

With the April No. ended any responsibility for the conducting of the Magazine by Resident Students. This step has been taken for reasons which will be apparent to those who read p. 71.

THE
"Plebs" Magazine

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EDITORIAL

FIVE months ago the "Plebs" League stepped upon the stage of working-class history to play its part in the drama of working-class education. It made its début none to soon, as recent events have amply shown. In fact, all that happened in the sphere within which the League has moved, points triumphantly in justification of its existence. What has taken place at Ruskin

**The Old Object
and the New.**

College this year strikingly confirms the opinions of the students in residence during 1908, and is the climax to the tendencies observed in the institution for the past three years, and which led at the close of last year to the formation of the "Plebs." These tendencies, we have pointed out in our previous editorials, were of such a nature as to call for the most immediate and serious consideration of the working-class movement. It was plain that the College was being conducted in a way that antagonized with the interests of organized Labour. As the cause of this was to be found in the control of the College, it was there that an alteration had to be effected if matters were to be put right. Accordingly the "Plebs" started out with the object of securing the definite control of Ruskin College by the Labour Movement. Such a consummation is no longer possible. It has been made impossible by the authorities of that institution. The democratic management of Ruskin College by elected representatives of the working class is the last thing in the world they wish for. They revealed their attitude clearly when at the end of last year they refused to allow Mr. Hird to become Editor of this magazine, or to be in any way associated with the League, and at an Executive meeting specially called to consider this organization they showed still more clearly their hostility towards us. At this meeting steps were taken to restrain the students from participating in the "Plebs"

movement, failing which, certain individuals, who were marked out as taking a prominent part in the compiling of the Magazine, were to receive attention *in another way*. The object of the "Plebs" has been characterized by certain members of the Executive, particularly Mr. Shackleton, as "*undermining* the College." Without stopping to deny such a charge we have to congratulate Mr. Shackleton, and the other members of the Executive Committee, on their success at accomplishing what they considered to be the object of the "Plebs." So well have they succeeded, that what has been the object of the League can no longer be. Ruskin College has ceased to fulfil whatever useful function it did perform for the Labour Movement. Henceforth the object of the "Plebs" must be to assist in the establishing of a new educational structure definitely controlled by organized Labour.



RUSKIN COLLEGE is no longer tenable by the Labour Movement for three reasons: (1) Because of the character of its control; (2) Because of its claim for a non-partizan education; (3) Because of the incompetency of the teaching staff. The

Why. question of the control of an institution is a vital one.

The fact that it presents itself to us in the field of education does not in any way minimize the importance of this consideration. The educational world is not a water-tight compartment entirely separate from other social activities. The laws that operate in the sphere of industry must in the very nature of things operate in those spheres which are the reflex of industrial activity. The existence of Trades Unionism is itself an index to the fact that between those who produce wealth, and those for whom they produce it, there is a conflict of interests. It is in this antagonism that the industrial organizations of the working-class take root, and assume an independent character. They are controlled by the class for whose sole benefit they exist. The existence of independent political organization of the working-class is another proof of the fact that they who rule industrially will rule politically, and that, therefore, independent action at the ballot box must accompany independent action in the workshop. The same principles apply in the sphere of education. *Clear acting depends upon clear seeing, and clear seeing depends upon the presentation of that which is to be seen.* In the present economic system of society it is to the interests of that class who rule to use every social institution for the perpetuation of their power. And in no way can they accomplish this aim better than through the channel of education. It is they who are continually chanting the caste creed of "impartial education" and mouthing the myth of the "open mind."

A necessary condition for the teaching of impartial education, for the observance of neutrality upon subjects which "tell tales," is the

control of the structure. *The "open mind" is written above the lintel of the "open door."* The door is only closed, and extra locks put on, when "sinister motives" are in the air, and the spectre of "hostility to any education" is abroad. It is out of the control of Ruskin College that the recent crisis arose, a crisis that has been maturing for the past three years. An institution deriving much of its support from members of the Liberal and Tory Parties, such as Balfour, Rosebery, Guinness, Strachey, &c., must naturally reflect in the government of that institution the interests of its supporters. But we will be told that the Labour Movement also participates in the financial maintenance of the College, and that, therefore, its control must also reflect the interests of the Labour Movement. Very well, take away the support of the latter movement; would the first-mentioned class of people still be as interested? We think not. *The wolf is enthusiastic about the lamb only when there is a possibility of the lamb lying down with him.* Once Ruskin College ceases to be an institution for the education of organized working men, the Balfours and the Stracheys will cease to be interested in "doing something" in that quarter. But what about the Labour representatives upon the Executive of Ruskin College? Surely they have borne our interests and carried our ideals! They have done so just in the same way as they bear them in other quarters. Neither Bell, Bowerman, Shackleton, or Taylor, represent either the interests or the best opinion of the working class. They are too ready to bow the knee at the sound of "Professor," and to consecrate what intellect they possess to the sweet will of "Privilege." These men, too, are members—nay leaders—of industrial and political organizations independent of the organizations of the master-class. We have heard some of them ourselves accounting for the lack of this independent organization by lack of education. These organizations are independent of the employing class, both industrially and politically, for the simple reason that their interests are not identical. Surely, then, the education which is necessary for successful organization along these independent lines must also partake of the same independent nature. Wherever there are two economic classes there are two sets of economic interests, and that cleavage extends throughout the superstructure of society. Just as there is no neutrality in the industrial field, no impartiality in politics, neither is there any such thing as non-partizan education. The worker is either robbed or not robbed; Labour is either paid or unpaid. To ask the worker to be neutral is both insulting and absurd. The "impartial education" idea has its source in a very "partial" quarter, and so long as the control of education comes from that quarter the working-class movement will be poisoned, and drained. In this light Ruskin College stands condemned. It has taken a turning that leads out into the walks of servility and mediocrity.

Since the removal of Mr. Dennis Hird the institution has finally demonstrated its futility. His teaching was the only redeeming feature of the place, and with his exit the curtain may as well be rung down. The incompetency of the other members of the staff has long been a byword among the students, and the situation which has obtained since the return has been one gigantic comedy.



