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THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

The purpose of Independent Working-Class Education is to prevent any worker being an honest traitor to his class.

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THE PLEBS

"I can promise to be candid but not impartial."

Vol. XIII | May, 1921 | No. 5

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TO MINERS—AND OTHERS

¶ *A good proportion of the readers of the* PLEBS *are miners. Unless something has happened between the time of writing these words and the date of publication, it is probable that many of them will be feeling that a sixpenny magazine is a luxury they cannot afford. We ask them to take their copies as usual. We'll give credit for as long as the strike lasts. And we appeal to our other readers to stand by us, and, by prompt payment, enable us to carry on.*

OUR POINT OF VIEW

A RECENT article by R. W. Postgate in the *Communist*,* on "Proletcult," affords us an admirable opportunity for a brief discussion of certain PLEBS' principles—or, shall we say, of certain PLEBS' "slogans" . . . Are we of the PLEBS right in boasting of our "prejudice" and "partiality"? Is Proletcult "partisan"? To both questions Postgate answers No. And since we

* April 16th. Also referred to in a letter from Walton Newbold on another page.

Prejudice and Partiality.

agree with his argument quite as much as we disagree with it—which is not surprising, seeing that he is a keen Pleb—it will be as well if we restate our reasons for sticking to our old motto (as above) and our old watchwords.

Postgate's very sound argument is briefly this: The torch of truth, knowledge and beauty can only be carried by a class "in the period of its growth and at the height of its power." "A declining class is unable to continue progress in civilisation." Bourgeois civilisation is now in decay. "The discovery of knowledge and the production of beauty are no longer within the powers of the declining capitalist class and its defenders: they are beginning to fall to the workers and their defenders." It is the working class, in fact, which is rediscovering truth and beauty, and creating a new culture—as yet, of course, immature. That new culture is the *true* culture, and we work for it because we believe it to be true, not merely because we believe it to be "partial and prejudiced" in our favour. PLEBS phrases about partiality and partisanship, though arresting as propaganda, are wrong because they imply the opposite.

* * *

Paradox.

They may be wrong. They will, we admit, in the fuller light of that civilisation which it is the mission of the workers to establish, be seen to have been wrong. What now appears "partiality" in the interests of a class was, it will be seen, disinterested enthusiasm in the service of humanity. What now appears as "prejudice" will be seen to have been true breadth of vision. We believe that paradox to be true. . . . But we believe something else. We believe that *all* truth is limited, conditioned by the social environment of the living men and women who "discover" it or who hand it on. In a class society, therefore, it must necessarily be modified by class interests and class outlook; and because it is so modified it must necessarily be *anti*-some other class—if one may phrase it so. We know nothing of Absolute Truth. The nearest to that we can hope to get is Truth in the interests of all humanity; and that Truth is, as yet, Truth in the interests of a single class—the workers. It is *partial* and *prejudiced* —though only as all truth is partial and prejudiced. If we boast of our partiality and prejudice it is simply because our enemies so complacently believe in their own freedom from either; whereas we are conscious of our *class* outlook.

* * *

A Fighting Culture.

We don't want to be involved in a philosophical dispute—"the mire," as Postgate says, "from which no argument escapes alive." We want simply to emphasise a fact not stressed by him; the fact that as yet, here—and everywhere but in Russia—working-class culture is necessarily a *fighting* culture. And because the established culture against which it is fighting claims like other established cultures before it, to be Absolute, Impartial, Non-Partisan and so forth, Proletcult (*at this stage*) must perforce attack the very notion of Impartiality. Is not this attitude to culture parallel to the Communist attitude to human freedom; that attitude which insists on a necessary transitional stage—the Dictatorship of one class, the Proletariat—before the freedom of all men, and the abolition of all

classes, can be realised? The germ of ultimate Freedom is contained in that temporary Dictatorship. And the germ of ultimate Truth is contained in our present Partiality and Prejudice.

We believe in the Marxist doctrine, and act upon it, as Postgate says, because we believe it to be *true*. But it is not less true because, *in a class society*, we can see that it *must* be "prejudiced" and "partial." It can only cease to be that when class society ceases to exist.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE DEAD

An essay prompted by a reading of (1) "*The Evolution of Sinn Fein*," *by R. M. Henry, and* (2) "*An Economic History of Ireland*," *by D. A. Chart* (*Dublin, Talbot Press, 6s. and 5s. net respectively*).

MAN is born not only into a physical environment but also into a mental one. Around him in his earliest years are not only walls and trees and roofs and stones—things of use and things of nature—but his kinsfolk, the lights and shadows in their eyes, the tones of their voices, and the tales they tell to beguile his tedium and instruct his youth.

From them he learns to fear all the things that they fear; and to desire that which they have come to think desirable. From them he derives his idea of the shames which are too shameful for a man to bear, and of the honours which are all but out of mortal reach. If his ways are cast not in the jumble and scurry of a crowded town but in the isolation of a rural settlement separated by stretches of field or bog, moor or hillside from other and similar homestead clusters—towns a day's march distant and the populous places of the earth still further away beyond the "vacant spaces of the sea"—he will absorb into the texture of his emotions the gossip and legend of the countryside. When that gossip is of political rather than of personal ambitions, and the legends those of the patriot strivings of heroic forbears who had every virtue but success; and when the sombre splendour of their story is supplemented by bitter remembrance of agonies incidental to their strife, and cumulative with their woes, it will be little wonder if the Passion of the Past grows into a haunting prepossession pressing every energy of youth into the channel of a righteous revolutionary zeal. Once engendered, this high and holy zeal—though change of scene may modulate it, idealising a biting pain into an abiding melancholy, and tinging the horrors and angers of strife and defeat with the fascination of tragic romance—once engendered, this impulse will endure with little feeding even to the third and fourth generations. Given abundance of its appropriate food and it will glow like a concealed fire except when it rages like a tempest.

