

[On account of the space occupied by the Report of Annual Conference of Central Labour College, the Editorial has been dispensed with. The report of the "Plebs" League Annual Meet will appear next month.—ED.]

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CENTRAL LABOUR COLLEGE,
LONDON

Report of Third Annual General Meeting held at
13, Penywern Road, Earls Court, August 5th, 1912

Delegates present—65.

The Proportion of Delegates to each Association represented,
was as follows:—

Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants	...	...	31
South Wales Miners' Federation	...	...	12
Amalgamated Society of Engineers	...	...	2
Amalgamated Union of Co-op. Employees	...	...	1
Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners	...	...	1
United Society of Coach Makers	...	...	1
Domestic Workers' Union	...	...	1
London Federation of Painters	...	...	1
Trades Councils	...	...	7
Socialist Organizations	...	...	8

Letters were read, expressing regret for absence, from Messrs. Ernest Edwards, Edward Gill, Ald. J. V. Wills, and others.

Ernest Edwards, A.S.R.S., who had been appointed Chairman of the Meeting by the Board, was unable to be present owing to the

refusal of the G. W. Rly. Coy. to give him leave for the day. He addressed the following letter to the Meeting:—

COMRADES,—

I am sorry that I am denied the opportunity, not only of presiding at such an important meeting, but of assembling with representatives of those who have so nobly assisted in the great and difficult, yet inspiring work, of setting in motion the first independent Labour College in this country.

It will be understood by those present that we cannot expect financial or other assistance from the capitalist class by its purse, Press, or platform, because our object is to train *men* and *women* FOR the Labour Movement, which movement stands in opposition to that class which lives on the unpaid labour of the working class: but the privilege and duty of those present is to make those facts so clear to the rank and file of the Trade Unions, that every Labour organization in the country will very soon be sending students and otherwise supporting the work of the College that should be for *all* workers, "Our College."

The educational movement of the working class is as yet only an infant, but the tragedy of the past few years and especially of the past few months upon the industrial field and in the political arena, should make obvious to every intelligent worker the need for education in social science, to develop such a power as will soon remove the existing mountains of ignorance and point the road to complete emancipation from wage-slavery.

Yours Fraternally,

ERNEST EDWARDS.

The Deputy-Chairman, Noah Ablett, S.W.M.F., presided in the absence of the appointed Chairman, and in the course of a brief but lucid speech, drew from the recent industrial and political events the need for the development of working-class education.

Secretary's Report

Will. W. Craik, Acting Secretary, presented the following report:—

The College commenced its third year at the close of October last in the premises at 13 Penywern Road, Earls Court.

The difficulties encountered in securing permanent premises for the College in Oxford, had by August last become so great, as to make continued residence in Oxford impossible. These difficulties, as has been pointed out at previous conferences, were without doubt created by that spirit of intolerance so characteristic of Oxford culture, and which is in love with nothing except that, which is like itself, reactionary.

The Provisional Committee of the College had no alternative but to institute inquiries after suitable residence outside of Oxford, and as a result of these investigations it was decided to secure the premises now occupied. Through the kindness of some friends the College was able to procure an overdraft from the bank, enabling the lease of the premises (61 years) to be purchased.

These premises are, as may be seen, in good condition, exceedingly commodious and as conveniently situated as is compatible with the nature of the Institution. Some £200 has been laid out in extending the furnishing of the College, in extending the electric light throughout the Institution, and other necessary alterations.

The new premises were formally opened with a public reception on November 14th, and the College had a rousing send off in its new home.

With the coming of the College to London, the Provisional Committee retired and a Board consisting of directly-elected representatives of the Organizations establishing scholarships took over the sole control of the College administration and curriculum.

The following are the members of the Board :—

Edward Gill,	...	...	<i>Western Valleys, S.W.M.F.</i>
John James,	...	...	<i>Anthracite, S.W.M.F.</i>
David Watts Morgan,	...	...	<i>Rhondda, No. 1, S.W.M.F.</i>
Noah Ablett,	...	...	<i>Rhondda, No. 1, S.W.M.F.</i>
James E. Williams,	...	...	<i>A.S.R.S.</i>
Ernest Edwards,	...	...	<i>A.S.R.S.</i>
Ben. Davies,	...	...	<i>Rhondda, No. 2, S.W.M.F.</i>

The Trusteeship is invested in the following organizations :—

Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants—

Represented by Mr. E. Edwards.

Western Valleys, S.W.M.F.—

Represented by Mr. John Phillips.

Anthracite District, S.W.M.F.—

Represented by Mr. John James.

The Board appointed Alderman J. V. Wills, O.B.S., to be the Hon. Treasurer of the College and Mr. Wills took up his duties on January 15th last. In the interim Mr. Dennis Hird acted as Treasurer. The Board also appointed Mr. W. W. Craik to be Sub-Warden of the College.

The Board is very glad to welcome back to the College, after his long and serious illness, Mr. George Sims, and is pleased to report that he will resume his duties as Secretary at the beginning of the next College Year, on September 17th.

