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# THE PLEBS

"I can promise to be candid but not impartial"

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## OUR PLANS

BY THE EDITOR.

**W**ITH this issue, as the discerning reader will have noted for himself, we are initiating sundry changes in the "make-up" and general appearance of THE PLEBS. Those changes—small as yet, but, we trust, agreeable—are intended as little reminders of other changes which we have in view for the near future. In carrying out our plans we shall need the active interest and support of all our friends; of all those men and women, that is, who believe in Independent Working-Class Education as a vital weapon in the fight for the abolition of capitalism.

Our movement is growing by leaps and bounds. (Elsewhere in this issue recent happenings and developments are referred to and commented upon.) The fact that it is growing means that it is being discussed; and the fact that it is being discussed makes all the more essential a constant restatement and redefinition (we do *not* mean "revision") of its meaning and its aims. "Working-class Education" means a dozen different things in the mouths of a dozen different "reformers." We of THE PLEBS are out, in William Morris's phrase, for "Education towards Revolution." And, as Arthur McManus wrote in these pages last month, "The *slaying-power* of revolution, its very maintenance, will be determined by the amount of real ground-work achieved in the shape of Socialist and Working-class Education."

There are a score of different ways in which a journal primarily devoted to educational propaganda can be vitally useful to the working-class educational movement. Reviews of new books, articles on historical and contemporary movements, syllabuses of lecture or study courses, discussions of theoretical questions—all these, besides the more obvious usefulness of serving as a link between classes and a record of their doings, are needed by the keen student. THE PLEBS, we hope, is going to supply them. We have the men. Look over our yearly volumes and tell us whether we cannot get together a group of contributors capable of producing a live, "worth-

while" working-class review. We'll guarantee you value for money—if you'll help us with the money.

We are getting near to the point.

Now, you can't squeeze a really adequate monthly review into 16 small pages. Big subjects need elbow-room if they are to be properly discussed. BUT—16 pages is as much as can be supplied for 2d. nowadays.

You begin to catch our drift?

Let's out with it. If there are not enough keen, intelligent working-class students up and down the country, on the Clyde, in the Rhondda, on the North-East coast, in Lancashire, to support a decent monthly review, then Evolution help the working-class movement in this country! And if we can't "deliver the goods" . . . well, we'll get out of the way, and leave the field open for other triers. But we think we can do it; and we have faith enough in those working-class students to believe they'll back us.

*With our next issue (September) we go up to 24 pages. That necessitates our price going up to 3d. monthly. (Post paid, 3½d.; six months' postal subscription, 1s. 9d.) Before the year is out—if you will back us—we'll be a 48-page 6d. monthly.*

Now, we know that these are days when working men and women have to lay out money carefully, and when plain folk can't afford sixpence—or even threepence—for a journal unless it's honestly worth while. Give us a trial. We'll do our damndest to make THE PLEBS cheap at whatever price we have to charge for it. Sixpence monthly is precious little if you get *the goods*—the *meat*, as Jack London would have put it. There are half-a-dozen vigorous weeklies—we need name no names!—now doing the work and publishing the stuff which THE PLEBS almost alone was doing five years ago. We want to break new ground; and we believe you'll help us to do it. From various quarters we have had messages urging us to get on with "a sixpenny monthly." If every class secretary will see to it this winter that his students are each and all PLEBS subscribers, we're safe. Don't, please, say you'll "wait and see." We can't afford to distribute free specimen copies. You'll have to take us on our past record. If you think Craik and Ablett, Sims and Newbold, Starr, Holder, the Pauls, Wm. Paul, McManus—to name but a few of those who will write for us—can between them turn out a sixpenny monthly worth the money, then get busy booking orders for us.

And take notice—a bigger, fuller review doesn't mean a *duller* one. McManus hit the right nail on the head when he pleaded last month for "Education, and along more popular lines," and when he urged emulation of Lenin and Trotsky in the task of putting difficult theories and propositions into simple terms. More space means more chance to explain oneself.

In the meantime—just to get into our stride, so to speak—we're going up to 3d. Annual subscribers who have still some months to run at the old rates, will not be charged extra until their subscriptions again become due. (Though, needless to remark, the difference between the old and the new price will be gratefully received, if sent.) All parcel order charges will be increased by 50%, from next month. Please let us know *in good time* (*i.e.*, by the 18th inst. at latest) of any change in the quantity you order. But we hope and trust you won't alter your order, unless it's to increase it. *Don't* send us subs. for the *sixpenny* issue yet—we'll notify you in good time.

And please don't forget the balance of that £40, which we've still to clear, despite a gratifying response during the past month.

Time for the peroration.

