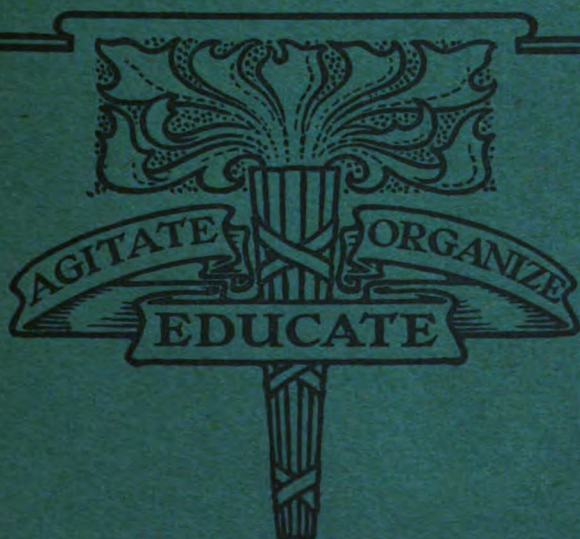


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April, 1915

The
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MAGAZINE



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MONTHLY

TWOPENCE

The "Plebs" League

Object

To further the interests of Independent working-class education as a partizan effort to improve the position of Labour in the present, and ultimately to assist in the abolition of wage-slavery.

Methods

The holding of an Annual Meet: the issuing of a monthly Magazine, mainly devoted to the discussion of the various questions of Labour, theoretical and practical: the formation of local branches and classes for the study of social science, in connexion with the Central Labour College, and in every way to assist in the development of the latter institution, and its maintenance of a definite educational policy.

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Open to all who endorse the object of the League.

Each Member shall pay 1/- a year to the Central Fund towards meeting the expenses in connexion with the Annual Meet, &c.

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An Executive of five members elected annually, and the Editor of Magazine, who shall be responsible as to publication and meets, &c.

The Magazine shall be 2d. per copy, 2½d. post free.

Subscriptions payable in advance: Quarterly 7½d., Half Yearly 1/3, Yearly 2/6

✉ The Seventh Annual Meet will be held in London (Bank Holiday), August, 1915

G. SIMS, Secretary-Treasurer

To whom all P.O.'s should be made payable

13 Penywern Road, Earls Court,
London, S.W.

THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

In an emergency few words are best. We have already, in previous Editorials, described the present state of affairs in connection with the College; and there is little or nothing to add to those reports this month. Nothing can be looked for from the

The College N.U.R. before June, when the question of an alteration of rules enabling the Society to grant "recognition" to the C.L.C. will be discussed. For the time being, therefore, Unity House might just as well be the headquarters of the Anti-Socialist Union so far as the College is concerned. The S.W.M.F. will again discuss the situation next month; but since all their resolutions have been dependent on the N.U.R. fulfilling their

share of the original bargain, it is quite possible that they may deem it advisable to await the Railwaymen's decision in June before taking definite action. The immediate problem is then to make the College safe for the ensuing three months. A very small sum will suffice to do that. A few shillings from *every Trade Union branch* which has assisted the College at one time or another in the past would end the present emergency.

We have made appeals in *The Plebs* so often that we—and very probably our readers—are sick and tired of this particular form of space-filling. Probably a good proportion of the College's supporters have become so hardened to these oft-repeated demands on their enthusiasm that they have come to regard them and the College alike as immortal institutions—part of the eternal order of things. Well, the war has destroyed a good many illusions, and it may destroy that particular one. But it is not necessary that the College itself should perish along with the illusion. Whether it will or not depends on the individual efforts of its friends and supporters, *now*. We ask our readers to think over Comrade Mather's letter on another page, and to decide whether an effort is or is not worth while; only remarking, in all seriousness, that on their decision depends the fate of the College.

* * *

WE print the following letter with the very greatest pleasure:—"The news that a conference of members of C.L.C. Classes has been arranged to take place at Blackpool on Good Friday has aroused much interest among people of the same persuasion in Barry. C.L.C. Class members and

A South Wales Conference

Plebs readers in that town are anxious that a similar Conference should be held at Cardiff or some other convenient centre on Whit-Monday. Will any South Wales Class undertake the necessary arrangements, or will all those in favour notify the Barry comrades, who are prepared, if need be, to convene a meeting? Letters to be addressed to T. Eddolls, 31 Broad Street, Barry." We trust that the South Wales Conference will materialise, and that by Whitsuntide delegates will be able to rejoice together over the College having safely passed another ticklish corner.

J.F.H.

"The ships and ploughs and lighting—systems of a hundred years ago were made by the same men—the same long generations of men—as the religious and politics and moralities of a hundred years ago. Why assume that our predecessors were almost infallible in these latter creations, yet capable of such immeasurable improvement in the former?"

JOSEPH McCABE.

"The psychologic counterpart of the physical quality of the drunkard never to be satisfied, is the Capitalist's mental quality, never to feel rich enough."

DANIEL DE LEON.

A Defence of Historical Materialism

(Continued from last month)

IF criticism is to be fruitful, if we are to clearly and distinctly triumph over an error, it is essential that the error be understood in its genesis, that its motivation be comprehended. It is not sufficient to reject an error by characterizing it as absurd. Yet, it is in this, that the superior knowledge of our *English Review* critics, consists. This is the higher criticism which transcends "the shortcomings of Marx," and for lack of which, "the devotees of this materialist cult of abstraction" are supposed to be such a lot of simpletons. The theory of Historical Materialism is compared by the critics, to the "philosophers stone," and the Marxians are likened to the believers in miracles. The world of miracles is an arbitrary world, a world that knows no laws. Miracles are the satisfaction of wishes, and they are the more agreeable in that they require no labour or effort for their accomplishment. The end is realized without means. That is the world in which Messrs. Hyndman and Bax live, a world in which historical results are accomplished by hopes and wishes. They fancy they have transcended the belief in miracles. But as their explanations partake of the same miraculous nature as the belief which they are supposed to explain, as they deduce the historical development out of the heads of men just as the good Lord created the world out of *His* "active mentality," it is evident that they still share in the "believers delight," and that their faces are still turned toward Jerusalem.