The young men who are now actually or in sentiment the rank-and-file of the Army of the Irish Republic are the sons of victims of the rack-renting absentee landlords and their striking arm—an eviction party, with battering-ram, crowbar, pick, and armed escort equipped with Uniform and Authority from an alien Government. Their imaginations will have been fed in their youth with tales of the Land League; of the gaol, the packed jury, the proclaimed meeting, the baton-charge and of the fusillade at Mitchelstown when the constabulary, under express orders from Mr. Secretary Balfour, "did not hesitate to shoot."

And the fathers, from whose lips they will have learned these things—along with legends of the fitful romance of the Fenian Brotherhood—were, in their turn, themselves sons of famine-stricken, fever-tortured, charity-insulted survivors from the horrors of the Black Forty-Seven, across which had gleamed for a moment, like marsh fires over a bog, the glow of Young Ireland.

These survivors, too, were sons and grandsons of the dragooned and half-hanged, lashed and picketed victims of the property-mad Protestant conquerors of 1798. And, yet again, these "men of '98" (who "rose in dark and evil days") were the torn and tortured outcome of a protracted process of persecution which, originating far back in the tangled treachery of feudal marauding has for persistence no equal and for brute folly and black malice no rival in all the crimes that have hitherto defiled the earth.

An acute consciousness of Nationality—and it thwarted, goaded, and irritated into a chronic inflammation—possesses or pervades, in consequence, the whole mental and moral being of Irish men and women, to whatever class they may belong. A natural self-satisfaction supplementing and extending the healthy personal pride of the average man or woman constitutes, in an unconquered country, the normal and not unpleasing patriotism of a small nation. In over-grown Plutocratic Empires this "patriotism" becomes, under State manipulation, a blatant and sycophantic vulgarity which replaces both dignity and decency for the socially-enslaved and mentally-debased petty-bourgeois and slum proletarian mobs that such Empires perforce beget.

These pleasures, alike of an enlarged family pride and of the intoxicating bombast of Jingoism, are denied to a subject nation. Its members can win public dignity and rewards at the hands of the powers-that-be only by a cynical surrender of all the illusions that make such honours, normally, acceptable. Among their fellows they can win esteem only by either a crude reiteration of inherited wrongs (a mechanical insistence on the villainy of the conqueror and the sorrows of the conquered which soon grows into a baneful political hypochondria—the whine of the beggar—the wail of the broken slave) or, alternatively, by embarking upon a course of revolutionary adventure whose success will risk a repetition of the very horrors it was designed to avenge.

To *blame* Irishmen for being rebels and revolutionaries is, therefore, to condemn them for their chief title to honour—to stigmatise them for choosing the road of dignified danger rather than that of slavish safety. To expect Irishmen—who by virtue of circumstance and tradition are exalted as far above normal "patriotism" as the Jingo is debased below it—to desert their inherited ideal in favour of political propositions whose sole recommendation is that they are safe, sane, and reasonable is to abuse patience and outrage human decency. Even class struggles in Ireland must wear a National uniform.

When conscious of weakness and debilitated by despair, the general mass of Irishmen have tolerated, and only just tolerated, a parliamentary struggle for a local legislature. And even then they have tolerated it partly as a means of rousing the enthusiasm which would make possible a struggle for the *real thing*. "Home Rule," beloved of English Liberalism, was, in Irish eyes, at best a beginning. At worst it was a treacherous surrender. When the Irish people became convinced that Redmond and

his party were, at the price of Home Rule, willing to accept the inclusion of Ireland in the British Empire as a final and concluded fact, the Irish people repudiated Redmond and his party with contempt and loathing.

The process of elementary education to-day consists in great measure of the selection of the mental environment calculated to fix in the young the emotions and prejudices deemed desirable and salutary by their ruling elders. The art of government, whether it employs sermons, newspapers, proclamations, pageants or parliamentary speeches, consists in little else. It is, therefore, not surprising that the proximate roots of the more recent rebellions in Ireland are to be found in a struggle to free the minds of Irishmen, young and old, from the effects of the system of education as by law established in Ireland. At about the same time that Keir Hardie was setting up an Independent Labour Party in England a small company of scholarly enthusiasts in Ireland were founding a society to strike at the roots of the process of Anglicisation (conducted by the public elementary schools) which threatened to obliterate, by its official English language, literature, history, and teaching, all the essentials of inherited Irish feeling.