We'll make it brief. *Forward* had a caricature of Wullie Gallacher recently, in which that irrepressible representative of the Clyde militant was depicted as glancing at a placard bearing the words "Peace Signed," and remarking grimly, as he rolled up his sleeves, "*Is it?*" We, like him, want to get busy in the only war that matters. We're out to supply munitions. They're needed, right enough. Never were the other side harder at work. The air is thick with lies and misrepresentations and distortions—about Russia, about Hungary, about the workers' movement wherever and whenever it makes its presence felt. "We can promise to be candid, but not impartial." Give us a chance to put in some overtime.

ERGATOCRACY AND THE SHOP STEWARDS'  
MOVEMENT

## I

**I**N previous articles, in *THE PLEBS* and elsewhere, ergatocracy has been briefly defined as "the administration of the workers, by the workers, for the workers," in contradistinction to democracy, which is "the government of the people, by the people, for the people." The need for a new term to denote the new aims and new methods of the working-class movement is daily made more manifest. On the one hand it is essential to avoid the confusion arising from the use of the word "democracy" now in a good sense and now in a bad one, often in different articles in the same newspaper, and sometimes within the limits of a single article. On the other hand, the term frequently suggested, the term much used by faithful Marxists, the term "dictatorship of the proletariat," is, though useful, both cumbersome and inadequate. Broadly speaking, we may summarise the political history of recent centuries in the western world by saying that it has been characterised by the transition from theocratic aristocracy to bourgeois or capitalist democracy. We are now in the throes of transition to a new phase, and the transition is likely to be accomplished in decades instead of centuries, in years instead of decades—the transition from capitalist democracy to communist ergatocracy. Apart from the inelegance of the term, we could not properly speak of the new order as "communist dictatorship of the proletariat." The dictatorship is no more than a transient and necessary evil, a counterblast to the veiled dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and we shall pass, speedily it may be hoped, through dictatorship to ergatocracy.

In one of its manifold aspects the Great War, ostensibly initiated to rid Germany of anachronistic vestiges of theocratic aristocracy, has been an attempt to make the world safe for democracy, a democracy which boasts of giving equal rights to such folk as Northcliffe and Rockefeller, and is, therefore, ruled by such folk as Northcliffe and Rockefeller, and by the Lloyd Georges and the Wilsons who are their instruments, a democracy whose very thoughts are suggested by the Press, the school, and the cinema controlled by the capitalist oligarchs.

In this journal it is needless to offer proofs of the thesis that capitalism is doomed. Behind its solid-seeming front, the entire structure is crumbling to ruin. The alternative that confronts us is not the alternative between capitalism and socialism, but the alternative between socialism and chaos. Now it grows increasingly clear that socialism will never be secured through parliamentary democracy, that our goal can be attained only through communist ergatocracy. Parliament, whatever it may have been in its origins, has become essentially an instrument for the maintenance and diffusion of capitalist democracy. We shall court disaster should we attempt to put our new ergatocratic wine into the old parliamentary bottles. It is quite probable that the course of events will compel the capitalist oligarchs to disregard the parliamentary instrument, to continue during the false peace the militarist dictatorship that prevailed throughout the war. However this may be, for clear-sighted revolutionists, at any rate, parliament, the instrument of the bourgeoisie, is obsolete, and must be thrown on the scrap-heap. Those who realise that the parliamentary machine is out of date must show their colours. It is sheer waste of time for us to trouble ourselves over parliamentary paraphernalia, to interest ourselves in elections, to lobby Labour members, to participate in delegations to Cabinet ministers. We have to devote ourselves to the fashioning of the new tool. We must concentrate our energies upon organising and educating our fellow workers, so that when the favourable moment comes there may be an adequate revolutionary minority able to avail itself of the new instrument, and a mass psychology which may at least not be hostile to its employment. Some details as to the nature of the new political instrument which shall express working-class social organisation as effectively as parliament has expressed bourgeois social organisation, will be given in the sequel. Meanwhile, let those who incline to jib at a new word realise that the term "ergatocracy," with its derivatives, has come to stay. It

was minted independently in this country, but the Greek socialists (who, after all, have the prior claim to the use of their own tongue) have recently started a periodical entitled "The Ergatocrat"

EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL.

(To be continued.)

### THE PARABLE OF THE MARXIANS

**A**ND behold, yet once again the Teacher lifted up his voice and spake unto them in parables, saying:

2. An explorer went out to explore, and as he explored, he discovered a new continent.

3. And behold, there was an exceeding mighty river flowing to the west, and at the source thereof was a small village.

4. And he communed with himself saying, Verily, I will name the continent England, and the river will I call the Thames, and as to the village, surely I will call it London.

5. And he spied about and he discovered a small path leading to the southwards, and he called the path the Caledonian Railway.

6. So when he was returned to his own country he cried aloud in the market place and said,

7. I know of a certainty that England is a mighty continent, and that the River Thames is an exceedingly mighty river which floweth towards the west.

8. And moreover, the small village of London standeth at the source thereof, and the Caledonian Railway leadeth from London to the south. And no man knoweth where it leadeth.

9. But certain of the bystanders did interrupt him, saying, Surely these things are not so, for we have known all these places of which thou speakest from our youth up, and they are not as thou describest them.