According to Marx, it is the social existence which determines the consciousness. According to Messrs. Hyndman and Bax it is precisely the opposite, the forms of consciousness determine the social existence, e.g., "the hope of another world . . . brought about an indifference to this world," and again on the following page, they state that the religious antagonism was initial, and that the economic antagonisms follow as consequence. True, they agree, that in some cases the theory of Historical Materialism may be accepted. This eclecticism, although fashionable, only shows that their understanding of Historical Materialism is on a par with their understanding of the early Christians. It shows that in historical science they occupy the same ground as characterizes vulgar economy, where, e.g., value is compounded out of a number of factors, cost of production, wages, profit, rent. The doctrine of the factors so called is just as pre-scientific in the field of history as

in that of economics. In both cases it is the result of superficial investigation, although that, of course, does not prevent those superficial people posing as intellectual giants.

It is not denied by Historical Materialism that antagonisms express themselves psychologically. It is denied that they are primarily psychological. Men can only become aware of these antagonisms through their consciousness. Their specific awareness is the *form* in which the struggle is fought out. But the *form* must be distinguished from the *content*, the awareness of the antagonism from the antagonism. Our critics who flounder upon the surface, see only the semblance, the formal aspects, and these they turn into initial factors. *What they see first they place first* in the order of formation. And what men think of their being is more manifest than the actual conditions of their being. Especially when we come to investigate the more remote past, are we confronted with difficulties which arise from the fact that we have only for data what the actors *thought* of their situation, while the actual conditions of the situation have long since disappeared. Their erroneous thoughts, their defective understanding of their own experience, conceals the actual conditions of experience, the abstract hides the concrete, and thus renders difficult the task of reconstructing the actual concrete situation, for those who live at a time when that situation has long since been outgrown. The reconstruction of historical development in our thought is for Historical Materialism no "simple" task, is not a mere case of opening the eyes, applying a formula, and lo! and behold! And it is certainly not rendered easier by those, who, like the critics, are content to reproduce what men thought of their movements as the "initial" cause of those movements. The early Christians turned away from this world because they thought of, and hoped for, another world. Messrs. Hyndman and Bax take the same view as the Christians took of themselves, and without more ado, present it as "the more obvious reason for what has taken place." How very *passive* is "active mentality"! And as for "simplicity," no explanation could be simpler! Why did men act thus? Because they thought thus! And why did they think in this way? The superior knowledge of our critics transcends this question by, in effect, denying that it is a question. For them there is no such problem. Hence they release themselves from the need to explain why it is that men do not think in that way to-day, why instead of crucifying the flesh they prefer to rest it on the softest cushion?

It is only because we to-day live in a very different world to that in which Christianity arose, that our attitude towards it is one of

interest and not one of indifference. And it is only by the method of Historical Materialism, by taking the economic variations as the guiding thread, that it is possible to fully and clearly comprehend the changes that have taken place in the heads of men. The history of man, his internal and external development, is in the last resort, the history of labour. As the stature of labour grows, the religious consciousness dissolves. In religion, man sees the results of his own work as the work of another being. Man in religion seeks to accomplish his salvation from the limitations of his own efforts, to overcome the barriers which his own efforts are unable to remove. Every progress made in the development of his work he therefore ascribes to religious influence. Originally, the salvation man sought to win was no other worldly affair, but a very concrete salvation upon the earth. The "promised land" was to the children of Israel no "land of pure delight, where saints immortal dwell," but a land flowing with abundance of the means of material life. It was only after they had settled in this new land, and when as a consequence of the new mode of production, their old social relations were revolutionized, the old corporate lands transformed into private property, and the people differentiated into rich and poor, that there takes place a revolution in their religious consciousness. The Comrades Hyndman and Bax, would of course explain this antagonism of economic classes out of the "initial" religious change. In other words, they take the form in which the revolution appears in the Israelitish consciousness, as the content, as *the* revolution itself. Certainly the prophets took that view. They explained to the masses that these departures from the old social practice, these filchings of the common lands, were the result of the departure from the old religious practice. "Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord thy God." And the God of these social agitators is not a God that delights in the burnt offerings of the rich. He is now a God of ethical attributes, a God of justice, mercy and loving-kindness. Still however, religion is concerned with the world of every-day life. The manifestoes of these so-called prophets have for their aim, the organization of the expropriated mass, to the end that the old communal order of social relations be restored. There was as yet no talk about being indifferent to this world. It was only when the new order of private property and class-rule became more and more firmly established, and when the efforts of the impoverished masses hopelessly failed, that the "Kingdom" which "is not of this world," began to develop in the minds of men. And what is true of this development from a concrete religion to a more and more abstract and spiritual religion, holds good generally,

throughout the lands within antique civilization. When all this civilization was brought under the dominion of Rome, and when Rome entered the period of decadence, then were the conditions present on an international scale, for the rise and extension of an international spiritual religion.

The wider the Roman Empire extended, the more thoroughgoing her exploitation of the conquered lands, then the more widespread became the mass of misery. Slavery was the fundamental basis of the whole society. The greater the mass of slaves, the greater became the barrier to further progress, the less the incentive to the promotion of technical improvement. Rome concerned herself more with *taking* the wealth of her tributary lands than with applying any of that wealth to productive purposes. The golden stream that flowed into Rome was directed towards the lavish development of festivals, magnificent buildings, theatrical performances and other luxurious excesses. Soon, however, the stream began to run dry. The resources of exploitation became exhausted, and that, at a time when the burden of militarism constituted an ever increasing drain. And the final result of it all was decay. The growing stagnation of the productive forces led to more and more widespread feelings of insecurity and discomfort. And in this situation all hope of reform disappeared. Everything pointed downward, and gone were all the old corporate supports. The individual was left to himself. All the more hopeless therefore his efforts to save himself. On the basis of the diseased social conditions, the weirdest ideas arose, the most fantastic superstitions sprang up and multiplied. Even before Christianity had taken hold of the masses, beliefs in happenings quite parallel to some of those recorded in the New Testament, had arisen, and which were quite removed from the old and so-called pagan conceptions. These latter no longer explained the new situation. Gone were the conditions of life in which the old gods and ceremonial served as the visible guide of life. And out of the new and turbulent social relations, the new conceptions, characteristic of spiritual monotheism, arose and crystalized.

The Roman Empire embraced people from the most different nations and brought them into such contact with each other and under such uniform conditions of depression and despair, as to wipe out, to a large extent, the dividing lines of nationality. And more particularly was this the case with the exploited slaves and pauperized freemen. This served more and more to unite the movement in the mystical direction. The writings of the Roman philosopher Seneca, show how far this direction had already been

taken, by the beginning of our era, and how, more especially the consciousness, was being developed amid the revolution in the conditions of social life for the spread of Christianity. When the latter reached out into the Jewish colonies throughout the Roman Empire, it found the external conditions and the mental outlook prepared for its reception.

