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LABOUR ORGANIZATION

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"THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF IRELAND IN THE
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PREFACE

THE subject of the organization of labour is one with which it is impossible to deal adequately in a book of this size. All that we can hope to do is to outline in the roughest manner the forms of organization which labour has adopted in the past, and the new forms which it hopes to adopt in the future. We shall therefore first of all give a very brief description of the gild system, which was the universal method of organizing labour during the Middle Ages and until the middle of the eighteenth century. We shall then discuss the modern forms of labour organization, dividing the treatment of this part of the subject into two parts, first, the organization practised where the wage system prevails, and second, that practised where labour is remunerated by some payment other than wages. Under the first heading we shall treat of trade unionism, which is the principal, if not the only organization to which labour resorts under the wage system; and under the second heading, we shall treat of profit-sharing, labour copartnership, co-operation, collectivism, syndicalism and gild socialism. We shall in conclusion endeavour to arrive at an opinion as to how far any of these forms of industrial remuneration is likely to replace the present system in practice, and shall indicate the safeguards which are necessary to ensure that the existing system shall yield its uses without its abuses so long as it continues.

The author wishes to express his gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb for their permission to make use of their arrangement of certain branches of the subject; to Mr. Arthur Greenwood for information regarding recent statistics, and to Professor T. A. Smiddy for assistance with the proofs.

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