10. But the explorer cried out all the louder, Verily ye are fools, for I can testify that I speak the truth.

11. Yet because no one listened to him, he began to curse and swear, and repeated all that he had said many times more.

12. Whereon they took him and bound him in chains and cast him into Bedlam, for they said, He hath a legion of devils in him.

13. And he abode there many days.

14. Now when the multitude were gone, the students came unto the Teacher and said, Explain unto us this parable.

15. And he answered them, Oh generation of blockheads, ye can discern the fallacies of Mallock but can ye not discern your own futility?

16. For the explorer is a Marxian, and the country he discovered is the Science of Economics.

17. And when he hath found out divers new things, he giveth unto them names belonging to old things. So that *labour* is called *value*, notwithstanding that this word is already used to mean other things that are not labour.

18. And he speaketh of the *coercive government* of the land as the State, whereas others use this same word to mean the *community*. And *ability to labour* he nameth *labour power*.

19. And he doth this that they who hear may not understand, lest hearing they may be converted and cast down the Capitalist System.

20. And many other words doth he use with strange new meanings different from those understood by all other men.

21. So it cometh to pass that when he speaketh in the market-place, they who stand by understand him not, and say, He is surely mad, and a Bolshevik.

22. And his enemies speak unto them subtilely, saying, With your own ears have ye heard that he speaketh that which is not true. So that they cast stones at him that spake in strange ways.

23. And he saith within himself, Surely their heads are empty. For he knoweth not that it is himself that is the fool.

24. He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

M. W.

## A BOOK THAT CHEERS

IN his latest book\*—which it is to be hoped every Pleb has ere now read and re-read (it is his own loss if he has not)—Ransome tells with gusto of the conversion of Sukhanov, a friend of Gorky's. Some months before he at last offered to work with the Bolsheviks, Pavlovitch, head of the Committee of State Constructions, had written in his diary, "Sukhanov will come." Sukhanov did. And Pavlovitch remarked to Ransome, "He is an honest fellow, and was bound to come."

One wonders whether Pavlovitch has made any entries in his diary concerning Ransome! But though—as yet—Ransome does not call himself a Bolshevik, his book is not less, nay, it is even more, valuable on that account. He is an honest writer, as well as an able one. And for propagandist purposes *Six Weeks in Russia* is even better than Trotsky's history or Lenin's pamphlets, since he is concerned to give us simply a picture of "things seen," and neither to prove a proposition or defend a policy. That is not to say that Ransome has no critical powers, of men or of things. On the contrary, it is fairly obvious that he is a pretty shrewd judge of character, and he is man-of-the-world enough (he is a 20th century journalist, remember) not to accept statements without question, or further inquiry. Indeed, throughout the book there is ample evidence that it is more fashionable in Russia than it is further west to face the facts; and those poor *Times* reviewers who have week by week to churn out denunciations of Bolshevism might, with profit, imitate the Bolshevik leaders themselves in their ruthless summing up of the *pros* and *cons* of the Revolution.

Ransome's book makes it fairly clear that the thousand and one statements in our bought-and-paid-for Press about the Russian Revolution crumbling to pieces as a result of internal opposition are merely instances of "the wish being father to the thought." Right from the very beginning, in fact, those innocents who imagined from the book's title that it must be a melodrama, will be sorely disappointed. A cabman who merely demands a big fare, instead of driving you into a by-way and then murdering you, is a poor specimen of a Bolshevik after what our leader-writers had led us to expect. And the interview with "An Ex-Capitalist" is shockingly flat—not a drop of gore anywhere. One can well imagine that many horror-seekers have wished for their half-crowns back.

There are even touches of humour. Ransome and the party he travelled with were delayed on the Finnish frontier owing, they were told, to "a serious revolt in Petrograd." "The Semenovskiy regiment had mutinied, seized the city, etc., etc." When the party reached Petrograd they immediately inquired about the Semenovskiy regiment and the mutiny. "There was a shout of laughter, and Pozen explained that there was no Semenovskiy regiment in existence." Needless to add, this yarn had been "duly telegraphed to England." There is always a market for fairy-tales there! . . . Plebs will smile, too, at our author's little outburst about

the horrible statue of Karl Marx (outside Smolni), who stands, thick and heavy, on a stout pedestal, holding behind him an enormous top-hat like the muzzle of an 18-inch gun.

Well, you can't deny, Mr. Ransome, that, ugly or not, there is a certain symbolic fitness about the Marxian topper reminding you of a big gun. And, while we are on the subject of humour, couldn't some of our frenzied Jeremiahs take a lesson from the Arch-fiend, Lenin himself—"this little, baldheaded, wrinkled man, who tilts his chair this way and that, laughing over one thing or another . . . every one of his wrinkles is a wrinkle of laughter, not of worry." "*More than ever Lenin struck me as a happy man.*" And all the time our poor Jeremiahs are working themselves up into a dreadful state of ill-humour about him. It's a hard life, is a paid denunciator's. Why not be a Bolshevik, and "Smile, Smile, Smile"?

