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EDITORIAL

The Mediæval College

THERE appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* of the 8th of February an article appropriately entitled "A Mediæval College." It bears upon it all the marks of the breed of the University don. The article is signed W. H. F. We think we could put our hand on the gentleman. The "Mediæval College" is Ruskin College for which, says the writer, "respect is now widespread among the senior members of the University who open their lectures gladly to the students, and its fame is spreading to wider circles outside. Its future seems secure and its only need is a generous endowment." If the University opens its lectures to Ruskin why should not the patrons of the University open their purse? If the Anson's, the Buxton's, the Lees Smith's and the W. Hamilton Fyfes give the assurances, if these "experts" declare that when "he (the Ruskin Student) goes back to his work and to his fellow-workman he is not the man he was," why should the "captains of industry" hesitate to take out their insurance policies at Ruskin College?

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The Miracle

THE masters have always had good reason to be in sympathy with the miraculous, particularly at a time when their institutions have lost the stability necessary to breast the storm, when the conditions of their rule enter the stage of dissolution. The greater the extent and intensification of the storm, the more popular becomes the miracle with the ruling class. And it is always invoked for the purpose of arresting the inevitable development of the social forces. True, these miracles no longer take the form of addressing hey prestos to the natural forces. Natural science, which capitalism found necessary to develop for its own expansion, has taken the sun and the moon, out of the conjuror's box, and rescued walking-sticks from all possibility of ever assuming the rôle of serpents. They did not *sell* walking-sticks in the days of Moses. Although now and again someone of capitalism's officially-licensed savants invokes the sun to admit its crime of

creating unemployment, the performance of the miraculous is to-day, for the most part, confined to the sphere of the abstract. The W. H. F.'s contain within their heads a wonderful spark called THE IDEA. It is *their* idea, of course. But they are generous genii, and they are prepared to dazzle in the darkness in which the ignorance of workmen blooms. Only let these working men be brought to the magic cave of Ruskin College, let contact be established between them and the jovian head of a W.H.F. and—ABRACADABRA—the miracle is wrought. But let us take the performance according to W.H.F.

> In all the world there is no self assurance quite so firmly rooted as that of the young trade union official. He is clever and capable and he knows it so well, that his ignorance blooms in darkness. There is no one who so sorely needs education or so highly repays it. He comes with rock-hearted convictions based on half truths and inaccurate statistics; at first he kicks against the painful pricks of fact: at last he is sure of nothing but his desire for truth.

It must indeed be a miraculous light that penetrates into the darkness and discovers this amazing ignorance. So powerful is it that the patient is blinded by it and at first struggles to escape its preternatural glare. At last he ceases to struggle. *Yet he does not cease to be blind.* At last—O wonder-working wisdom—there comes the clinching climax, "at last *he is sure of nothing* but his desire for truth." We have been to the Olympia. We have seen the statue of the Virgin transformed into a real live human being, but a greater than the Olympian Miracle is here. We recall the four lines of the old hymn:—

> Oh to be nothing, nothing;
> Only to sit at the Master's feet,
> A broken and empty vessel
> For the Master's use made meet.

These lines we think appropriately hit off the situation presented in THE MIRACLE OF THE OPEN MIND. And we feel sure that the Masters will fully appreciate this transformation and will respond to W.H.F.'s plea for "a generous endowment" to Ruskin College.

> This is a transformation that must happen at Ruskin College every year and each miracle does a separate service to the country.

Country, of course, means those who *own* the country, just as the fair lady Truth, who has with her companion Justice toiled so assiduously in the mines of history, means the painted prostitute of class rule. And not all W.H.F.'s hypocritical rhetoric will make her look like virgin innocence, except of course to those who are "sure of nothing." W.H.F. has something more to say about the sequel.

> When he goes back to his work and to his fellow workman he is not the man he was, his manners have lost their proud assurance, his speeches are shorter and less loud, he is critical of theories, and shows a new born reverence for books.

All of which is a further guarantee of security to the "country." That security is badly wanted by the "country" in these days, is clearly evidenced by the verbal froth that daily seeths in the "country's" literary cauldrons, from the *Daily Mail* to the *Manchester Guardian*. The all-absorbing aim of the defenders of the existing order is, how to stem the rising tide of working-class revolt, how to disrupt the decisiveness which is becoming more and more characteristic of the forces of Labour. And here, as clear as noonday, W.H.F. shows how this may be attained through Ruskin College. We wish that every Trade Union branch in the country might read this article. We have no doubt as to what the result would be. It is one more justification for the existence of the Central Labour College, one more confirmation of all that we have said in these pages, one more damning indictment of Ruskin College. In his anxiety to convince those in whose interests the *Manchester Guardian* operates, he blurts out in brazen fashion the real truth about Ruskin College. Students who are sent to Ruskin College from the working class may "at first kick," but there can be no question that at the last they will be "sure about nothing." "The desire for truth," gilt-edged truth, Diplomatic truth, will have soothed the savage breast, will have softened "his manners," shortened "his speeches," and strangled his "proud assurance." "This transformation must take place," says the emphatic W.H.F. Lest that should not be sufficient testimony for those who are asked to give "a generous endowment," we would add our testimony to that of W.H.F. and the noble army of Ruskin advertisers, by saying, that the transformation *does* take place. Some fourteen students of Ruskin College have already satisfied the University that they have reached the high level of being "sure about nothing," and have been duly certificated as devotees of "truth." We know that some of these holders of diplomas now continue their "enthusiastic search for truth," in Labour Exchanges or on Free Trade platforms. We hope those that sent them to Ruskin College are sufficiently grateful and that they fully appreciate this observation of W.H.F.: "It is fine work that is done at Ruskin and it is done in a fine spirit." It is the fineness of *finesse*.