When Christianity first appears in Judea it assumes an antagonistic attitude towards the official religion of the Jews. But here again this religious antagonism, far from being the "initial" cause of an economic antagonism, is nothing but the form of consciousness in which the class struggle arising from this economic antagonism, is fought out and justified. And it is for the Jewish proletariat that this new ideology arises. It is the common people who "heard him gladly," it is the poor that rally around this new leader, and he in turn, appeals for inspiration to the leaders who before him championed the cause of the oppressed. For the rich he has nothing but hard words. The rich man in the parable, suffers not because of some abstract spiritual consideration, but precisely because he is rich; and the poor man enjoys himself precisely because he was poor. And it is the rich that remove this, to them, dangerous leader. All the later interpolations and meaning-twisted sophistries of official Christianity, have failed to conceal the unequivocally proletarian character of these first Christian movements. Indeed they should not be designated Christian at all. It was a social ideal that was proclaimed and aimed at, under this religious form. And these early organizations not only preached the communism of property and its enjoyment, but practised it as well. It could not, of course, at that stage of social development, be a productive communism. But it was a consumptive communism, a communism in the means of consumption. The *Acts of the Apostles* show this principle in practice, and also what happened to a certain gentleman and his wife who tried to "keep back the goods."

In the degree, however, that the mass of people to be maintained increased, the limits to the extension of this communism became more and more felt. The amount of wealth increased slowly while the number of mouths to be fed grew rapidly. As a result, this pure communism disappeared, a disappearance which is reflected in the development of that spiritualizing process, which finally transformed Christianity into that other world shape, and which made it eminently satisfactory for the ruling class. Already St. Paul could assure the rich Corinthians, "I do not want your goods but yourselves." Christianity, in effect, said St. Paul, is not

a class movement, not a religion stirring up class hatred, but a religion for all classes. And the breed of the Pauls' has by no means died out even in the modern proletarian movement.

The Jewish proletariat had expected the return of their leader in the flesh. He had told them he would return after he had made preparations for the realization of the ideal. His death made that impossible, but not impossible to the minds of his followers. The tradition handed down became, with the growing mass of misery and increasing feeling of insecurity, more and more embellished with the mysticism that grew on the fertile soil already described, until it assumed in the minds of men the form of the belief in the Second Advent. When the difficulties of maintaining the communistic practice increased, the idea that Christ would soon return and that the end of the world was at hand, grew up and afforded consolation. And throughout the Roman Empire, and as its social decrepitude advanced, this belief spread, and the believers counted it for gain in a hereafter to be soon a fact, to despise a here-and-now that offered nothing but tribulation and wickedness, and to give up their lives in order to put on immortality. The lines of the old hymn—

“Earth is a desert drear,
Heaven is my home,”

indicate the core of spiritual religion. It shows the earthly negative transformed into the heavenly positive. Heaven is full of what the earth is emptied. Beyond the grave, the ego will at last free his personality from those limitations which prevent his full expression here. There, life will be in harmony with the needs which the present life contradicts. W.W.C.

To be concluded.

“The W. E. A. Way”

A REPLY

WHEN I read the review of my book* in the *March Plebs* I was reminded of the Divinity student who knew one thing only—the Nicene Creed. When therefore the question paper required him to distinguish between the major and the minor prophets he wrote:—“Far be it from me to differentiate between such holy men: I greatly prefer to deal with the Nicene Creed.” Similarly, I have written a book about the war; but J. F. H.

* *The War: Its Origin and Causes.* See *March Plebs*, review, page 47.

would greatly have preferred a book on the uprising of Labour against Capital. Doubtless ; but I did not know his wish at the time of writing and so could not oblige him—even had I been ready to do so.

I wrote the book simply to fill out and make permanent certain lectures I had given in and about Sheffield. As these lectures were given free, there was no question of considering the wishes of a paymaster. I said exactly what I wished to say—as indeed I always do even in the work for which I am paid ; since I believe in acting on the principle of going until you are stopped. Hitherto nobody has ventured to try and stop me (because of course, J. F. H. would say, I'm quite harmless). Hitherto I have found paymasters too indifferent or too busy or too *practical*—which means short sighted—or too dull or stupid to interfere. To them all the vital stages of theory and discussion are only so much talk—and as such may be safely ignored. I believe the C.L.C. men have an exaggerated notion of the capacity, and certainly of the intellectual organizations, of the profiteers. I don't believe for a moment they have one set of books and facts for themselves and another for the workers. That's crediting them with too much interest in speculative matters altogether. Economics and economic history in particular are largely a sealed book to them. There may be vague general prejudices and dislikes on the subject of social education : but the idea of one range of ideas for the Workers and another for the Initiated is Prussian ; the English are incapable of the effort required to draw up two such separate schemes of study.

When I undertook the lectures—and therefore also the book—I determined to use the war chiefly as a platform from which I could say things about England which in normal times were practically unsayable. And it so happened that the criticisms I wished to make were not to any extent economic in nature. To tell the truth, I am not excessively interested in economic problems. Economics (which I studied under Marshall) and Economic History (under Cunningham) were, I always felt, for the statistically-minded Newnhamite ; and that was the current opinion among the other men I met who were reading history at Cambridge in the '90's. Thus though the economic bases of the war are of importance (and I touched on them to some extent) I was not drawn by them so much as by other aspects of the great struggle ; and if I had specialized in them, I do not think I could have satisfactorily explained the war on purely economic lines, especially on the lines of mere exploitation of workers by international capitalists.

The motives which sway a whole nation can never, be purely economic. I doubt whether they are even predominantly so. If I can argue from my own case, I should say that economic motives are relatively unimportant. "My riches consist in the fewness of my wants, not in the extent of my possessions"—a hopelessly uneconomic attitude in accordance with which I recently dropped more than half my salary to gain more leisure. I fear I am much more interested in the living rooms—even the drawing rooms to which J. F. H. so scornfully refers—than to the kitchen and drains of the House of life. It's a personal weakness to which I plead guilty.