The following is the new constitution of the College as passed by the Board :—

CENTRAL LABOUR COLLEGE, LONDON**Founded at Oxford, 1909**

—o—

CONSTITUTION

- 1.—The object of the Central Labour College shall be to train men and women in Social Science for the Industrial, Political, and Educational work of the Labour Movement by (a) receiving Resident Students, (b) by teaching through Correspondence and (c) by training Lecturers who shall conduct Central Labour College Classes throughout the Industrial Centres.
- 2.—It shall be governed by a Board of Directors composed of directly-elected representatives of Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies and Socialist Organizations.
- 3.—(a) Each Labour Organization providing a Scholarship or Scholarships to elect a Representative or Representatives on the Board.
(b) Wherever possible, the Representative or Representatives to be elected or re-elected annually.
- 4.—An Annual Meeting of Delegates from contributing organizations and Subscribers shall be held during the first week in August at the College, to receive the Annual Balance Sheet and Report of the Board.
- 5.—The Officers and Lecturers of the College shall be appointed by the Board ; all appointments to be subject to six months' notice on either side.
- 6.—The Warden is responsible to the Board for the management of the College ; he shall present a Report to every Ordinary Board Meeting ; all complaints of Students and any irregularities in connexion with the "House" to be reported to him in the first instance.
- 7.—The Sub-Warden shall act in the place of the Warden, in the absence of the latter.
- 8.—The Secretary shall be responsible to the Board for the proper keeping of accounts ; deal with all correspondence, the preparation of Agendas, Balance Sheets, Appeals, &c., and shall present a Report to every Ordinary Board Meeting.
- 9.—The Treasurer shall be responsible to the Board for all monies received by him on behalf of the College, and for paying the same into bank, and for the proper disbursement of monies authorized by these rules and resolutions of the Board, and he shall present a Report to every Board Meeting.
- 10.—The Secretary of the Corresponding Classes shall present a Quarterly Report of work done in his department.

- 11.—The Staff Committee shall be composed of the Warden (who shall act as chairman), Sub-Warden, Secretary, Correspondence Department Secretary and the Treasurer ; who shall meet weekly for the purpose of considering any complaints from the students or from the Warden, on questions of discipline or management of the College, which cannot be satisfactorily disposed of by the operation of Rule 6. All decisions of the Committee to be reported to the next Board Meeting.
- 12.—The students shall be represented by their three Delegates to hear and discuss the Warden's Report, and make representations to the Board on all matters affecting their interests.
- 13.—The Board shall meet Quarterly and specially (for special business only) on the request of the Staff Committee, or three members of the Board.
- 14.—These Rules must not be altered, nor the policy of the College varied, except by a two-third vote at a Board Meeting, providing that a month's notice of such alteration has been given.
- 15.—A copy of these Rules shall be exhibited in the Board Room, and in the Lecture Room used by the students of the College.

The following organizations have had students in residence during the past year :—

Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants ...	3	Students
Rhondda Valley No. 1, S.W.M.F.	2	"
Rhondda Valley No. 2, S.W.M.F.	1	"
Western Valleys (Mon.), S.W.M.F....	1	"
Anthracite District, S.W.M.F.	1	"
Maesteg District, S.W.M.F.	1	"
Paying Students	5	"
Free Scholarships	8	"

In addition to retaining the support of the above organizations, it is confidently hoped to secure the support of other organizations. It is to be regretted that the financial position of the College is not yet such as will allow any appreciable degree of propaganda being carried out on behalf of the College. There is no doubt that if the College could afford to put a regular organizer in the field the results would in a very short time amply compensate. The Board appeals to the Delegates to use their influence in the various branches of their organizations for strengthening the basis and extending the work of the College.

The attention of the Delegates is drawn to the work of the Correspondence Department. This Department is under the control of Mr. A. J. Hacking, M.A., who has devoted his very valuable labours—without fee of any kind—and that successfully, to the extension of this important part of the College's work.

The grateful thanks of the Board are extended to Mr. George Davison for his serviceable gift to the College of lantern and screen ; to Mrs. Horrabin for the beautiful and artistic banner which she has made for the College ; to the *Railway Review*, *Daily Herald* and other Socialist papers for their contributions on behalf of the College, and to all those branches of the Labour Movement and members of the rank and file who have laboured for the promotion of the cause of working-class education.

The best thanks of the Board are again extended to Messrs. T. V. Brown and C. T. Pendrey for the efficient way in which they have carried on the cooking in the Institution during the past year.

In conclusion it is hoped that the Conference will be a successful one, and that the work done will be of such a character as to make for the progress of the College and the movement generally, during the next twelve months.

After a number of questions had been asked on the report, and answered, it was moved by William Benton (*Leeds No. 2, A.S.R.S.*), and seconded by F. J. Passmore (*West Central Electric A.S.R.S.*), that the Secretary's Report be adopted. Carried unanimously.

The Warden's Report

Since last year great changes have taken place. Forced out of Oxford we settled here in London in October, 1911.

The change of situation has not been without its effect upon our mode of life and our outlook. It remains to be seen whether this will finally be for better or for worse.

The lectures have been fairly well attended.

The first-year students have done their essays well, both in regularity and quality.

Evening Classes have been held in Evolution, the Art of Public Speaking, and Logical Methods. These were well attended by the outside public and were a source of income to the College.

The control of the College has passed from the hands of the Provisional Committee to the Board of elected representatives.

The financial struggle of the College is still very severe, and unless the Trade Unions take up this matter in earnest, the future of the College is very doubtful.

Owing to the numerous strikes, the Rent Fund has suffered heavily, and many of the Hon. Trustees have been unable to keep up their payments.

The Welsh miners are negotiating a scheme of centralization and at present we cannot say definitely what will be the effect upon the students from South Wales.

The Notts miners are sending a student next year.

We commence our fourth College year on the 17th of September next, and our destiny is in the hands of the Trade Union world and of the students themselves.

After questions had been taken it was moved by F. W. Dunn (Civil Service Socialist Society) and seconded by D. Thomas (Rhondda No. 2, S.W.M.F.), that the Warden's Report be adopted. Carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report and Balance Sheet

In the absence of the Hon. Treasurer, Ald. J. V. Wills, who through meeting with an accident was confined to bed, Dennis Hird presented the report, as under:—

Balance Sheet and Financial Statement

The following Balance Sheet and Financial Statement dates from October 25th, 1911 (when the College removed to London) to June 30th, 1912; during which period the College has been under the control of the Board.