The Gaelic League set itself, by the revival of the practice of writing and speaking the native language of Ireland, to undo all this—to nullify the invading influence that (for example) excluded even Scott's lines on " my native land "—" breathes there a man," etc.—from the school-books because of their *dangerous tendency*. It challenged the worth of a Parliamentary Nationalism that made a show of resisting the enemy at Westminster while simultaneously surrendering to its agents the mind of every child in Ireland. It demanded of the Revolutionary Party what was likely to be the worth of Irish Independence if the men who gained it had Englished brains? Or how they hoped to win it until the men who strove to bring it to being fought, not for external rewards, but in obedience to the compelling impulsion of their cultivated Irish consciousness—fought because they felt themselves wholly and utterly parts of a distinctively Irish World?

By making Irish speaking and writing a point of honour among Irish men the Gaelic League built up a movement for an Independent Irish Education—a culture purged from every taint of alien bias and suppression. They created a body of positive Irish opinion totally distinct from the mere anti-Englishism which had boggled at the *form* while it swallowed the substance of defeat and conquest. It was, as Patrick Pearse acclaimed it, " the most revolutionary force that ever came into Ireland." For in keeping clear of " English " bias and going for their inspiration to native Irish literature they were not merely taking the line of greatest psychological impulse, they were, albeit unwittingly, in going for their inspiration to the legendary love of the Gael, throwing back from the ideology of the dominant bourgeois order to that of a time when the memory and culture of tribal communism was still fresh and living. They turned their backs on Samuel Smiles and his progeny, and by way of the love of the cabin fireside and the legends of the thatched houses adventured into the shining glory of the gods and heroes of pre-historic Ireland.

Even to an alien who knows Ireland only as a mark on a map, and its mythology through the refracting medium of a translation; even to dwellers in towns who can conceive hillside and bog, heath, hazel and rowan, the salmon's leap and the blackbird's song, only as vague guesses built up from the materials of picture-palace and railed-in park; even

to the proletarian rebel who yearns to make an end of all the Dead and Damnable Past, this wonderful Gaelic Mythology comes as a revelation of a fresher and a brighter world. It was, rightly handled, a force calculated not merely to weld into one all the Fellowship of the Gael, but to give it the tone and the temper necessary for a high and heroic endeavour.

The economic and social consequences of English rule helped to smooth the path for the Irish Revival. The 18th century policy which struggled to prevent Irish domiciled commerce and industry from competing on anything like equal terms with those of England perforce had kept the more distinctly Irish population fastened down to agrarian life. The industrial revolution (which made England for the nonce the workshop of the world) and its consequences have emphasised this; and since the Land Acts (1878-1903) the agrarian population has become one of smallish farmers and peasantry who by various devices were gaining a homely prosperity from the rise of the demand for, and the price of, foodstuffs in the English and West European markets. Co-operative Agriculture and Dairy-Farming, the Home-Industries Movement, Sinn Fein (in its earlier forms) and the Gaelic League were all expressions of this economic readjustment and the permutations of the traditional ideologies induced by this agrarian revival. And the rise of a Labour Movement, too, dating as it does from James Connolly's return to Ireland in 1896, points to the greater consolidation of a proletariat which is its inevitable counterpart. Connolly noted and formed his policy in the light of the fact that the Irish National tradition had been preserved by and was most vital in the peasantry, the proletariat and the rural semi-proletariat.

There is no room here to speak of the why and the wherefore of Easter Week, or of what has happened since. We can if we are fools enough dismiss the question by supposing the Irish to be inflamed with a madly irrational hatred of England and the English. To that John Mitchell as long ago as 1848 gave reply. His hatred, as Patrick Pearse shows, was "not of English men and English women but of the English thing that called itself a Government in Ireland, of the English Empire, of English commercialism supported by English militarism, a thing wholly evil—perhaps the most evil thing that there ever has been in the world." What would be a class fight elsewhere must in Ireland perforce be a National one.

. . . .

Over Ireland, radiating from and resurging against Dublin Castle, extends the Dictatorship of the Dead. Always the question, posed anew by each day's happenings, arises clamouring for an answer—On whose side are you? Do you take sides with the Black-and-Tans?—or with their victims? Are you inspired by Robert Emmett?—or by those who hanged him? By James Connolly?—or by those who shot him?

For the Dead, clustering thicker and faster, dwell ever in the land. On Irish lips are the words they coined, in Irish hearts are the emotions they engendered, and in Irish souls the fires that they kindled. And while the Dominion of the Dead endures, and to-day's woe and yesterday's sacrifice keeps fresh and living the woe and sacrifice of 700 rebel years, all that is Ireland will call alike to her sons and her daughters and those who share sorrow with them—"On whose side are ye? Choose ye this day whom ye will serve!"

THOS. A. JACKSON

MR. SMITH

MR. SMITH is not a very distinguished name to possess. And even when, as in this case, Mr. Smith becomes the Rev. Mr. Smith, he still remains obscure. So obscure was Smith, indeed, that probably not one in twenty of our modern historians could place him. He is, it is true, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but under a wrong name.

James Elishama (not "Elimalet") Smith was born in 1801, the son of a hard and narrow Glasgow manufacturer. His father was intensely religious and Puritanical. From him Smith inherited that peculiar semi-metaphysical, semi-mystic cast of mind which is so difficult for a south-country Englishman to understand. The house in which he was brought up (his father was an Irvingite) was full not merely of disputations on doctrine and study of the text of the Bible, but also of argument on the new prophets—the successors of Joanna Southcote, who were claiming the same authority as Amos and Isaiah, and whom James' father, the adherent of Edward Irving, was half inclined to follow.

