remarkable and thought-provoking speech delivered by Mr Léon Harmel at the closing session of the annual General Assembly of the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles. We congratulate the pious and valiant deputy secretary general of the Association on the clarity and courage with which he tackled the most topical and most controversial subjects of the programme of Catholic social action.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It would be unpardonable rashness on my part to speak here if I were not fulfilling a duty of obedience.

You will allow me to speak in all simplicity and frankness, having only one concern and one aim: the good of our common work.

Where do we stand, and what is our future? Those are the questions I wish to answer in a few words.

I. Where Do We Stand?

We have existed for almost a quarter of a century. That is something in a time when everything passes so quickly, when institutions and men pass so rapidly into oblivion.

Our work began a march forward towards an ideal that its founders had formed for themselves: the corporative system. On this long journey undertaken through the unknown, we had to struggle against individualism, against social disorganisation and religious indifference: there were many stages to be passed.

The first was the re-establishment of Christian practices and habits.

The second was to teach association anew to men accustomed to think only of themselves and to mistrust others.

We also had to reform our own ideas and to seek the truth, taking as our principles the definitions of the Church on her relations with civil society. Thanks to our friend the Marquis de La Tour du Pin, our studies were pursued with an energy that no obstacle discouraged. Our dear president had the glory of seeing his ideas confirmed by the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII in his memorable encyclical *Rerum novarum*.

We can therefore affirm that, through the flowering of the circles and through the studies, the Association has passed the first three stages.

The ruling class was the chief object of our efforts; it was at first deeply stirred; then fickleness, disappointed impatience, the weariness of the struggle and the dust of the road little by little reduced the numbers in our army. We must say that there remains to us a core of valiant men with whom we can boldly continue on our way.

The workers answered our call everywhere; but several of them, among the most intelligent, became discouraged because we were not advancing, because we were not reaching the kingdom of justice, where lie the promises of all that shall be added.

In these last years, following the pilgrimages to Rome, a powerful popular movement, full of promise for the future and capable of giving new youth to our work, has arisen with the help of some of us. The workers too want to take part in the struggle; they want to bring to the triumph of the cause the ardour of their devotedness and the power of their sacrifices. And it is not I alone who approve of them. Our secretary general has not been afraid to give their efforts an official approval. When I go through the eloquent pages of the speeches of A. de Mun, which have stirred our souls and kept alive our ardour

for the struggle, I find in them the constant appeals he has never ceased to make to me, urging me to persevere in the popular way, where my heart, my upbringing and my profession were drawing me.

That is how I believe I have fulfilled my mission as deputy secretary general: by following this movement, in order to preserve in it the Christian spirit which is the aim of our work.

We firmly believe that the future lies there. The members of our committees who understand that one must always advance if one does not want to retreat must set to work resolutely to call forth everywhere a powerful popular action.

II. Popular Action

And first of all, what do we mean by popular action? We mean an action exercised in working-class surroundings by workers: the apostolate of like by like, the fruitful means we have never ceased to recommend for many years. This movement is reproached with tending to suppress the influence of the ruling class.

Quite the contrary: we offer devoted men a new field, interesting and fruitful in results. The workers rightly complain of being abandoned, and nothing arouses keener gratitude in them than the advice of those who, better equipped by their studies or by experience of life or of business, show them true affection. The formation of worker elites: that is our great task.

To prepare the ground, we must bring light into minds. The corruption of the mind is the worst scourge for a nation. The newspapers read by everyone have put into circulation the falsest ideas and brought the gravest problems into discussion. The popular mind is cluttered with prejudices, ignorance and errors. What has been done to enlighten it? Almost nothing. As numerous and ardent as the apostles of falsehood have been, so rare have been the apostles of truth on social questions. A considerable effort must be made here. People complain that the most abominable laws are accepted by the

country without provoking an uprising. But how can it be otherwise, since the masses of the people are informed only by the enemies of religion and of the fatherland?

It is therefore urgent to organise *Christian social study circles* everywhere, to fill the workers with the complete truth, taking as a basis the teachings of the Sovereign Pontiff, in particular the Encyclical on the condition of the workers. We also wish to give them the Christian solutions to the questions under debate, a true appreciation of events and of laws. We want to form apostles of the truth in the workshop, in working-class surroundings and in the meetings organised for propaganda. How I suffered in former days when I attended public debates and saw the power of the socialist workers' speakers! I felt that these men of labour exercised a kind of fascination over their comrades, and I wondered why our Master and King Jesus Christ did not also have his little battalion of worker speakers to bring back these crowds over whom direct influence escapes us. Thanks to the devotedness and energy of a few friends, this gap is beginning to be filled; at the workers' congress of Lille we heard true orators, and they are beginning to be trained more or less everywhere.

It would be impossible to tell the persecutions these friends have had to endure from certain Catholics. An incurable blindness is the usual lot of the conservatives of our time. They do not sense the barbarians who are at their door, ready to break into their homes and plunder everything. They do not hear the mort sounded by the Opportunists, who are preparing to share the quarry with the socialists. They do not understand that a well-organised popular army is the only means of salvation. As for us, gentlemen, together with our secretary general, we have confidence in the soul of the people; we know from the Gospel and from the history of the Church that the providential reserves are in the masses.