And, thanks be to Ransome, one *can* smile even when one has finished the book, for he heartens us by making us feel the real optimism of all the Bolshevik leaders as

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\* "*Six Weeks in Russia in 1919.*" By Arthur Ransome. 2s. 6d. (post paid) 2s. 8d. from S.L. Press or B.S.P.).

regards their eventual triumph over external enemies and internal difficulties. The difficulties are real enough. Listen to Pavlovitch, who as already mentioned is the Chief of the State Constructions Dept.:—

“War spoils everything,” he continued. “This committee should be at work on affairs of peace, making Russia more useful to herself and to the rest of the world. You know our plans. But we are fighting on all our fronts, and with all our best men away, we are compelled to use 90% of our energy and material for the immediate needs of the army.”

(It's amusing, by the way, to recall our Parliamentarians' efforts to set political against industrial democracy—which of them has ever had the opportunity of voting either for or against military measures against Soviet Russia?) Yet even “military necessity” has been forced to serve its turn as a lesson to doubters. To save at least some of the Baltic Fleet it was necessary to deepen and widen the canals between the Baltic and the Volga, a scheme turned down as impracticable under the Czar's regime. The Bolsheviks' engineers have done it—though their pleasure at its achievement was spoiled by the knowledge that to accomplish it men and materials had to be taken from the electrical undertakings started in order to make Petrograd independent of the coal supply. Even so comparatively small a matter as the supply of matches has been improved by a new process invented and developed in the Government laboratories. There is no lack of ideas in Russia, but Peace is sorely needed to permit of a fair opportunity for their realisation. Meantime, remembering the brilliant success of private enterprise in this and other countries in dealing with war requirements, we can rate Capitalist criticism of Soviet organisation at its true value.

The chapter on Education is naturally especially interesting to PLEBS readers, and one gleans from it some idea of the part an intelligent understanding is expected to play in the future of Russian society. One is not surprised to learn that special attention is being paid to the teaching of science, history, and philosophy; also, more important still at present in Russia, of industrial mechanics. As to the literature in demand, it would appear to be mostly matter calculated to develop social knowledge. “No one reads sentimental romances” (which may explain why some, at least, of the “literary gents” are “agen the Government.”) The W.E.A. will be gratified to learn that “a great deal of poetry is read,” and that excited controversy rages in the periodicals as to the merits of “the new proletarian art.” The great difficulty as regards the education of the children is the lack of fuel and of food. Adult students can “stick it”—in fur caps and great-coats; though the result may be hands so frostbitten as to be badly disfigured (and doubtless, hearts full of respectful gratitude to those more highly-cultured nations responsible for the blockade!) So the children are given meals instead of lessons. And as one of the commissioners remarked, “By making them come for their meals we do two things—keep them alive and keep them in the habit of coming, so that when the warm weather comes we can do better.”

The section in which Ransome deals with public entertainments is also interesting, though brief. The new type of audience and the old, old lack of fuel are described. Ransome does not disguise his contempt for the audiences of the past regime. There has been “a general transfer of brains from the gallery to the floor of the house . . . where formerly were the people who came to digest their dinners.” One interesting feature of the list he gives of theatrical performances in Moscow is the popularity of dramatised versions of Dickens—*The Cricket on the Hearth* at the Art Theatre, and *A Christmas Carol* and *Little Dorrit* at other houses. Obviously, a people which delights in Dickens *must* be a fierce and bloodthirsty generation! And—  
going home afterwards . . . I did not see a single armed man. A year ago the streets were deserted after 10 in the evening. . . . Now they were full of foot-passengers going home. . . . There could be no question about it. The revolution is settling down.

Poor, poor Jeremiahs!

But we cannot go on quoting indefinitely—though one may have marked passages on every page. We say again—This is a heartening book! Only the confirmed Utopian will be daunted by the fact that—

a Socialist state was faced with difficulties as real as those which confront other states; that in the battle there was little sentiment and much cynicism, and that dreams worked out in terms of humanity in the face of the opposition of the whole of the rest of the world are not easily recognised by their dreamers . . . and that it is really necessary to set to work and, stone by stone, with bleeding hands level the walls of Jericho.

And hark to Lenin:—"England may seem to you untouched, but the microbe is already there."

GEO. SIMS.