But I don't think that therefore I am absolutely cut off from all useful activity. Indeed, when I consider how manifold life is, how complex its interests, how tangled its motives, I am practically certain that the view from the scullery window is even more restricted (and therefore misleading) than the peep into the street from behind the lace curtains of the front parlour. All partial views are dangerous as a basis for action, and it's the business of the reformer to know his subject in all its bearings. A clinkered mind miscalculates distances; gets wrong perspectives, unfits itself, by the very means it takes to focus and protect its vision, for any true view of the problem it is tackling. Action based on partial vision is apt to be thwarted by factors which have been minimized or ignored; and though I know that specialization with its consequent limitations is essential to effective work, yet the dangers of specialization are as great as its advantages. The seminary is a dangerous place—more dangerous even to the cause it serves than to the cause it attacks; for it is apt to generate a hot-house enthusiasm which is closely akin to fanaticism. It provides its novices with formulæ instead of knowledge of the world; and as a result the youths it has trained find themselves in the midst of a people who refuse to conform to the theories or to act on the motives enunciated in the class room.

I have been told that the strictest sect of the Marxists distrusts and discourages the artist because his influence is apt to become too priest-like. Well, I am quite sure of this; that any social reconstruction based on the discouraging and, if possible, the ignoring of such aspects of life as are represented by the terms art and emotion—religion, too, in its broader sense—is foredoomed to failure. I for one have no sympathy with it. It seems to me dull, pedantic, doctrinaire; completely out of touch with the facts of life. It is a dehumanized view: the construction of an organization for creatures that once were men. It is the economic man brought

back to life : or rather the galvanized semblance of life. To me, on the other hand, a knowledge of human achievement on as many planes as possible—including of course the economic—is essential if men are to have life and to have it more abundantly ; and I do not see why the energy of economic reform should be lessened (its direction will certainly gain in effectiveness) by this widened range of interest and outlook among the workers.

In the Middle Ages—when many of the institutions we are striving to re-establish were actually flourishing—economics had not emerged as a separate interest or point of view. The life of the Middle Ages had a unity which we have completely lost. A practical Christianity found society in the bonds of love, and men practised their duty to their neighbour as a corollary to their duty to God. Art flourished exceedingly as a democratic institution. (To-day it is a grandiose appanage of the rich.) The Middle Ages were great, in short, because they saw life whole. Is it not possible for those who strive after a remodelling of economic conditions to keep also in touch with the other sides of human life without so great a loss of enthusiasm that it cannot be compensated for by the increased sanity and improved direction these wider interests will provide ?

A University, it seems to me, is an attempt to construct a microcosm wherein the student shall have all the possible chances of becoming an all-round man of the world in the best sense of the term. Cambridge may be governing class ; but to me—unable doubtless to see the wood for the trees or else blinded by prejudice—it seemed a place where truth was sought after honestly and with a certain amount of energy ; though maybe with less energy than a place on the river or an average at cricket. There was certainly nothing of the seminary about Cambridge and I have a distrust of seminaries and their effects. Doubtless the diseased economic condition of the body politic needs specialist treatment ; but let us beware lest economic specialization became in its turn a disease. Whether the avoidance of that danger is the W.E.A.'s way or not I cannot say ; but I have endeavoured to show that it is at least F.J.H.'s way.

FRANK J. ADKINS.

J.F.H. writes : Had Mr. Adkins called his book *Some Aspects of the War*, my criticism would have been beside the mark. But he expressly set out (according to his title-page) to deal with the *Origins and Causes* of the War. I ventured to point out that he omitted to deal—or at any rate dealt but cursorily—with what are immeasurably the most important and far-reaching of those origins and causes ; preferring, as he himself admits, to

discuss various other aspects of the struggle more interesting to himself. So that the story of the Divinity student who preferred to deal with the Nicene Creed rather than the subject set him, seems to apply to Mr. Adkins rather than to me. For the rest, his reply is so excellent a statement of the "W.E.A. Way" that I should prefer to leave it, without further comment, to the tender mercies of *Plebs* readers, who have come to the conclusion that another and better "way" exists.

Historical Materialism

A Personal View

"I use . . . the term 'historical materialism' to designate that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggles of these classes against each other."

[Engels' Pamphlet, *Hist. Materialism*.]

"According to the materialistic view of history, the factor which is, in the last instance, *decisive* in history, is the production and reproduction of actual life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. But when anyone distorts this so as to read that the economic factor is the sole element he converts the statement into a meaningless, abstract, and absurd phrase."

[Engels, quoted in Intro. to *The Roots of Soc. Philosophy*.]

AN apparent contradiction is implied in these two quotations, a contradiction, which, to adherents of the theory of Historical Materialism, may seem more apparent than real. Whether real or not it is not my purpose to question. Nor am I disposed to deny the modifying influences of material conditions in the course of social evolution. My view is that Historical Materialism does not adequately represent or designate the forces at work in the evolution of society.

It would be absurd to imply that any degree of complexity in economic or social structures had given birth to society. The *genesis* of society is due primarily to the social instinct. What is generally averred is that the *progress* of society is due, in the main, to the evolution in economic conditions and social structures. Social life is taken as granted. Its progress, however, is determined by "changes in the modes of production"; this is the "great moving power."

A pertinent question seems to arise here. How, if the social instinct and reason conditioned the emergence of society in its lowest forms, can these factors be overlooked in the continuity of its development? Or, to be more precise, how are they subordinated to material developments in the

progress of society? Without playing upon words, I would like to ask this question:—If Historical Materialism posits economic evolution as the prime mover in social progress, then a “pre-historic” materialism would also posit material conditions as giving rise to social life; and such also would be the case among animals!

“All successive historical conditions,” says Engels, “are only places of pilgrimage in the endless evolutionary progress of human society from the lower to the higher. Every step is necessary and useful for the time and circumstances to which it owes its origin, but it becomes weak and without justification under the newer and higher conditions which develop little by little in its own womb; it must give way to a higher form, which in turn comes to decay and defeat.” Such is the law of economic progress as the precursor and condition of social progress.