The devotedness of the ruling class to the working class must therefore be an intelligent devotedness, which consists not so much in

rendering services as in forming men capable of engaging in the social battle in their own surroundings. We want to help the Christian people to recover themselves, so as to become, in our disordered society, a conscious force powerful enough to restore the social reign of Jesus Christ. That is what we have sought to achieve through our workers' congresses, and the attempts are full of hope.

III. Workers' Congresses

The Christian workers' congress is a meeting of delegates appointed by the member associations. It deals with questions and organisations favourable to the moral, professional and economic well-being of working people. The questionnaires, sent out long in advance, are studied in each group with the help of priests and devoted men, who are themselves invited to the congress as consultant members.

The sole purpose of these assemblies is to put in order the efforts made and the knowledge acquired, to give a direction needed for the common work and a powerful stimulus for continuing the march forward; people encourage one another; hearts are steeped anew in a fresh enthusiasm that doubles their ardour.

In spite of the fears expressed, experience has proved the excellence of the method. Our work can find in it a new life and a considerable social influence.

The first congress took place at Reims in May 1893.

Seven more have been held in the past year: at Reims (June 1894), at Charleville (August 1894), at Cons-la-Grandville (November 1894), at Mohon (January 1895), at Nantes (April 1895), at Gespunsart (May 1895) and at Lille (June 1895). Two others will take place shortly, at Paris (7 July 1895) — our journal the *Corporation* is its official organ — and a second at Charleville (15 September 1895).

The Ardennes have begun small congresses every quarter to keep the study circles and the member associations constantly on their

mettle. The success of this attempt has led Reims to follow this example. The first quarterly assembly will take place on 21 July next. The Nord has taken the same decision; Roubaix has been designated for September.

Do you not see what life our work would have if, in each region, a similar succession of meetings renewed zeal everywhere! What results should we not achieve with such a movement, directed by men who are sound on principles, respectful of the workers' initiatives, broad-minded in details and persevering in their action on the elites to be formed?

The congresses have shown how much responsibility makes men wise, how much it accords with human dignity, and how it sustains energy and perseverance in the struggle undertaken.

We have seen to what depths the truth had penetrated into these minds, because, instead of being thrown into souls like a barren dust, it was made to fall drop by drop like a gentle and fertilising rain.

It is with joy that we have heard the workers quote our secretary general, whether from his bills or from his programme. It is with emotion that we hear him acclaimed as the defender of justice and the initiator of the Christian demands of labour.

We are still under the impression of the workers' congress of Lille, where we found at one and the same time the charm of a tender affection and the ardour of a passionate discussion, with a touching cordiality that did not falter for a moment, even at the height of the battle of ideas. The moderation that marks the demands of these congresses has surprised and moved even our adversaries.

Respectful of justice, our Christian workers seem to care more for the rights of their employers than for their own interests.

Deeply imbued with the supernatural, they draw down the graces of God by their simple and overflowing faith.

Conversions are brought about among them by way of the social side. We have heard miners, glassworkers, factory workers: it was

through social ideas that they came to religious practice, the reverse of what one might think when one does not live in these surroundings.

As soon as working people are convinced that they can return to religion without ceasing to study and assert their legitimate rights, they will give way to the unconscious hunger for Christ that is in every baptised soul. That radiant figure of the suffering Jesus, of Jesus the friend of the little and the humble, will then appear to them in all its attraction. They will go to him, and to defend his cause they will be ready to brave anything. As bold in the apostolate of good as they were in the propaganda of evil, they will astonish the respectable people who are too often timid and trembling.

No doubt it is sweet to live in a perfect idyll, to enjoy the good Lord's fine sunshine amid cool shade, to the murmur of the brook.

But it is fine too to face the fire of battle, to withstand the shock of the enemy, to fight in the burning atmosphere. It is fine to storm the strongholds overrun by the enemy, to plant the flag on them and to reconquer the territory of the fatherland defiled by the presence of the foreigner.

And to conquer, it is not necessary for such men to be the majority. It is enough for them to have faith: "In every camp," says Cardinal Manning, "the core of the strong is the group of the indoctrinated, of the believers, let us not mince words, of the fanatics. Those who are moved by interest prowl around and are beaten at the first shock."

Now ours are among the strong.

Together with the socialists and the anarchists they used to storm society in order to drive out of it God, the family, property and the fatherland; now, with the battalions of converts that grow larger every day, they are still storming society, but no longer to destroy it; on the contrary, to save it, to plant the cross in it and to establish in it the reign of Christ. It is they who will drive out the horde of Jews

and Freemasons who exploit, ruin and dishonour our fatherland*.

It is they who will give France back to God.

IV. Defence of Interests.

The interests of the world of labour, in small as in large-scale industry, in commerce and in agriculture, are threatened everywhere by the invasion of the tribe of Israel, so dear to the Freemasons and the Protestants.

There is a Jewish question; we cannot deny it. The soil of our Champagne did not know this race thirty years ago, and now, without anyone taking heed, they have seized all the profitable trades. It is the same everywhere.

It is therefore impossible for our Association to stand aloof from this question, which puts the very life of the nation in the balance.