		INCOME.					
		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Balance in hand, Petty Cash	... ..					1	12 11
" Bank, General Fund	... ..					5	11 3
" " Rent Fund	... ..					36	7 8
Scholarship Fees	... ..	541	0	0			
Correspondence Dept. (books and fees)	... ..	33	19	8½			
Evening Lectures	... ..	6	11	7			
General Fund Donations	... ..	77	17	11			
Rent Fund	... ..	107	14	0			
Loans	... ..	25	0	0			
Sundries	... ..	1	5	5			
		<hr/>				793	8 7½
Overdraft	... ..				2159	1	3
					<hr/>		
					2996	1	8½
					<hr/>		

		EXPENDITURE.					
		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Catering	... ..	294	6	5½			
Laundry	... ..	15	0	1			
Rates and Taxes	... ..	137	17	4			
Repairs and Removal	... ..	68	18	3			
Furnishing and Library	... ..	233	10	7½			
Lighting and Heating	... ..	71	19	3			
Cleaning and Utensils	... ..	8	3	1½			
Printing and Stationery	... ..	17	3	10			
Salaries	... ..	159	13	4			
Legal Expenses	... ..	54	9	3			
Travelling Expenses	... ..	19	1	0			
Grants	... ..	3	0	0			
Loans Repaid	... ..	77	16	0			

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Postage	40	0	1			
Sundries	28	4	8			
Bank Charges	73	4	8			
	<hr/>			1302	7	11½
Purchase of Lease				1682	18	5
Balance in hand, General Fund...				3	4	1½
" " Petty Cash				7	11	2½
				<hr/>		
				£2996	1	8½
				<hr/>		
				£	s.	d.
LIABILITIES.						
Trade Bills due				100	0	0
Overdraft				2159	1	3
				<hr/>		
				£2259	1	3
				<hr/>		
				ASSETS.		
Cash in hand				10	15	4
Premises				1700	0	0
Furniture, Fittings and Library...				500	0	0
				<hr/>		
				2210	15	4
Deficit				48	5	11
				<hr/>		
				£2259	1	3
				<hr/>		

(Overdraft, July 31st, 1912 £2175 9 6)
 (Tradesmen's Bills due July 31st, 1912 £178 6 0)

I have examined all the books and documents of the College and declare the above to be a correct statement.

(Signed) BENJAMIN T. AMES,
Chairman Executive Council, Operative Bricklayers' Society

After questions had been asked and answered, the adoption of the Balance Sheet and Financial Statement was moved by Charles Harris (*Colwick Junction A.S.R.S.*), and seconded by George Gowing (*Chalk Farm A.S.R.S.*). Carried unanimously.

It was moved by — Clarke (*Brixton A.S.R.S.*), and seconded by I. Makin (*Wigan A.S.R.S.*):—

That this Conference urges the branches of the Trade Unions interested in the College to appeal to their Executive Committees to wipe out the financial burden of the College.

Carried unanimously, with acclamation.

Proposed Working Women's Labour College

The Chairman called upon Mrs. Bridges Adams, Hon. Organizer of the movement for the above, to report upon the proposal, and upon the progress made in the work.

Mrs. Bridges Adams gave a report to the Conference on the seven months propaganda which, in order to popularize the proposal for a working women's College, she had carried on since the *Railway Review*, to its great credit, had published the first article written on this important development of the Central Labour College. She said that the article in question had been the basis of an extensive propaganda and that many men and women in the working-class movement had worked to further the Working Women's College.

The objects of the College were stated as follows:—

- 1.—To meet the deficiency of trained working women as Propagandists in the working-class movement, as representatives on public bodies, and as members of management committees of the Trade Unions in which women are organized.
- 2.—To train in a Co-Educational College under the control of Trade Unions and Socialist Organizations, an organized body of disciplined militant working women, combining confidence in themselves with an intelligent understanding of their position *as workers*, who will, by constructive educational work increase working-class discontent, and help to organize that discontent under the banner of organized labour.
- 3.—To provide a centre of combined Trade Unionist and Socialist effort for the realization of the educational demands of the Trades Union Congress.
- 4.—To provide, by means of organized united service in the cause of the worker's education, a link between the Labour movement and the most forward spirits of all classes in the feminist movement.

Mrs. Adams said she was in communication with friends in the Continental Socialist Movement with a view to forming an International organization, linking up the Socialist Schools of Economics in other countries, and forming an International Socialist Student's Union. She said she had good reason for hoping that the next few months would see the Working Women's College become a reality, and that women in the forward feminist movement were already showing sympathy.

Mrs. Adams said that friends in all classes would be welcome to come into this movement, provided they accepted the lead given by the working-class organizations which controlled the Central Labour College—from the first it must be made quite clear that the movement is a working-class movement.

She said that while women would reside in their own hostel, they would attend lectures at the men's college.

The Conference endorsed the proposal.

* Address all communications with reference to Women's Labour College to Mrs. Bridges Adams, Hon. Organizer, 64 Prince of Wales Mansions, Battersea Park, London, S.W.

Correspondence Department Report

A. J. Hacking submitted the following report :

The work done on the whole has been very satisfactory, and the number of those who have taken up the various courses is as follows:—

Grammar	...	...	...	70	Students.
Economics	...	...	...	41	„
Logic	...	...	...	34	„
Industrial History	...	...	...	17	„
English Literature	...	...	...	7	„
Evolution	...	...	...	2	„

Total... 171

The receipts from 25th October, 1911, to the 30th June, 1912, have been £33 19s. 8½d.

The number of students is small but their intellectual character good.

Frank Hodges (*Garw District S.W.M.F.*) moved that the report be adopted, and that there be placed on record the Conference's appreciation for Mr. Hacking's work. This was seconded by Sidney Jones (*Tredegar District S.W.M.F.*). The resolution was carried unanimously.

Provincial Classes Report

Will. W. Craik submitted the following report:—

Classes were held last winter at Rochdale, Bury, Oldham, Waterfoot, Radcliffe, St. Helens, Wigan, Warrington, Birkenhead, Liverpool (Kensington), Ashton-in-Makefield, Rhondda Valley, Abertillery, and in London.

These classes were conducted by Messrs. M. F. Titterington, W. F. Hay, Nun Nicholas, Tom Jones, Frank Hodges, Ed. Gill, and Will. Jones.

Progress has already been made in securing the affiliation of local trade unions and socialist organizations to these classes. Bury class tops the list at present with twelve affiliations.