Though a manufacturer, Mr. Smith, senior, was by no means well off, and it was only his determination to send all his numerous sons into the ministry that gave to James the fair education he received at Glasgow University. In 1818 James left Glasgow and earned his living as a tutor and church probationer. This mode of life he carried on until 1829, but made no attempt to join the church. Instead he fell into the hands of the new prophets.

New prophets do not abound in our day. Scarcely do there remain a few strange sects like the Christadelphians or the more bourgeois Theosophists to remind us of the insatiable desire which swept over our fathers for revelation. Joanna Southcote (died 1814) we were reminded of suddenly some nine months ago by a large poster in the London Tubes demanding that "the bishops open Joanna Southcote's box," and curiosity has made some scholars hunt up facts about her. She issued a large number of prophecies and instructions, and moreover left a Church. This was believed to have become practically extinct with the death of J. J. Jezreel, the last prophet, in 1885, but the posters in the Tubes, mentioned above, seem to show that it is still alive.

But Joanna was only the first and greatest of an enormous number of prophets, all of whom met with a considerable success, and left volumes of canonical writings. Lindsay, Boon, George Turner, Ward, John Wroe were perhaps the best known of them. They were mostly in the Southcotian tradition and one at least (John Wroe) was actually in the "Body" as it was called.

They are indeed a strange outgrowth of the suffering and distracted mind of the English lower classes of 1800 to 1840. It is not surprising that the consolations of religion were demanded by the victims of the Industrial Revolution, or that new revelations of heaven were forthcoming. But the character of these later prophecies is strange. They show that nothing was too degraded to achieve success; they explain very easily the energy which Robert Owen put into his secularist campaign. To many of us Owen's rationalism seems only a private foible and a further evidence of the immaturity of his teaching; a study of the popular religious literature of the time shows how necessary and inevitable his propaganda was.

The most surprising of these is perhaps George Turner, whose picture of heaven (the thing most urgently demanded by converts) was of a place in which the power of man and woman to enjoy one another should be increased " and that an hundredfold." The details of his life and of his behaviour towards the female members of his flock may be gathered from his works, where they are sandwiched in between unending calculations concerning the number of the Beast, rant from Isaiah, and prophecies of the end of the world. His lubricity, like that of the other prophets, probably proceeded from insanity. But it is important to observe that although Smith, in an amusing passage which I am afraid to reproduce, pillories Turner's teaching, he nevertheless wrote of Turner's adopted son and Messiah, John Ward, " much of his doctrine I admire as a *principle.*" And Smith was an intelligent man.

The particular prophet into whose fold Smith fell was John Wroe, whose followers had to wear beards. Wroe claimed to have succeeded to Joanna Southcote's prophetical power and to have the power of healing. Smith was for a time convinced of his genuineness, but in 1827 and 1830 charges were brought of criminal intercourse and misconduct against him by his domestic servants. A jury of friends was made up at the later date to investigate the charges, and an acquittal was only secured by the expulsion of two members of the jury, of whom one was Smith. He, and many others, now cut off their beards and left Wroe, whose followers made a schism in the Southcotians, and called themselves Christian Israelites.

In 1831, on leaving Wroe, with whom he had been living at Ashton-under-Lyne, Smith returned to Scotland and practised painting, for which he showed a fair talent, in order to get money enough to come down to London and lecture. This he did next year.

He was probably now at the height of his powers. When he left the Wroe church he left behind also his belief in the immediate coming of Christ and in the inspired character of the follies of the new prophets. But the taste for revelation and inspection of the intricacies of the Bible never left him. His character became now sharply divided, so much that one would have said there were two persons. His long, thin, humorous and typically Scotch face truly indicated common sense and ability. No man had a better sense of a jest than Smith. No one was more competent in practical affairs; no one had a clearer head or was a more dangerous adversary. But behind this acute Scotsman was a semi-oriental mystic—a man who had once believed in John Wroe and was now evolving " Universalism," a mystical religion. He still claimed the title Reverend (given him, I believe, by John Wroe), and opened his chapel in London, charging 1d. entrance fee. The Universalism he here preached was continually struggling for the mastery of his mind with the other more mundane Smith. Its character may be gathered from the title of his collected lectures (1833) :—

> The ANTICHRIST, or Christianity Reformed, in which is demonstrated from the Scriptures, in opposition to the prevailing opinion of the Whole Religious Word, that Evil and Good are from one source; Devil and God one Spirit; and that the one is merely manifested to make perfect the other. By the Rev. J. E. Smith, A.M.