THE time has come when the working class must control its own education, when the new structure must be set up free from any entangling associations with those who govern us. *For there is no alchemy that can change an industrial or political enemy*

How ? *into an educational friend.* The establishing of a central Labour College at Oxford is a matter which concerns the whole of the organized labour movement. The first phase of the Ruskin College dispute has ended. It had a local and personal aspect, but it was only so in its form of manifestation. It expressed a general and class principle. *The Principal stood for a principle.* The removal of the one involved the removal of the other. That phase is ended after having performed its function of exposing to the public view the real nature of the situation. The futility of the old structure and the need for the new. The second phase has now begun with no longer a local but a general complexion. What has been begun by 46 students in the interests of the class they represented is now being taken up by that class throughout the country.

The miners' organization in South Wales with their typical enthusiasm for the progressive have already begun to secure funds for the new college, and have instituted a movement in that direction under the leadership of Councillor J. Winstone and Mr. G. Barker, miners' agents. Next to the South Wales Miners for enthusiastic support, comes the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. In spite of the questionable methods of the general secretary of this organization in trying to convey erroneous impressions regarding the recent dispute and later situation at Ruskin College, we have the utmost confidence in the rank and file, and as the organization is their property and not that of its officials, we believe they will unhesitatingly act in the right direction at the next annual general meeting. Space will not permit us to make particular mention of the various and numerous trades and labour bodies who are supporting us, but we take this opportunity of thanking on behalf of the students all organizations and individuals who have notified us of their support.

The supreme question now is *How soon can we begin?* It is a question of urgency. No matter how small the beginning if only begun. With £400 a commencement could be made. With the new structure in existence the rest we feel would be easy. The appeal which has been made for a hundred thousand shillings was

brought out in its present form owing to the urgent necessity of the case. Arrangements are being made to secure a chairman, secretary and committee from amongst the prominent labour leaders to take full charge of the movement. In the meantime, those who possess collecting sheets should lose no time in getting together sufficient funds to enable a start being made. Already we have received a considerable number of shillings and the promises that are to hand gives us every reason to feel optimistic as to the future.

It has been arranged that the August Bank Holiday meet of the "Plebs" shall take the form of a conference to which the various branches of trades and labour organizations will be invited to send delegates. This ought to be a historic meeting in the annals of the working class, and every effort must be made in order to ensure its success. From this will be seen the importance of having the new college opened before that date. A vigorous propaganda throughout the Labour Movement for the next few weeks will secure the realization of our object.



THE question of the location of the proposed new Labour College at Oxford calls for a few words of explanation. It may be urged that Oxford is not a desirable place for such an institution. The objection is a perfectly fair one and contains some truth in it.

Where ? The advantages, however, we think, outweigh the disadvantages. First of all there is a tactical advantage in making Oxford the site. To retire from it, in view of the recent dispute would be a blunder, and would no doubt be interpreted as a weakness. Besides, if Ruskin College is a menace to the best interests of the labour movement, then we must see to it that so far as that movement is concerned, the college is a closed book. Should it continue to exist and continue to receive for a short time the support of any labour organization, the mistake made by that organization can be pointed out more clearly and effectively with the existence of a clear-cut institution, such as is proposed, in Oxford.

Oxford has the advantage of being practically a non-industrial town and consequently industrial organization and political association of the working class is at a minimum. The students, therefore, are not so much tempted to devote a large part of their time to propaganda work, which, useful as it is, yet is apt to detract from private study. In addition to all this, the place is fairly central so far as England and Wales is concerned, and we know that the men north of the Tweed are lovers of travel. A fact that must not be overlooked is the educational facilities that Oxford affords. The Museums, Libraries, and Public Lectures are a source of great value to the student. Everything considered, it would be sound policy to remain in Oxford.

The establishing of a definite working-class college in Oxford for women as well as men, will mark the beginning of a comprehensive scheme of working-class education throughout the country. In addition to promoting a scientific system of correspondence classes, provincial colleges will be opened up on the lines laid down by the South Wales Wing of the "Plebs." All these branches for the promotion of education along definite lines, with a definite object, and linked up to the central structure, presents an ideal that ought to inspire an enthusiastic activity. The economic independence of the worker, without which there can be no freedom, can *only* be attained by the conscious and independent action of his class, industrially, politically, and educationally. *Working class education is the powerful stimulating force that alone can build up efficient working-class organization, and to this end must we press forward.*

Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute.
 What you can do, or dream, you can begin it!
 Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.
 Only engage and then the mind grows heated:
 Begin, and then the work will be completed.

Easy Outlines of Economic Science

No. 2—Evolution in Economics

JUST as in the study of Biology commencement is made with a cell, so the study of Economics commences with a commodity—because it is the unit, the multiplication of which comprises the whole wealth of society. What is a commodity? A commodity is an article, the product of human labour, which has the properties capable of satisfying human wants, and is placed upon the market for purposes of exchange. Time was when the products of labour were not exchanged. That was when society was based on the same principle that the "ideal family" is now based on, viz. : each able member contributes of his best to the common stock, and all take therefrom according to their needs. Hence *the difference between a product and a commodity is not an inherent but a social difference.* The articles have the same properties, but are produced in different states (or economic systems) of society.

The commodity commenced its existence with the destruction of the ancient systems of communism. But it is only within the last few hundred years it has become the dominant, almost exclusive, product of all forms of industry. It is around the production, distribution, and exchange of commodities that most of the activities of modern society are centred. Hence it is the analysis of these forms that is the first work of economics. The principle that determines the exchange of commodities is the keystone to every system of economics.

With this preamble we turn to a brief review of the various schools of thought that have and do exist in economic science. Roughly speaking there have been six schools of thought in the province of economics, viz. : (1) Ancient, (2) Mercantile, (3) Classic, (4) Physiocratic, (5) Marxian, (6) Utility.

The following summaries contain the finding of these schools. Readers are asked to carefully note the economic conditions of each period, so as to observe the connexion between social activities and ideas as an illustration of the Marxian law. That the conditions of production and distribution of goods determine the modes of thought prevalent in any given society.

I.—THE ANCIENT SCHOOL.

Grecian Period.