A new district will be opened in North East Lancashire next winter with Burnley as centre.

Application has been made for Provincial Classes next winter in the Mersey and Rochdale Districts, in Liverpool, Manchester, Stockport, Halifax, Bradford, Hull, Brighton, Tondy, Rhondda and Western Valleys, South Wales, and in and around London. Arrangements are in the making.

The development of this phase of the work of the College has attained success exceeding all expectations. So much so that the demand is far outpacing the supply.

The winner of the Rochdale District Scholarship is Mr. F. A. Casey, 56, Bolton Street, Bury.

We are unable to announce the winner of the Mersey District Scholarship owing to the papers not having yet been put into the hands of the College authorities.

Mr. Harold Kershaw, Hon. Organizer of the Rochdale District, supplemented the Report.

The Report was adopted unanimously.

[We think our readers will be interested in this specimen of a brilliant series of letters which appear on Saturdays in the *Daily Mail*, from the pen of one who signs himself "an Englishman." Although we cannot agree with his politics, yet when he is dealing with literature and its adjuncts he gives us a literary feast which is rare to be met with in these days of sensational and ephemeral journalism.—ED.]

The Black Art

AN exhibition of books and broadsides recently held by the Association of Antiquarian Booksellers at Stationers' Hall illustrates the history and progress of printing in England from 1477 to 1800. If the progress is not always evident, it is a long, unbroken history. Like many another Art, printing attained at the very beginning its highest proficiency. As Van Eyck carried the art of oil-painting out of nothingness to the very pinnacle of beauty, so Caxton produced his masterpieces without any examples to aid him. And after more than four centuries of experience the most ambitious efforts of the Press are mere imitations of Caxton's *Golden Legend*.

When Gutenberg invented movable types, the most powerful instruments of good or evil yet discovered, the world proved its wonder by calling printing "the black art." There was a mystery in the multiplication of books which suggested astrology and the powers of darkness. Surely, said the world, this magic is not the work of man. When a cunning Roman invented a glass which, though transparent, was unbreakable, Cæsar put him to death, because, clever as he was, he seemed a danger to the State. And the attitude of the wise and powerful towards the craft and mystery of printing was Cæsar's attitude towards the glass maker. Their admiration was mingled with fear, and doubtless they would if they could have burned the miraculous, offending printers at the stake.

TRIUMPHS OF THE HAND-PRESS

For all its magic, printing in its early days was far less dangerous than it presently became. It was above all things an Art. Through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it aimed at its own perfection. It made no attempt to disseminate widely and carelessly opinions which were dangerous and heretical. The day of large circulations came far later. The hand-press did not produce hundreds of copies in an hour. It assured a beauty of colour and texture which we vainly look for in the books of to-day. And the old paper, apt to make a vivid impression, aided the artists in their pursuit of a handsome effect. The result is that you regard ancient books, not merely as repositories of wisdom, but as works of Art which may be looked at and handled, like jewels or plate, without a thought of the splendid verse or noble prose which they enshrine.

The passage of the years has done something to mellow and perfect the handicraft of man. There is a patina upon old books as upon old bronze. There is still the hazard of time to be reckoned with. And ancient books carry their associations with them like ancient buildings. The ghost of those who once possessed them lurk in their pages. Could you touch without emotion a book that had been in Shakespeare's hands? Yet when we have made a due allowance for the sentiments and superstitions of the past we must still confess the greater beauty of ancient books. The exhibition at Stationers' Hall revealed to us strange, unexpected virtues in old friends. You could not recognize the smart, trim acquaintance with which reprints have familiarized you in the august, dignified folios, bound in the original sheep. The art had not then acquired the mechanical precision which has destroyed its beauty and increased its practical efficiency tenfold. Each book seems to have a separate design, to have been created separately to please its maker. There is scarcely a page that has not a character of its own, as though it were, in effect, the printer's interpretation of his author. And truly he is a poor hapless student of literature who does not carry in his mind the shape and form of famous first editions.

WONDERFUL TITLE-PAGES

And the early printers, not content with worthily displaying their authors' words, lavished all their superb ingenuity upon the facture of title-pages. If the temple contained the most precious treasures it should certainly be entered by a golden door. When Pass or Merian designed a title-page you were sure to encounter an elaborate symbolism and a happy invention. Look, for instance, if you have the chance, at George Chapman's "Batrachomyomachia"

or "The Battle of Frogs and Mice." This, "the Crowne of all Homer's works," rejoices in a title-page of magnificent ingenuity, suggesting the source of Homer's inspiration and including what we recognize to be a true and faithful portrait of the translator, even to his bald head. And even where no pictorial design embellishes the title the lines of type are so skilfully disposed as to produce an effect of architecture. The topmost line of all is dark and menacing, like the broad eaves of a house, and holds together the stern composition of the page. These, then, are some of the virtues of ancient books, virtues which are not precisely a part of humane letters and yet easily justified. Does not a statesman or orator discharge his duty all the better if he is properly dressed for the part?

And to-day, save in rare and distant corners, printing has ceased to be an Art and has become a science. Here and there an artist produces furtively and in secret a printed masterpiece. These may be counted on the fingers of a single hand, and the enthusiastic praise lavished upon the Kelmscott Chaucer, for instance, in which Caxton and Burne-Jones wage an unequal contest for the mastery, proves that the art of printing has left the high-road of tradition and has wandered off into the by-path of Pre-Raphaelitish imitation. But the science of printing is carried further to-day than ever before. If the one object of the Press is to print and distribute as many copies of a given book or document in an hour as human ingenuity makes possible, then its triumph is complete. To watch a printing-press at work is to know that a breathing, sentient soul may inhabit a piece of mechanism. The machine which casts and sets up its letters at the mere click of a typewriter is separated by many centuries of ingenuity and experience from the hand-press of Gutenberg. A black art indeed! Or, rather, a dark science which aims not at beauty but at utility, and which sends the thoughts and deeds of men to the remote corners of the country in the swift passage of a night!