Society we recognise as an organism; as yet it is unconscious of itself as an organic whole. The play and inter-play of individual wills do not materially affect or alter this unconsciousness. When, however, a heterogeneous collection of wills want to take advantage of a circumstance in the evolution of economic and social arrangements, they assume control of that circumstance. This does not mean that such a circumstance came into being of its own accord; it may be the creation of an ingenious brain, or the result of a laborious research, or it may have been due to superior mental strength. Whatever it may have happened to be, whether conquest of land, which meant serfdom or feudalism, the discovery of the power of coal and steam, or the application of machinery, in which some keen and far-seeing minds saw greater or less possibilities of exploitation, it was always the same. Men being always desirous of gain, power, authority, did not look askance at such opportunities, but immediately grasped them for their own ends. This process in regard to industry received Adam Smith’s blessing: “By pursuing his own interest (in industry) the individual promotes that of society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.” But these profiteering pioneers knew also that if they did not grasp these opportunities others would seize them. And when having come into possession of the industrial processes, they, as other exploiters of men had done in the past, looked about them for means to protect themselves and their interests. Thus the State came into existence, and for such reasons the “function” of the state, the creating and enforcing of “law,” was developed and strengthened.

“All the successive historical conditions,” to me, are not “places of pilgrimage” merely. They are beads on a long string of greed and exploitation. My mind is focussed on the string, which is the reality, and not on the beads which may be only different in *form*, size, and colour. Water running through a series of glass tubes is still water though it may assume a different cast and colour in each tube. The reality in social evolution must be that which is *continuous*; is the continuity in the different “modes” of production a reality in this sense? Is not greed, domination, power, authority, such a reality? Are not these things merely aspects of one reality—exploitation?

The divisions of society are maintained to be consequent upon the changes in the modes of production. What do we mean by "modes of production"? Is it not the form, the arrangement, the way, in which things are produced? Can such a simple fact bring about a class cleavage? It is, to say the least, very doubtful. Is it necessary that the present "mode," economically speaking, be changed completely before we can establish a kind of Socialism? What is required is not so much a change of mode as the abolition of that which holds and controls the mode for profit.

How is this to be achieved? All of us are agreed that it can only be done by the workers assuming control either indirectly through the State or directly by themselves in co-operative industry. To this end the workers must be educated and organized. It matters little to this argument which of the above two ways the workers decide to follow; the absolutely essential thing is to get them convinced of the necessity of *going*. They must *desire* to move in either direction. How is this desire to be created? How is the courage to back up this desire to be developed? Are material conditions creating the desire? Yes, in so far as they limit the advantages, curb the aspirations and enthusiasms, crush noble desires for a larger life,—which is like the kettle-lid saying that it creates the steam because it makes a noise! Conditions, even if they were to change a mode of thought—modes only change with modes!—will not necessarily create a desire. Desire is something more radical and fundamental than intellectual perception. The pinch must be felt first of all before you set about removing its cause. How many workers feel the pinch of the economic boot and know that it *is* this boot that pinches; how many want to remove it? And it is not the boot that will get less—i.e., conditions become more intense; for *they will not* in comparison with previous conditions—but the foot grow bigger! And as the foot will not grow bigger of itself and alone, the whole body growing in proportion, how are we to secure suitable nourishment and exercise in order to develop the whole body in as healthy and as sensitive a manner as possible?

D. J. W.

W.W.C. writes:—What is D.J.W.'s point in reproducing the "apparent contradiction," if it is not his purpose to affirm or deny its reality? He knows very well where he found those two quotations placed against each other as contradictory, viz. : in the works of those who, like himself, attempt to show that Historical Materialism is inadequate. If he avails himself of this find to the extent of heading his article with it, then he must have some purpose in doing so. He implies that there *is* a contradiction. When he says, "whether real or not, it is not my purpose to question," he merely excuses himself for not producing the proofs—a common weakness of Marx-critics.

“D.J.W. has much to say about "reality," which he claims that Historical Materialism does not adequately explain. But what is this reality of D.J.W.'s? An arid heath of abstractions! He abstracts from the immediate aspects of social evolution and isolates what he has abstracted. He finds for example that under chattel-slavery, feudalism, and capitalism,

there has been "greed," "domination," "power," "authority." Such is for D.J.W. "reality." And all these are in turn, accompanied by exploitation; this is indeed the "one reality" of which the others are "aspects." Reality in social evolution must be continuous," says he; exploitation and its aspects are "continuous," therefore these constitute the reality. But the modes of production have changed, and therefore they do not fulfil the "continuity" required for reality. They are like the different "glass tubes" while exploitation is the same "water." This is certainly a very watery reality. But how can D.J.W. talk of evolution at all, seeing that the condition required for its reality is one which allows of no evolution taking place? If a thing continues to be the same thing, in what does its evolution consist? Where is the evolution in power, domination, authority, greed? If these are existing in unchanged continuity, it is impossible to speak of them in historical terms. They have no history. Neither would D.J.W. himself have any reality very long under the conditions that he demands for social reality. He is real only because he changes. And so it is with evolution in society. Society evolves only if it continues *to change*.

D.J.W., with his fixed categories, does not tell us how the modes of production change. They cannot change by reason of something that does not change. D.J.W. thinks that so "simple" a fact as "modes of production" cannot result in a "class cleavage." How then does the "same long string of greed," the fixed exploitation, result in changing class cleavages? Does not exploitation already presuppose a class that exploits and a class that is exploited, and therefore class antagonism? And does not this difference in the mode of exploitation result from different modes of production?

The fact is that "exploitation" is merely an empty generalization until it is attached to a concrete particular mode of exploitation. In the same way "authority" is nothing "in itself," but always has reference to some specific authority. There is no power, authority, domination, exploitation which is not concrete. "Power" in general is an abstraction made from concrete and differentiated powers, just as man in general sums up what all men have in common. What D.J.W. has been doing is this: He abstracts what is general to different social epochs and unconsciously transforms these abstractions into concrete entities; he gives to what has only a general existence, a special existence. Hence the illogical separation between form and content, between the mode of production and the mode of distribution, e.g., where he says "what is required is not so much a change of mode as the abolition of that which holds and controls the mode for profit." As if the mode of profit was one thing and the mode of production quite another thing.

As for what our friend says about "desire," that is only another one of his many empty generalizations which explain nothing. What desire? The desire for Socialism? Very well, there is surely no desire more obviously conditioned than that one. Desires—specific desires—arise under specific conditions, and only when the material means for satisfying them are at least in process of development.

THE WAR

Its Effects on the Engineers

AT the outbreak of the present European War, the Government of this country, owing to the sudden development of the crisis and the inadequacy of existing organization, found itself confronted with many problems which demanded immediate attention if the conflict was to be brought to a satisfactory end. At the outset, owing to the rapid rise in the prices of foodstuffs, the Board of Trade had to step in and fix maximum prices, or otherwise they would have found rebels instead of recruits; also in order to facilitate the transportation of troops and munitions of war, the Government took over the control of the different sections of transport service, of course, guaranteeing the owners against financial loss.

