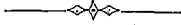


future life, they are dead already. But baptism is the sign of the new life after death.¹ If, then, they have no new life after death, what is the meaning of administering baptism to them? Professor Evans, in his valuable note on this passage, maintains that βαπτίζομενοι and βαπτίζονται are "middle," but still seems to think that the words interpolated by Chrysostom and Theophylact are necessary to the explanation of the passage. To me it seems clearer without them.

H. C. ADAMS.



ART. V.—ENGLISH GILDS.

THE principle of association for mutual aid is one so obvious, and so sure to suggest itself to all communities which have at all emerged from barbarism, that it is quite what one might expect to find—that the English mediæval gilds have had very various countries, times and causes assigned for their origin. The *ἔρανος* of the Greeks, the burial societies of Rome, the family festivals of the Scandinavian tribes, the tithings or divisions for frank-pledge, are all put forth by various writers as the origin of the gild, as it is found fully developed and systematized in mediæval England. With regard to the first of these the resemblance to the gild statutes is somewhat striking. "The objects of the *ἔρανοι*," says Boeckh, "were of the most various description; if some friends wanted to provide a dinner, or a corporation to celebrate a solemnity—to give a banquet or forward any particular purpose by bribery—the expense was defrayed by an *eranos*. Associations of this kind were very common in the democratic states of Greece, and to this class the numberless political and religious societies, corporations, unions for commerce and shipping belonged."² The Roman Burial Society, having a distinctly limited object, may be regarded as having less in common with the multifarious aims of the gild. "The northern historians," says Dr. Brentano, "in answer to the question whence the gilds sprang, refer above all to the feasts of the German tribes from Scandinavia, which were first called 'Gilds.' Among the German tribes every occurrence among the more nearly-related members of the family required the active participation in it of them all. At births, marriages, and deaths all the members of the family assembled. Banquets were prepared in celebration of the event, and these had sometimes even a legal signification, as in the case of funeral banquets, namely, that of entering on an inheritance. Great social banquets took place at the great

¹ Romans vi. 3, 4.

² "Public Economy of Athens," p. 243.

anniversary festivals, and at the same time the common concerns of the community were deliberated on at these banquets."¹

Against these combinations many of the Capitularies of Charlemagne, whose great object was to centralize, were directed, especially against those unions which were confirmed by mutual oaths. But the most obvious origin for the gild, and that out of which it seems necessarily to have grown, was the Anglo-Saxon arrangement for divisions into tithings, or parties of ten men, made responsible in their corporate capacity for each individual member of the body. "Throughout the earliest legislation of the Teutonic nations," says Mr. Kemble, "and especially of our own, we find small bodies of men existing as corporations, founded upon number and neighbourhood, thus making up the public units in the State itself. It is probable that the Anglo-Saxon law implies these under the name of *gegylðan*, or brothers of the *gylð*."² These bodies consisted of ten members, called a tithy, ten tithys forming the hundred. These divisions were originally numerical, not territorial. The members were bound for one another either to make good any injury one of them might have done, or to exact compensation for any that he might have received. This guarantee was known as *frith-borh*, or franc-pledge. It would naturally lead to the formation of a common fund of the tithing, to meetings of the members for social purposes, to religious services in common, and to other amenities of gild-life. Thus the mediæval gild seems naturally to grow out of the Saxon tithing. The merchant gild has doubtless a different origin and history. But if there are varieties of opinion as to the origin of gilds, there are no less discrepancies as to the derivation of the name. Most authorities derive it from the word signifying money or gift, referring to the contributions made by the members; but we are now assured, on no mean authority, that this is wrong. "It is a mistake," says Dr. Furnivall, "to connect the word with the German *geld*, payment. The real derivation is to be found in Welsh *gwyl*, Breton *goel*, *gowil*, a feast or a holiday."³ With this corresponds the Dutch *gulde*, Danish *gilde*, feast or banquet. Those who adopt this latter derivation would probably be in favour of retaining the most usual spelling of the word as "guild," while the others maintain that it should be written "gild." We are inclined to favour this latter opinion.⁴ Feasting together does not seem to be the primary object of a gild, but only an accident and afterthought. "The early English,

¹ "History and Development of Gilds," p. 67.