The chief exponent of this school was Aristotle. Other writers were Zenophon and Plato, whose ideas, however, would now be described as speculative ethics. They bear a close relation to what is now taught in *the* University under the euphonious titles of Political Philosophy, Political Science, and sometimes privately and confidentially described as Sociology. Aristotle was conversant with the difference between the use-value and exchange-value of goods. "Of everything we possess there are two uses : one the proper and the other the improper, or secondary use of it. For example, a shoe is used for wear, and is used for exchange ; both are uses of the shoe. The same may be said of all possessions."* The second great merit of Aristotle was to point out that exchange implies equality : "5 beds equal 1 house is not to be distinguished from 5 beds equal so much money." Again : "Exchange cannot take place without equality and equality not without commensurability." If Aristotle had been asked why 5 beds are commensurable with 1 house he would have been unable to answer correctly. It is of interest to us to know why he could not do so. Every scientific school since his time agree that the answer is—human labour. Aristotle failed in this direction because "Greek society was founded upon slavery, and had therefore for its natural basis the inequality of men and their labour powers. The secret of the expression of value, namely, that all kinds of labour are equal and equivalent, because, and so far as they are human labour in general, *cannot be deciphered*, until the notion of human equality has already acquired the fixity of a popular prejudice. This, however, is possible only in a society in which the great mass of the produce of labour takes the form of commodities, in which, consequently, the dominant relation between man and man, is that of owners of commodities,"† i.e. modern capitalist society.

* Jowett's translation of Aristotle, Vol. 1, p. 15. Quoted by Marx.

† Marx *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 29.

Aristotle's genius plumbed the very depths of the society of his time; and before any further progress could be made in economic theory the conditions of production had to be changed. They were changed, and we go on to the second school of thought.

2.—THE MERCANTILE SCHOOL.

Period: 12th to 16th Century.

There is no great representative of this school, and the literature of the period is too scanty and ill-preserved to quote definite authors. Perhaps the opinions of this school were best expressed by John Locke, who borrowed most of their ideas to attack the classic school which existed in his time (about 1660).

The two main concepts of the mercantile school were, (a) That profit is made by exchange. This was a step back from Aristotle. (b) That nations and individuals prosper, or otherwise, in proportion as they possess hoards of the precious metals (gold and silver). Each nation should, therefore, only sell commodities and retain the money they got in exchange.

Prevailing economic conditions. Close of the long slumbering period of feudalism. Production was for local consumption—called production for use—but there was already a growing surplus which a rising merchant class distributed to foreign countries. As this grew the merchant class became more powerful, the chief form of capital being means of transportation, e.g. ships, caravans, &c., and called merchants' capital. As these merchants became wealthy without taking part in production, it was natural that they should think that profits were made by exchange. It was also a consequence of the foreign trade of these merchants that the old means of exchange (payment in kind) should give way to payments in the precious metals. Payment in kind is obviously unsuited for foreign trade. For the first time gold and silver are extensively used in exchange. What more natural than that the qualities of money, in metal, form an enduring and universal equivalent, should appeal to them as being some inherent and mysterious virtue of the metals themselves? What more natural than their desire to hoard it, both individually and nationally? Hence we find their conceptions of economics to fit in with the prevailing economic conditions.

3.—CLASSIC SCHOOL.

Period: 1650 to 1832.

Chief representatives—Sir W. Petty, Adam Smith, and D. Ricardo. Petty in his book *Political Arithmetic* (1699)—now significantly enough being republished by Cambridge University Press—not only re-affirms in clearer form Aristotle's views on exchange implying equality, but declares that equal labour is the common

measure of all commodities. "Equal labour," however, in his analysis assumes the form of "special labour" devoted to the production of gold and silver. The measure of value for him is determined by "gold labour." He attacks the misconceptions of the mercantile school on money in his remarkably pregnant and humorous style. He says "Money is but the fat of the Body Politic, whereof too much doth often hinder its agility, as too little makes it sick . . . as fat lubricates the motion of the muscles, feeds in want of victuals, fills up the uneven cavities and beautifies the body: so doth money in the state quicken its action, feeds from abroad in time of dearth at home: evens accounts . . . and beautifies the whole, although more especially the particular persons that have it in plenty." We have not space to deal with his many remarkable merits. Marx describes him as the father of modern economics, and as being of more importance than Adam Smith, the latter (about 1770), declared the division of labour to be the only source of use-value. He did yeoman service in breaking up the mercantile school. On value—to quote Marx—"To be sure Adam determines the value of a commodity by the labour time contained in it but relegates the actual principle to pre-Adamic times." He was never clear even as to his own theory of value, sometimes in important places confusing even his pre-Adamic theory by stating that the value of labour (he meant wages), was the value of commodities, which two things clearly belong to different categories. When dealing with the developed relations of capitalism as wage-labour, rent, &c., he forgets his own theory. His great failing, which is also true of the whole classic school, is that he does not perceive that the "special labours" being exchanged for each other on the market are thereby equalized in abstract social labour. He is best known for his investigations into the division of labour,—which however had been done on a grander scale by Petty. Ricardo (1818), while believing capitalism to be eternal, was its great scientific spokesman. He realized with great clearness the labour theory of value. Not conceiving the true position of labour-power he was unable to show why labour-power was not of the same value as the commodity produced by it. This was one of the chief reasons for the decay of the Ricardian theories. The Utopian Socialists of this period, Owen, Bray, &c., deduced that labour-power was of the same value as the commodity it produced; this contributed to its breakdown. Ricardo did great service in showing that rent was a capitalist category, but could not completely discard the illusion that rent comes from the soil, and not from society. The difference in fertility of soil is not, by him, subordinated to the action of competition. Yet his theory of rent still prevails in orthodox political economy.

Economic conditions prevailing during the classic school, Petty was enabled to observe capitalist manufacture of 100 years' growth. Adam Smith lived in the transition from hand manufacture to machine manufacture. Ricardo observed Capitalism as it approached its maturity. In a more detailed description than I have been able to give their theories will be found to correspond with these periods.

4.—PHYSIOCRATIC SCHOOL

Period same as Classic, 1650—1830.

This school flourished in France. Chief representatives, Bois-guillebert and Sismondi, who were contemporaries of Petty and Ricardo respectively. They believed, as their name implies, that the only form of wealth was agricultural products. For manufacture they had great contempt. As far as they could they held the idea that labour was the source of value, but only agricultural labour.