During this time many firms engaged in shipbuilding and armament manufacture were offering glaring inducements to those members of the engineering industry who were in the employment of firms not engaged in the production of war material to transfer themselves to the armament shops. Many firms manufacturing textile machinery found it necessary to put their workmen on short time; with the result that engineers began to migrate to other districts in enormous numbers, the number of men employed at these firms in normal times being reduced by half. For a time it seemed likely that a sufficiency of men would thus be secured to provide the required amount of munitions of war for our own and the Allied Governments; but a change rapidly came over the situation when the textile machinery firms commenced to work full time, and in some cases overtime, notwithstanding the fact that there had been little or no change in the demand for their commodities. They adopted this line of action for the purpose of retaining their men, as they realised that after the present abnormal state of affairs, those firms which had been busy upon war material, would certainly keep the more efficient workers. It was, therefore, better policy to put their men on production for stock rather than run the risk of losing them for good.

The Trade Union officials were asked to give their assistance in securing the necessary number of men, and they were also given to understand that if the required number was not forthcoming the shops would have to be organised in such fashion as would allow of the introduction of unskilled labour. The officials immediately

offered their assistance in order to avoid this alternative, and entered into conference with the employers' representatives. The result, after many vain efforts to come to an agreement, was that on March 6th the following scheme was formulated to be placed before the members of the different societies for their acceptance or rejection :—

(1) Men engaged in the making of tools and gauges shall be skilled men. Men engaged in setting up machines shall be fully qualified for the operations they undertake.

(2) Such men may be drawn from other branches of the engineering industry, provided they possess the necessary qualifications, and shall be paid at least the standard rate of wages for the operation on which they are for the time employed.

(3) List of men employed in the terms of the foregoing provisions shall be furnished to the local representatives of the unions concerned.

(4) Such men shall first be affected by any necessary discharges either during or after the period of the war.

(5) Where skilled men are at present employed they shall in no case be displaced by less skilled labour unless other skilled employment is found for them in the same department.

(6) Operations on which skilled workmen are at present employed, but which, by reason of their character, can be performed by semi-skilled or female labour, may be done by such labour during the war period. Where semi-skilled or female labour is employed in place of skilled labour, the rates paid shall be the usual rates of the district obtaining for the operations performed.

(7) The Federation employer shall at the conclusion of the war, unless the Government notify that the emergency continues, reinstate the working conditions of his factory on the pre-war basis, and as far as possible afford re-employment for his men who are at present serving with His Majesty's Forces.

(8) The Federation undertakes that the fact of the restrictions being temporarily removed, shall not be used to the ultimate prejudice of the workpeople or their Trade Unions.

(9) These proposals shall not warrant any employer making such arrangements in the shops as will effect a permanent restriction of employment of any trade in favour of semi-skilled men or female labour.

(10) The employers agree that they will not, after the war, take advantage of this to decrease wages, premium bonus times, or piecework prices (unless warranted by alteration in the means or method of manufacture) or break down established conditions, and will adopt such proposals only for the object of increasing output in the present extraordinary circumstances.

(11) The employers agree to take all possible steps to insure distribution of Government work throughout the Kingdom.

(12) So far as consistent with the national requirements regarding output, the employers undertake to reduce overtime wherever possible, and in any event to distribute it over as large a number of workpeople as practicable.

(13) In the event of semi-skilled or female labour being employed, as per the foregoing clauses they shall be first affected by any necessary discharges either before or after the war period.

(14) The liberty of any employer to take advantage of these proposals shall be subject to acquiescence in all the provisions thereof and to intimation of his acquiescence to the local representatives of the Unions through his local association.

To the average workman this is apparently an honourable agreement, and in his inborn innocence he is likely to accept it—as he accepts most other agreements—without realizing what it really means. While the agreement will be strictly adhered to by both parties during the war period, or as long as the Government continues its demand for munitions of war, it is yet perfectly plain that it will be to the ruinous disadvantage of the workers at a later period, when things are once more normal, and the workers must again resort to the strike weapon to defend their interests. There is every likelihood that many months will elapse before it will be necessary for the employers to dispense with this new kind of labour that they desire to introduce, by which time the semi-skilled men will have become fairly proficient workmen; and this being so, they will constitute an ever-ready army of strike-breakers.

As the proposals are to be voted upon in the various branches, it is essential that all of us in the forefront of the battle should do everything in our power to overthrow them. It has been pointed out by the men's representatives (and ample evidence put forward) that there is a sufficient number of men to meet all the requirements if the Government would force the other employers either to release their men or take up some of the Government work. All the branches should inform their different Executive Councils that they must insist on the Government taking over the distribution of the work. Well aware as we are that the introduction of new machinery cannot be retarded as a wage-reducing factor, it is all the more necessary that we should fight against the introduction of any other element with a similar tendency. Since, as Trade Unionists, we can only exist by fighting, let us fight.

FRANK JACKSON.

Correspondence

SOCIALISM AFTER THE WAR

Sir,

It seems to me that certain important points have been overlooked in the discussion in *The Plebs* on the position of Socialism after the war.

Take, for example, such questions as those already being raised in the Press—"Will clerks return to the drudgery of the desk and its limited outlook after a life of open-air and danger? Will farm labourers return to their tiny pittance and monotonous toil after a spell in the firing-line? Will the weavers settle down uncomplainingly to the vitiated atmosphere of the mill and the uncertainty of regular employment?" And so on. And one may add—"Will any of these workers view with complacency the increased cost of living, especially after all the discussion in the Press to-day as to *who* is receiving the margins created by the increased costs of necessities?"

These aspects of the situation seem to me to point to an inevitable growth of Socialism among the proletariat of the whole world.

Many a housewife whose breadwinner is at the front, and many another on account of the increased cost of living, has paid no rent. And the Law, be it noted, is aiding and abetting this 'No Rent Policy'—in England, it is true, to but a limited extent; but in France, I understand, on a much more comprehensive scale. Landlords and agents have been a little shy in face of the "inability to pay on account of the war" plea; and they have not had their customary satisfaction in the County Courts.