² "The Saxons in England," i., 238.

³ "English Gilds," p. 61.

⁴ See Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith's "Introduction to English Gilds," p. 19.

gild was an institution of local self-help, which before poor laws were invented took the place in old times of the modern friendly or benefit society, but with a higher aim. While it joined all classes together in a care for the needy and for objects of common welfare, it did not neglect the forms and the practice of religion, justice and morality."¹ These fraternity gilds were anterior in time to the gilds merchant, and craft gilds, but led up to and naturally suggested this further development of the gild principles. "The social gilds were founded upon the wide basis of brotherly aid and moral comeliness, without distinction (unless expressly specified) of calling or class, and comprehended a great variety of objects. The craft gilds, while sharing the same principles, were formed for the benefit of the members as craftsmen and the regulation of their craft. There were also gilds that were neither wholly social nor of a craft, and to these it seems that gild merchants belonged."²

Now, of these social gilds, the origin of all the others, it is undisputed that the first complete examples are to be found in England. Dr. Brentano says: "The oldest reliable and detailed accounts which we have of gilds came from England. They consist of three gild statutes. According to the latest investigation into the origin of gilds, the drawing up of all these statutes took place in the eleventh century."³ To these statutes, then, we naturally turn for enlightenment as to the character of the early English gilds. They are printed in Mr. Kemble's "Anglo-Saxons" (vol. i., appendix D). In all of them the religious character of the gilds is very strongly marked, and is indeed the most prominent feature. The Abbotsbury Statute prescribes gifts of wax, money and corn to "the honour of God and the worship of St. Peter." By the Exeter Statute, at each meeting of the gild the mass-priest was to sing two masses, one for the living and one for the dead; and each brother of common condition "two psalters of Psalms," one for the living and one for the dead. The Cambridge Statute does not prescribe any special service, but each gild brother is to "give oath upon the relics that he would hold true brotherhood for God, for the world." Next after the religious rules come provisions against quarrelling. If one brother "misgreet another within the gild in hostile temper" he is to be fined the amount of his entrance, and, if he refuses to pay, to be expelled. The Exeter Statute fixes the fine for this at thirty-pence, the Cambridge at a "sester of honey." The Abbotsbury rule has a provision as

¹ See Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith's "Introduction to English Gilds," p. 14.

² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³ "English Gilds," p. 65.

regards the gild feasts. "If any introduces more guests than he ought without leave of the steward and caterers" he is to forfeit his entrance. All three of the statutes enforce the duty for the gild brothers to join in the funeral rites of a member, but the Cambridge Statute ordains an equivalent benefit to the gild. "Let the gildship inherit of the dead half a farm"—a curiously indefinite provision. As regards actual benefit to be derived in life from gildship, the Cambridge Statute is the fullest. If a gild brother suffer a loss by theft, "let all the gildship avenge their comrade." If he commit a wrong, "let all bear it; if one misdo, let all bear alike." If he slay a man in fair quarrel, the fine is to be borne by all; "if the slain be a ceorl, two ores; if he be a Welshman, one ore." But if he commit a treacherous murder, he is "to bear his own deed." These statutes, curious from their antiquity and from their connection with the origin of gilds, are very far from giving us full and complete information as to the character of the social gild of the Middle Ages. But for this abundant materials are now provided.

It appears that in the year 1388, at a Parliament held at Cambridge, it was ordered that two writs should be sent to every sheriff in England, commanding him to make public proclamation throughout the shire, calling upon all masters and wardens of all gilds and brotherhoods, mysteries or crafts, to send copies of their charters, details as to their foundation, statutes, and property to the King's Council in Chancery. These returns, made during the winter of 1388, "over five hundred years ago, and forty years after the great pestilence, by which many of them mark their dates, remain to us now, life-pictures of what was passing then. Many of them must be lost, but there are still extant official returns of more than five hundred of the brotherhoods which once were scattered all over the land—enough to teach us the characteristics, purposes, and value of these institutions."¹ These valuable records, lying in bundles in the Record Office, were almost absolutely unknown and untouched until the late Mr. Toulmin Smith happily lighted upon them. They were not known to Mr. Herbert when he wrote his work on the "Livery Companies of London." They had escaped the notice of many laborious inquirers. Mr. Smith's volume (published by the Early English Text Society), together with the valuable Introductions, now enables any who are interested in the social life of our ancestors to obtain most valuable information as to some of its leading features. We propose, without going minutely into details, to lay before our readers some of the most striking peculiarities

¹ "Introduction," p. 25.

of these mediæval gilds. But, first, it may be well to clear the position in which we stand historically as regards these institutions.