Economic conditions prevailing in France during this period. More than half the population were peasants and worked in small allotments on the land. Hence their theories. Marx, while giving full credit to their acuteness in criticizing capitalist conditions, points out that their object was to turn the hands of the clock of progress back. They are akin to the English who wail about capitalist desecration of natural beauties, and are labelled by Marx as the school of "*petit bourgeois Socialism*" (*Small capitalists' Socialism*).

5.—MARXIAN SCHOOL.

Period 1859 and forward. Chief Representative, Karl Marx :

The labour theory of value is here for the first time proved. The contradictions of the Classic School are solved. The profits or surplus value of capitalists is exposed. Capitalism is fitted in as a phase of industrial evolution and the law of its motion laid bare. The true position of labour-power made clear, and the first scientific theory of wages worked out. *Economic conditions prevailing*—Contradictions inherent in Capitalism make themselves manifest. Commencement of huge commercial crises, Revolutionary outbreaks of Capitalism take place in England, France, Germany, &c. Capitalists become the dominating power in politics. Struggles of the workers against capitalists, take the shape of Trade Unions. Bitter persecution of all who attack Capitalism and intense misery and exploitation of workers. Hence Marx was a revolutionary. As we shall have more to say on the Marxian School in future we now leave it.

6.—UTILITY SCHOOL.

Period 1860 and forward.

Chief Representatives : J. S. Mill, Bohm Bowerk, and Jevons.

J. S. Mill did not strictly belong to this school, nor did he belong to the Classic School, but as all the theories of Utility School are based

on Mill we put him in here. Labour theory of value set aside, but not disputed. Economics become psychological and individual. The utility of an article to its consumer is said to be a part of the origin of its value, but it appears that the cost of production is also a factor. In short, economics is no longer a science, but only a statement of tendencies, and there is no *one* factor that determines value but a complex of many factors: briefly, economics is beyond their comprehension.*

Economic conditions prevailing, as before stated, Capitalism was predominant. Not only politics, but education, and every avenue by which they may be attacked, is controlled by them. The only economics that can obtain the assent of authority to-day are apologetic economics, i.e. those that defend the exploitation of the workers. Hence in the decay of Capitalism, and with signs of a new system appearing, every scientific work on economics is necessarily revolutionary, and therefore tabooed. Dispite this the Marxian school (from an international standpoint) is by far the dominating school. We have touched very briefly on the main schools of thought, being forced to leave Romance or Italian school out, as it is only a repetition of other schools. If clear ideas cannot be gained from this very condensed summary, the reference to books, dates, &c., may save the time of the inquirer. We have perhaps raised questions in the minds of readers as to virtues of certain theories, e.g. Mercantile and Classic. We shall refer to these points in future articles.

N. ABLETT.

*Next month's article will deal with the main contentions of this school.

Next Month :—*The Marxian Theory of Value and The Theory of Marginal Utility.*

Sequel to the Strike at Ruskin College

IN spite of the fact that the authorities of Ruskin College gave to the students, on leaving for the "enforced" vacation, an assurance that no attempt would be made to victimize or penalize in any way any student who had taken part in the strike, but that all who wished to return could return, the contrary has taken place.

Already one student has been compelled to leave the institution, a student who took a prominent part in the dispute, and who acted upon the strike committee, to wit, George Sims, of Bermondsey.

Coming to the College in January, 1908, to take up a two years' course of study, Mr. Sims brought with him a number of years of

effective experience in the Labour Movement. Always active in his efforts to promote the well-being and advancement of his class, and manifesting a marked degree of ability as a speaker on questions concerning the interests of Labour, he attracted the attention of Dr. Salter, L.C.C., who offered him a two years' scholarship at Ruskin College. The scholarship was accepted, and Mr. Sims has more than justified the giving of it during his residence at Ruskin College.

Right from the beginning he has always uttered his convictions fearlessly and without apology, *never mistaking the enemies of his class for its friends*. That is his greatest crime in the eyes of the enemy. He had always one sound and indisputable principle by which he tested all proposed solutions to a problem, and woe was it to that unfortunate proposition which failed to stand the test!

In all matters concerning the students' interests he took a prominent part, but perhaps his most valuable work was done in the students' own classes on economics, of which he mainly took charge.

During the recent dispute he rendered immeasurable assistance, for which he has become a victim. In the course of the strike certain information was given to the Press by the Secretary of Ruskin College, with a view to injuring both Mr. Sims and the cause of the students. When challenged in the presence of the students to prove the truth of his statements Mr. Wilson sat silent as the Sphinx.

It is true that it was the Donor of his scholarship that withdrew him, but it is just as true that Dr. Salter was approached by the powers that be, who requested Mr. Sims's withdrawal. Later they urged upon his patron *not to do so while the dispute was on*. That would have been a tactical blunder. Consequently, when the strike had concluded, and the fortnight's vacation had elapsed, Mr. Sims was not allowed to resume his studies.

We are not deceived by the fact that the College authorities did not directly and openly demand his removal. Open and direct dealing is not their forte. Their inability to act squarely is accounted for presumably by the fact *that they are gentlemen*.

Mr. Sims is therefore no longer a student of Ruskin College. He has, however, not been allowed to leave Oxford, and has been appointed by the students concerned in the dispute to act as their outside representative in, and to take full charge of, the movement, which has for its aim the establishing of a New Labour College in Oxford. He is therefore at liberty to visit any branches of Trades and Labour organizations throughout the country, who are desirous of obtaining full information on the question at issue.

The Editor.

Scotland's Poet

His Life and Work

ONE hundred and fifty years ago Robert Burns was born in a little cottage outside the town of Ayr. Little reckoned his father, as he gazed with paternal pride on his first born, that the infant now trembling on the threshold of a new world would be his country's sweetest singer, and that his infant wailings were the fore-notes of eternal melodies.

The story of his career is one of surpassing interest. It is not only tragic and pathetic, but it is also of noble struggle and achievement under great difficulties. The life that has no shadow has no light, and so the men who have struggled against the storms of adversity usually have the first claim on the attention of mankind.

Goethe has said, "It is a man's errors that make him truly lovable," and Burns is no exception to the rule; for with his sufferings, his faults and failings, there has sprung up a warm human sympathy, which has helped to purify many another fellow-creature.