The Fraternal Union was founded specially for the defence of the interests of small traders. Your deputy secretary general is its president; an associate member of the committee of the Association, Mr Hyacinte Le Franc, is its secretary general. We have three thousand five hundred names of Christian tradesmen, for whom we call for the custom of respectable people.

The agricultural unions are growing more every day; they are organising themselves into a peaceful army for the defence of rural interests, sacrificed for so long. We should like social ideas to be carried further in them[32]. Here there is a useful employment for the zeal of many fellow members who live in the country. I take the liberty of drawing their attention to this side. They would have to organise study circles and to group the workers as has been done in the towns.

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* NOTE See the note on page 98.

32. We warmly recommend a book composed under the inspiration of our dear president: the *Manuel social chrétien*, by Canon Dehon, 2nd edition. We also recommend an elementary book: *Manuel d'économie sociale* by Jules Michel, 4th edition, Tours, Alfred Mame.

The socialists are penetrating into this new milieu and, if we do not take care, they will cause the same havoc there as in the industrial centres. Let us use their methods. Our converts have tried it on Sundays in the neighbouring villages, and often with real success. The truth is more powerful than error; with equal apostolate we must triumph.

V

It did not seem necessary to me to speak in this talk of the institutions that have long been at work in our Association and that we must carefully continue: the Catholic circles, when they are kept to the type traced by our admirable and saintly friend Mr Maingnen, always remain an excellent means of christianisation and social education; the people's secretariats train the non-commissioned officers of the popular army; the economic institutions come to the help of families; the unions and the professional associations prepare the corporative system; and finally the associations of piety bring the supernatural element without which we shall build our social edifice in vain.

I have said nothing of our lady patronesses, whose generous help is so necessary to us. It is always a joy for me to attend their meetings and to be in touch with these valiant souls, who draw from their faith in the Association an ever new courage.

The Associations of St Anne secure the precious help of the workers' mothers for the family and economic institutions.

Finally, the needle-trade unions are multiplying under the eloquent apostolate of our Rev. Father Chaplain; they have already produced results that allow the finest hopes.

Moreover, gentlemen, it would not be difficult to link this past with the future. The *Guide des Fondations* has been accepted by the Association as the sequel to the *Instruction*. It dates from 1887, and in it we find, under the name of workers' sessions, the embryo of the social

study circle, as, under the name of workers' meeting, the first conception of the workers' congress. Have not the formation of men in the labouring class and the restoration of their dignity and their responsibility always been the objective of the Association?

Let us go forward, then, with the certainty of being faithful to our origins.

The year 1896 brings round the fourteenth centenary of the baptism of France. At Reims, it is by returning to its cradle that our nation will draw a new youth; for its origins give it back the consciousness of its strength, and if it is wise enough to understand this, it will rediscover the secret of its former glories and power. It is a patriotic act of the first order to associate ourselves with the great movement of 1896 and to help give it the importance it deserves.

By a happy and providential coincidence, the jubilee of our Association falls on the same day as this great anniversary, and on the see of St Remigius sits the eminent Cardinal Langénieux, he who is called the workers' cardinal, who led the crowds of the people to Rome, who encouraged the first Christian social study circles, who blessed the first workers' congresses, he in short who was from the beginning a beloved spiritual father of the Association and who has never ceased to show himself its affectionate protector.

Does it not seem to you that Reims is marked out for our general assembly next year? Could we not adopt the days following the national workers' congress, that is, immediately after the feasts of Pentecost? A general pilgrimage of the Association would be organised for the close of the assembly, on Trinity Sunday, and beneath the vaults of the magnificent cathedral where France came for so many centuries seeking the blessing of God, all gathered together with our dear workers around Cardinal Langénieux, we shall acclaim the Christ who loves the Franks, we shall ask him to give us back the faith of our fathers, to protect our armies, and to fill our legislators and our leaders with the light of his grace.

We shall renew, in the measure of our strength, the ancient covenant between Jesus Christ and the French nation.

Thus our jubilee would give our Association a new youth by plunging it into popular and Christian action, and by forming its cadres into an army that takes the offensive again to give France back to the French by giving her back to Jesus Christ.

Letter to Mr Le Chevalier, President of the Paris Workers' Congress

July 1895
L'Association catholique, vol. XL (1895), p. 145-146

Letter from Mr Harmel to Mr Le Chevalier

President of the Paris Workers' Congress

So your Congress is over. We are following its echoes in the press, friendly and hostile. Our first duty is to thank God for the success he has given us. The workers have proved once more their spirit of justice and fairness in the discussions that concern both the employers and the working people. For justice indeed requires the rights of each, and if it guarantees to the little and the humble respect for their dignity, their family and their life, it guarantees no less to the employers the fullness of their authority and the legitimate remuneration that belongs to them. Let us rejoice at these peaceful assizes, which show honest men the importance and usefulness of Christian workers' congresses.

The press, moreover, has not been mistaken. All the newspapers that are with the Pope, the *Univers*, the *Croix*, the *Monde*, the *Peuple Français*, etc., have applauded your meetings and your work. The press hostile to the directions of the Sovereign Pontiff has called you socialists. It is truly comic to see the *Petite République*, the *Siècle* and the *Estafette* take up the defence of the Catholic Church and show how this movement favours revolutionary socialism while destroying all Christian sense. To be attacked by these sheets is a good mark for you and proves that you are in the truth. You therefore have all the encouragement you need to continue your work.