Here is a specimen of his style in elaborating this curious thesis. Even if he was mad, his writing shows he was no fool :—

> WAGGERY
>
> The God of the Bible is evidently a wag; he speaks one way and means another; and very often, grave as all the parsons look in the pulpit, is very jocular. Thus, for

instance (Jerem. xxi. 14), speaking of the happiness to which he means hereafter to raise the human race, he says, "And I will satiate the soul of the priest with fatness." This is a capital wipe to our full-fed ecclesiastics and is as good as a hint to them, if their interest would permit them to take it, that the Lord is merely quizzing and scarecrowing them when he preaches so sanctimoniously upon atonement, justification, election, and damnation. And this reminds me of what he is said to have told a certain celebrated Prophetess alluded to in a preceding note, that he was merely jesting with men in the Gospel, to try the wisdom of the pretended wise men. She believed this; but when the Devil told her that God was a d——d liar, she was quite shocked. However, it would be a very difficult task to refute this accusation of the Devil's from the Bible, since we have so many of the Lord's own confessions to corroborate it. Whereas the Devil himself, in the sacred writings, stands quite irreproachable; he gets an abusive name now and then, certainly, but nicknames are no proof against a man's character; yet a bad name is all that the clergy can allege against the Devil. How would they themselves like to be all strung up like a parcel of dried haddocks, merely because some malicious persons gave them the nickname of rascals; yet this would only be serving them as they have served the Devil. If a dog gets a bad name they say you may hang it, for nobody will believe any good of it afterwards. Poor Devil! He has been sadly abused and maltreated, all by that waggish elder brother of his; who, like the ladies, as Dr. Goldsmith avers, always means No when he says Yes and Yes when he says No (p. 14).

Or if anyone knows of a copy of *Antichrist* let him read pp. 94 onwards, for a brilliant piece of writing which a modern clergyman (quite wrongly) would call indecent.

But already Smith was feeling very strongly the influence of Robert Owen, whose meetings he was diligently attending and whose denunciation of the effects of the capitalist system appealed to the saner side of him. Even in *Antichrist* (p. 80) he wrote :—

> "The Lord forbade the Israelites to bring wages of a whore or the price of a dog into the sanctuary." But the parsons are contented to live on funds more dishonourably acquired than by selling dogs or female smiles—they live on the wages of hypocrisy and imposture and suck the blood of the poor by feeding upon those funds which were originally collected from a charitable and generous public under the pretext of relieving the necessities of the needy. Thus we see that whilst the first apostles *sold* their property to give to the poor, the modern apostles *take it back from the poor* and convert to their *own* use. Is not this the spirit of what they *call* Antichrist? It is better to be Antichrist in *name only* than Antichrist in *reality*.

It is clear from this that even in 1832 he was turning his attention from Gnostic fancies to the realities of the oppression about him, and as soon as he did that, the victory of the saner side of his character was assured. The change was caused by the lectures of Robert Owen, whom he assiduously followed at this time. Owen was at his best period. He had ceased the foundation of model communities, and had come into contact, through the "Labour Exchanges," with the actual proletariat. His power of analysing and denouncing the evils of capitalism and competition was at its highest; his preoccupation with secularism and moral instruction had not yet become an obsession. Smith was recognised by him and others as a most valuable ally, and became second only to Owen himself in the movement, lecturing alternately with him at the Charlotte Street Institute. Moreover, on September 22nd, 1833, Smith took over the editorship of the *Crisis*, the official Owenite journal, which had fallen to the miserable circulation of 1,250. It is significant of his ability that the circulation of the paper went up at once and maintained for six months a high rate of increase.

R. W. POSTGATE

(To be concluded.)

OUR POUND FUND—LIST OF FURTHER DONATIONS NEXT MONTH. HAVE YOU SENT YOURS?

A FRENCH SCHEME OF WORKING-CLASS EDUCATION

The following interesting communication was sent by a French comrade to Eden and Cedar Paul, who have translated it for the PLEBS. *Both the letter itself and the syllabuses appended will be studied with considerable interest by class-tutors and students in our own Working-Class Educational Movement.*

Paris, *March 11th*, 1921.

My dear Comrades,—I was extremely glad to hear from you. As you suppose, I have been much interested in working-class education for a long while. I must own, however, that I have not had any considerable success hitherto. Every effort in this direction has had my enthusiastic support, whether the initiative was taken by anarchist groups or by the sometime Popular Universities. It seems to me that the disappointing results were due to lack of co-ordination. It must also frankly be acknowledged that our trade unions have always (or almost always) shirked the question, on the pretext that such activities tend to switch us off from our main purpose—organisation. This seems to me altogether a false estimate. True, there is education and education! For my part I am opposed to any subjects of study which may tend to divert the workers from the actuality of the class struggle and the revolutionary aim of transforming society.

I have found, however, that the work must be developed, at least here in France, along two distinct lines. The first of these would apply to the generality of workers, and would appeal to their feelings, their reason, their imagination. The second would apply mainly to the worker who is already class-conscious. Setting out from this idea, I have drawn up a comprehensive syllabus. . . . I have tried to combine coherency with an attractive method of presentation.

What I have in view is a specifically proletarian culture. I count on the co-operation of comrades who have had the advantages of better education. But I esteem it of the utmost importance that this educative movement should emanate from the workers themselves; from the trade unions; that the whole of the finance should be met by these organisations.

The FIRST SYLLABUS is a series of lectures on the history of labour and everything closely or remotely associated therewith. It aims at giving a broad outline which will whet the intellectual appetite, and lead to a demand for more. Each lecture is to be illustrated by a film, and followed by a pageant representing in concrete form the subject treated. Such lectures should be a centre of attraction for many who would otherwise pay no heed to our more serious endeavours. From such a nucleus, we propose to form study groups, to arrange for intercourse between the cities and the rural areas. We need libraries for reference books on social and economic topics; and hope to organise these book centres in a severely practical manner. Finally, some comrades have promised to help in arranging regional festivals so as to bring the workers of widely separated areas into personal touch with one another.