It is said of another that "his soul goes marching on," and this is true also of Burns. Every day but adds lustre to the name of the poet, and to the number of men and women who appreciate his works and worship his memory. Far from any lessening effect "time but th' impression deeper makes" the ploughman poet's influence on the minds and hearts of his countrymen. During his early boyhood he was very much under the influence of an old woman, who resided in the family, and who was remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. Burns himself says that she had the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, witches, and other trumpery. This old woman undoubtedly fired the young imagination of Burns, and the effect of this strange acquaintanceship may be noted in many of his poems, notably "Tam O' Shanter."

The two books which gave him the greatest pleasure to read in early life were *The Life of Hannibal* and *The History of Sir William Wallace*, the Scottish Patriot. The story of Wallace poured a Scottish patriotism into his veins which in after years burst forth in that immortal ode "Scots Wae Hae," an ode which nearly all Scotsmen at home and abroad swear is the grandest outside of the Bible.

Of the aspirations of his boyhood, he said—

That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book would make,
Or sing a sang at least!

Such were the hopes of his bright and shining youth, surrounded as it was with toil and trouble, because he belonged to "a virtuous household but exceedingly poor." He first burst into song when he was fifteen years old, with "Handsome Nell"—Nell being a co-labourer with him in the harvest field. On the death of his father, Burns assiduously applied himself to farming, with a firm resolution to get on. But "the best laid schemes o' mice and men gan aft a-gley." Misfortune overtook him and he was on the point of leaving his native land for Jamaica, when a friend prevailed upon him to publish his poems, which were already gaining for him a certain amount of celebrity. The result was, the now famous *Kilmarnock Edition*. The reception it received was highly gratifying, and he was advised to go to Edinburgh and publish a second edition. He went to "Edina, Scotland's darling seat," and the attention he received during his stay in that city from all ranks and descriptions of people might have turned his head. But he proved himself to be an almost perfect type of a democrat, for he responded with equal frankness and goodwill to the lowliest as to the highest of his acquaintances. After a short stay in Edinburgh, the ploughman-poet visited those parts of his native country most attractive by their beauty or their grandeur, and thus gratified a desire he had long entertained. He then settled down and resumed the labours of "the toil worn Cottar." The last few years of his life are peculiarly sad. Struggling against adverse circumstances he slowly but surely passed away to "that undiscover'd country from whose bourne no traveller returns," at the early age of thirty-eight.

To study the works of Robert Burns is to become impressed with his poetic genius, his human faults and failings, his passion for freedom, and justice, his vivid personality, the fire and fervour of his patriotism, and the deep sincerity of his feelings.

There is no exaggeration, no falsehood in the spirit of Burns's poetry. It is this note of sincerity and the return to the realities of life and nature, that gives him his distinction as a poet, and is the secret of his influence. "O wad some Pow'r the giftie gi'e us To see ourselves as ithers see us!" is a truth that makes one wish that most people were as honest about their failings as was the national poet of Scotland; it would at least save us the trouble of suspecting their vices.

His themes were the "wee modest crimson-tipped flower; the wee sleekit cow'rin' tim'rous beastie," scurrying away from the ploughshare; the winding stream; the real toiler in the fields; and the passions and emotions of the human mind. The beauties of rural nature and the passions and emotions of the human mind are combined in a manner that displays intimacy of knowledge and sympathetic affection. In his poetry, the thoughts, the feelings, and the aspirations of the people are so vividly expressed that they see the reflection and character of their own order. This is why the

"immortal memory" is proposed each succeeding year with increasing enthusiasm. James Russell Lowell in one of his poems says that :

A poet cannot strive for despotism ;
His harp falls shattered ; for it still must be
The instinct of great spirits to be free.

Burns must have felt this when he wrote :

If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave,
By nature's law designed,
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind.

and again :

A fig for those by law protected !
Liberty's a glorious feast !
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

These lines are the essence of the great Modern Movement which has for its object the realization of true freedom. In the works of Burns there is music for every mood and inspiration for every fancy. The volume he has left behind him is a voice that will echo and re-echo down the corridor of time to sooth the feelings of many a lover, encourage virtue, and show vice its ugliness. Its influence will keep the memory of the peasant-poet evergreen when poets of grave and learned repute have faded from the world.

With Wordsworth we may exclaim that :

Through busiest street and lowliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen ;
He rules mid winter snows, and when
Bees fill their hives ;
Deep in the general heart of men
His power survives.

Such is the reward of poetic genius even though it may be nurtured in domestic poverty.

JAS. H. H. BALLANTYNE.

Drive thy business ! Let not that drive thee.—*Franklin*.

You had better watch in the market-place than slumber in the temple.—*Maeterlinck*.

Keep an eye on your enemies ; but keep a microscope to one eye and a telescope to the other when watching your "friends."
—*P. P. Shevlin*.

Mr. Dennis Hird is asked to reprint some of his books, as *Toddle Island*, in a cheap form. He would, therefore, like to know if he could find some 200 old students, or other friends, who would be willing to *try* and sell ten copies each of such reprints. For particulars send card to Mr. Hird, Bletchley, Bucks.

How Long ?

How long will men this state of things endure ?

And grunt and sweat beneath a weary life ;

And slog and slave a pittance to secure,

Till faint—they fall and die amid the strife.

He tills the ground,—another eats the bread ;

He wealth creates,—and idlers seize the prize ;

He goes to war,—the tyrant to his bed ;

He tills, he toils, he works and wars,—then dies.

Workers and warriors all ! are ye not fools ?

That thus ye serve these soft ungodly hands ;

These filching pirates use you, but as tools—

And rob you of your bread, your homes, your lands.

How long will men meek and submissive be ?

When thro' the land stalks Want and Misery.

E. L.

A Labour Sonnet

Advance your waving standards to the foe,

A thousand wrongs are crying for reform ;

Press on, press on ! this pace is passing slow,

The cunning foe prepares him for the storm.

Rouse up the poor, the homeless and oppressed,

Until the tyrant trembles in his gates ;

A mighty hope burns in the peoples' breast,

Our fortune's in ourselves—not in our fates.

Have done with dignity : men rot and die,

And Job's philosophy is out of date ;

For bloody treason flaunts in places high,

And specious, spurious shams bestride thè State.

Advance ! and let your cry of battle be

For Right, for Freedom and Humanity.