But do not hide it from yourself: the congress of 7 July marks only the beginning of serious studies, which must be continued with energy and perseverance. You must accustom your comrades to devote their leisure to these great and serious questions, which matter to the world of labour but matter no less to the revival of the fatherland. For the great evil from which we suffer comes above all from the false doctrines that are in people's minds, and if we are crushed by the Jews and the Freemasons, it is because the masses are skilfully kept in falsehood and in the grossest errors*.

There is for you, Christian workers, a true apostolate to undertake, and you cannot prepare for it without serious studies. For truth is not a matter of feeling: it has precise limits that must be known and rules that must be followed.

You are right to insist on the presence of consultative members, priests or Christian laymen, in order to preserve you from the deviations that would be natural to your inexperience.

I was struck, like all those who attended your meetings, by the supernatural spirit that reigned in all the speeches, and you are quite right, for we can do nothing without Jesus Christ. It was Jesus Christ who delivered the world from servitude, and it is He alone, today still, who can give back to it the liberty and dignity that the revolutionaries have stolen from it. No doubt one can organise neutral institutions that are good in themselves, but be assured that their effectiveness will be limited if they are not animated by the Christian spirit; for the Christian spirit is to human institutions what the soul is to the body. It is the Christian spirit that gives life and movement. It is the Christian spirit that makes it possible to renew a society and to transform it by the power of resurrection it contains.

You must now rally around you all the workers' associations that are organised in your spirit, and to do so, enter into personal rela-

* NOTE See the note on page 98.

tions with each of them. Make yourselves known, and make people understand the importance of studies in all the working-class circles where they wish to do serious work.

In this way you will prepare the federation of the Christian workers of the Seine, so as to bring your contingent next year to the National Federation which is to be formed at Reims.

You follow the teachings of Leo XIII; you are therefore certain of being in the truth and of accomplishing a work that is at once religious and patriotic.

Please accept, my dear friend, for yourself and for your comrades, the expression of my most affectionate sentiments.

Léon Harmel.

Speech at the Banquet of the Fraternal Union of Commerce and Industry, at Montmartre

1895

L'Association catholique, vol. XL (1895), p. 194-195 (passages quoted by the journal)

The Fraternal Union at Montmartre. — Speech by Mr Harmel.

In his tireless apostolate, our friend Léon Harmel provides us with valuable pointers and powerful arguments in support of our social theses. His fiery addresses touch on the most topical and most burning points of the social question, and we could never tire of borrowing passages from his speeches.

At the closing banquet of the Assembly of the *Fraternal Union of Industry and Commerce*, — which at this moment counts more than two thousand members — Mr Harmel delivered one of those warm addresses in which he is a past master, and we note in it the following passages addressed to those Christians without strong convictions who play into the hands of the Jew, that eternal enemy of everything Christian*:

. . . . . .

We are here, gentlemen, to celebrate our dear Fraternal Union of Commerce and Industry, which has grown so considerably during the year just ended. No, the Fraternal Union is not an empty title: here people truly love one another, and help one another to bear the sorrows and miseries of this sad world. Love, indeed, lightens hearts. Would to heaven that it existed in our society: in this basilica at least, we are in the true temple of love, since here people pray for those

* NOTE See the note on page 98.

who persecute. That is why we have come from the four corners of France to stretch out our arms together towards the God who so loved men.

Alas! today this unhappy society is nothing but a vast battlefield on which dismal birds of prey have swooped. The Jew, indeed, has come down and taken everything from us*. It was then that emotion overcame us and we founded the "Fraternal Union", preferring to act rather than lament the misfortune of the times. For the mark of generous men is not to complain but to organise help. It used to be said of the Christians: See how they love one another. Well, gentlemen, that was said because they knew how to help one another. The saints did not enrich the enemies of Jesus Christ. In those days one did not see religious communities give work to those who were to drive them out. If a Christian does not help a Christian, he is no longer a Christian, he is a Cain. If we are handed over to the Jews, as the people of God were once handed over to the Egyptians, it is because we have sinned. Let us be converted, then.

Gentlemen, these words may perhaps be published, but so much the worse; it is good that they should be known. The Jews are everywhere: we must at last react. We have never sought to close their synagogues; why do they seek to close our churches and silence the voice of our priests? Why do they give the posts to a crowd of incompetents who are their creatures? If we want all this to end, let us bestir ourselves, let us come out of our lethargy. God must be the master. The people of Roubaix have just shown us the example; let us follow it. The boldness of our enemies comes only from our cowardice. If in future we have a little more courage than in the past, we shall see that the cowardice of our enemies of tomorrow will surpass even ours. It is sometimes said — and our enemies have repeated it to

* NOTE See the note on page 98.

us often enough — that good makes no noise and noise does no good. That is not true: one does no good without making a noise.

Some, seeing the present situation, begin to lose heart. They are wrong, for what time was ever more fertile in miracles? From the depths of the Vatican, Leo XIII speaks, and the echoes of his word resound from one end of the universe to the other. He is listened to and respected even by his enemies. Let us therefore be with the Pope, and we shall be strong. Let us be submissive to the Pope: he is a genius; he is more than a genius, since his word is more than a human word and is the word of God. At my last audience, Leo XIII deigned to say to me: "Ah! if the French Catholics would listen to my voice and follow my directions, they would be masters in their own house. . . . . .