POWER OF THE PRINTING-PRESS

That the printing-press has sacrificed its primitive beauty is obvious. At Stationers' Hall are a series of broadsides and proclamations meant to warn and to admonish which, for all their definite purpose, are miracles of design. Here in all the majesty of print stands "an Acte for Kepyng of milche Kyen and for the breadynge and rearynge of calves." There is "an Acte that purveyors shall not take victualles within five myles of Cambrydge and Oxforde." They have a stateliness of aspect which perhaps is not wholly in harmony with their purpose, and

we cannot help comparing them with such broadsides: as are sent out to-day by the Insurance Commissioners. But if beauty is sacrificed the power of the printing-press is increased a thousand-fold. If Gutenberg had foreseen how much of passion and excitement his invention was destined to arouse, would he, I wonder, have destroyed his types and lived his life in quiet obscurity? He in truth is a wise man who can estimate the consequences of his acts. Gutenberg hoped no more than to increase the knowledge and pleasure of mankind and to inculcate sound religious principles. And men have converted his invention to be an instrument of warfare and revolution. The egg he laid was of a modest strain. His successors as Erasmus said of Luther, have hatched a fighting-cock.

Daily Mail.

AN ENGLISHMAN.

Faded Laurels

THE laurels once were Stephen Duck's, but they have long since dried up and withered, and the name of the man whom Gay envied (or, to be precise, whom Gay, somewhat invidiously, thought it necessary to protest that he did not envy in the least) has long been consigned to oblivion. Yet Duck was the favoured bard of a Queen. Mr. George Moore once charged the Royal House of Hanover with an absolute incapability of appreciating real genius; and it must be confessed that Queen Catherine's preference of Stephen Duck to Pope, Swift, and Gay, can hardly be cited in disproof of Mr. Moore's accusation. Nevertheless, Duck, even though a Royal Personage was kind to him living, has suffered more than he deserved since his death.

It is true that that light that never failed, the Dictionary of National Biography, throws a small ray of light on his career. But Chambers' Cyclopaedia of English Literature gives him not a bare mention. Neither does the book to which one would confidently turn for information concerning a minor poet of his period—Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. But the gloom around his fame lifted momentarily when a sketch of his life and work appeared a few years ago, in the *Cornhill*. The *Plebs* may be interested in the career of a forgotten "labour-poet"—albeit not a very notable specimen!

In its "List of Promotions" for the month, the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1733, published the following announcement:—"Mr. Stephen Duck, the famous Thresher and Poet, made one of the Yeomen of the Guards." That was Queen Catherine's way of solving the problem of the minor poet. It is also, one cannot help reflecting, an almost uncanny forecast of the Government appointments to be found at a later day for tame labour men! It even suggests the possibility of reserving the Yeomanry of the

Guard for bought-off Labour veterans; the latter would then be comparatively ornamental, and certainly out of mischief. But we are wandering. Duck, at the time of his "promotion," was 28 years old, From the age of 14 he had worked as an agricultural labourer. His average earnings were 4s. 6d. a week, and he married at 19. Yet he contrived to save enough to buy a few books, and in his scanty leisure, by the aid of a grammar and a dictionary, he read them! Why, O, why! has Samuel Smiles, that worshipper of industrious mediocrity, neglected to sing the thresher-poet's praises? But Duck was given to verse-making, and the Victorian Plutarch loved achievements of a more solid character.

In 1730, Duck's fame reached the ears of Joseph Spence, of 'Anecdotes' fame, and an introduction first of his verses and then of the poet himself, to Queen Caroline followed. A pension of £30 a year, with a house in Richmond Park, was the sequel. But now the wits took alarm at this plebeian intruder. His homely figure became the mark of some truly Georgian shafts of humour. Swift wrote:—

"The Thresher Duck could o'er the Queen prevail;
The proverb says 'No fence against a flail'."

A pirated edition of his works appeared, in which he is thus addressed:—

"Wild Duck in genius! you on high
Soar with bold wing; our rhyming fry
Are tame ones, and not made to fly."

Duck had appeared just a year too late to secure immortality in the *Dunciad*; but Pope made him amends by a withering reference in the *Grub Street Journal*, in the course of which he too worked in "no fence against his flail"—a phrase which the 'busy mockers' seem to have made good use of.

In 1733 came the appointment to the Yeomen of the Guard, and in the same year, his first wife being dead, Duck married the Queen's housekeeper at Kew. He was now basking contentedly in Royal favour, and expressed his gratitude and his loyalty in sufficiently tiresome "Verses to the Royal Family." In 1746, his name again appears in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, this time in the list of Ecclesiastical Preferments:—"Stephen Duck, the Poet, entered into priests' orders." Another step in the evolution of the tame Labour man! We may yet hear of Ruskin College students taking Holy Orders! Duck became Rector of Byfield, Surrey, and there, ten years later, his half-pathetic, half-grotesque career ended. He was found drowned in a stream near the town.

He can hardly rank with the Olympians of English Literature. One cannot even place him alongside such peasant poets as John Clare, or Bloomfield. Yet his life-story has a curious interest, and maybe, a moral. Poets are not the only people who can be killed by patronage.