E. L.

MORALS, NOT MANNERS

'Tis the morals, not the manners, make the man,

Parade your smiles and courtesies who can ;

For minus manners man might manage somehow

But minus morals man could manage nohow. .

E. L.

The Watch Tower.

A PROPOS of Mr. John A. Hobson's engagement at Ruskin College as lecturer on Sociology, it is interesting to know that in the beginning of this year the gentleman came in for some discussion between Mr. Bertram Wilson and one of the students. The latter had been deploring the fact that no one had been appointed to lecture on Marxian economics. Mr. Wilson asked the student whom he could suggest to take up this work, whereupon the student mentioned the name of Mr. Hobson. The Secretary shook his head despairingly, remarking, "But he has no *locus standi*."

Now "the stone which the builders *despised*, the same has become the head of the corner." In fact, to quote the recent utterances of Mr. Wilson on the subject, "Mr. Hobson, in the language of the circus proprietors, has been engaged regardless of expense."

By the puny intellects outside Ruskin College authorities, Mr. Hobson has been known as an economist and not as a sociologist. These latter monumental thinkers by taking thought !!! (to them always a painful process) have added the *sociological* cubit to his *economic* stature. To paraphrase Marx in his reply to Proudhon: In Ruskin, he (Hobson) has the right to be a bad economist because he is a great sociologist. Outside Ruskin, he has the right to be a bad sociologist because he is a great economist.

The following *unofficial* facts have the advantage of being *true*. In 1907 five members of the present Executive Committee, viz.: Messrs. Markby, Ball, Taylor, Rev. A. J. Carlyle, and Prof. Lees-Smith were appointed as a sub-committee of the then Executive Committee to draw up a fresh curriculum. They suggested English Literature and Temperance as subjects to replace Sociology and Logic. When the students got to know this, 50 out of 52 signed a protest against the proposed alteration, and at a subsequent House Meeting agreed to leave in a body if it were carried out. The proposal was dropped. Then followed the loudly trumpeted *new curriculum* of February, of 1908.

The present Executive Committee are favourable to Sociology and Logic, they say. *The majority of them sat on the sub-committee of 1907, which wanted to remove these subjects.* The two University representatives, who, we are informed, drew up the new curriculum which gave "fuller recognition to Sociology" also sat on the body which wanted it withdrawn in 1907. Rapid conversions are seldom lasting—or sincere. To paraphrase Mark Twain: The Executive Committee could tell the truth—but they won't.

It is exceedingly strange that no arrangement whatever had been made for carrying on Sociology until after Mr. Hird's enforced resignation caused such an outcry from the students. Prof. Lees-Smith told the students that on April 6th last that when he got on the 'phone to ask Mr. J. A. Hobson to take up the Sociology

lectures, Mr. Hobson replied that it was very strange, as he had just been approached by representatives of the students' committee, who were then on strike, to join a committee to start a new college. So it was *after* the outcry that they tried to get a lecturer on Sociology. Was it intended to do so before the students struck? We think not.

Whatever there may be in the adage that "truth is stronger than fiction," it is certain that official facts are stranger than truth. In the circular issued by the Executive Committee of Ruskin College the following statement is made, viz.: "Accordingly we put the situation before Mr. Hird *in the most friendly way*, and in view of the differences of opinion which could not be adjusted with self-respect on either side, *Mr. Hird tendered his resignation.*" The italics are ours. Mr. Hird *was asked* to tender his resignation in the same "most friendly way" that an employer might ask a prominent Trade Unionist employee to retire.

The world owes a debt of gratitude to the compilers of "official facts." They are the people who keep truth just above par, and who furnish the romance of life with a continual freshness. In their innocence, we have no doubt they think they are honest.

Three lecturers have been added to the list since the removal of Mr. Dennis Hird—the Rev. A. J. Carlyle, Prof. Lees-Smith, and Mr. J. A. Hobson. These three gentlemen have *a tendency* to fill the place of the late Principal in the same way that a penny magnet has a tendency to attract a thousand tons of steel.

It is rumoured that the new House Committee is composed of Messrs. Buxton, Wilson, and the cook. We cannot vouch for the truth of this statement. If the rumour has any foundation it is one more illustration of that great truth, "better a live cat than a dead lion."

Reports

LABOUR COLLEGE IN OXFORD.

SEQUEL TO THE RECENT "STRIKE."

On Saturday evening last a conference was held in the York Hotel, Cardiff, of the "South Wales Wing of the "Plebs." The "Plebs," which seems destined to become more widely known, is a league of Ruskin College students and sympathizers, which was called into existence at the close of last year by the then resident students for the purpose of establishing a more definite and satisfactory connexion between the College and the Labour Movement.

In view of the present crisis at the College, the Students naturally congratulate themselves on the birth of this new League, for no sooner had it begun to multiply its branches all over the country than these latter were called upon to act as intelligent mediums between the "striking" students and the Trade Unions. The Conference on Saturday was evidence of the marvellously rapid progress which the "Plebs" movement is making in South Wales. According to the agenda it was originally intended to discuss the ways and means of promoting the institution of a Labour College in South Wales, but the crisis in Ruskin College had changed the

situation. All attention was now diverted to Oxford, the centre of the movement. The enforced vacation at the College brought a number of "the strikers" to the meeting, two of whom gave an interesting and instructive account of the whole situation.

Messrs. J. W. Winstone and G. Barker, who were present, expressed entire sympathy with the cause, and hoped that the admirable courage and loyalty of the men would shortly be rewarded in the form of a new Labour College, which would be perfectly free and independent, with Mr. Dennis Hird at its head. Other miners' leaders had written to the Conference expressing sympathy with its objects, but regretting inability to be present. Several generations of "Ruskin" students were present, and all spoke warmly of the ability and personality of Mr. Hird, and regarded his dismissal with the utmost indignation.

It was unanimously resolved :

(1) That in the opinion of this Conference the Trade Unions should be asked to withdraw all support from Ruskin College.

(2) That the Trade Unions of the country should immediately set to work for the establishment of a Labour College in Oxford.

(3) That in order to further this object a manifesto be drafted by the South Wales Committee of the "Plebs" for circulation among the Trade Unions.