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

**T**HE movement for REAL Working-Class Education—for education, that is, designed to equip the workers for their own task of self-emancipation, as distinct from that which aims at making them more contented or more efficient labourers for the profit of others—is growing everywhere. One sign of its growth is that camouflaged organisations such as the W.E.A., blessed by bishops, baronets and bosses generally (not to mention Labour's own backsliders) are resetting their sails to catch the changing breeze. Thus Mr. J. M. MacTavish, in a recent number of the *Shop Assistant*, boldly—for a W.E.A.er almost dare devilishly!—declares that "the most striking social phenomena (*sic*) of our times, unfolding itself in all parts of the world, is the rise of the working-class. . . . There has grown up a new power—a workers' power—Trade Unionism. . . . less than a century ago the pariahs of society . . . now the confidants of Cabinets and Prime Ministers." The W.E.A., accordingly, intent of yore on citizen-culture, now braces itself for the making of militant Trade Unionists, filled with "enthusiasm for the workers' emancipation." *O tempora! O mores!*

That other famous Dope Dispensary, Ruskin College, Oxford, has been figuring in big type in the columns of the leading organs of public opinion during the past month. The camouflage on R. C. is pretty thin, indeed almost transparent; which may account for the fact that (so far as we have observed) the *Daily Herald*, heretofore resolute to hear no evil of the workers' Only Link with Oxford, has not published the Appeal for Funds recently issued on its behalf. It would, indeed, be a little difficult to rouse organised Labour to enthusiasm for an institution which A. J. Balfour, D. Lloyd George, Auckland Geddes, and R. S. Horne (among others) are confident will, if adequately supported by the Trade Unions, exercise "an influence for good on the future development of the Labour movement." An Appeal with such signatories appears more appropriately in such popular journals (among Trade Unionists) as the *Times*, the *Telegraph*, and the *Morning Post*. Fellow-workers! "We, the undersigned, desire to call your attention to the exceptional importance of the work undertaken by Ruskin College, Oxford, the only residential college of its kind in the country." (*Of its kind, yes! Though thank God there are other kinds.*) "There is a genuine demand by Labour for higher education . . . and we are confident that the college can help to supply this demand efficiently." Yours fraternally, D. Lloyd George, etc., etc., etc. One expected to find the names of Messrs. Geo. Barnes and D. J. Shackleton in the list; and, of course, where Geddes and Horne are gathered together there will Clynes be in the midst of them; and the last place, *after* the names of those who left him on the mat, is, as befits one of his humbleness, filled by Arthur Henderson. Truly, the list of signatories, as the *Daily Telegraph* remarked, "is a remarkable one." And we cannot improve on the same journal's summary of the case for Ruskin College:—

It aims at a *sound instruction* in the branches of study chosen, without colour of religion or politics; and since a certain battle was fought out some fifteen (!) years ago, between the executive committee and those who sought to make the College a centre of class-war propaganda, it has been an educational institution, *pure and simple*. . . . The names appended to the present appeal are assurance enough that the situation is now such as we describe.

They are, indeed—and assurance enough, also, of the sort of "influence for good" which Ruskin College would be likely to exercise on the Labour movement.

We turn with relief to the REAL movement. When the Labour College opens in September it looks like being a case of "House Full." The latest body to decide to support the College is the Northumberland Miners' Association, which will send two students. Our only surprise is that Northumberland got in before Durham, and we shall be surprised if Durham does not go one better shortly. We are unable to give any official announcements as yet concerning the College's activities; but we do not think we are betraying any secrets in mentioning that the Governors have confirmed Geo. Sims' appointment as Secretary, and appointed W. H. Mainwaring to the lectureship in Economics. We are inclined to wish they would appoint a Press and publicity agent; for their present policy seems tinged with a reluctance to let their left hands know what their right hands are busy upon. Or is it that they are modest about the importance of the College? We can assure them that they need not be. Thousands of men and women are keenly interested in its success, and would be glad to know something of the Governors' plans. Cannot any railwayman or S. Wales miner persuade them to lift the curtain a little?

The promoters of the Scottish Labour College have a better appreciation of the uses of publicity. And it certainly appears as though Independent Working Class Education would be booming on the Clyde this winter. And not on the Clyde alone. The Conference at Wigan on July 12th, of the Lancs. and Cheshire League for Independent Working Class Education, called to discuss the establishment of a Labour College for the district, was attended by close on 200 delegates, of whom several stated that their organisations were already pledged to help financially. The speakers included Nun Nicholas, Albert Taylor (Rossendale), J. R. Wilson (I.L.P. organiser), Alex. Evans, and J. McGee (Manchester "Plebs"). It was unanimously agreed that the necessary organising work be at once proceeded with, and a College for the training of teachers for the local classes is well in sight. Meantime, arrangements for this winter's classes are already in hand, and the full-time services of Nun Nicholas for Economics, and Walton Newbold for Indust. History, have been secured. All individual students interested, or any classes desirous of taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the League, should communicate at once with J. Hamilton, 52 Byrom St., Liverpool.

On the same day a Conference was held at the William Morris Institute, Nottingham, to discuss the establishment throughout the county of classes under C.L.C. auspices.