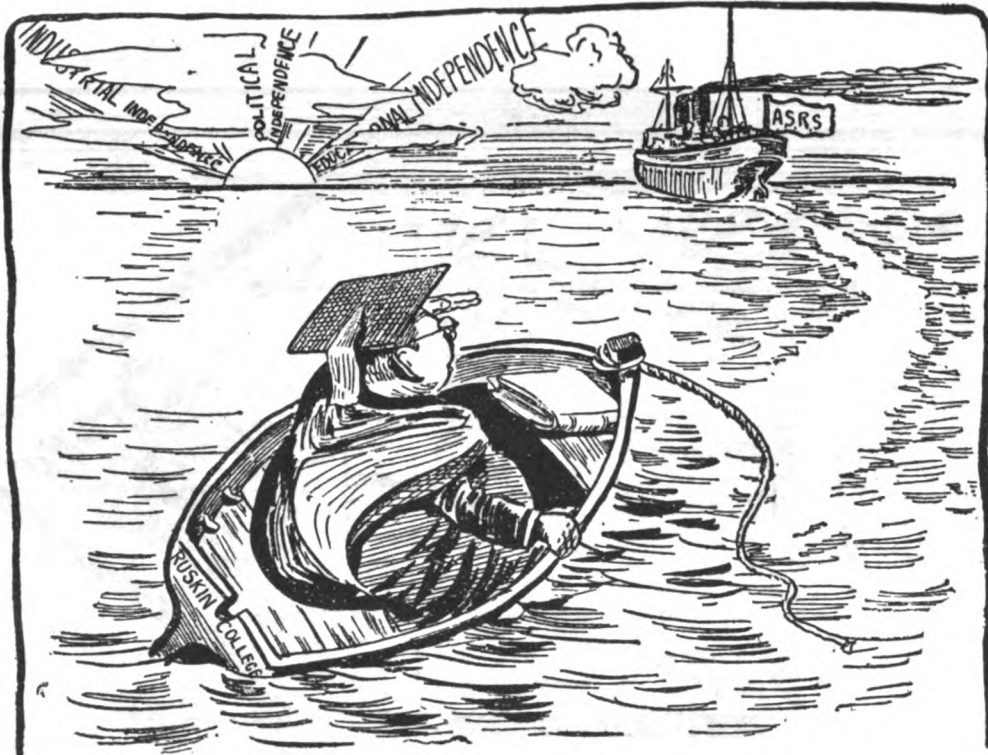
J. F. HORRABIN,



LABOUR'S MOST VALUABLE ASSET

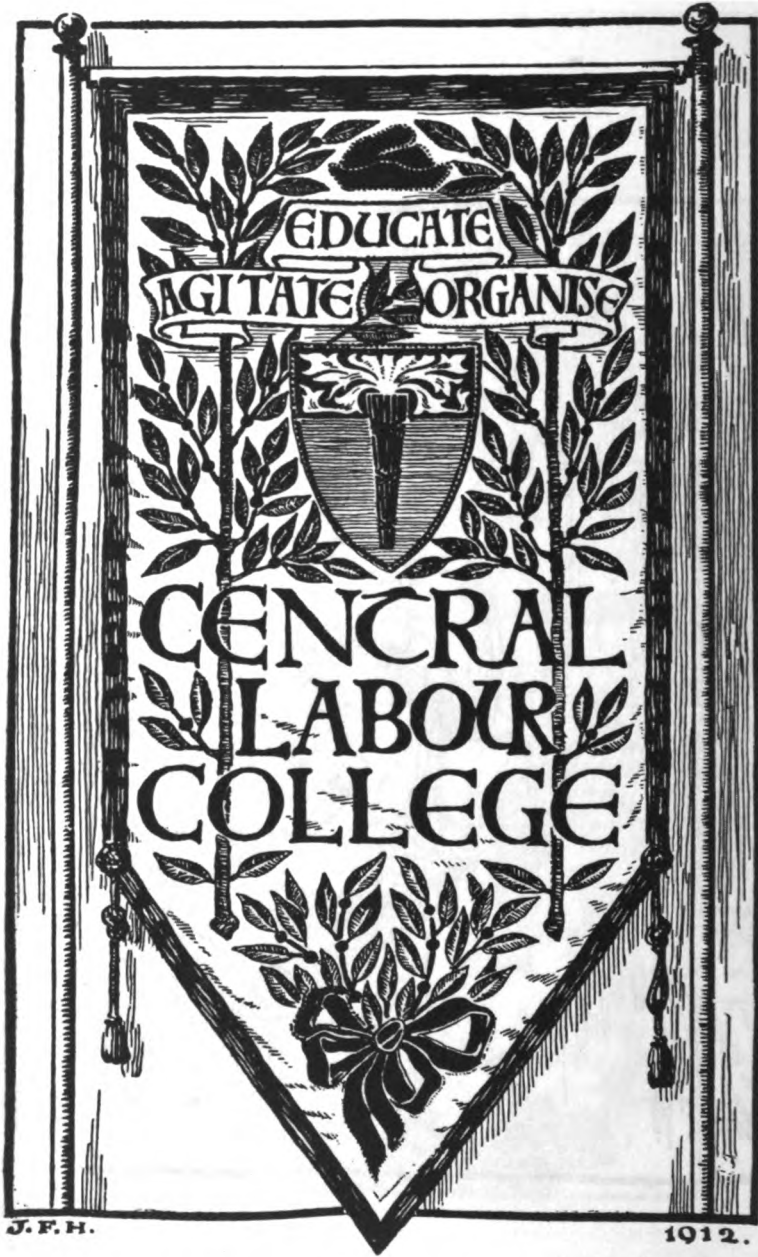
The Children's Appeal to Labour: "We are YOURS and you need us badly. Then won't you help us?"

From the Railway Review, 16-vii-1912



CAST ADRIFT

By a large majority the A.G.M. decided to withdraw from Ruskin College and support the Central Labour College
From the Railway Review 29-x-1909



THE CENTRAL LABOUR COLLEGE BANNER

Designed and Embroidered by MRS. WINIFRED HORRABIN.

Proletarian History

THE proletariat created by the breaking up of the bands of feudal retainers and by the forcible expropriation of the people from the soil, this "free" proletariat could not possibly be absorbed by the nascent manufactures as fast as it was thrown upon the world. On the other hand, these men, suddenly dragged from their wonted mode of life, could not as suddenly adapt themselves to the discipline of their new condition. They were turned *en masse* into beggars, robbers, vagabonds, partly from inclination, in most cases from stress of circumstances. Hence at the end of the 15th and during the whole of the 16th century, throughout Western Europe a bloody legislation against vagabondage. The fathers of the present working class were chastized for their enforced transformation into vagabonds and paupers. Legislation treated them as "voluntary" criminals, and assumed that it depended on their own goodwill to go on working under the old conditions that no longer existed.