How has it come about that these gilds, so prevalent, so almost universal in the Middle Ages, and with such manifest powers of usefulness, utterly collapsed and ceased to exist, and that scarce a survival of them was to be found in the seventeenth century, save of the gilds-merchant and craft gilds? What had become of the social gilds? This is rather a dark page in our history, and especially in the history of the Reformation. It has been seen that in the statutes of the earliest gilds the religious provisions were put foremost. It was the same substantially in all the statutes of the later gilds. These religious provisions were not of a nature to commend themselves to reforming zeal, being much taken up with regulations as to wax candles and the providing of masses for the soul of the departed brother. When, therefore, in the truculent days of Henry VIII. there were no more monasteries to be spoiled and looted, the attention of the king and his advisers was turned to the institutions, which also had somewhat of the religious element in them; namely, colleges, hospitals, and gilds. Many of these latter had acquired considerable property, and by an Act of Parliament (37 Henry VIII., c. 4) the King was empowered to send out Commissioners to take possession of their property, "to be used and exercised to more godly and virtuous purposes." This Act, coming towards the end of the reign, was not fully carried out when the keen-scented advisers of the young King, Edward VI., came upon the scene. They at once proceeded to make a still more sweeping ordinance. By this (1 Edw. VI., c. 14) all moneys devoted by any sort of gilds and fraternities for masses or obits were conferred upon the Crown, and all "fraternities, brotherhoods and gilds, and all manors, tenements, lands, and other hereditaments belonging to them" were vested in the Crown. There was a provision saving the trading gilds; but all those which could not creep out by this door were absolutely suppressed and spoliated. Hence the long hiatus in gild-life, feebly revived in modern times by friendly societies, burial clubs, and trades unions.

Now, had there not been the fixed intention to despoil, there was no reason why the antiquated religious provisions of the gilds should not have been allowed to drop out and die away, as was the case with the colleges in the Universities. That the social gilds, considered as apart from the trading gilds, had in themselves great elements of usefulness will, we think, be apparent when we consider some of their main features. "The gilds were not in any sense superstitious foundations; that is, they" were not founded, like monasteries and priories, for men

devoted to what were deemed religious exercises. Priests might belong to them, and often did so, in their private capacities. But the gilds were lay bodies, and existed for lay purposes, and the better to enable those who belonged to them rightly and understandingly to fulfil their neighbourly duties as free men in a free state. Though it was very general to provide more or less for religious purposes, these were to be regarded as incidental only.¹ Out of the five hundred whose statutes are preserved there were very few which were not formed equally of men and women; and so far was the social gild from being exclusive, or having a trade union character, that the members belonged indiscriminately to every grade of society and to every craft. Chaucer gives us a picture of such a gild:

An Haberdasher and a Carpenter,
 A Webbe, a Dyer, and a Tapiser,
 Were all y clothed in o livere,
 Of a solemne and grete fraternite.²