THERE was a foundation stone laying ceremony at Ruskin College on the 8th of February, at which the "country" was well represented. Among those who expressed their appreciation of "the fine work done at Ruskin," was Mr. Sydney C. Buxton, Liberal Cabinet Minister, who "well and truly laid" one of the foundation stones. We take the following extracts from his speech, which seems to have had the fullest report in the Liberal Press, a report which we are informed was supplied to the Press by Ruskin College:—

Master Building

> One special object which the promoters, those who managed the College, and those who managed the various associations had in view, was to fit those who came there for the *responsibilities of citizenship*, and to equip them to take a share in the various administrations in their own trade unions and co-operative societies, and others to take a share in Local Government work, and *to have a share even, as he hoped might be the case, in the work of the Imperial Parliament* (applause).
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> He was inclined to think if they had a Ruskin College for Cabinet Ministers they would all be the better for it, for after all *the education which was given was singularly adapted for the purpose they had in view.*
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> It had been called a school of citizenship, and that seemed to him to be a very good phrase to express the meaning of the education given.
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> He thought that education did very much to open the mind, *to give a less restricted view of class interests.*

The italics are ours. The last quoted sentence corroborates W.H.F.'s guarantees, and it confirms the direction in which we have reported the wind to be blowing. Presently it will blow such a gale as will "well and truly lay" Ruskin College in ruins, so far as the working class is concerned. It is on the showing of its advocates, a bulwark of capitalism, a breeder of indecision in the minds of working men, a barrier to intellectual certainty. This blissful mental uncertainty, this condition of not being sure about anything, may be a most satisfactory recommendation to the class whose material sustenance is conditioned upon the certainty of having appropriated the earth and the means of living on it, but it is scarcely the thing that is likely to recommend itself to those who, because they are propertyless slaves, live in a condition of material uncertainty that is anything but blissful. This species of social agnosticism is not for them. It is this very material uncertainty which urges the workers more and more to seek for theoretical certainty, that dictates the need for a positive knowledge of the society in which they can only live by getting a buyer for their brain and muscle. They are less and less likely, therefore, to levy themselves for the upkeep of an institution that teaches men to be "sure about nothing." They have already seen in practice that "out of nothing, nothing comes." "The desire for truth" may satisfy that imprisoned ghost of capitalist society—the citizen. Being a shadow it can exist on shadows. The flesh and blood of Labour desires something more substantial. It will realize its desires when it has with its own strength built its watch towers high enough to overlook the enemy's fortifications. For capitalism and all its supports, the "generous endowment of Labour," will be a winding sheet.

W.W.C.

The Problem of Knowledge

By Paul Lafargue

(*Continued*)

SOCRATES considered that he had lost time in studying . . . the phenomena of nature; he recommended the abandonment of things—πράγματα—for ideas, λόγοι—; realities—ὄντα—for the truth of realities,—ἀλήθεια των ὄντων. The ideas that man makes for himself of things was this truth: the knowledge of the idea of the thing dispensed with all research into its nature. The knowledge of the concept of the horse, said Plato, teaches the properties of the horse. Concepts, according to him, possessed reality; it is not the matter, but the idea whence it receives its forms, which makes of each thing what it is, the idea represents in consequence the true reality of things.

But all the sophists did not share this high opinion of the ideas of pure Reason. They objected: We can only express the sensations of the state in which we find ourselves without being able to affirm anything as to that which is outside ourselves, or to enounce anything which has a general scope, because the senses interpose themselves between the external world and Reason, which is like a prisoner and cannot go out of itself. They submit to their paradoxical and cavilling criticism the ideas of motion, space, the definitions of geometry, and the operations of arithmetic.*

. . . Socrates forsook the physical sciences for ethics, the only study worthy of a free man; morality, manners, custom, loyalty, justice, were in effect the constant and general pre-occupation of the sophists, they passed them through the sieve of their pitiless criticism.

Gorgias boasted of having discovered that appearance has more weight than truth, and Pyrrho declared that appearance is queen everywhere when she shows herself. The theory of appearance is that which the sophists come to apply to ethics. Since things are for each individual what they appear to him according to his

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* Here are some samples of sophistic criticism.

Such as a thing is in one and the same space, it is at rest; for, an arrow, which flies, is at each instant in the same space, it is then at rest at each instant of its flight, consequently thus during all the continuance of its flight; the movement of the arrow is then only an appearance.

If all that exists is in space, space ought also to be itself in a space, and thus on to infinity; as that is inconceivable, nothing existing is in space.

Mathematicians laugh at us when they talk of cutting a straight line into two equal parts. The line being, according to them, composed of points, how could they undertake to divide into two equal parts a line formed by an unequal number of points, of 9, for example. We cannot divide the fifth point, which has no magnitude, and if we do not divide it, the two parts are unequal.

We cannot cut off one number from another, for example, 5 from 6: for to cut off one thing from another, it is necessary that it be contained therein; but if 5 is contained in 6; 4 is in 5; 3 in 4; 2 in 3; 1 in 2; add together all and you will have 15; but 15 is not contained in 6.

sensations, truth is only an individual opinion; each man ought to hold as true what appears to him true, and as good and just what appears to him good and just; for man is as much the measure of things of the moral world as of things of the physical world.

The boldest opposing nature of society, natural right to legal right, φύσις to νόμος, concluded that each man ought to follow his passions and his interests, and if laws and customs are opposed thereto they attack his natural right and impose upon him a constraint to which he is not bound to submit himself, and he ought to violate them without hesitation if he can do so with impunity.

The King of Persia, because he was able to satisfy all the caprices of his ego, possessed the sovereign good, and Archelaüs, because he had taken possession of the throne of Macedonia by treason and murder, became a hero. "I, the only one," of Stirner and the pretentious "Superman" of Nietzsche are the caricatures of these ideas of Greek sophistry. The individual ought to conduct himself, not according to a morality general and valid for all, but according to the requirements of his Ego. The Ego was the beginning, the middle and the end of all; it became the point of departure of the new morality, whose fundamental dogma, "Do to another what you would wish that he had done to you," as Hesychius reports, and as the sophist Socrates also comments: "Do not to others what you would not suffer from them. . . . . Be thou in regard to others what you would wish that I be with regard to you," was taken up by Christianity, which repeats: "Do not to another what you would not that he should do to you. Love your neighbour as yourself."

The Stoics who asserted the pretention of returning to Nature, while they rejected the primitive philosophy of Nature for the subjective philosophy of sophistry, professed that to be free in all relations the wise men ought not to accept any charge or any duty with respect to others; he ought not to impose on himself the care of bringing up children, he ought to be self-sufficient, and not to submit himself to the yoke of marriage, when there are so many other means of satisfying sexual needs. The cynic, to return entirely to Nature satisfied them in public. Zeno and Plato preached the doctrine of having wives in common.