After the war, how long will it take to get back into the old groove of "pay or clear out"? Some time, I can't help thinking. In addition then will be a smaller demand for houses owing to the ravages of the war. Further, we are experiencing a considerable amount of "State" Socialism, every step of which has been taken by the Government out of pure necessity. Can we revert to Individual Enterprise by a stroke of the pen at the subsequent Peace Conference? I think not.

The higher cost of living will demand higher wages, which may not be forthcoming owing to the increased war levies on incomes. The labour shortage—an after effect of the war—will also increase the wages rate, and tend to keep financiers' money cheap. These factors will be world-wide in their incidence, and will engage the attention of the Capitalist class to a sufficient extent to make them chary in exporting their capital, as previously, until things have once again become normal.

These are all indications of "liveliness" in the economic world in the early days of peace, more disturbing to the "Top-dog" than any "liveliness" recently recorded by the Press Bureau.

Burnley.

T. E. SHUTTLEWORTH.

Sir,—I was much interested in an announcement in March *Plebs* re Blackpool Conference. I hope it may be the precursor of greater activity in the various centres, and that it may stimulate each individual member of the classes in those centres to greater energy.

Now is the time for us to show our mettle. Let us take our Marxian Theory to our Trade Union branches, Labour Clubs, Socialist Clubs—take it everywhere. Let us show whether War can kill Socialism! We want waking up. We ought to go right bang at our object, with no fear of failure. Our premise is sound and unassailable. . . . The International crumbled owing to the weakness of the National Pillars. Let us build then from the foundations; begin with Lancashire, and spread our principles, county by county, until the C.L.C. is the centre of the National movement.

We *can* do it. Most of us have never tried. Let's get to work. In my own Trade Union branch I have seen hostility to the College changed to support—aye, financial support. It's time that we tested our qualities—gave the knowledge we've gained some opportunity of achieving practical results. The more we do, the better fitted we shall be to do more. Aim directly at instituting new, or transferring existing, scholarships to the C.L.C. The need is plain, and the problem of how to meet it can be solved with a little energy. Get into the clubs and branches, and once inside let them know that the C.L.C. exists; tell them *how* it exists, and in your own way tell them what it stands for. Don't get discouraged; keep on steadily and straightforwardly, and be determined, as the representative of the C.L.C. in your town or district, to carry the matter through. Never mind if you hit some tender spots, or if your audience gets restless. Show them that there is some substance in what you have to say. Get a move on—and keep it on!

Who's for the fray?

Blackburn.

P. MATHER.

Reviews

WHAT'S WRONG WITH EUROPE?

What is wrong with Germany? by W. H. Dawson.

(Longmans, Green & Co., 2/- net).

Of the writing of books on Germany and the World War there is no end. Those published at the beginning of the war were largely devoted to denunciations of Teutonic wickedness generally and to the sins of the Kaiser in particular. But in subsequent volumes careful analysis has been substituted for mere expressions of hostility, quite a new science having arisen—enquiring into the nature and causes of those lapses into barbarism which (it is assumed by English writers of to-day) are something quite peculiar to the German character and temperament. *What is wrong with*

Germany? is a fair sample of books of this kind. It is however, marked throughout by a moderation of tone and statement which makes it refreshing reading when compared with some of the more lurid and sensational work dealing with the same topic. But the work is marred by a wearisome reiteration of the same arguments and stands much in need of compression.

The author's object is to trace

the tendencies of German national thought and policy which have for some years been making inexorably for war. He claims that there are three responsibilities—of the Emperor, of the Chauvinists and war-makers, and of the German nation as a whole—and he indicates the parts played by these several factors in bringing upon the world the present catastrophe. Regarding Prussian militarism as the enemy of Germany and Europe, he shows it to be inseparable from Germany's present system of Government, and in a concluding chapter considers the political reforms necessary to the peace of that country and of the world, and how they should be brought about.

In elaborating his case the author makes full use of the now familiar trinity—Treitschke, Nietzsche, and Bernhardi—and emphasises the importance of these writers who have so powerfully influenced the German mind during recent years. It is interesting to notice that he rejects the "great man" theory of the causes of historical development. "There has been a tendency to identify genetically any political movement of exceptional importance with certain commanding personalities . . . whereas the larger fact is that such personalities have only gathered together and voiced the tendencies of their time." The evils of militarism and an omnipotent State are clearly indicated and this should convey a warning to English people, for these twin evils are developing here rapidly. The fundamental error of the whole work is of course the assumption that the various wrongs he denounces are peculiar to Germany. In some degree they are common to every capitalist country in the world. That they are more vivid and startling in the case of Germany is simply due to the conditions of her material development. Germany came late to the capitalist feast of industrial and territorial expansion, hence she passes more swiftly (and therefore more ruthlessly) through historical phases through which England took many decades to evolve. It is to be regretted that the author in his zeal for the cause of small nationalities should have overlooked Finland, Persia, and the Transvaal. And may not all that Bernhardi has ever written be summed up in the words "Military necessity knows no law?" Yet these are not the words of a German militarist but of Mr. Tennant, the English Radical statesman! The remedies suggested appear very tame in comparison with the evils they are to cure; an amendment of the German constitution, relegation of Prussia to a more subordinate position in the Empire, and the substitution of an elective for an hereditary monarchy, sum up all the author has to offer by way of solution of the many problems he raises. The book concludes with a grave warning to the Allies to beware lest their diplomats rob them of the (prospective) victories

of their soldiers—a passage which forms an ironic comment on the honour of the treaty makers as well as on that of the treaty breakers.

Had the author devoted half the time he has given to Treitschke to a study of the works of another great German (one Marx) he would certainly have arrived at very different conclusions from those contained in his book—

H. WYNN-CUTHBERT.

—SO FAR AS IT GOES

The War and Democracy, by R. W. Seton-Watson, D.Litt., J. Dover Wilson, M.A., A. E. Zimmern, M.A., and Arthur Greenwood, B.Sc. (Macmillan and Co., 2s. net).

This book is dedicated to the Workers' Educational Association. It originated, the preface tells us, "in the experience of its writers at the summer schools for working-class students, held in connection with the W.E.A." It has been written "as a guide to the study of the underlying causes and issues of the war."