Circular Letter and Address on Taking Up the Presidency of the General Committee of the Association of Circles

24 December 1895 and January 1896
L'Association catholique, vol. XLI (1896), p. 188-192

Léon Harmel, president of the general committee of the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles.

Léon Harmel is the man of action, the apostle of social foundations for workers, the great *impresario* of our movement of Christian reform. True to his vocation, he inaugurates his new functions as President of the General Committee of the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles with the two documents that follow.

Val-des-Bois (Marne), 24 December 1895.

Mr Secretary General,

Allow me to call on your help in the popular action with which I am personally occupied, together with our dear workers, for the coming National Congress, which will take place at Reims during the feasts of Pentecost.

The situation is grave for those who care about the religious and patriotic future of France. On the one hand, the sectarians who hold power are seeking to crush the Church and to dechristianise the nation; for them the enemy is Jesus Christ and all his servants. On the other, socialism, the fruit of godless doctrines, has been unwittingly favoured by the atheistic and pleasure-seeking bourgeoisie that holds the government; socialism grows every day, its progress is frightening, its agents show a devouring activity; it is like an immense fire kindled at every point of France, down to the smallest hamlets, which threatens to consume everything. We cannot look at

the future without a certain terror, and we should do so in despair if we did not have God with us.

Between these two kinds of adversaries, it must be acknowledged that the efforts of Catholics, considerable as they are at a few isolated points, are in general slow and too lacking in energy to react against the current of materialism that is overrunning the populations.

Only the blindness of the upper classes, who have no contact with the masses and understand nothing of what is happening, can explain the feebleness of the resistance.

We must not hide it from ourselves: no action will be as powerful in working-class circles as that of the workers. It is therefore to making easier the mission of the elites among working people that we must devote our zeal and our efforts.

I come to ask you to have our friends organise, wherever they can, social study groups in which the members can be filled with the truth. For the corruption of the mind is more fatal than the corruption of the senses and, I am convinced of it, the great cause of the unhappy situation in which we find ourselves is error, the illusions that result from it, and the complete lack of direction from the social point of view for the best of men.

We offer to send regularly questionnaires that make study easy, by guiding those who are willing to devote themselves to this very useful and very necessary teaching. By having written papers drawn up that sum up the discussions, the workers are taught to fix their ideas and to bring more method into their thinking.

Finally, these great national assizes to which we are inviting the associations for next Pentecost will mark the life and the rise of our Christian popular groups.

Our congress will have this particular interest, that it will be held at the same time as the National Socialist Congress, which has chosen the same town and the same date for the year '96. It will thus

be possible to see the difference in ideas, in methods and in principles, and to recognise that our Christian workers' congresses are the most effective institution for combating the socialist congresses.

In this great undertaking of social salvation, we have confidence neither in our own lights, nor in our strength, nor in our activity. We know that we are, in the hands of God, instruments whose power will be all the greater as God is more with us. That is to tell you that we ask for the prayers of our friends.

The workers' organising commission of Reims wished the first questionnaire to be on the importance of Christian principles, in order to show what value it attaches to supernatural ideas and what confidence it has in the support of God.

I should be grateful if you would have us informed of the names of the groups and persons to whom we can send our questionnaires and our circulars. We should like the movement to spread to every point of France, for in the dangers that threaten us no one is safe, the South no more than the North, nor the East than the West. We may well have been put outside the law by a government that is under the thumb of the Jews and the Freemasons*, and we shall win back our rights as French citizens only by winning back our rights as Catholics and as servants of Jesus Christ.

Our leader is the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII: we declare ourselves docile to his teachings, firmly confident that the fruitfulness of our efforts will be in the measure of our absolute submission to Jesus Christ living in Peter.

If you adopt these ideas, would you be so kind as to ask our friends to let us know their decision as soon as possible? We are ready to answer objections and to study difficulties, so as to bring all efforts together in one action made powerful by our agreement.

* NOTE See the note on page 98.

Please accept, Mr Secretary General, the expression of my affectionate devotedness.
Léon Harmel.

Here now is the address with which Mr Léon Harmel began on taking up the presidency of the General Committee:

My dear Friends,

It is with great joy that I find myself among you again.

I have been very sorry to have been kept away so long, and I warmly thank our dear Vice-President for the care with which he so perfectly took my place.

I rejoice particularly at the circumstance that allows me, at our first meeting, to offer you my heartfelt good wishes.

We have entered the year 1896. It is a memorable date for France, which will celebrate the 14th centenary of her baptism and of her birth. No nation has enjoyed so long an existence; where does she stand after so many centuries?

Jesus Christ has continued his tender love for his chosen people. In our own time we have witnessed extraordinary events that have marked the direct intervention of God. La Salette, Lourdes, Pontmain and Montmartre are so many permanent witnesses of that intervention. The Church has never ceased to show her eldest daughter her particular affection. The great Pope Leo XIII seems to concentrate his attention and his love on our country.