You may be thinking that such a programme exceeds the framework of strictly working-class education But we have to realise that, side by side with the class-conscious workers, there are the masses who actually, despite their present miserable conditions of life, are still steeped in reaction

and need to be made aware by proletarian culture of their true place in society.

Nevertheless our main activities are to be devoted to the class-conscious workers. We have, therefore, drawn up a SECOND SYLLABUS, more specialised and advanced, but conceived in the same spirit as the first. The method of presentation is much the same: general ideas followed by detailed study of proletarian philosophy and economics.

There is actually in Paris a "Communist Marxist School," of which you will have heard. I realise that this is a very interesting experiment, and the study courses seem well arranged this year. . . . But I consider that, for France, it is absolutely essential that proletarian education should be inspired by, and should have its roots in, *our trade-union organisations*. . . .

These syllabuses have already been adopted by the Union of Technicians (Ustica) and have been forwarded to the Confédération Générale du Travail. With the present attitude of the C.G.T. I fear a long postponement! Nevertheless there is work afoot, and groups of young trade unionists have decided to carry on intensive propaganda for the acceptance of the programme and for the establishment of a Labour College.

Use this letter or any part thereof for criticism and comment. Such comradely exchange can only be for good. With fraternal good wishes to you and our British fellow-workers,

LÉON CLÉMENT

1ST SYLLABUS

THE HISTORY OF LABOUR

1.—Labour from the social, moral, and artistic point of view—Forced labour, free labour, associated labour—Festival of labour.

2.—Stone celts; nomads; cave dwellings—Polished stone celts; origin of agriculture; adoption of a settled life; megalithic monuments—First historic records; cave paintings; tools—Copper; bronze; iron; corresponding civilisations. (Following Sunday, visit to museum.)

3.—Egypt—Slavery, its characteristics, its causes—Historical records of Egyptian civilisation; a temple; a pyramid; why they were built—Legend of Osiris.

4.—Greece—Slavery in Athens; the artisan—Slavery in Sparta; the soldier—Essential differences—The Acropolis—The Panathenean festival—Monuments; vases—Reading from Homer's Odyssey, from Plato, from Æschylus. Renan's *The Prayer on the Acropolis*. (Following Sunday, visit to museum.)

5.—Rome — Slavery — Evolution of property; geographical environment, formation, development, law, popular assemblies—Religious and philosophical ideas—Monuments—Reading from Plautus, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius. (Following Sunday, visit to museum.)

6. (*a*)—Christianity—Labour and property—Philosophical and moral basis—Reading from the Gospels—Lammenais' commentary.

(*b*).—Gauls under Roman rule—Labour—The Roman villa—Influence of higher civilisation on lower civilisation—Roadsteads (harbours, ports, etc.).

7.—Barbarian invasions—Serfdom, the fief, feudal castle, monastery, Teutonic guilds, age of "chivalry"—Free communes; the guilds, the book of trades, the cathedral—Reading of mediæval plays and rhymed romances; extracts from Hugo's *Notre Dame*, etc. (Following Sunday, visit to museum; next Sunday, to cathedral.)

8.—Renaissance—Guilds, printing, the history of a strike—The new spirit, science, philosophy, art, architecture—Readings from Rabelais, Ronsard, Montaigne, etc.—Old French songs.

9.—Seventeenth Century—Guilds, manufacture — Absolute monarchy — Europe; continental Powers, British liberalism—Reading from Descartes, a scene from one of Molière's comedies, Songs of the period.

10 & 11.—Eighteenth Century—Guilds—John Law's financial system—Reform; Turgot—Europe; North America—Colonial policy—"Enlightened" despotism—The economists—Philosophy, art—Reading from Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot—A scene from one of Beaumarchais' plays—Music; Rameau, Haydn, Mozart, etc. (Following Sunday, visit museum.)

12 & 13.—The Revolution—Organisation of labour—The Bourgeoisie—Social and philosophical ideas—Repercussions—Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre—Babeuf's manifesto—Revolutionary songs.

14.—Nineteenth Century down to 1848—Economic situation following the bourgeois revolution—Social classes—Physical and

moral condition of the workers—Fourier and Saint-Simon—General view of the economic situation the world over—Philosophy, art. (Following Sunday, literary and musical festival. Hugo, Michelet, Balzac; Beethoven.)

15 & 16.—1848 to the Commune—The economic situation — Social classes — Economic relations between the nations—Competition — Proudhon; Marx — Revolutionary movements — Philosophy, art. (Follow these with literary and musical Sundays, Hugo's *History of a Crime;* Renan, etc.; Beethoven, etc.)

17, 18 & 19.—From the Commune to the War—Industrialism—Large-scale industry: mining, iron industry, banking, transport—Comparative study of these phenomena throughout the world—various kinds of joint-stock companies, trusts, etc.—The economic international—Class struggles—Employers' organisations—Workers organisations—Comparative study of various countries—Evolution of social ideas during this period—Philosophy, art—Zola, Maeterlinck, Romain Rolland—Wagner. (Sundays following these lectures, literary and musical festivals.)

20 & 21.—The War—Economic, political, and moral causes—Various interpretations—Economic, political, and moral consequences—Reading from Barbusse, Romain Rolland, letters from the front.