The Gild of the Trinity, Coventry, had, according to Dugdale, enrolled Kings Henry IV. and Henry VI. among its members, while in later times the Gild of St. Barbara of St. Katharine's Church, near the Tower of London, could point out Henry VIII. and Cardinal Wolsey as brethren. The members were admitted by an oath, and received with a kiss of peace. Their entrance fees were fixed sometimes in money, sometimes in goods; the moneys were kept in a common chest, and the alderman of the gild, together with the stewards, had to render an annual account of the property of the gild. In some gilds it was the rule for a member dying to leave the society a legacy. It is evident that such an arrangement must have interfered more or less with family life; but as the admission to the body was perfectly free to all, it might be that all the members of a family belonged to it, and all might share in the benefits. The days of meeting of these gilds were various—once, twice, thrice, or four times in a year. The meetings were known by the singular name of *morn-speeches*, suggesting the idea of a meeting for business and discussion in the morning, while the evening was dedicated to convivial purposes and ceremonies. On the gild-day, usually that of the patron saint, the brethren and sisters met together, worshipped together, transacted their business, and then joined in the feast. Clad in their hoods and livery, all bearing lights, they joined in some act of worship, and then marched in procession to their gild-house, with lights, music, and flowers and garlands. Sometimes these processions were made on horseback; sometimes a play or mystery was

¹ "English Gilds," Introduction, p. 29.

² Prologue to "Canterbury Tales."

represented by the gild-members, and various pageants, of which it may be said that the Lord Mayor's Show is the sole survival, were exhibited in all the principal towns. As to the property possessed by the gilds, no doubt many of them had acquired considerable amounts of land, which afterwards served to tempt the spoiler; but the "property of many seems to have merely consisted of the contributions in money or in kind expended and accounted for by responsible officers; others acquired considerable property in church ornaments, furniture for the gild-house, goods used in plays and shows. Some gilds invested in cows and oxen, and let them out at so much a year."¹ Of how great value these institutions were before the provision of any systematic relief for the poor may be easily judged. The sick, the afflicted, the aged, those who had been robbed or been overtaken by misfortune, were regularly helped. In the statutes weekly payments to the poor, as well as gifts of clothing and food, are frequently mentioned. These regular payments must have been far more valuable than the fitful and uncertain doles of the monasteries, and they benefited the dwellers in large towns, whom for the most part the religious house did not reach. Sometimes loans of money were made; sometimes free gifts to enable a member to set up in trade. "Any good girl" of certain gilds was helped to a dowry. Brethren cast into prison were to be visited and aided to get free; those who were bound on a pilgrimage were helped and honoured, and one gild even sent a pilgrim yearly, at the expense of the society, to the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury. At Coventry a lodging-house with thirteen beds was kept to lodge poor pilgrims, with a governor of the house and a woman to wash the pilgrims.

The regular payments of the gild were, of course, made to its members, but there was also provision in many gilds for doles or gifts to the poor who were not gild-members.² A gild in York found beds and attendance for poor strangers. The gild of the Holy Cross, in Birmingham, had almshouses for poor people of the town. The gild of Hatfield Brodoke, Essex, contributed to the repair of roads. That of St. Nicholas, Worcester, repaired the walls and bridge of that city. It was very common for gilds to undertake the repair or restoration of a church, and

¹ "English Gilds," Introduction, p. 35.

² "On feast days the bretheren and susteren shall have three flagons and six tankards with prayers, and the ale in the flagons shall be given to the poor who most need it."—Statutes of Gild of the Tailors, Lincoln, E.G., 183. "Every year at the feast of the Purification they shall feed as many poor as there are brethren and susteren in the gild with bread and ale, and one dish of flesh or fish, at the cost of the gild."—Gild of St. Benedict, Lincoln, E.G., 172.