The sophists attacked social institutions; Lycophon declared that the superiority of the aristocracy is imaginary; Alcidamas that the opposition of the freeman and the slave is unknown to nature; others that slavery is contrary to nature. The city, the nation, the State, said they, are too narrow for him who has the universe for his native land. The wise man is a citizen of the world; he ought to belong neither to a city nor to a state, since he ought not to alienate his freedom at any price, and because the road that leads to Hades is the same length from every place. It is ridiculous to sacrifice oneself for one's native land; the wise man who has the world for

his native land is not going to make a sacrifice of his person and of wisdom for the profit of fools.†

Socrates dared not push doubt to its last logical consequences, but like Bentham, the theorist of bourgeois utilitarianism, he made of utility the condition of well-being, and counselled being virtuous, because of the advantages which virtue procures; shunning adultery because of the dangers to which it exposes; taking part in public affairs because the welfare of the community profits the individual; cultivating friendship idealised by mutual Sodomy, because of the services which one can expect therefrom, &c.; nevertheless, in opposition to the other sophists, he identified legality with the concept of justice so far as to refuse to withdraw himself from the judgment which he considered unjust in order not to violate the law. He had for a rule, as Pyrrho, to attach himself to commonsense and to act like everybody: and it was that he might not shock public opinion that he sacrificed to the gods whose existence for the sophists was quite as doubtful as was the knowledge of things.

The doubt of the sophists of the truth of knowledge and their disdain for every science of nature bordered upon the recognition of commonsense as the guide of the wise man and the universal guarantee of that which human knowledge can hold as certain; nevertheless, it was against current opinions, which were, at their epoch, survivals of an exhausted social order that they set out for war in company with Heraclitus.

The first sophists originated from the commercial towns of Ionia and Magna Græcia, where, from the 7th century B.C., industry and commerce attacked the communistic organization of the gens and of the patriarchal family, substituted for the community of goods private property and constituted a new class, the bourgeoisie.

The patriarchal family was a providence for the numerous households, living under the despotic authority of the Father, who represented the ancestors: it provided for all material and intellectual needs. The harvests of its fields and the work of its slaves nourished all its members; the worship of its ancestors, its history, its legends, its traditions and its rules of conduct, which were unquestioned and which confined them in bonds were their intellectual and moral sustenance.

According as the class of the merchants and the manufacturers became rich and grew, the class of the patriarchal aristocrats became

† The Christians of the early centuries, like the Greek sophists, concerned themselves very little with their native land; Bishop Prudentius, in the fourth century, rejoiced because Rome had conquered all peoples and made of the whole world one city. The Christian poets of the Sybilline books of the second century cherished, on the contrary, a ferocious hatred of the rich and of Rome. "The wicked city which has made the world suffer so much"; they greeted its ruin in anticipation and wished to be the witnesses of it. Christianity, which at first, addressed itself only to the disinherited of society modified its opinion commensurably with its conquest of the rich classes.

impoverished and reduced. The nobles, for whom war was the only means of acquiring riches, had only hatred and contempt for the parvenus of commerce and of industry, of whom the aristocratic poet, Theognis, desired "to drink the black blood." Nevertheless these individuals so much despised, disputed with them the government of the State, dispossessed them of their goods by usury and leagued themselves with the debased nobles, the artisans and the slaves to drive them from power, to exile them and to dispossess them of their property. Civil war stained with blood the old states for centuries.

The individualist society which the new class established on the ruins of the gentile and patriarchal community had no Providence, and it was to fill up this gap that the Providence of God was invented: instead of depending for his well-being upon a family collectivity, each individual looked for it only from the success of his individual enterprises; delivered from patriarchal despotism and given over to his own forces only, he was obliged to make provision for his material and intellectual needs. The sophists took upon themselves the duty of giving him the education which he received formerly in the bosom of his family; they opened the first public and paying schools; they taught all that he needed to know to make his way in the social hurly-burly without being confined by the morality and the outworn customs of the patriarchate. Man, instead of losing his individuality in the gentile or patriarchal community, supported his Ego in face of society, instead of referring everything to a collectivity, he brought back everything to his Ego; he was the measure of everything, according to the profound word (dictum) of Protagoras. The new social conditions established the principle of subjectivity, whence the sophists deduced the subjective philosophy of the Bourgeoisie.

Aristophanes and Anytus accused Socrates of contemning the gods and the customs bequeathed by his ancestors, of corrupting morals, and of demoralizing youth; a like accusation has been brought against the other sophists. Nevertheless, their teaching answered to the intellectual and moral needs of their environment; it only gave them a philosophical expression. "The people," says Plato, "is the great sophist, who will not be contradicted either in his opinions or in his inclinations." It was in full moral decomposition. All kinds of excesses were allowed, reports Thucydides. Bad faith was general, the most terrible oaths could not be relied upon; the mob applauded the most shameless and egoistic maxims of the orators, of which here are some examples: each man follows his interest according to his means, without ever letting himself be stopped by regard for right; the triumph of the strongest is the law of nature; each measures definitively right and honour by his advantage and pleasure, &c.

The throwing into doubt knowledge of things and the shameless rejection of ideas of private and public morality were the intellectual reflexes of the overthrow of social conditions which determined the economic and political events which transformed ancient society.

Doubt, born with the bourgeoisie, provides itself a home in its philosophy. Descartes believed that his axiom, *je pense donc je suis* (I think, therefore, I am) would have driven it out; he could have said with as much justice: *I feel, therefore, I am.* He missed the point. The sophists had never doubted their thought and their sensations, but the certainty of the perceptions which they procured. Unconquered, doubt continues to flourish in philosophic thought: it is fatal, since doubt is one of the intellectual characteristics of the bourgeois individual, who lives in uncertainty of the success of his commercial and industrial enterprises and the continuance of his prosperity.

At different times in the course of the history of the bourgeoisie, we have seen re-appear, at epochs of transition, the moral shamelessness of the Greek sophists, but it has never asserted itself with so much cynicism.

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The sophistic criticism of the erroneous and variable impressions of the senses has not been refuted, and cannot be; every day, numerous and striking proofs of sensorial unfaithfulness confirm and reinforce it. Popular wisdom supports it with its proverb: *De gustibus et de colorbris non disputandum* (We cannot wrangle as to tastes and colours.)

Some years ago, Blondot, the celebrated physician of Nancy, announced to the scientific world the discovery of the rays N., the appearance of which was demonstrated by a luminous spot on a phosphorescent screen: numerous scholars of Europe and America, all equally able experimenters, saw them; nevertheless they were obliged to end by recognizing that these rays were an optical illusion of those who had seen them. Everybody sees the sun beaming with light; physicists affirm that an aëronaut who succeeded in going out of the terrestrial atmosphere could see it black. A professor of pyschology, to demonstrate that the same object impresses individuals differently, caused to come in, abruptly, in the middle of his lecture, a harlequin, who executed two or three pirouettes and disappeared at the end of a minute. He asked the persons present to put in writing, without consulting one another, what they had just seen; there were no two narrations in agreement as to the gestures and the costume of the clown. The judiciary depositions at the time of eye and ear witnesses disagree when they are not concerted: of the double murder in a blind-alley of Rousin, ten witnesses, of whom six were *sergents-de- ville*, (police-constables), professionals, habituated to make statements as to the places of crime, could not agree on the position

of the corpse of the painter Steinhel: the servant and a neighbour saw him stretched on the ground; four policemen found him on his knees, supported against a door; a fifth saw him leaning with his back to the wall, near a lavatory, &c. When the historian possesses only a single testimony, the fact is registered as positive, certain; but when there exist several documents, it becomes doubtful in its details and sometimes in its entirety. Who will be able to disentangle the affair of Dreyfus, which so many documents entangle? History is not a science.