In England this legislation began under Henry VII.

Henry VIII, 1530: Beggars old and unable to work receive a beggar's licence. On the other hand, whipping and imprisonment for sturdy vagabonds. They are to be tied to the cart-tail and whipped until the blood streams from their bodies, then to swear an oath to go back to their birthplace or to where they have lived the last three years and to "put themselves to labour." What grim irony! In 27 Henry VIII the former statute is repeated, but strengthened with new clauses. For the second arrest for vagabondage the whipping is to be repeated and half the ear sliced off; but for the third relapse the offender is to be executed as a hardened criminal and enemy of the common weal.

Edward VI: A statute of the first year of his reign, 1547, ordains that if anyone refuses to work, he shall be condemned as a slave to the person who has denounced him as an idler. The master shall feed his slave on bread and water, weak broth, and such refuse meat as he thinks fit. He has the right to force him to do any work, no matter how disgusting, with whip and chains. If the slave is absent a fortnight, he is condemned to slavery for life and is to be branded on forehead or back with the letter S; if he runs away thrice, he is to be executed as a felon. The master can sell him, bequeath him, let him out on hire as a slave, just as any other personal chattel or cattle. If the slaves attempt anything against the masters, they are also to be executed. Justices of the peace, on information, are to hunt the rascals down. If it happens that a vagabond has been idling about for three days,

he is to be taken to his birthplace, branded with a redhot iron with the letter V on the breast and be set to work, in chains, in the streets or at some other labour. If the vagabond gives a false birthplace, he is then to become the slave for life of this place, of its inhabitants, or its corporation, and to be branded with an S. All persons have the right to take away the children of the vagabonds and to keep them as apprentices, the young men until the 24th year, the girls until the 20th. If they run away, they are to become up to this age the slaves of their masters, who can put them in irons, whip them, &c., if they like. Every master may put an iron ring round the neck, arms or legs of his slave, by which to know him more easily and to be more certain of him. The last part of this statute provides, that certain poor people may be employed by a place or by persons, who are willing to give them food and drink and to find them work. This kind of parish-slaves was kept up in England until far into the 19th century under the name of "roundsmen."

Elizabeth, 1572 : Unlicensed beggars above 14 years of age are to be severely flogged and branded on the left ear unless some one will take them into service for two years ; in case of a repetition of the offence, if they are over 18, they are to be executed, unless some one will take them into service for two years ; but for the third offence they are to be executed without mercy as felons. Similar statutes : 18 Elizabeth, c. 13, and another of 1597.

James I : Any one wandering about and begging is declared a rogue and a vagabond. Justices of the peace in petty sessions are authorized to have them publicly whipped and for the first offence to imprison them for 6 months, for the second for 2 years. Whilst in prison they are to be whipped as much and as often as the justices of the peace think fit . . . Incurrible and dangerous rogues are to be branded with an R on the left shoulder and set to hard labour, and if they are caught begging again, to be executed without mercy. These statutes, legally binding until the beginning of the 18th century, were only repealed by 12 Ann, c. 23.

Similar laws in France, where by the middle of the 17th century a kingdom of vagabonds (*truands*) was established in Paris. Even at the beginning of Louis XVI's reign (Ordinance of July 13th, 1777) every man in good health from 16 to 60 years of age, if without means of subsistence and not practising a trade, is to be sent to the galleys. Of the same nature are the statutes of Charles V for the Netherlands (October, 1537), the first edict of the States and Towns of Holland (March 10, 1614), the "Plakaat" of the United Provinces (June 26, 1649), &c.

Thus were the agricultural people, first forcibly expropriated from the soil, driven from their homes, turned into vagabonds, and then whipped, branded, tortured by laws grotesquely terrible, into the discipline necessary for the wage system.

It is not enough that the conditions of labour are concentrated in a mass, in the shape of capital, at the one pole of society, while at the other are grouped masses of men, who have nothing to sell but their labour-power. Neither is it enough that they are compelled to sell it voluntarily. The advance of capitalist production, develops a working class, which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of nature. The organization of the capitalist process of production, once fully developed, breaks down all resistance. The constant generation of a relative surplus-population keeps the law of supply and demand of labour, and therefore keeps wages, in a rut that corresponds with the wants of capital. The dull compulsion of economic relations completes the subjection of the labourer to the capitalist. Direct force, outside economic conditions, is of course still used, but only exceptionally. In the ordinary run of things, the labourer can be left to the "natural laws of production," i.e., to his dependence on capital, a dependence springing from, and guaranteed in perpetuity by, the conditions of production themselves. It is otherwise during the historic genesis of capitalist production. The bourgeoisie, at its rise, wants and uses the power of the state to "regulate" wages, i.e., to force them within the limits suitable for surplus-value making, to lengthen the working-day and to keep the labourer himself in the normal degree of dependence. This is an essential element of the so-called primitive accumulation.

The class of wage-labourers, which arose in the latter half of the 14th century, formed then and in the following century only a very small part of the population, well protected in its position by the independent peasant proprietary in the country and the guild-organization in the town. In country and town master and workmen stood close together socially. The subordination of labour to capital was only formal—i.e., the mode of production itself had as yet no specific capitalistic character. Variable capital preponderated greatly over constant. The demand for wage-labour grew, therefore, rapidly with every accumulation of capital, whilst the supply of wage-labour followed but slowly. A large part of the national product, changed later into a fund of capitalist accumulation, then still entered into the consumption fund of the labourer.

Legislation on wage-labour (from the first, aimed at the exploitation of the labourer and, as it advanced, always equally hostile to him), is started in England by the Statute of Labourers, of Edward III, 1349. The ordinance of 1350 in France, issued in the name of King John, corresponds with it. English and French legislation run parallel and are identical in purport. So far as the labour-statutes aim at compulsory extension of the working-day, I do not return to them, as this point was treated earlier (Chap. X, Section 5).