some of our finest cathedrals may owe their construction in no small degree to the gild principle. Thus, for the building of Lincoln Cathedral, St. Hugh formed the Gild of St. Mary, which produced about 1,000 marks a year; and in the Patent Rolls there is a letter from his successor authorizing the establishment of a society to last five years for the same purpose.¹ The officers of a gild were its head, called alderman; stewards or wardens; dean or beadle, and clerk. These were all elected by the members annually. The dean and clerk received salaries; the others were allowed certain privileges at feasts. It must be confessed that an inordinate amount of ale seems to have prevailed at these banquets; but it must be remembered that this was not the strong heady ale of modern days, but a mild compound in an incipient stage of fermentation, served with a cake (discus) swimming on it, precisely as the traveller in Norway may have it now brought to him in a large open earthenware jar, and with the provision of a spoon to consume it with. Another item which everywhere appears in the statutes is wax. Candles of wax were offered by all the gild-members to their patron saints. When the obsequies of a dead brother were celebrated, in which all gild-members had to assist, a *hearse* was placed round the body—that is to say, a wooden enclosure was made, and on this each member fastened his votive candle. At the feasts also there seems to have been a vast illumination of candles. Two very striking characteristics, the second one universally expressed among the by-laws of all the gilds, must not pass unnoticed. The first is the respect for law and its established forms; the second, the constant sense of moral worth, and the desire to attain it. A good character was required for admission into a gild, and immorality, if persisted in after warnings, formed a ground for expulsion. As the gilds had a distinctly religious character, and priests were usually members of them, immorality and excess were no doubt discouraged by them. But there were other convivial clubs in the Middle Ages which were not so innocent, and with which the clergy were a good deal mixed up, as it was customary to give notice of the meetings of them in church. These were known by the name of Scot-ales, and seem to have been unmitigated drinking-bouts, in which the strongest tippler escaped free of payment, while the weaker heads had to contribute the reckoning. In the Constitutions of Archbishop Edmund Rich and in those of Bishop Grosseteste these symposia are prohibited, and the clergy are warned not to give notice of their proposed meetings.

One very singular arrangement made by some of the gilds

¹ Coggeshall in "Martene," v. 867. Rot. Lit. Pat., p. 57 (ed. Hardy).

deserves notice. This was the formation of a sort of league or incorporation with some distinctly religious society, by which the prayers, alms-deeds, and merits of the religious body were to be made available for the members of the gild. An instance of this in England was the pact formed between the gild of the saddlers in Aldersgate and the neighbouring religious house of St. Martin-le-Grand. Dr. Brentano states that this alliance was common in the foreign gilds.¹ Some of the gild returns, written in old English, are, as might be expected, excessively quaint. The careful provision made in almost all of them against anyone entering the "ale-chamber" except in company with the officers, shows how carefully the store of this favourite beverage was guarded. The feasts are always described as "drinkings," and the amount of ale allowed by the rules as an honorarium to the officers seems marvellously liberal. The alderman was usually allowed two gallons, the stewards and dean one gallon each. It is provided in many of the statutes that no man is to sleep "in the time of drink," nor let the cup stand near him on pain of the fine of one penny.²

The usual amount of payment in sickness was one shilling or fourteen pence weekly, and at death a free burial, with attendance of all the gild members, and abundance of wax candles, if the member died within a reasonable distance of the gild centre. With regard to the gilds associated for a special purpose, and not merely on the basis of a friendly society, some very curious information as to mediæval customs may be gleaned from the gild returns. In York a gild was established for presenting a play "setting forth the goodness of the Lord's Prayer," in which play all manner of sins and vices were held up to scorn, and the virtues were held up to praise. The players were to prepare themselves for the performance by religious exercises, and when the play was played all the members of the gild were to ride through the streets, accompanying the players, all clad in a livery. How the Lord's Prayer was to be represented in a play is not specified, probably by hideous presentations of the vices and fair pictures of the virtues.

In the gild of St. Michael-on-the-Hill, in Lincoln, the democratic feeling curiously peeps out. The gild, it is said, was founded by "common and middling folk," and "no one of the rank of mayor or bailiff shall become a brother of the gild unless he is found to be of humble, good, and honest conversation, and no one shall have any claim to office in this gild on account of the honour and dignity of his personal rank." The gild of St. Martin, in Stamford, has somewhat of a truculent character.

¹ "English Gilds," p. 84.

² Gild of St. Thomas, Bishop's Lynn, E.G., 81.

Every year it was to provide a bull, which for the amusement of the citizens was to be hunted through the town by an unlimited number of dogs and then killed.¹ A gild in Ludlow has a provision that its members, in keeping night watches over the dead, are not "to call up ghosts."