And yet how many reasons for disheartening sadness do we not give him? Triumphant Freemasonry is redoubling its efforts to dechristianise our country. It has lost all shame; intoxicated by uninterrupted successes, it has inaugurated an era of persecution that it will pursue to the end. Ruins pile up upon ruins to the applause of the anti-patriotic sect, which does not shrink from the destruction of France in order to destroy the reign of Jesus, its age-old enemy.

The year 1896 is also a solemn date for the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles: it is the 25th year since its foundation. In the

most complete agreement with my most excellent friend and predecessor the Marquis de La Tour du Pin, who wished to give us a striking and public proof of it, in concert with our valiant Secretary General and with the consent of the members of the Committee, our Association is accomplishing an evolution that makes it the social work par excellence.

Without disowning any of its forms, and while courageously pursuing the application of its principles, it is widening its action in order to come closer to the masses of the people. It understands that its role today consists above all in carrying out, disinterestedly and discreetly, the education of the people. This education consists chiefly in awakening the people's intellectual initiative and in teaching them to seek the truth for themselves and to attend to their own affairs.

Our Association is adapting itself to new methods without abandoning the old, both starting from the same principle, which is the application of the teachings of the Church to social life, and tending to the same end, which is the progressive re-establishment of the Christian spirit in the relations created by the labour contract or the exercise of the right of property (paragraph taken from the Circular of 5 August).

This evolution, so fully set out in the circular of 5 August, we invite you all to help us carry out resolutely, without hesitation, without reservation and with confidence in the soul of the workers. As love calls forth love, confidence calls forth confidence.

In the lamentable situation in which France finds herself, the Association has an important part to play in bringing about union: the union of hearts, the union of goodwill, to restore the reign of justice and solidarity among all the children of the same fatherland, to fight against the oppressors of consciences and to defend every weakness.

We should achieve this by being closely united ourselves. This affection, this mutual confidence that makes all the members like one great family: that is my hope.

I will not hide from you that it was with fear, with a certain anxiety, that I accepted the post your affection imposed on me. But the encouraging congratulations I have received from so many, and the many marks of support for our programme, have comforted me. I have felt the strength of the bond that binds the Committee and the Secretariat into an indissoluble whole, and I said to myself that with an army that is small, it is true, but so disciplined, so imbued with the supernatural, so closely united to the heart of Jesus Christ, the source of all power, we can fight with confidence and certainly with fruit.

Let me sum up all my wishes for the year 1896.

May our mutual affection and confidence grow every day; may God grant us wisdom in our resolutions and indomitable energy in action.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus kindle in our souls the noble enthusiasm that makes work and sacrifice light. May he give our Association a new youth, which will allow it to accomplish, in the forms required by the state of society, as much good in the order of ideas and of facts as it has produced during the first period of its existence.

[...]

Visit of the Society of Social Economy to Val-des-Bois (Report)

1 June 1899

L'Association catholique, vol. XLVIII (1899), p. 75-79 (report by Mr Jules Michel)

THE VAL-DES-BOIS MILL

Visit of the Society of Social Economy.

We reproduce[33] the report by Mr Jules Michel of the visit of the Society of Social Economy to the Val-des-Bois mill.

The writer adds in a note: "A few days after our visit, a sudden misfortune struck the Harmel family and the workers of the Val. Mr Félix Harmel, who had for some years replaced his father in the management of the workshops, and who had received us with as much cordiality as liveliness, was suddenly taken from the affection of his relatives and his workers. We can only join in the mourning of his family and respectfully share the grief and the sorrow of his family in tears."

— Our journal joins in the mourning of the great family of Val-des-Bois. We express our Christian condolences and our feelings of unchanging affection to the "Good Father", whose family "is being formed again in heaven".

The members of the Society of Social Economy and of the Unions went on 1 June, more than fifty in number, to Warmériville, not far from Reims, to visit the wool spinning mill of Val-des-Bois. This in-

33. See the *Réforme sociale* of 1 July 1899.

teresting day would deserve a long report; we shall at least try to recall here what particularly interested the visitors[34].

The Val-des-Bois mill is built on the Suippe, on the borders of Champagne and the Ardennes. It is served by the small railway line from Bazancourt to Chellerange. We were received at the station by Messrs Harmel father and son, accompanied by the veterans of the mill, who are distinguished by a gold-fringed decoration they wear in their buttonholes. The mill's brass band went before them, and the procession made its way to a large hall where the whole population of Val-des-Bois was gathered in close ranks, the men in working clothes, the women, and the schoolchildren.

Before this assembly, full of sympathy for the visitors, one of the longest-serving members of the staff came forward to welcome the members of the Society and to assure them that they would find at Val-des-Bois a working population satisfied with the security given it by uninterrupted work, and grateful for the solicitude with which the employer's family watches over everything that concerns its material and moral well-being.

Mr Jules Michel replied that nothing could be more pleasing to us than to see this good harmony between the employers and their workers: for the aim of the Society is the study of all the means that can help to strengthen social peace. This good understanding, if it is to bear all its fruit, must, according to Le Play, rest on family virtues; and so the Society is happy, whenever it has the opportunity, to distinguish workers who have given an example both of their attachment to the workshop and of the fulfilment of their duties towards their family. "At Val-des-Bois," he said, "as in all the factories where the employers know how to fulfil their moral obligations towards their staff, the workers who deserve to be singled out for their fidelity to their duties are numerous; the Society cannot reward them all.