And the following announcement speaks for itself:—

**LABOUR COLLEGE PROVINCIAL CLASSES:** North-Eastern Area (Northumberland and Durham). WANTED, full-time Lecturer and Organiser. Salary, £250 per annum. Must have efficient knowledge of Marxian Economics and Industrial History. Applications, with two references, to be sent before August 14th, to T. Ethell, 76 James St., Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Truly, the Movement Moves! . . . We may be permitted to remark finally that we want a monthly journal worthy of the Movement, and of real value to every worker in the Movement. If our friends who go up and down preaching our gospel will carry a copy of THE PLEBS in their hands, drawing attention to it at favourable moments, we shall be grateful. We depend on them.

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## REVIEWS

1,065 PAGES ON RUSSIA.

*The Spirit of Russia. Studies in History, Literature and Philosophy.* By T. G. MASARYK. Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul. (Allen and Unwin. 2 vols. 32s. net.)

THERE is a popular Russian tale to be found in most school-reading books about a soldier who was billeted on an old peasant woman and could not induce her to give him any food. "We have nothing ourselves, sonny," was her invariable reply. Whereupon the soldier hit upon a stratagem. "Have you a hatchet, mother?" he inquired. The woman looked at him with suspicion. Did he want to kill her? "No, mother," the soldier explained. "I want to make a *kasha* (thick porridge) out of it." The proposition sounded incredible, but the soldier continued to assure the woman in all seriousness that he was going to cook the hatchet, and ultimately, moved by curiosity, she gave him the desired implement. He asked for a saucepan, filled it with water, put in the hatchet, and set it on the fire to boil. Some little time elapsed, during which the old woman watched the saucepan intently. Suddenly the soldier said: "Mother, have you not got a little salt to make the porridge tasty?" "Oh, yes," the woman said, impatient to see the dish made out of the hatchet and ready to do anything to expedite its preparation. "I'll fetch it for you in a minute." She brought out the salt from a cupboard, and the soldier salted the water, and continued stirring it and tasting it from time to time. "It will be a magnificent porridge," he observed after another interval, adding carelessly: "I wish I had a handful or two of groats—that would thicken the thing marvellously." "Oh, yes, sonny," said the woman, "I can give you some." And with this she brought out a bagful of groats. The soldier thanked her. "Now it will be splendid, mother," he said, and put in the groats and continued stirring. Again some time elapsed, and again he carelessly asked: "You haven't by chance got some bacon fat? I could add it to the hatchet." The old woman was only too glad to "improve" the strange dish, and brought out bacon and fat from an obscure corner. "Now we shall soon be ready," the soldier thankfully observed, and, indeed, in a few minutes he took off the saucepan, asked for a spoon and, leaving the hatchet at the bottom, consumed its contents. "Thank you, mother," he said, when he had finished the meal, "and here is your hatchet back." The story does not record the terms in which the old lady expressed her indignation at the way in which she had been "had."

Professor Masaryk, now president of God's own Czecho-Slovak Republic, conceived somewhere about 1905 the idea of interpreting the revolution of that year in Russia in the terms of Dostoyevski's philosophy (a very strange idea, indeed!), but in order to interpret Dostoyevski himself he found it necessary to make a special study of his predecessors as well as his successors. Inasmuch, however, as literary or philosophical history does not hang in the air, the learned professor decided to give the reader also a political history of Russia since Peter the Great, but here again, since Russian history did not begin with Peter, the author found it necessary to start from prehistoric times and to continue it *beyond* Peter, so that we ultimately arrive at the story of Russian Social Democracy up to the year of Our Lord 1912. Parallel with this, the entire literary and philosophical as well as religious history of Russia is surveyed in great detail, with extra excursions, free of charge, into neighbouring domains of Marxism, Anarchism, Kantianism, etc. In his preface the author pathetically explains this singular method of studying Dostoyevski by his "lack of literary skill"—a charming confession on the part of an author responsible for two volumes totalling something over a thousand pages in translation; but we suspect that he was simply deceiving us, as the soldier deceived the old woman, by pretending to cook a hatchet in the shape of poor Dostoyevski, being really bent upon providing us (or himself) with an encyclopædia on Russia. The only difference is that while the soldier had the decency to return the hatchet to his hostess, Professor Masaryk

makes Dostoyevski vanish altogether, telling us in the last sentence on the last page of the second volume, that Dostoyevski will be dealt with—in a sequel! “Good Lord,” the reader will exclaim, “is not Masaryk a thief as well as a trickster?”

But I hope he won't, because though the literary ways of Masaryk are inscrutable, the stuffing and the spicing he “adds” to his Dostoyevski hatchet is so solid that it can well serve—and more than serve—as a dish in itself. If we forget the declared intentions with which the author set out on his journey and do not seek for the hatchet, we shall find in the two volumes such substantial food as only an erudite and conscientious German *savant* (and Masaryk is German to the core, in spite of all his protests) can set before an inquisitive and sturdy student. Masaryk, with his “realist idealism,” is, of course, a hopeless thinker, and his literary skill is really small; but, although not free from minor inaccuracies in respect of facts, his work is likely to remain for long a standard work on Russia's intellectual movements. It may be warmly recommended to every one interested in Russia (and who is not at present), and both the publishers and the translators are to be congratulated on the great courage and skill with which they so successfully tackled the formidable task of issuing this monumental book. The translation is throughout very fluent and, so far as can be judged without the German original, accurate. We cannot, however, apply the last term to the translators' disquisition on Russian pronunciation and transliteration in their “Foreword.” There are things there which had better have been left unsaid.