22, 23 & 24.—The present situation—Capitalism, international capital—Social trends; aims of political parties and of trade unions—Contemporary revolutions; causes, trends. (Following Sundays, organise mass demonstrations.)

(The 2nd Syllabus, "History of Labour—Contemporary," will be published next month.)

MARXIAN DETERMINISM: AND FATALISM

THE reference in the special Foreword to the PLEBS edition of *Creative Revolution* to the charge of inconsistency sometimes directed against Marxians, because they accept the M.C.H. and at the same time advocate the deliberate use of the class-struggle as the instrument for the overthrow of the capitalist system, reminds me that I promised in a previous issue of the PLEBS to return to this question. This charge assumes that the acceptance of determinism implies the doctrine that all human effort is futile. It confuses *determinism* with *fatalism.*

If we approach the free will controversy from the biological standpoint, it reveals itself as the counterpart on the psychological side of the biological controversy between the naturalistic and vitalistic schools, which centres around the question, "Is the active resistance offered by the living organism to the flow of the universal degradation of energy, which is the fundamental difference between living and dead matter, capable of being described in terms of the laws of matter and energy (known or yet to be discovered); or is it due to an independent agency, vital force, vital impetus, 'entelechy,' an agency which acts outside and independently of the eternal flow of cause and effect, and which never can be expressed in terms of that flow?" The answer to this question has not yet been given finally.

Meantime, we Marxians are not out to pursue a policy of impartial inactivity until somebody arrives at absolute truth; but to find effective working hypotheses and apply them to the solution of the urgent economic problems before us. As for this purpose there is no need to assume either a separate vital force, independent of physical forces, or a free will, and as all objective study points to the unity of life with the other processes of material nature, and to determinism in the realm of thought and action, we frankly accept determinism as a working theory.*

The materialist conception of history is the theory that the behaviour

* A theory or hypothesis is not a "truth," the answer to some "divinely formulated world enigma," but a tool, a method, a tactic; a working diagram, which helps us to understand a bit of our environment, so that we can act upon it to our benefit and to the benefit of our race.

and thoughts of a society of men are determined by the material conditions under which for the time being they get their living; and that these conditions are continually changing, in an inevitable direction. At the same time the Marxian recognises the class-struggle, the conscious striving of each class to increase its economic advantages, as the instrument by means of which revolutions, the transference of power from one class to another, are brought about. Now, say our critics, here you have one theory which attributes the changes of history to the inevitable march of the economic process, and another which attributes them to the voluntary action of groups of men; you preach the former in theory, but advocate the latter in practice.

This is the old game of limiting the meaning of a word, and after thus misrepresenting the case, arguing that a position is untenable. The economic environment includes not only tools and material commodities, but the knowledge how to use them, and the theories and ideas with which man rationalises* the material experiences of his daily life. Knowledge, theories and ideas are tools. The multiplication table and the Darwinian theory are as much tools as the footrule and telescope.

Without knowledge, tools are useless. A motor car would be of no use to a wild Australian black. This environment, material, but including also man's accumulated knowledge of how to use matter to his advantage, acts upon men and determines the habits of thought and action (complexes) which they form, and these determine their class consciousness. These complexes, the sum of which is class consciousness, direct the individual's unconscious strivings towards self-expansion into particular courses of action, certain of which constitute the class-struggle. What we call the will can thus be interpreted as the particular rationalisations that we associate with the actions by which, under this ever-present drive of life, we respond to our environment. The object of Marxian education is to provide that knowledge which will secure that the habits of mind or complexes that we build up around this unconscious drive, and which determine the direction of its flow, shall be as nearly as possible true pictures, however imperfect, of our economic environment and our relations to it.

The answer to the charge that, to be consistent, the Marxian should avoid effort and wait for things to happen is that in social and economic affairs many things happen only through the striving of man's living mechanism, by which he responds to changes in his environment. The consistent determinist is not the man who denies the efficacy of this striving, but the one who endeavours, by acquiring knowledge, to bring his striving into harmony with the trend of economic events, and to avoid wasting it in futile effort in unprofitable directions. The difference is the same as that between the monkish ascetic or Indian Yogi and the man who follows Swinburne's call:

> "To be man with thy might,
> To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light."

Some libertarians will now ask, "If you adopt determinism, how do you account for the *intuition* of free will; the fact that man tends to believe that his will is free, and acts as if he thought it was free?" Let us examine "intuition." The word is generally used for immediate or direct

* Rationalisation is the name given to the process by which the mind explains to itself actions the real causes of which are hidden from consciousness. In the widest sense it includes all our attempts to explain things to ourselves. When, through knowledge, our explanations are more or less in accord with reality, it passes over into reasoning.

apprehension, arrived at without conscious analytical reasoning. The axioms of geometry are given as instances, also the intuitions of space and duration. Certain schools of the pseudo-science of ethics extend the idea into the field of behaviour, and suppose intuitive knowledge of right and wrong. Among intuitions are the belief in finality, and in the freedom of the will. The illusion of finality* is that point of view which attributes a permanence to affairs that are in fact ever changing, and in the field of human action holds up to us the hope of attaining stability and security. It is the vision of the fulfilment of the fundamental striving which is the very essence of life, the striving of the individual or of the race to come to rest or equilibrium in an environment which is ceaselessly changing. Thus in folk-tales and children's stories, after troubles are overcome, the people "live happily ever after." The intuition of free will includes the process which makes us think that actions resulting from emotionally coloured complexes in the unconscious are the result of deliberate reasoning.