(*To be continued*).

Translated from the French for the "*Plebs*" *Magazine* by A. J. HACKING, M.A., Central Labour College.

Political and Industrial Action:

A Rejoinder.

I AM sure that Mr. Lyle's article in the January number of the "*Plebs*" represents the views of a considerable number of the most enthusiastic adherents of the Labour Movement; and as I think it is based on distorted, or one-sided, views of contemporary political facts, as well as on a mistaken sociological theory, I will do my best to show where its errors lie.

While I should not contend, as Mr. Lyle charges me with doing, that the Syndicalist Movement was created by the relative failure of the Labour Party, I question whether even he would dispute the fact that there was in this country no popular anti-Parliamentary feeling until disappointment with the Labour Party had set in. However, I am quite ready to treat the matter from a wider point of view than that of British working-class politics, and deal with Mr. Lyle's contentions, both theoretical and practical, just as he has put them forward.

I am bound to say that my impression, on reading his article, was that of an intolerable deal of dogmatic assertion with a poor ha'p'orth of proof. For instance, Mr. Lyle assures us that "Parliament is only the political reflex of Economic Capitalism, and therefore cannot legislate for the workers." Now this is simply not true. Parliament was not created by the capitalist class—at least, not in every country. The English "estates of the realm" took shape, as a matter of historical fact, under the feudal system. Subsequently the bourgeoisie were able, by the Revolution of the

seventeenth century, and finally by the Reform Acts, to capture the political machinery in their own interest. By analogy, therefore, the wage-earners can do likewise. As to the idea that Parliament cannot legislate for the workers, that is a piece of impossibilism which amounts to nothing but rhetoric and no more. I put the straight question to Mr. Lyle: "Were the Factory Acts, the Workmen's Compensation Acts, the Trade Disputes Act, the Miners' Eight Hours' Act, worth anything to the workers or not?" And if not, is Mr. Lyle in favour of their repeal, or at any rate, of not actively opposing their repeal, in the event of any capitalist party urging it? I shall be glad to know his answer. And possibly he will at the same time inform us where, in "events that took place in Russia some few years ago," or in "the experience of 1848," he finds any case of the proletariat gaining control of Parliamentary machinery. It is simply here a question of facts; and Mr. Lyle's facts are sorely to seek.

Mr. Lyle further says that, while Labour Parties may be a nuisance to the master class, they are a greater nuisance to the working class, and quotes the Australian Labour Party as "the bitterest enemies of organized labour," and as "doing their utmost to crush the Trade Unions out of existence." Here, again, are assertions unsupported by evidence. If compulsory preference to Trade Unionists in all employment (which the Australian Labour Party, I believe, have enacted) is "crushing the Trade Unions out of existence," the sooner that sort of crushing begins over here the better. The Lancashire weavers seem very anxious to crush themselves out of existence in this way. The Australian Labour Government is, I grant, weak and compromising in many respects, but after all, it is up to the rank and file to worry their elected persons into the straight path, and if they will not do that, they deserve no pity for any backsliding that appears at headquarters. Perhaps, however, Mr. Lyle speaks with more authority than I do on Australia. One thing I can say with assurance about it, that Australian experience goes to prove my contention that the master class, by raising prices, do in practice often manage to weaken or nullify the effect of improvements in wages, which are unaccompanied by expropriation. The cost of living in Australia is tremendous. It must be borne in mind that, when Marx wrote his disproof of a similar contention to the above, he had before him a society in which universal competition prevailed. Now, on the contrary, the power of trusts and rings enables capitalists to sell commodities considerably above their exchange value, and so to "pass on" the amount of increased wages to the consumer.

I studied Mr. Lyle's list of working-class political "blacklegs" with a sad interest—the sadness being not entirely on account of the treachery set forth, but on account, also, of Mr. Lyle's reckless promiscuity in selecting the list. I had never heard of the particular treacheries which would have justified the inclusion of Vandervelde,

Pablo Iglesias, or Anseele in a catalogue of leaders who have "taken the first opportunity of betraying the workers." And a list of names, selected with such a purpose, really proves little. I might retort by mentioning Hardie, Thorne, Lansbury, Jaures, Vaillant, Guesde, Bebel, Liebknecht, Adler, as Parliamentarians who have *not* betrayed the workers. I would here add, that it is very poor wisdom to spoil the force of the truly terrible indictment which we *can* bring against some working-class leaders on the score of political treachery, by gratuitously including the names of men who are above such suspicion. It is unwise, it is unjust and it is untrue—which alone should prevent it being done in decent controversy. While I am on this wretched subject of "lost leaders," I might ask Mr. Lyle whether such treachery is, after all, confined to the political field. Have we never heard of a strike being throttled or defeated by the action of officials?

Surely we are entitled to be a little surprised when Mr. Lyle asks why the capitalists do not try to crush working-class Parliamentary parties. Has he never heard of Osborne? I should say that the enactment of payment of members can be explained on other grounds than a desire on the part of the enemy to "make the existence of the Labour Party easier." It was to dish the demand for the reversal of the Osborne Judgment, and render M.P.'s less dependent on the Unions.

I think I may now pass from Mr. Lyle's slightly erractic onslaught on political action, to his defence of industrial action as the *sole* means of social revolution. I may as well remark that I firmly believe in industrial action as a weapon *co-ordinate* with political action—a hammer, as it were, to drive the nail home. But industrial action alone is like hammering when there is no nail to drive. It may smash things to atoms, but you cannot *make* anything that way. To turn away from metaphors, I am surprised that he should fail to see that the sweated worker, the dweller in the slum, is *usually* the least class-conscious, and the most amenable to reactionary influences. This is a matter of such common experience, that I really did not expect anyone would deny that the slums were "an endless recruiting ground for blacklegs." I am afraid I am not impressed by Mr. Lyle's picture of the revolution taking place with the occupants of the slums in the front of the fight, inspired, if you please, by "the chance of plunder!" If it comes to that, he need not trouble, when the day comes, to declare a general strike. He can force open the doors of the prisons, and trust the gentry who issue thence, led on by "the chance of plunder," to make the social revolution! Seriously, though, I prefer to regard this little forecast of Mr. Lyle's as a joke, or as an attempt to impart an electric shock to the timid bourgeois he has made up his mind that I am.