There is already in circulation a counterblast by "the strikers" in reply to the official statement of the College Council, as well as a printed appeal for funds to start the new College, to which appeal, it is confidently hoped, the Trade Unions will heartily respond.

This month's number of the students' magazine, the "Plebs," contains an excellent account of the trouble, and may be had on application to T. Evans, Secretary of the "South Wales Wing," 204, Park Road, Cwmparc, Treorcky.

"THE SOUTH WALES WING"

The Committee of "The Wing" met on Sunday afternoon April 18th, in the Aberystwyth Restaurant, Tonypanyd. Attendance was good, some members having travelled considerable distances, notably Messrs. S. Morgan, Treharris, and W. J. Edwards, Aberdare. Complying with instructions from the Cardiff Conference, the following Resolution was drawn up, to be copied, and moved at the earliest possible date in every District Meeting of the South Wales Miners' Federation :

That this District affirms the need for a purely Labour College in Oxford, democratically controlled by Labour Organizations' and calls upon its members to levy themselves one penny per head for the purpose.

It was decided that a circular addressed to some responsible person, and containing an offer to supply speakers, on payment of travelling expenses, should accompany each copy of the Resolution.

Furthermore, an elaborate Manifesto containing reasons for the "resolution" was drafted, of which Manifesto it was decided to print 3,000 to be circulated generally among the Trade Union and Socialist branches throughout South Wales. Members will please note that a slight change has been made in the appointment of officers. On the suggestion of Mr. Ablett, the originally-appointed President, it was decided that Mr. J. Winstone, Miners' Agent, should occupy that office, while that of Vice-President should be filled by another Miners' Agent, in the person of Mr. George Barker. Mr. Ablett is now Chairman of Committee. The change, it was believed, would meet with general approval.

From Comrade John Rees comes the news that a branch and class of eighteen members have been started at Nantymoel, and that prospects are bright. Good!!

RUSKIN COLLEGE AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.

On Sunday, March 21st, Mr. C. Watkins, A.S.R.S., ex-student of Ruskin College, addressed a well-attended meeting of railwaymen at Heeley, Sheffield, on the above subject. After giving a brief description of Oxford, the speaker gave the history of Ruskin College from its origin up to the present date. He explained the method and nature of its teaching, and described the domestic and social life of the students. He laid great stress on the importance of exponents of the Labour Movement being well-informed on social and economic subjects, so that they may be fully qualified to deal with problems now demanding solution. The speaker further pointed out the weakness and the danger of allowing Ruskin College to depend so largely on the private subscriptions of wealthy men who, in many cases, were opposed to Labour's emancipation. He recommended the Trade Unions finding the money, so that the institution could be under the control of the Labour Movement. He said that in Dennis Hird, the Principal, they had a man fully in sympathy with Labour's aims and ideals, but that could not be said for every member of the staff, or every member on the Executive Committee. In fact, there was a danger that the College would be diverted from its original purpose by ambitious men wholly out of sympathy with the modern Labour Movement. This danger would be averted if Trade Unions would find the necessary money that would give them the control of the institution. Many questions were put and answered, and Mr. Watkins was warmly thanked for his address.

J. S.

For want of space other reports, and *By the Way* notes, are left over. Next month a Balance Sheet of Expenses' Fund will appear, also, list of donations towards New Central Labour College Fund.

Correspondence

To the Editor of the "Plebs" Magazine.

Sirs,—I read with deep interest the article by my friend Mr. Ablett in the February number, and with much of it I am in hearty agreement. It is when Mr. Ablett comes to deal with the question of "the attempt now being made to attach Ruskin College to the University" that I join issue with him. Whether or not such an "attempt" is "now" being made one cannot be sure. Perhaps Mr. Ablett has sources of information which are closed to others. Still, taking the thing for granted the argument in favour of such a course is not so easily disposed of as Mr. Ablett seems to think. As one of the "others" whom Mr. Ablett refers to, perhaps you will kindly allow me a little space in order to meet his criticism somewhat. Regarding the "permeation" principle which Mr. Ablett so lightly dismisses as of no value: impotent; if one believes in the principle of the cross-fertilization of cultures, what becomes of the argument for self-ostracism? If it be that the Labour Movement could not withstand the strain therein involved, then, one would imagine, it is not strong enough to accomplish in other directions what Mr. Ablett, and I, claim it can. Perhaps it is that my faith in human nature is stronger than Mr. Ablett's hence my optimism and his pessimism. Certainly I have as much confidence in one direction as he has in the other, yet we are both relying on human nature.

Of course, obviously, in a short letter one cannot deal with the whole case. I may return to the subject in a subsequent article.

Sincerely Yours, J. S. WHITEHEAD.

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THE GOLD SICKLE,

OR

Hena, the Virgin of the Isle of Sen.

A TALE OF DRUID GAUL

By EUGENE SUE,

Translated from the Original French by DANIEL DE LEON.

(Continued).

"**B**Y HESUS! Cedar oil! . . . What magnificence!" exclaimed Joel smiling. "That is the way our wives reason: for good fish, good sauce."

"These relics were with us, as with you, the book from which the young Gaul learned of the exploits of his fathers. Often did the families of the vanquished offer to ransom these spoils; but to relinquish for money a head conquered by oneself or an ancestor was looked upon as an unpardonable crime of avarice and impiety. I say with you, those barbarous customs passed away with royalty, and with them the days when our ancestors painted their bodies blue and scarlet, and dyed their hair and beard with lime water to impart to them a copper-red hue."

"Without wronging their memory, friend guest, our ancestors must have been unpleasant beings to look upon, and must have resembled the frightful red and blue dragons that ornament the prows of the vessels of those savage pirates of the North that my son Albinik the sailor and his lovely wife Meroë have told us some curious tales about. But here are our men back from the stables; we shall not have to wait much longer for supper. I see Margarid unspitting the lambs. You shall taste them, friend, and see what a fine taste the salt meadows on which they browse impart to their flesh."

All the men of the family of Joel who entered the hall wore, like him, a sleeveless blouse of coarse wool, through which the sleeves of their jackets or white shirts were passed. Their breeches reached down to their ankles; and they were shod with low slippers. Several of these labourers, just in from the fields, wore over their shoulders a cloak of sheep-skin, which they immediately took off. All wore woollen caps, long hair cut round, and bushy beards. The last two to enter held each other by the arm; they were especially handsome and robust.