The Statute of Labourers was passed at the urgent instance of the House of Commons. A Tory says naively: "Formerly the poor demanded such *high wages* as to threaten industry and wealth. Next, their wages are so *low* as to threaten industry and wealth equally and perhaps more, but in another way." A tariff of wages was fixed by law for town and country, for piece-work and day-work. The agricultural labourers were to hire themselves out by the year, the town ones "in open market." It was forbidden, under pain of imprisonment, to pay higher wages than those fixed by the statute, but the taking of higher wages was more severely punished than the giving them. [So also in Sections 18 and 19 of the Statute of Apprentices of Elizabeth, ten days' imprisonment is decreed for him that pays the higher wages, but twenty-one days for him that receives them.] A statute of 1360 increased the penalties and authorized the masters to extort labour at the legal rate of wages by corporal punishment. All combinations, contracts, oaths, &c., by which masons and carpenters reciprocally bound themselves, were declared null and void. Coalition of the labourers is treated as a heinous crime from the 14th century to 1825, the year of the repeal of the Laws against Trades' Unions. The spirit of the Statute of Labourers of 1349 and of its offshoots, comes out clearly in the fact, that indeed a maximum of wages is dictated by the State, but on no account a minimum.

In the 16th century, the condition of the labourers had, as we know, become much worse. The money wage rose, but not in proportion to the depreciation of money and the corresponding rise in the prices of commodities. Wages, therefore, in reality fell. Nevertheless, the laws for keeping them down remained in force, together with the ear-clipping and branding of those "whom no one was willing to take into service." By the Statute of Apprentices 5 Elizabeth, c. 3, the justices of the peace were empowered to fix certain wages and to modify them according to the time of the year and the price of commodities. James I extended these regulations of labour also to weavers, spinners, and all possible

categories of workers. George II extended the laws against coalitions of labourers to manufactures. In the manufacturing period *par excellence*, the capitalist mode of production had become sufficiently strong to render legal regulation of wages as impracticable as it was unnecessary; but the ruling classes were unwilling in case of necessity to be without the weapons of the old arsenal. Still, 8 George II forbade a higher day's wage than 2s. 7½d. for journeymen tailors in and around London, except in cases of general mourning; still, 13 George III, c. 68, gave the regulation of the wages of silk-weavers to the justices of the peace; still, in 1706, it required two judgments of the higher courts to decide, whether the mandates of justices of the peace as to wages held good also for non-agricultural labourers; still, in 1799, an act of Parliament ordered that the wages of the Scotch miners should continue to be regulated by a statute of Elizabeth and two Scotch acts of 1661 and 1671. How completely in the meantime circumstances had changed, is proved by an occurrence unheard-of before in the English Lower House. In that place, where for more than 400 years laws had been made for the maximum, beyond which wages absolutely must not rise, Whitbread in 1796 proposed a legal minimum wage for agricultural labourers. Pitt opposed this, but confessed that the "condition of the poor was cruel." Finally, in 1813, the laws for the regulation of wages were repealed. They were an absurd anomaly, since the capitalist regulated his factory by his private legislation, and could by the poor-rates make up the wage of the agricultural labourer to the indispensable minimum. The provisions of the labour statutes as to contracts between master and workman, as to giving notice and the like, which only allow of a civil action against the contract-breaking master, but on the contrary permit a criminal action against the contracting-breaking workman, are to this hour (1873) in full force. The barbarous laws against Trades' Unions fell in 1825 before the threatening bearing of the proletariat. Despite this, they fell only in part. Certain beautiful fragments of the old statute vanished only in 1859. Finally, the Act of Parliament of June 29, 1871, made a pretence of removing the last traces of this class of legislation by legal recognition of Trades' Unions. But an act of Parliament of the same date (an act to amend the criminal law relating to violence, threats, and molestation), re-established, in point of fact, the former state of things in a new shape. By this Parliamentary escamotage the means which the labourers could use in a strike or lock-out were withdrawn from the laws common

to all citizens, and placed under exceptional penal legislation, the interpretation of which fell to the masters themselves in their capacity as justices of the peace. Two years earlier, the same House of Commons and the same Mr. Gladstone in the well-known straightforward fashion brought in a bill for the abolition of all exceptional penal legislation against the working class. But this was never allowed to go beyond the second reading, and the matter was thus protracted until at last the "great Liberal party," by an alliance with the Tories, found courage to turn against the very proletariat that had carried it into power. Not content with this treachery, the "great Liberal party" allowed the English judges, ever complaisant in the service of the ruling classes, to dig up again the earlier laws against "conspiracy," and to apply them to coalitions of labourers. We see that only against its will and under the pressure of the masses did the English Parliament give up the laws against Strikes and Trades' Unions, after it had itself, for 500 years, held, with shameless egoism, the position of a permanent Trades' Union of the capitalists against the labourers.

During the very first storms of the revolution, the French bourgeoisie dared to take away from the workers the right of association but just acquired. By a decree of June 14, 1791, they declared all coalition of the workers as "an attempt against liberty and the declaration of the rights of man," punishable by a fine of 500 livres, together with deprivation of the rights of an active citizen for one year. This law which, by means of State compulsion, confined the struggle between capital and labour within limits comfortable for capital, has outlived revolutions and changes of dynasties. Even the Reign of Terror left it untouched. It was but quite recently struck out of the Penal Code. Nothing is more characteristic than the pretext for this bourgeois *coup d'état* "Granting," says Chapelier, the reporter of the Select Committee on this law, "that wages ought to be a little higher than they are, . . . that they ought to be high enough for him that receives them, to be free from that state of absolute dependence due to the want of the necessaries of life, and which is almost that of slavery," yet the workers must not be allowed to come to any understanding about their own interests, nor to act in common and thereby lessen their "absolute dependence, which is almost that of slavery;" because, forsooth, in doing this they injure "the freedom of their *cidavant* masters, the present *entrepreneurs*," and because a coalition against the despotism of the quondam masters of the corporations is—guess what?—is a restoration of the corporations abolished by the French constitution.—KARL MARX,