As a matter of fact, I think I may with confidence, challenge Mr. Lyle to point to any revolution which has been carried through

by hungry men, and which has been successful from the point of view of those men. The class which has reaped the benefit of every revolution has been the class which, being free from the oppression of absolute physical need, had the vital energy and mental power to grip clearly the principles for which it was struggling. Thus, the French Revolution, though effected largely by the physical force of the hungry peasantry and proletariat, went to the benefit of the bourgeoisie, who had their objects at their fingers' ends, and were certainly not actuated by starvation. And when the next social revolution comes, it will be put through, not by the famishing slum-dwellers, but by the organized and relatively well-paid workers, acting, as did the bourgeoisie, both through economic and through political channels.

May I say finally that the conclusion of Mr. Lyle's article seems to me somewhat of a tilt at words and phrases? He objects to the State, the Nation, &c., only because he has in the back of his mind the idea that a State is bound to be an agency for the exploitation of class by class, and a nation an exclusive fetish devised for the division of the workers against one another. Now, unless he is simply and solely an Anarchist, and believes only in voluntary association, he must admit that the society which the victorious working class will set up, will have at its disposal a certain executive and legislative power, which will be under the control of all the workers. I happen to denote that power by the term "State." Mr. Lyle seems to believe that the revolution will replace the existing State system by the federated working-class organizations themselves, in which case he has simply substituted the Trades Union Congress for the House of Commons, and the Parliamentary Committee for the Cabinet. As, however, the functions of the community will include many things besides the control of industry, it seems to me more sensible to aim at the capture, by the workers, of the State machinery already to hand, when it can be recast as required. If it be said that this is difficult, I admit it, but suggest that the proposed Syndicalist plan of looking to a starving mob for the patience to war down capitalist society, and the wisdom to organize a new one, is both grotesque and impossible.

A. H. M. ROBERTSON.

Measure thy life by loss instead of gain;
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth;
For Love's strength standeth in Love's sacrifice;
And whoso suffers most hath most to give.

* * * *

Therefore gird up thyself, and come, to stand
Unflinching under the unfailing hand
That waits to prove thee to the uttermost.

H. E. HAMILTON KING.

The French Revolution

WITH the precision and, in this case, awful relentlessness of historical necessity, the theories of Rousseau, Voltaire and Mirabeau, together with the disruptive forces in French Society culminated in a mighty upheaval, which sent a convulsive shudder through the whole of the civilized world and shook the thrones of Europe to their foundations. This great movement which was brought into being by the murmurings of the peasants gradually developing into a revolutionary roar and then finally sinking into a state of middle class complacency was the French Revolution. Superficially viewed, the Revolution appears to have been in vain, a useless expenditure of life and talents, but nevertheless a closer analysis will reveal modified social conditions, a marked progress in economic development and a complete transference of political power.

Briefly stated, such were the nature, force and effects of an event which divides the history of France, and marks the beginning of a new era. The causes may be summarized as follows:—the wretched financial condition of the country, the result of Court extravagances; the unjust taxation consisting of feudal dues extorted from a starving populace; a growing merchant class fettered by social institutions. The nobles squeezed the last sou out of their dependents and squandered their illgotten wealth in debauchery and excess at the Court of Louis XIV.

The peasants goaded by hunger and the arrogant opulence of the nobles, the merchant class writhing under feudal restrictions and the impotency of its political power clamoured, the former for mitigation of their poverty, the latter for political liberty, and several riots took place. For the first time since 1644, the States General was convened. The question of voting *par tête* or *par ordre* divided the House. The Prelates going with the Nobles, and the lower order of the clergy with the Commons. An indiscretion on the part of Louis by massing the troops, resulted in the storming of the Bastille, but for the time being the rising was quelled, Louis promising to grant all the demands of the National Assembly. Paris was in a delirium of delight thinking all evils would be remedied now that the King had recognized the Constitution. These illusions were soon dispelled. The working classes had been completely overlooked in the department of political representation and the Nobles and Clergy resented the curtailment of their powers and privileges. Louis' attempt to suppress the Revolution by military force was thwarted. The Jacobin influence was brought to bear on the National Assembly and a new legislative assembly was formed and the country was plunged into war with Austria. Clear proof of Louis' perfidy was shown by the Duke of Brunswick's manifesto. In response to this, the Revolutionary Commune was formed which forced the hand of the

Assembly, deposed and imprisoned Louis, and scattered the aristocracy. Thus the middle classes came into power, but even this class was subordinate for a time to the unenfranchised section of the people. The Commune, at the instigation of Danton, steeped itself in the September massacres. This policy of terrorism was one of self survival, an effort to make itself immune from any reaction. About this time, a convention was formed consisting of men of many nationalities and various shades of opinion, which finally split into two sections, Girondists and Mountainists, the former constitutionalists, the latter revolutionists, Hence arose the squabbles, due to the interests underlying the political expression of these sections. The Girondists were discredited in an effort to establish the monarchy: Louis was executed.

The Revolutionary Tribunal and the Committees for Public Safety and General Security came into existence at this juncture.

The legislative activites of the Convention were characterized by the Law of Maximum, fixing the prices of necessaries; the division of communal lands, a progressive income tax, and a forced loan for military purposes. Carlyle says, "there is no period in which the general 25,000,000 suffered less." This was the period termed the Reign of Terror. A rising took place on the 27th of May, resulting in the suppression of the Girondists in the Convention at the same time adding power to the Mountainists and giving a filip to the Revolution. The Constitution of 1793 was formed, recognizing the people as the sole power: it was however never enforced. At this period, the Commune representing the Sansculottes, the proletariat or working class was supreme; a new era was begun, the "Worship of Reason" established; social and educational projects contemplated and as an expression of ironical humour the execution of Marie Antoinette took place.

Out of the conflict of opinion expressed by the the Commune, the Convention and the Dantonists, the malign influence of Robespierre came into prominence. He was the personification of Terrorism. After sending Danton and several others to the Guillotine he tried to purge the nation of rationalism, and gratify his desire for the Dictatorship. He was confronted by a determined opposition in the Committees, which finally bore him down. He was arrested and hurried to the Guillotine. This was the end of the Terror. What had been instituted as a deterrent to foreign invasion had continued after invasion had been made impossible. The Revolution had now almost exterminated its leading adherents, and the reaction had commenced. The Convention asserted itself and the middle classes regained their power. The Revolution was eventually crushed and its leaders guillotined: the Convention now settled a franchise, with a property qualification, leaving the aristocracy weakened, a plutocracy established, and the proletariat still economically dependent and politically powerless.