"Friend Joel," inquired the stranger, "who are those two young fellows? The statues of the heathen god Mars are not better shaped, nor have so valiant an aspect."

"They are two relatives of mine; two cousins, Julyan and Armel. They love each other like brothers . . . Quite recently an enraged bull rushed at Armel and Julyan saved Armel at the peril of his own life. Thanks to Hesus we are not now in times of war. But should it be necessary to take up arms, Julyan and Armel have taken 'the pledge of brotherhood' . . . But supper is ready . . . Come, yours is the seat of honour."

Joel and the unknown guest drew near the table. It was round and raised somewhat above the floor which was covered with fresh straw. All around the table were seats bolstered with fragrant grass. The two broiled muttons, now quartered, were served up in large platters of beechwood, white as ivory. There were also large pieces of salted pork and a smoked ham of wild boar. The fish remained in the large pot that they had been boiled in.

At the place where Joel, the head of the family, took his seat, stood a huge cup of plated copper that even two men could not have drained. It was before that cup, which marked the place of honour, that the stranger was placed with Joel at his left and Mamin' Margarid at his right.

The old men, the young girls, and the children then ranked themselves around the table. The grown up and the young men sat down behind these in a second row, from which they rose from time to time to perform some service, or, every time that, passing from hand to hand, beginning with the stranger, the large cup was empty, to fill it from a barrel of hydromel, that was placed at a corner of the hall. Furnished with a piece of barley or wheat bread, everyone received or took a slice of broiled or salted meat, which he cut up with his knife, or into which he bit freely without the help of knife.

The old war-dog Debur-Trud, enjoying the privileges of his age and long years of service, lay at the feet of Joel, who did not forget his faithful servitor.

Towards the end of the meal, Joel having carved the wild boar ham, detached the hoof, and following an ancient custom, said to his young relative Armel, handing it to him :

"To you, Armel, belongs the bravest part ! To you, the vanquisher in last evening's fight !"

At the moment when, proud of being pronounced the bravest in the presence of the stranger, Armel was stretching out his hand to take the wild boar's hoof that Joel presented to him, an exceptionally short man in the family, nicknamed "Stumpy" by reason of his small stature, observed aloud :

"Armel won in yesterday's fight because he was not fighting with Julyan. Two bullocks of equal strength avoid and fear each other, and do not lock horns."

Feeling humiliated at hearing it said of them, and before a stranger, that they did not fight together because they were mutually afraid of each other, Julyan and Armel grew red in the face.

With sparkling eyes, Julyan cried: "If I did not fight with Armel it was because some one else took my place; but Julyan fears Armel as little as Armel fears Julyan; and if you were but one inch taller, Stumpy, I should show you on the spot that, beginning with you, I fear nobody—not even my good brother Armel—"

"Good brother Julyan!" added Armel whose eyes also began to glisten, "we shall have to prove to the stranger that we do not fear each other."

"Done, Armel—let's fight with sabres and bucklers."

The two friends reached out their hands to each other and pressed them warmly. They entertained no rancour for each other; they loved each other as warmly as ever; the combat decided upon by them was a not uncommon outbreak of foolhardiness.

Joel was not sorry at seeing his kin act so bravely before his guest; and his family shared his views.

At the announcement of the battle, everybody present, even the little children and young women and girls, felt joyful; they clapped their hands smiling and looked at each other proud of the good opinion that the unknown visitor was to form of the courage of their family.

Mamm' Margarid thereupon addressed the young men: "The fight ends the moment I lower my distaff."

"These children are feasting you at their best, friend guest," said Joel to the stranger; "you will, in turn, have to feast them by telling them and all of us some of the marvellous things that you have seen in your travels."

"I could not do else than pay in my best coin for your hospitality, friend," answered the stranger. "I shall tell you the stories."

"Let's hurry, brother Julyan," said Armel; "I have a strong desire to hear the traveller. I can never get tired of listening to stories, but the story-tellers are rare around Karnak."

"You see, friend," said Joel, "with what impatience your stories are awaited. But before starting, and so as to give you strength, you shall presently drink to the victor with good wine of Gaul," and turning to his son: "Guilhern, fetch in the little keg of white wine from Beziers that your brother Albinik brought us on his last trip; fill up the cup in honour of the traveller.

When that was done, Joel said to Julyan and Armel:

"Now, boys, fall to with your sabres!"

CHAPTER III.—ARMEL AND JULYAN.

The numerous family of Joel, gathered in a semi-circle at one end of the spacious hall, impatiently awaited the combat, with Mamm' Margarid holding the place of honour. The stranger stood at her right, her husband at her left, and two of the smallest children before her on their knees. Margarid raised her distaff and gave the signal for the combat to begin; the lowering of the distaff was to be the signal for the combat to end.

Julyan and Armel stripped down to the waist, preserving their breeches only. Again they clasped hands. Each thereupon slung on his left arm a buckler of wood covered with seal skin, armed himself with a heavy sabre of copper, and impetuously assailed each other, being all the more spurred by the presence of the stranger, before whom they were eager to display their skill and valour. Joel's guest looked more highly delighted than any one else at the spectacle before him, and his face lighted with warlike animation.

Julyan and Armel were at it. Their eyes sparkled, not with hatred but with foolhardiness. They exchanged no words of anger but of friendly cheer, all the while dealing out terrible blows that would have been deadly had they not been skillfully parried. At every thrust, brilliantly made, or dexterously avoided, the men, women and children in the audience clapped their hands, and according as the combat ran, cried :

"*Her . . . her . . . Julyan !*"

"*Her . . . her . . . Armel !*"

Such was the effect of these cries, of the sight of the combat, of the clash of arms, that the huge mastiff Deber-Trud, the man-eater, felt the ardour of battle seize himself also, and barked wildly, looking up at his master, who calmed and caressed him with his hand.

Perspiration covered the young bodies of the handsome and robust Julyan and Armel. Each other's peers in courage, vigour and agility, neither had yet wounded the other.

"Let's hurry, brother Julyan!" said Armel rushing on his companion with fresh impetus. "Let us hurry to hear the pretty stories of the stranger."

"The plough can go no faster than the ploughman, brother Armel," answered Julyan.

To be continued.