The *New Statesman* has hailed it as "the best book on the war"; and an admirable book it undoubtedly is—so far as it goes. Unfortunately it goes no further than Mazzini, to whom ("the most prophetic soul among nineteenth-century nationalists") there are a good many enthusiastic references throughout the book. That is to say, it discusses the war, authoritatively and informingly, from the standpoint of Liberalism, Nationalism, and political democracy; it nowhere alludes even to the existence of a *proletarian* point of view, as distinct from the point of view of the "citizen." This attitude may not stand in the way of a fairly satisfying treatment of the problems of South-Eastern Europe, where social development, roughly speaking, is to-day at the stage it had reached in Italy in Mazzini's time. But other problems—and other prophets—have arisen in Western Europe since that time, and these same problems complicate the issues even in those countries where political democracy is still to be achieved.

Liberalism, however, has decided that this is a war on behalf of "the twin principles of Nationality and Democracy"; and these are the "underlying causes and issues" dealt with in this book. The introductory chapter, indeed, after stating that the book throughout "is concerned with the *political* causes underlying the war," goes on to admit that "it would not be right to ignore the fact that there are other deeper causes," that "the Iron Law of Wages is a generation older than Bismarck; and 'Business is Business' can be no less odious a watchword than 'War is War.'" Such delicate subjects, however, are left behind in the first chapter; and we proceed to study the growth and development of the "National Idea in Europe, 1789-1914." In succeeding chapters Mr. Zimmern writes on Germany; Mr. Seton-Watson—probably the foremost British authority on this particular subject—on Austria and the Southern Slavs; and Mr. Dover Wilson on Russia. In this latter chapter there are a good many interesting sidelights on recent industrial development and its effect on the Russian

peasant. Mr. Arthur Greenwood writes a non-committal sort of survey of "Social and Economic Aspects of the War"; and Mr. Zimmern concludes the volume with a chapter on "German Culture and the British Commonwealth."

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of all is Mr. Seton-Watson's discussion of "The Issues of the War," which deals—among other points—with the Alsace-Lorraine, Schleswig-Holstein, and Polish questions; the future of Austria-Hungary; Italian "aspirations"; the Balkan situation; Russia and Constantinople; and the future of Turkey. In this chapter we come nearest to facts; and Mazzinian idealism, amid all this welter of "interests," "compensations," demands for seaports, and so forth, seems to "fade away and gradually die," as the patriotic song has it.

Once more, this is an excellent book—so far as it goes. Had it gone further, moreover, it was hardly likely to have been published as a W. E. A. text book, and we should have had to pay half-a-sovereign instead of two shillings for the very useful matter it contains.

J. F. H.

THE RED FLAG

International Socialism and the War, by A. W. Humphrey.
(P. S. King & Son, 3/6 net.)

To anyone requiring a concise and easily readable summary of the actions of the various Socialist Parties and the International with regard to the present war, this book will be exceedingly useful. As the author points out—"the book is not intended as a complete account of the International Socialist movement in connection with the war" but is only concerned with "the broad principles upon which the various Socialists have acted, the main facts which have influenced them, and how they stand in relation to their respective Governments." This information is based on the pronouncements of the various organizations and their official press.

In the first place, we are told, that the International Bureau and all the various Socialist Parties declared against the war at the outset, and enthusiastic protest meetings were held with a view to bringing pressure to bear on their respective Governments. The next thing we see is the majority of these same Parties upholding and supporting the actions of their Governments. Why this sudden change of front? Although our author does not specifically say so, it is quite clear, after a perusal of the manifestoes of the various Parties, that the cause lies in the so called "nationalism" which the International has declared it the duty of Socialists to uphold. It is this "nationalism" which explains the inconsistent position of Socialists supporting both sides in the present war. As our author points out, this inconsistency "arises because the two worst Governments in Europe are ranged on opposite sides. With the Alliance is Kaiserism, with the Entente Czarism, and Socialists everywhere fear the increased influence of either." The German Socialists are fighting to protect this beloved "nationalism" against Czarism, whilst on the other hand the French, English, and Belgian Socialists are protecting their "nationalism" against Kaiserism; in reality both sides are unconsciously advancing the Imperialistic aims of their respective Governments.

But what of the Russian Socialists? In Chapter XV. we are told that just prior to the outbreak of war, Russia was on the eve of revolution. "In Petrograd 120,000 workers were on strike, and barricades were in the streets of the working-class quarters." All this was put on one side when it became known that Germany had declared war. Just as in England and Germany there is a strong minority against the war, so we find the same in Russia. According to our author, the Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party has stated in a Manifesto that of a Russian victory over Germany or a German victory over Russia, the latter is the lesser of the two evils from the point of view of the Russian working class. The London branch of the Russian Social-Democratic Party issued a statement in October in which they denied "that the war is either a war of liberation or a war of civilization against militarism." Paradoxical as it may seem, nevertheless, according to the statements set out in this book, it is the Russian Socialists who have remained true to the genuine interests of the European working class, and not the cultured "nationalists" of Germany, France, and England.

In the conclusion of his book the author emphasizes the fact that the various Socialists are acting, as they think, in the interests of Socialism and Democracy, and that this "is the guarantee of the future life of the International." Yet we must remember that enthusiasm and understanding are two different things. Whilst there has been plenty of enthusiasm in the International, nevertheless the lack of understanding of Imperialistic policy enabled the respective European Governments to dupe the various Socialist parties into the belief that they were fighting for their precious "nationalism." In Chapter VIII. we can see the basis on which to build the New International, viz., International Trade Unionism. In the words of our author "A world Trade Unionism is bred by a world market." The world market knows no national boundaries and neither would a world Trade Unionism. The downfall of the International means the downfall of the old fighting methods. The war will not have been in vain if it teaches the workers of Europe this fact. It is up to us to make ourselves acquainted with the causes of the failure of the International, and this little book throws a good deal of light on those causes. In the words at the end of Chapter XV. expressing the sentiments of the Russian Socialists' Manifesto—"The business of the International proletariat is to work for an early conclusion of peace, to rally to the banner of the International, and to use the war as a means of hastening the Social Revolution."

ROBERT HOLDER.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

The Healing of Nations, by EDWARD CARPENTER (Allen and Unwin, cloth 2s. 6d. net, paper 2s. net).

The New Faith, by FRED HENDERSON (Jarrold, 1s. net).

After the War, by G. LOWES DICKINSON (Fifield, 6d. net).

The British Empire, by SIR CHAS. P. LUCAS (Macmillan, 2s. net).

Trade Unionism, by C. M. LLOYD (Black, Social Workers' Series, 2s. 6d. net).

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