MEREDITH F. TITTERINGTON.

The Festival of the Nations in London

The Celebration of the Establishment of the French Republic, Sept. 22nd, 1792.

"WHAT are the Nations to us? What is the French Republic to us? Have not all Nations long been included, did they not receive orders from us for all their positions, have we not interrupted the Germans in the theoretical, the French in the political sphere, the English in bourgeois Society? And finally the French Revolution! What is there to praise about an evolutionary step, which was taken long ago, which was developed by its own consequences? If it will inform us of England, evolve the newest phrase in which the Socialist principle has entered, tell us whether the one-sided English Socialism does not yet see how far below our height of principle it stands, how only for a brief spell, and that an exceptional moment can it make any claim!"

Peace, Dear Germany! The Nations and the French Rupublic are a great deal to us. The fraternizing of Nations is worth more than the sum total of German theories on real Socialism, as it now everywhere contrasts, through the extreme political parties, the natural narrow inborn patriotism and the hypocritical individualistic cosmopolitanism of freedom of Trade.

The fraternizing of Nations under the banner of modern Democracy, as it has emerged from the French Revolution, and as it has developed on French Communism and English Chartism shows that the masses and their representatives know better than the German theorists what the clock has struck.

But that is hardly a correct rendering! Who speaks of the Fraternization as "it," &c.; of the Democracy as "it" &c. We speak of the Fraternization of Nations and for it, of the Democracy, of the Democracy simply, of the Democracy as such. Have you quite forgotten your Hegel?

We are not Romans, we smoke tobacco. We do not speak of the Anti-National Movement which is now going through the world, we speak of the uplifting of Nations, which is accomplished in our minds, by means of clear thought, — with help of imagination, in the absence of facts. We do not speak of the actual democracy which runs Europe in the shape of the poor and which is quite a special Democracy divided from all earlier Democracies, we speak of quite another Democracy, an average which the Greek, Roman, American and French Democracies make, in short, of the concept of Democracy. We do not speak of things that belong to the 19th Century, they are bad and fleeting, we speak of the categories, which are eternal and existed "before the mountains were." In short, we do not speak of that fact with which the report deals, but of something which is quite different. In order to understand the matter briefly: if the report is about the English and the French and about those Germans who take part in the practical movement, who are not Theorists of Democracy, of fraternization of Nations, one has thereby nothing of which to think, only politics. Although phantasies still exist with some

German theorists and a few outsiders who do not count. In reality, these words have a social tendency in which the political significance is shown. Already the Revolution was something quite different than as it was frequently imagined in Germany, a struggle between this or that form of the State. The connexions of most of the risings at that time were with poverty, the significance of how the provisioning of the Capital and the division of stores was overcome from 1789, the Maximum, the laws against speculation in the necessaries of life, the battle-cry of the revolutionary army: "War to the palace, peace to the cottage"—the testimony of the Carmagnole . . . . and a hundred other clearly observable outward signs, looking away from all accurate investigation of facts, prove how very different was the Democracy of that time from a mere political organization.

Besides, it is recognized that the Constitution of 1793 and the terrorism of those parties declined which rose on the revolutionary Proletariat, that the reign of Robespierres shows the use of the Bourgeoisie over the Proletariat, that the conspiracy of Babeuf for equality, the last effect of the '93 Democracy—as far as it was possible—lost the day. The French Revolution was, from beginning to end, a social movement, and after a purely political Democracy, it has become a complete nonentity. Democracy to-day is Communism. Any other Democracy can only exist in the heads of the theoretical visionaries, who do not concern themselves of actual events, by which not only men and the details of the principles, but the principles themselves are evolved. Democracy has become the proletarian principle, the principle of the masses. The masses may be more or less clear, over the one correct meaning of Democracy, but for all that, there lies a vague feeling of equal social rights in the Democracy. The Democratic masses can peacefully be reckoned with the calculation of communistic fighting powers. And if the proletarian parties of different nations join then they have a perfect right to write the word Democracy on their banners, for with the exception of those who do not count, all the European Democracies in 1846, are more or less clearly communistic.

The celebration of the French Republic is, in spite of "defeats," completely justified by the Communists of all lands.

Firstly, all people who were foolish enough to allow themselves to be used in the fight of the Revolution, the French particularly, since that time have learnt to perceive what a foolish thing it is to begin by submerging the truth; secondly, the whole European Social Movement is only the second act of the Revolution, only a preparation for the denouement of the Drama which was begun in Paris in 1789 and now has the whole of Europe for the scene of action; thirdly, it is in our cowardly self-seeking beggarly, bourgeois epoch of the time, the memory of that great year is recalled, where for a moment a whole people threw on one side all cowardice, self-seeking and beggarliness, where it was given to men who had the mood of Anarchy, who were afraid of nothing and whose sterling spirit ran through everything, that from May 31st, 1793, to July 26th, 1794, not a coward, not a trader, not a stockjobber, in short, not a bourgeois dare show himself. Truly it is necessary in a time when a Rothschild holds the

peace of Europe, when a Vetter-Köchlein and a Cobden shriek on Protection and Free Trade, and when a Diergardt preaches of the salvation of sinful mankind by means of the Society for the Uplifting of the Working Class—really it is necessary to think of Marat and Danton, St. Just and Babeuf, of the victorious joy of Jemappes and Fleurus. If this famous time, these noble characters no longer stand out prominently in our time, truly mankind must despair and throw itself at the feet of a Vetter-Köchlein, a Cobden, or a Diergardt without discretion.

Finally, the fraternizing of nations to-day has more than a purely social significance. The brain figment of a European Republic, eternal peace under a political organization, have become as laughable as the Union of the Peoples under the shield of a Universal Free Trade; and whilst all chimerical sentimentalities of this kind come out of current affairs, the Proletarians of all nations, without much ado, begin to really fraternize under the banner of Communistic Democracy. The Proletariats are really the only class that can do this; for the Bourgeoisie has special interests in each country and as that interest is its high water mark, it can never get over Nationalism; and the theorists show nothing with all their beautiful theories, and only make phrases because they wish to allow all the contradictory interests which characterize the existing order to peacefully continue.

The Proletarians have in all lands one and the same interest, one and the same enemy, one and the same fight before them; the Proletarians are the great mass, already by their nature, without national prejudices and their whole conception and movement is essentially humanitarian, anti-National. The Proletarians alone are able to destroy Nationality, the growing Proletariat alone makes possible the fraternizing of the different Nations. . . . . F. ENGELS, 1846.