X. Y. Z.

#### TWO PAMPHLETS.

*Capitalism in the South Wales Coalfield.* By GEO. HARVEY. (S. L. P., 4d.; Post paid, 5d.)

This pamphlet forcibly recalls to mind that unforgettable speech of Undershaft's to his son in Shaw's *Major Barbara*. Harvey shows us the men who really control, who give the politicians their orders, who pay the piper, and invariably call the tune. That his investigations have led him out of South Wales and out of the coal industry only proves the interlocking of interests between the Coal and Steel and Money lords and their worldwide operations. What a huge amount of directive ability these captains of industry must have to be able to spread it over between 20 or 30 or more diverse concerns. What solidarity for the sake of dividends this *Who's Who* in the coal industry bears witness to. It is well we can know our masters in this fashion, for otherwise—so far is personal contact removed—we should be unaware of the men behind the mysterious capital letters painted upon the means whereby we live. Chapter 3 is a fine antidote to the attempt to place the higher price of coal to the miners' account. Many a S.W. miner will have his incentive further decreased when he has consulted the financial account of the particular company for which he helps to produce surplus value. Quite well could compensation be paid for the *original paid up* capital of these concerns, if expediency demanded it—so large are the present assets in comparison. Propagandists are indebted to Comrade Harvey and the S.L.P. for providing such a timely collection of facts when the battle for control is being waged in the coal-mining advanced section of the fighting line.

*The Coming Crash.* By WALTON NEWBOLD, M.A. (I.L.P., 2d.)

Events have wonderfully confirmed Newbold's placing of Mr. Wilson and the use made of him by American “big business.” For the rest the pamphlet shows in Newboldian fashion America's supremacy over her war-exhausted rivals, the hastening effects of war upon her industrial expansion, and her capacity to increase the lead and head the procession of Empires in world conquest. And then—the inevitable crash of the system from the international working-class movement.

M. S.

## "THE PLEBS" BOOKSHELF

I AM going to add my own word of enthusiastic admiration for Arthur Ransome's *Six Weeks in Russia* to G. S.'s appreciation on another page. I have read nothing more vivid, more quietly convincing, for a long time. It is exactly the sort of book that was wanted—not a piece of controversial propaganda, but a pen-picture of real men, at work in real surroundings. It is quietly done—Ransome's literary method is neither rhetorical nor declamatory, nor does he depend for his effects upon skilfully-manipulated "sob stuff." But he is an exceeding cunning artist; loose and even careless in construction as *Six Weeks in Russia* may appear to be, the cumulative effect of all those successive scenes, in theatres, restaurants, railway carriages, and Government offices, gets home to one in a way that the Philip Gibbs flamboyant school of descriptive writers could never achieve. Ransome may not call himself a Bolshevik; but I fancy he would readily admit the powerful influence which contact with the Bolshevik Revolution has had on his outlook. Glance down the list of his previous works given opposite the title-page of this book, and you will feel that a man so steeped in letters will be none the worse for coming so very directly into touch with life. A few of us would like half his luck! It would be worth a long journey to shake hands with "Bill" Shatov, Commandant of Petrograd, ex-New Yorker, Kropotkinite and anti-Bolshevik; who, when asked how long he thought the Soviet Government could hold out, replied, "We can afford to starve another year for the sake of the Revolution."