34. See the monograph on the Combed-wool Spinner of Val-des-Bois, by Mr Urbain Guérin, in the *Ouvriers des deux Mondes*, 2nd series, vol. V.

Obliged to limit its choice, it hopes that all will feel honoured and encouraged in the persons of the three families to whom the President of the Society is about to present a medal and a diploma, to honour their attachment to their employers and their persevering devotedness towards their parents, their children or their nephews."

Mrs Jupin and Mrs Deroche and Mr Léon Ladame, whose life, so simple and at the same time so moving, Mr Lavollée had recounted[35], came forward amid general applause to receive the medal of the Society, until a keepsake, also offered by the Society, should come to recall in their homes the distinction conferred on them.

Mr Harmel then presented the veterans, that is to say the workers who have more than 25 years of service, and the factory councillors, men and women, who are chosen by their comrades in each workshop to maintain good order there and to take their complaints, if need be, to the employers. Then we went to the chapel, simple and well adorned, where the closely packed benches, always insufficient, since a side aisle recently had to be added, show how eagerly the religious services are attended. The chapel, built in this way between Mr Harmel's house and the mill buildings, is the permanent affirmation of the deep religious feeling which, at Val-des-Bois, is at the basis of all relations between the employer and his workers.

The house of the founder of the mill, modest and without outward show, has been kept by Mr Léon Harmel. It was in an outbuilding large enough to receive us that the luncheon had been prepared, presided over by Mr Léon Harmel's daughter, Mrs Saucourt, and by one of her sisters-in-law. Following a frequent custom in this patriarchal family, a certain number of workers had been invited to take part in the luncheon offered to the Society by the management of the mill. At dessert, Mr Félix Harmel spoke to set out the social programme of the Val-des-Bois mill; he appealed to the ideas of F. Le

35. See in the same no. of the *Réforme sociale* the report on the prizes for virtue by Mr René Lavallée.

Play in the whole organisation of relations between the employers and the workers of Val-des-Bois, laying particular stress on the importance of the associations, in which an active role is reserved for the workers themselves. Mr Gaston David replied, thanking the Harmel family for the good example it gives and wishing long prosperity to the mill, which is for the whole of France a moral lesson of great significance. Mr Jules Michel then gave an account of the various institutions the Society was to examine, all of which correspond to one of the six customs of the model workshops listed by Le Play in his book on the *Organisation du travail*.

In visiting the mill, we were first taken to some of the four-room dwellings, two on the ground floor and two on the first floor, with a garden, made available to the workers of Val-des-Bois at an average price of 170 francs. Other two-room dwellings with an attic are let more cheaply. The good keeping and the cleanliness of these dwellings were particularly noticed.

Next we went to the girls' school, of which a dispensary forms a sort of annexe. The sewing work of the pupils of the housekeeping school had been put on display. The school is run by the Servant Sisters of the Heart of Jesus of Saint-Quentin; it has three classes with 136 pupils, not counting the infant school, which gathers 86 children, boys and girls, under 6 years of age. From there we went to the boys' school, kept by the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine, which also has three classes and 127 pupils. Mr Léon Harmel is the titular holder for the boys' schools and Mrs Félix Harmel for the girls' schools. The schools are entirely free of charge, and school supplies are given to the children of large families. Then we visited the cooperative bakery, where 400 kilos of bread are baked every day. The Cooperative Society founded in 1879 also sells wine and printed cotton goods. As almost everywhere, the cooperative butcher's shop

had to be given up and recourse was had to the safer system of approved suppliers; the same was done for the grocery[36].

Until then we had been going round the mill. The moment had come to enter it and to find at their work the workers we had seen gathered in the great meeting hall on our arrival. Two engines with a combined power of 1,100 horsepower drive a vast single-storey mill, lit through the roof and perfectly ventilated. It has 42,000 spindles. Sales of woollen yarn reach 9 million francs a year, of which 4 million are abroad. The total wages paid at the Val-des-Bois mill amount to 800,000 francs a year. There was no stoppage of work, either in 1848 and 1870 or in 1874, when the buildings were largely destroyed by fire. The staff is made up as follows: males from 13 to 18 years, 85; over 18 years, 277; foremen and clerks, 48; miscellaneous, 45; in all, 455 men; females under 18 years, 76; unmarried over 18 years, 91; married, 35; miscellaneous, 30; in all, 232 women. Total staff 687; 72 veterans have from 25 to 48 years of service. The workshops where the women work are completely separate from those of the men. The most meticulous precautions are taken to prevent accidents. The woollen yarn industry carried on at Val-des-Bois is not, moreover, very dangerous, and accidents are rare; the injured

36. The capital consists of 200 shares of 100 fr., i.e. 20,000 fr., of which 10,650 fr. has been paid up in 30 years. In 20 years the profits have amounted to 88,265 fr. on 1,500,000 fr. of business done by the Cooperative Society (i.e. about 6 per cent), of which 63,016.35 fr. has gone back to the cooperators, i.e. an average of 3,160 fr. a year.

are helped by means of a special fund and by the Mutual Aid Society[37].