Translated from the German for the "*Plebs*" *Magazine* by MEREDITH F. TITTERINGTON.

The Gold-making Angel

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The following history of a fact in disguise, which is the essence of all history, shows that in all ages politicians have taken the same disinterested ways of showing their love of mankind.

It seems highly desirable that the facts here set forth should find a place in the records of reformers throughout the world.

I hope my comrades will read and mark—if they cannot digest these facts. Such a record of *reality* is not lightly to be set aside, so I commend it to your solemn meditations, though it is ancient.

6th July, 1911 D.H.

I HAVE read somewhere of an angel, which in response to the wish of a rich man gave him the power to turn into gold all he touched. Of course the rich man by his greed hastened his death. The name of the angel was "Golden Sheen."

I was lying in a boat, moored under trees, and the lap of the water may have soothed me to sleep. At any rate I dreamt that Golden Sheen had come again to our world, and was making mountains of gold in unexpected places. How that fair little angel did upset the balance of nations! She flitted here, there, and everywhere, swift as thought, and she seemed to have no idea of the value of gold. She made it in the wrong places and gave it to the wrong persons, till the world was topsy-turvy, and Golden Sheen smiled in wonder at all the clamour. Had she been a well-regulated, earthly angel, she would have taken out a patent for her touch and would have gone to "The City" and formed a Company, for they would have known how to prevent the gold from reaching the poor.

Or she might have confided her secret to the Government, then nobody would have benefited and there would have been none of the confusion, caused by too much wealth.

But Golden Sheen was so full of other-world simplicity that she lighted on the West coast of Ireland. She was first seen near the hut of Mike O'Saintly. This was held to be quite wonderful, for Mike's cabin at Mangymara was not attractive. Mike and his fathers before him had lived here in that philosophical style, not rare on the West coast, which had brought the cabin, as well as their lives, almost into a state of nature. Mike's wife was dead, and all except one of his ragged sons and daughters (nine in number, I think) had gone away to enrich the world, so that he lived here with his youngest daughter, and they shared the cabin with a very lean sow and her three offspring. A five-year-old cock told them when it was morning, and hens of varying shades of antiquity roosted on the bed. On this particular morning Mike had risen early and had been and stolen a fish out of Lord Kilman's best lake, for it was Friday, and his mind was full of religion.

Now there was a lingering superstition on the West coast of Ireland that in this world the pious are rewarded, so when Mike returned from poaching and saw Golden Sheen standing by his door, he felt at once that the Blessed Virgin had come to reward him for his piety. He threw down his fish and prostrated himself before the holy visitor, but when he dared to look up, the angel had fled, and a strange gleam shone on all the cabin. He rose, but he could not understand it; he had never seen solid gold, so he took its gleam for the haze of the miracle.

On entering his cabin, he found the same gleam. Everything was metal. Then he cursed the visitant for a fiendish witch, and seized his rosary to count his beads. But they also were solid metal, so he praised the holy saints because he would not have to pray any more, for the simple reason he could not. Then as he looked at the lovely thing, something struck his dazed mind, and he felt it was gold. In a flash he hurried off to the nearest town, Kallikalloo, to sell it.

He went to a jeweller's shop. The man looked at Mike's rags and sniffed a crime, so he had told him it was solid gold and he had not money enough to buy it, and advised him to go to the bank. Mike had never seen a bank, and his unearthly excitement was somewhat abated as he stole inside and saw the men bring out real sovereigns on a shovel!

At last one of the clerks roused the fascinated Mike and asked his business. He produced the rosary and asked for money. At first the clerks were amused, as they passed it from one to the other, then they weighed it. Never had they handled or seen such jewellery. They took it to the manager. He was troubled, and he came from his sanctum to solve the mystery. Mike said the Blesssed Virgin had brought it him. Now as a protestant and a banker he did not know much of the Virgin Mary, but he thought he remembered she was always very short of gold, and appealing to his confidential clerk, he was assured that such was the case. So he returned and heard all Mike's story. Then it flashed upon him that this fellow was an imposter and a thief, so he whispered a message and sent for the police, because he was a respectable man with a family, and a reputation—both requiring maintenance.

The policeman saw at once a sensational case, not only of robbery, but most likely of murder. He handcuffed Mike instantly, seized the rosary and was for marching him straight to the police station. Mike was nearly terrified out of his wits, but fortunately he had told the clerks that all his cabin was of the same metal—the walls and roof, the bed, the table, the pigs, all solid gold. When the policeman heard this, he knew that Mike was mad and felt sure he had escaped with the rosary from some asylum. Still Mike begged and prayed them to go with him and look at the cabin, and if it were not solid gold, they might kill him and eat him. So the manager asked them to wait whilst he drove over to see for himself. It was only five miles away and he was soon there. He found little bare-legged Elizabeth sitting on a golden door-step, crying for her father and her breakfast. He could not believe it. He trembled. He thought it was some foolish trick, and that they had raised the devil. Yes, he remembered, the devil often came with gold. He spoke to the little girl, and gave her a penny; she forgot her father and her breakfast in her life's first great joy, and she ran away for fear he should take it back. Gold was everywhere—yes, at last even silence was golden. He mustered courage and entered. All was gold. At the back was a small heap of turf—this also was gold. To be quite sure, he took a dozen squares and put them in his dog cart.

When he reached the bank he was almost breathless with excitement. It was true Mike O'Saintly was a man with a golden house.

The policeman gasped; by all the saints, if Mike should be a gentleman in disguise! He softly undid the handcuffs and returned

the rosary with wheedling smiles, and vanished to tell the tale. Still Mike wanted money, he wanted a breakfast and he wanted a drink. The manager took pity on him and gave him £2 all in silver, for the rosary.

Mike was happy, and he went forth to increase his happiness. Whilst Mike was purchasing more happiness, excitement raged through the length and breadth of Kallikilloo, and within a few hours its streets were empty, and all the able-bodied had gone forth to see the miracle.

The priests were there first, and bowed long and reverently before the golden image of this true miracle. They sought Mike everywhere, with pious intent to cajole or coerce him into giving the cabin as a new shrine to the Virgin, and one of the holy fathers remarked, with an Irish wink, that he thought this sort of miracle would soon bring England and Scotland over to the Catholic faith!

When Mike arrived at Mangymara later in the afternoon he would have seen some changes in his cabin, had not pleasure dimmed his eyes. At the sight of so much gold, the respectable and the well-to-do of Kallikilloo went mad and reverted to their primitive instincts. At first the priests prevailed with the poorer sort and kept them from the Virgin shrine, but the pious prostrated themselves in such profusion of humility and numbers that it was impossible to watch them, and when they rose from their devotions, it was manifest that less gold remained.