\* \* \* \* \*

It's a long time since we discussed novels in these pages. I have recently read H. G. Wells' *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* (just out in a cheap edition), and his last-published book, *The Undying Fire*. The latter contains a good deal of matter about Education, which I hope to quote from and comment on later. J. D. Beresford's *God's Counterpoint* is a sombre, not to say solemn, study of a man repelled yet obsessed by the physical side of sex; just the least bit less solemnity would in my opinion have made a finer book. Arnold Bennett's *Roll-Call* is a really good Bennett; the story of a young man who "got on," and found Fame a trifle unsatisfying at times, as, for example, at the great municipal banquet where he, the architect of the new Town Hall the opening of which was the occasion of the festivities, found himself very much eclipsed by the building contractor and other prominent "practical men." It was at this banquet that "the health of all classes of society which could rely on good doctors was proposed and heartily drunk—princes, prelates, legislators, warriors, judges—but the catalogue was cut short before any eccentric person could propose the health of the one-roomed poor, of whom the city was excessively prolific." Sir Harry Johnston's *The Gay-Dombey's* contains many interesting sidelights on the manners and customs of the British ruling classes A.D. 1880-1914. W. L. George's *Blind Alley* is a good foil to *Mr. Britling*. It is a very candid history of the war—on the home front; its *dramatis personæ* being profiteers, conscientious objectors, society "war-workers," and wounded and disillusioned warriors. There is a nasty hectic sort of atmosphere about it all which may very well have been the war-atmosphere in the social circles Mr. George is describing. Some of the "love" scenes are almost Ethel M. Dell-ish; probably love scenes between such people are Ethel M. Dell-ish. We have to acknowledge with thanks a nice little advertisement of ourselves on page 312, where, as proof of the hero's advanced views, we are told that he regularly visited the Bomb Shop, in Charing Cross Road, there to purchase the *Cambridge Magazine*, THE PLEBS, and the *Masses*. I am not quite sure, from his punctuation, whether or not Mr. George thinks that THE PLEBS, as well as the *Masses*, comes from America. If he does, will he do us the justice of rearranging his commas in the next edition? Also, we must ask him to take our word for it that the millionaire is not "driving all the clever young men into education shops . . . driving them into a pen where they shall browse the rank grasses of practical knowledge and drink from the poisoned wells of capitalist teaching." There are wells of another colour!

\* \* \* \* \*

If Newbold goes on at his present rate he will earn the proud title of the Pamphlet King. *The Coming Crash* is referred to on another page. His *Gang Behind the Government, or Capital's Case for Industrial Unionism* (Reformers' Bookstall, Glasgow, 2d.) is well up to his standard. The peroration alone is worth the money. Newbold, in fact, is such a really skilful rhetorician that one always rejoices when he shakes himself free from columns of statistics and lists of company directors, and lets himself go. . . . Another notable pamphlet is *The Allies' Crime Against Russia* (I.L.P., 3d.). By A. W. Humphrey. This is indeed, as its title-page declares, "a crushing exposure of the campaign of lies against the Soviet Government." I don't think we Socialists always pay due regard to psychology where our propaganda is concerned. We let it rip, hot and strong, ignoring the fact that there are quite a lot of people whom that sort of thing repels, but who can quite effectively be got at by quieter methods. Humphrey's pamphlet is a really good example of the quieter style; and the man who could not be shaken, even if not convinced, by its calm yet deadly statement of the case against intervention in Russia, would be a hopeless case indeed. . . . Robert Nichols' *Peace Hymn for the British Peoples* (Bomb Shop, 66 Charing Cross Road, W.C.2. 1s.) is "writ sarcastic." It is in the vein of savage humour one has come to associate with the name of Siegfried Sassoon. I am afraid it will not be popular in choirs and places where they sing about Victory.

\* \* \* \* \*

I note that, according to an article by W. P. Ryan in the *Herald* (July 14), the subject for public debate at the Oireachtas, the All-Ireland festival organised by the Gaelic League, is this year to be Industrial Unionism. Sinn Fein is very obviously becoming more and more alive to the class-struggle. Mrs. Selma Sigerson's *Sinn Fein and Socialism* (Kiersey, Dublin. 1s.) is another indication of that same tendency, and the chapter on Connolly is a fine tribute to a personality which seems to loom larger and larger as we see his life and death in truer perspective. I don't know whether Mrs. Sigerson writes more easily in Gaelic; but I do wish she didn't model her English style on Dr. Johnson at his worst. Some of her sentences could hardly have been less intelligible to common or garden Saxons had they been published in Gaelic.

J. F. H.

## HOW TO IMPROVE "THE PLEBS"

Keen readers are critical readers. We have little doubt that every PLEBS reader is quite ready to point out features which could be improved—either by alteration, or by total omission. We're going to increase our size next month, and again (we hope) in the near future. We want to use our additional pages to the best possible advantage. Therefore, we want advice and suggestions.

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- Sinn Fein and Socialism.* By SELMA SIGERSON. (Thos. Kiersey, Palmerston Gardens, Dublin. 1s. Post paid, 1s. 3d.)
- Fifty Points About Capitalism.* By Sir LEO CHIOZZA MONEY. (C. Palmer and Hayward. 6d.)
- The Social General Strike.* By JACK TANNER. 2d. (Post paid, 2½d.) *Red Russia: Book II.* By JOHN REED. 4d. (post paid, 5d.) (Both from Workers' Socialist Federation, 400 Old Ford Road, London, E.3.)
- Invocation and Peace Celebration.* Hymn for the British Peoples. By ROBT. NICHOLS. (Henderson's, 66 Charing Cross Road, W.C. 1s.)

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Mark Starr	..	..	..	..	159 votes
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B. Skene Mackay	..	..	..	..	128 "
Robt. Holder	..	..	..	..	125 "
C. Terry	..	..	..	..	123 "
C. T. Pendrey	..	..	..	..	114 "
T. Quelch	..	..	..	..	113 "
C. Mason	..	..	..	..	93 "
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