That these very useful, or, at any rate, harmless, institutions should have been marked out for spoliation and suppression in the sixteenth century seems very hard measure. The Commissioners sent to inquire into their condition under Henry VIII. and Edward VI. were in some cases moved rather to recommend their preservation than to condemn them.²

The Gild of the Holy Trinity at Cambridge appears to be unique in its objection to priests. If any ecclesiastic becomes a member he shall not be put into any office nor allowed to "meddle" in the affairs of the gild in any way, "for it is neither becoming nor lawful that a clerk should mix himself up with secular business, nor does it befit the good name or come within the calling of such men that they should take upon themselves offices, or things of this sort."³ Considering that these words were written early in the fourteenth century, they are sufficiently remarkable. In contrast to the very *lay* tone of the Cambridge Gild we may place the very curious and interesting Gild of the Kalenders of Bristol, which was essentially a clerical body. The records of this gild were destroyed by fire early in the fourteenth century, but an inquiry ordered by the Bishop of Worcester brought to light the fact that the beginning of the fraternity "did exceed the memory of man," and was anterior to the Norman Conquest. One of its works had been to found a school for Jews and other strangers, "to be brought up and instructed in Christianity, under the said fraternity and protection of the Mayor of Bristow and Monastery of St. August-

¹ This strange and savage custom was kept up till the present century.

² This was especially the case with the Gild of the Holy Cross, at Birmingham. Henry's Commissioners report: "In the same towne of Byrmyngham there be two thousand houselies people. And at Ester tyme all the prestes of the same gyld, with eleven others, be no sufficient to mynyster the sacramentes and sacramentalles unto the seyde people. Also there be divers pore people ffounde aided and suckared of the seyde gyld, as in money, bread, drynke, coles; and whenne any of them dye they be buried very honestlye at the costes and charges of the same gyld." Edward's Commissioners add other good deeds of the gild: "There be mainteigned and kept in good reparacions two greate stone bridges, and divers foule and daungerous high wayes; the charge whereof the town itself is not able to mainteign; so that the lacke thereof will be a great noysaunce to the kinges majesties subjectes passing to and from the marches of wales, and an utter ruyne to the same towne, being one of the fayrest and most profittable townes to the kinges highnesse in all the shyre."—"English Gilds," pp. 247-249.

³ "English Gilds," p. 205.

tine, in Bristol."¹ The name kalenders was derived from the fact that the meetings were held on the first day, or kalends, of the month. In France and Germany, according to Dr. Brentano, "the clergymen, assembled in the first day of each month to deliberate on their interests, were united in special fraternities, which from their meeting-day on the kalends of each month, were called Gilds of the Kalenders. In a deed of the fifteenth century they are styled "fratres in calendis missas celebrantes."² There does not appear to be any other example of a kalenders' gild in England besides this at Bristol.

We have dwelt at so much length on the peculiarities of the social gilds that we have not left ourselves much space to speak of the gilds merchant and craft gilds. These, indeed, are much better known, and in their survivals and modern representatives, the Livery Companies, are sufficiently familiar, and have been elaborately described by Mr. Herbert in his book on the "Livery Companies of London." The origin of these gilds was due to the "necessity of protecting liberty, property, and trade, against the violence of neighbouring nobles, the arbitrary aggressions of the bishops or the burgrave, or the bold onsets of robbers. The whole body of full citizens—that is, the possessors of portions of the town lands of a certain value—united itself everywhere into one gild—*convivium conjuratum*; the citizens and the gild became identical; and what was gild-law became the law of the town. From this kind of gild sprung in England the method of recognising the citizens as an independent body by confirming their gild."³ Some of these gilds merchant existed in England in times anterior to the Conquest, but their full development was under Edward II. and Edward III. By a charter, bearing date in the former reign, it was ordained that no person should be admitted into the civic freedom unless he was a member of one of the trades or mysteries; and under Edward III. there took place an entire reconstitution of the trading fraternities, which, now generally assuming a distinctive dress or livery, came to be called livery companies.⁴

Among the earlier gild-merchant societies in England, none is so remarkable as the German Gild (*Gilda Teutonicorum*) or Hanse, which existed in a sort of fortified castle in the heart of London, and was governed by the strictest laws and regulations of almost a monastic character. This gild was a branch of the Hanseatic League, and was known by the name of the Easterlings. They had their factory in London, in Thames Street,

¹ "English Gilds," p. 288.

² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³ Brentano, "English Gilds," p. 93.