After visiting the workshops we went to the circle room, where the circle council received us and offered us refreshments. Mr Léon Harmel then spoke to set out in full the programme of the employers' institutions of Val-des-Bois, institutions characterised by the workers' share in their management. They are governed by 26 men's councils comprising 256 members, that is, half the staff of the mill, and by 7 women's councils. These institutions are crowned by the family fund, which distributes to workers burdened with children allowances in proportion to their burdens. In this form too, we see that the customs recommended by Le Play for the sound organisation of labour are put into practice at Val-des-Bois and justified once more by their results.

While we are listening to these explanations, the hour of departure strikes, and we take our leave, charmed by the hospitality of this patriarchal family, whose third generation is now at the head of the mill; fully edified as to the happy results of applying the good customs of the model workshops; and filled with wonder, finally, at the power

37. *Mutual Aid Society:* annual payments by the workers, 8,966.20 fr.; by the employers, 1,870.25 fr.; total, 10,836.45 fr.

Accidents. — In the event of an accident causing temporary incapacity, the injured man receives: 1. half of his full wage; 2. the allowance of the Mutual Aid Society. Example. — A man who earns 4 francs a day receives 2 francs from the accident fund and 1.50 fr. from the Mutual Aid Society; total, 3.50 fr. In the event of a serious accident entailing the permanent cessation of his previous work, or in the event of death, the full wage is paid by the firm until the settlement is signed by the family and the company. The victims thus have all the time they need to assert their rights.

of the religious idea, which has transformed Mr Léon Harmel into an apostle of social peace[38].

38. In a moving and charming introduction placed at the beginning of a volume by Mr Gabriel Ardant entitled *Terre et famille*, Mr Léon Harmel has set out the *Coutumes domestiques de sa famille*. These are exquisite pages, to be set beside the finest models of our family traditions, such as those whose historian Mr Charles de Ribbe has made himself. Those who would like to know Val-des-Bois in more detail will find a very well-made description of it in the already cited monograph on a Spinner of this mill by Mr Urbain Guérin (*Ouvriers des deux Mondes*, 1896, 2nd series, vol. V).

Address to Pope Leo XIII at the Sixth Workers' Pilgrimage to Rome

1899
L'Association catholique, vol. XLVIII (1899), p. 374-376

THE WORKERS' PILGRIMAGE TO ROME

Address of Mr Léon Harmel to the Pope and speech of the Sovereign Pontiff

Here is the text of the address read by Mr Léon Harmel at the solemn audience granted by the Holy Father to the French workers' pilgrimage.

Most Holy Father,

In bringing the France du Travail for the sixth time to the feet of Your Holiness, we rejoice to be united with our brothers of the Pilgrimage of Penance to Jerusalem, led by our intrepid Fathers of the Assumption.

Our first duty is to proclaim our deep gratitude to our Master and King Jesus Christ, who has preserved Your life and who prolongs through the years a health so precious to the whole world, and above all to the workers.

Have You not lavished Your fatherly tenderness upon them? With the powerful authority of Your word and the irresistible logic of Your arguments, You have shown the moral and material uplifting of the masses of the people to be a duty of the social order.

In the face of many difficulties, You have never ceased to make Your voice heard throughout the world, to proclaim that rightfully, by virtue of justice and charity, a fitting place must be given to the well-being of the lower classes.

Thanks to Your solicitude, the immense multitude of the proletarians, who have an unconscious thirst for Jesus Christ, are beginning once again to understand what should never have been forgotten, and what the Church has never ceased to instil into the Christian peoples: that the true spirit of the Gospel is not confined to the exercise of private virtues, to acts of purely religious piety, but that it also consists in effective help given to the little ones and the humble, through the practice of justice and brotherly love.

We often repeat it to the crowds of workers: "The Church is a Mother; while caring for the higher interest of souls, she makes it her duty to care for your temporal interests, taking in hand your legitimate aspirations for the honour and security of your homes, for the dignity and the fruitfulness of your work."

And now You, who are the supreme Head of the Church, call into Your royal dwelling the humble delegates of the workers, to pour out Your heart into their hearts, to bend down towards them with love and to lavish on them Your fatherly solicitude.

And we, sons humbly and completely submissive to all Your directions, swear here to be everywhere the echo of Your liberating word, and to make people love in Your august person not only a tenderly affectionate Father, but also the infallible Doctor and the pilot of the nations.

We shall never cease to ask God to preserve You for the world and to console Your great heart by granting You the fulfilment of Your wishes. — To make our action and our prayers more effective, deign, Most Holy Father, to crown Your kindnesses by granting us the apostolic blessing.

LONG LIVE LEO XIII!

Reply of the Sovereign Pontiff

Most dear Sons,

It is a great joy for Us to see you again, brought back here once more by the spontaneous impulse of your filial love, and to find in your ranks the pilgrims of penance returning from Jerusalem. They have joined you to pay Us homage, after venerating, under the guidance of the most distinguished Fathers of the Assumption, the lands sanctified by the life and death of the Redeemer.

Our joy has been increased still further on hearing the words you have just addressed to Us. He who spoke in your name offers Christian employers a rare example of kindness and wisdom; for many years you have hailed in him, more than in any other, the watchful friend, mindful of all your true interests.

[...]