Probably the combined effect of religion, curiosity, and enlightened self-interest, would have been the total disappearance of Mike's cabin, had not other forces come into play—notably the police force.

Lord Kilman's agent, Mr. Bagman, naturally was the last person to hear of any advantage to Lord Kilman's estate. When the agent heard the first rumour of the cabin gleaming in the morning sun, he sent a wire to his lordship, that the Home Rulers were burning down his lordship's property at Mangymara. Lord Kilman was at his London residence, and making preparations to go to Monte Carlo when the news arrived. So he swore on general principles and in general terms, including everything from the Catholic Church to honest men. Lady Kilman was shocked. She asked where Mangymara was. His lordship tried to explain, but as he had never seen Mangymara, his account was confused. Lord Kilman swore again—a little more definitely this time.

Chapter II.

When Mr. Bagman reached Mangymara and saw the heap of gold, he suddenly remembered that, as the estate agent, he could claim to guard the cabin. So in Lord Kilman's name he called upon the police for help. Thus it was that the cabin was still standing when

Mike returned. Mike trembled when he saw the estate agent. A legion of howling devils would not have filled Mike with such terror as one frown from the agent. This unreasonable alarm was due to long generations of instinct.

The agent took Mike severely to task for damaging Lord Kilman's property, said he would insist upon having the cabin replaced *exactly* as it had been, and that he should bring an action against Mike for causing a howling mob to assemble, to the great injury of the estate.

Poor Mike shook and trembled like a political party when brought face to face with truth, and he stammered out an appeal (chiefly of hiccups) to the Blessed Saints. The agent seized his chance. He offered to let Mike off if he would take his donkey and sow and clear out, the little pigs and the hens had gone long since, and there was no furniture left. Mike jumped at such a favourable offer, and got some friends with ropes to help him to draw the gold donkey and the gold sow to Kallikilloo.

The agent sent for men and waggons and carted away the whole cabin. Half of it he hid away in his own wine cellar, and the rest was placed in charge of the bank to await his lordship's instructions.

When Lord Kilman received his second telegram, he was overcome with holy emotion. It seemed, indeed, a "special Providence"! There was he growing old and with difficulty able to raise money enough to go to Monte Carlo, and he shuddered to think what he should do if he were not able to join at the gaming table. He turned to his wife and said:

"Great Heavens, Victoria, fancy there being so much power left in religion! Tens of thousands of pounds! What a saint that Mike must be. I feel as if I should like to give the fellow a drink!"

Then his lordship rang the bell and said, "James, you may put a Bible in my luggage this time."

But James never did. He went at once to order one, but the shock had destroyed his memory and he never found his way back.

While this new excitement had taken possession of Kallikilloo and Lord Kilman was suffused with religious emotion, the angel had not been idle. Golden Sheén had travelled hundreds of miles. She had covered the whole west coast of Ireland from Cape Clear to Benwee Head. On the morning after Mike's entrance into a life of riot, islands of solid gold sparkled off the coast; lakes of molten gold beautified the country; and a mountain of gold mocked the tears of men, from Sligo to Waterford.

DENNIS HIRD.

(*To be continued*).

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Central Labour College

A copy of the February No. of the A.S.E. *Journal* has reached this office. From it we glean that there is to be a Delegate Meeting of the A.S.E. convened for next Whitsun. The Editorial waxes eloquently indignant about a resolution emanating from a district which is nameless: the said resolution seeks to obtain the consent of the Delegates to "instruct the Executive to transfer the A.S.E. scholarships from Ruskin College to the Central Labour College." The indignation is at the "undemocratic" nature of the method of proposed transference, i.e., by Delegate Meeting, instead of by votes of the entire membership. From this it would appear that the writer must believe *all* delegated authority "undemocratic," an Executive is therefore undemocratic in principle. Yet the Executive of the A.S.E. decided in favour of Ruskin College during the Strike; and by the "democratic" method of keeping out of the Society's *Journal* and *Report* any official statement of the case for the "strikers" and the Central Labour College have been successful in getting the rank and file of the A.S.E. to continue their scholarships at Ruskin College. At the Delegate Meeting at Whitsun an opportunity will be given for a statement and discussion of the merits of Ruskin and Central Labour Colleges, and evidently the writer fears the result. Else why pick on *only one* of the matters that will come up for discussion then and label it "undemocratic?" If one thing is "undemocratic" in principle surely *all* other things decided by the Delegate Meeting must be "undemocratic,"—the Delegate Meeting is "undemocratic." The Executive evidently think the way to secure a "democratic" vote is, to ask the members to decide a question *with only one side of a case presented to them.* The sophistical reasoning of the February *Journal* Editorial is charming but not very convincing. The result of the Whitsun discussion on the two Colleges may result in a rude shock being administered to the "democrats" at the A.S.E. headquarters.

We understand that our fellow Plebeian, Tom Rees, of Woolwich, is a candidate for Organizing District Secretary for the A.S.E. We hope this is so. The Trade Union Movement will be the gainer by the advent of such sterling fighters as Rees into the ranks of its officials. We are sure his fellow students at Ruskin College will join with us, and his friends everywhere, in hearty good wishes for his success.

The Fool's Prayer

THE Royal feast was done: the King
Sought out some new sport to banish care,
And to his jester cried: "Sir Fool,
Kneel now and make for us a prayer!"

The jester doffed his cap and bells,
And stood the mocking court before;
They could not see the bitter smile
Behind the painted grin he wore.

He bowed his head and bent his knee
Upon the monarch's silken stool;
His pleading voice arose: "O Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool!

"No pity, Lord, could change the heart
From red with wrong to white as wool,
The rod must heal the sin; but Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool.

"'Tis not by guilt the onward sweep
Of truth and right, O Lord, we stay;
'Tis by our follies that so long
We hold the earth from heaven away.

"These clumsy feet, still in the mire,
Go crushing blossoms without end;
These hard, well meaning hands we thrust
Among the heart-strings of a friend.

"The ill-timed truth we might have kept—
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?
The word we had not sense to say—
Who knows how grandly it had rung?

"Our faults no tenderness should ask,
The chastening stripes must cleanse them all;
But for our blunders—O, in shame
Before the eyes of heaven we fall.

"Earth bears no balsam for mistakes;
Men crown the knave and scourge the tool
That did his will; but thou, O Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool!"

The room was hushed; in silence rose
The King, and sought the gardens cool,
And walked apart, and murmured low,
"Be merciful to me, a fool!"—EDWARD ROLAND SILL.