⁴ Herbert, "Livery Companies of London," i., 28.

with spacious quays. The name which it acquired of *Steel-Yard* is derived by some authorities from *Staple* or *Stabile* (quasi *stabile* emporium, a fixed depôt). It was, according to Stowe, "large, built of stone, with three arched gates towards the street; the middlemost whereof is far bigger than the other and is seldom opened." Here the foreigners dwelt like so many monks. They had their separate cells, ate at a common table, were tied to celibacy, obliged to be within the factory at a certain hour, were governed by regular officers, and strictly prohibited from holding any communications with the English, save in the way of trade. Like the English factories of a later date in India, or the Dutch in Java, they dwelt as it were among a hostile people, being under obligation not to forestall the markets from the burghers of London, and to pay a certain toll to the City. The craft gilds, which gradually grew up to a rivalry with the merchant or citizen gilds, "and everywhere in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries either snatched the government from their hands or at least obtained a share in it,"¹ have a history of exceeding interest. In London they appear in the full possession of the mastery in the reign of Edward III. The king himself became a member of the Linen-Armourers, or Merchant Tailors, and many of the nobility followed his example. The favour with which they were regarded speedily gave to these gilds a sort of aristocratic status, and induced a rigid exclusiveness. The fee for entering by way of apprenticeship was made immoderately large. Privileges were conferred upon the families of gild-members, and thus a craft became hereditary, and from this narrowing and hedging off of the favoured few, who, protected by their charters, established a rigid monopoly, there was brought about the development of a new class, which also began to have its fraternities and combinations. This was the class of workmen who, not being able to obtain admission to the gild, but nevertheless being needed for the carrying on of its craft, gradually came to feel their power, and to make it felt by the masters, through combination and mutual support. At the transformation of the gilds into "entails of a limited number of families, the narrow-minded spirit of capital, petty rivalries and hateful egotism, began to take the place of the great idea of association and solidarity,"² the importance of the skilled workman became greater and greater. "The statutes before the fourteenth century do not even mention the workmen; after the middle of the fourteenth century it became absolutely necessary to regulate their relations to their masters."

The great Plague of 1348, of which advantage was taken by the survivors to exact inordinate wages, made these regulations

¹ Brentano, "English Gilds," p. 114. ² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

still more necessary. This is perhaps the earliest instance of a "strike." It was decreed by the Statute of Labourers that prices were not to exceed those paid before the Plague. In 1362 it was ordained that disputes and demands of workmen were to be settled by the warden of the gild, a somewhat partial judge. About this time, therefore, we meet with combinations of workmen almost the exact predecessors of the modern Trades Unions. These fraternities had many of the characteristics of the benefit society—a lodge, common festivals, help to the indigent, burial of the dead; but they had also the characteristic of violence and compulsion, all the journeymen of a trade in a town being compelled to belong to them. The masters became alarmed, and in London in 1383 the City authorities issued a proclamation forbidding all such "congregations, covins and conspiracies" of workmen, and even committed some of those who were employed in organizing such a fraternity to prison.

A series of laws and ordinances was directed against the "yeomen," as they are styled, with a view of keeping them in due subjection to the gild-masters, but the most effectual method seems to have been the directing that no workmen should be employed but those who had been first bound apprentice. This at once placed the workman distinctly in the power of the master, and hence it soon became necessary to regulate, by Act of Parliament, the apprentice fee. This was fixed by 22 Henry VIII., cap. 40, at the very low sum of 2s. 6d. on becoming an apprentice and 3s. 4d. on obtaining the freedom of the gild, but the masters contrived to exact many much larger sums. How important and demonstrative a body the London prentices soon became is well known, but both in them and in the craft-gilds which gradually became societies of capitalists, the true gild-principles of equality, mutual assistance, and obedience to certain laws, died out and disappeared.

That these principles had done much for the well-being of society in troublous and unsettled times, that they had been the fosterers and supporters of high qualities and graces, of religious faith, of brotherly love, of prudent care for the future, of discipline and obedience and due regulation of life, can hardly be doubted by any who will take the trouble to read the statutes of these useful organizations, and to examine the plentiful contemporary testimony as to the influence which they exerted on the social state of their era.

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