We can, according to our tastes, treat these intuitions or beliefs either as parts of man's inherited working mechanism, or as on a par with any other unconsciously formed rationalisation of our experiences, or as traditional habits of thought. Thus it is quite in accordance with the biological theory of instincts to suppose that, just as men have inborn tendencies to act along certain lines in certain situations, which lines of action are on the whole likely to be beneficial to the species, so man may have an inborn tendency to think along certain lines, likely to lead to actions beneficial to him.

It is easy to imagine, from the biological standpoint, what a potent and beneficial motive to action would be supplied by the thought that we are free to choose our course of action, or that our efforts can lead to a static condition of lasting satisfaction, perfection or security; and to see how in the evolution of man's ancestors those individuals who had faith that they could overcome all obstacles and reach perfect repose might have a better chance of survival in the struggle against natural forces than those whose tendency was to "wait and see." Or as a second alternative we can regard intuitions as associations of ideas formed in the unconscious, and emerging without our recognition of the intermediate steps.† Or we can, with William James (*Pragmatism*, Lecture V.) regard such ways of thinking as "discoveries of exceedingly remote ancestors, which have been able to preserve themselves throughout the experience of all subsequent time"; preserved by tradition, not by heredity. The widespread belief of savages in a life after death might be included here.

In any of the above cases, the intuition exists quite independently of its inherent truth or falsehood. The truths of one period become superstitions in the next, and discarded errors in the next. The child's intuition that the candle flame is something desirable and to be grasped, disappears in later life before ruthless reality. Even our intuitions of time and space, and the definitions of geometry, have received a rude shock from the Einstein relativity theory. A harmless or even (in a former state of society) useful intuition, like finality or will, may last till knowledge, like the candle flame in the case of the child, renders it untenable.

NORDICUS

* See J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress* (p. 351).

† The word *inspiration* is applied to this process by Freud (*Wit*, p. 265). Original witticisms and the ideas of great artists and poets seem to arise in this way.

PRODUCTION AND POLITICS

VII.—The Sheep in Statecraft

Newbold here continues his interpretation of English History from the Marxian point of view. Compare the facts as presented by him with the sort of "history" we were taught in State elementary schools, and you will understand why we urge the necessity of Independent Working-Class Education. (Back numbers of the PLEBS *containing six previous articles in the series can be obtained from Plebs Office, price 2s. 6d. post paid.)*

HITHERTO in this series of articles we have had to do with the reactions in social and political organisation of the evolving economics of grazing and ploughing, of cow and ox, of milk and grain. We have been concerned with the successive changes in land cultivation having as its primary element the use of cattle. Now, when we have come to the struggle for constitutional restraints upon the king, and the setting up of the High Court of Parliament, we are witnessing the efforts of the lords of a society based on cattle-rearing to standardise the customs of a passing epoch and to hold in check the political forces released by a new economic factor; the factor of a commodity easy to circulate and easy to exchange for money, a commodity to be associated henceforth with the history of England—*wool.*

We are witnessing the disintegration of Feudalism. The word *feudal* derives from *feodum.* "The word *feodum,*" says Professor Maitland, "does not, I believe, occur before the end of the 9th century. It is derived from the German word for cattle." The *beneficium* or *feodum* was "a gift of land made by the king out of his estate, the grantee coming under a special obligation to be faithful . . . in consideration of the gift." The gift, at first, had been made for life. Then it became hereditary. The notion resulting was that of a *dominium* divided between lord and tenant, a notion at variance with Roman Law, but surviving in English Law to this very day. More important to us than this resulting notion is the derivation of the terms *to fee* and *feudal.* They have to do with the gift, the lease of land for *cattle,* and they give us the key to manorial society and feudal polity. The mediæval world was based on *cattle.*

In this mediæval world there was next to no interchange of commodities and, consequently, practically no system of levying taxes as distinct from rent. There was only one real tax levied in England under feudalism, and that was Danegeld. Scutage was only a commutation in money form of a military service and, therefore, not a tax in the strict sense of the word. Danegeld when revived by William I. was known as *hidage,* i.e., a tax on plough-land. It fell into final disuse in 1224. In 1322 scutage also disappeared.

The king might, also, from time to time, exact from the tenants on his private lands, his demesne, a *tallage.* This was due as an *auxilium civitatis* or "town's aid" from boroughs, and as *dona* or "gifts" from tenants on his other manors. It was customarily one-tenth of the tenant's personal property or some less amount. It was levied at the lord's discretion and, strictly speaking, denoted villein status.

Originally, tallages were rarely enforced, for the simple reason that when personal property was small they yielded little. With the development of sheep-rearing, however, and the growing accumulation of money

or other movables representing equivalent values obtained as the result of the sale of wool, personal property increased very considerably and became much more worth taxing than the scanty produce of the arable land. In 1168 and 1173 the king began to appreciate the fact that there were new sources of revenue to be tapped. So, also, the Pope; and first with the Saladin Tithe in 1188, and frequently for a century afterwards Rome imposed a tax on movables. The king followed suit, sometimes under papal sanction and sometimes under strained interpretations of the theory of feudal tenure, seeking to stretch the tallage to include all tenants as being his tenants whether on his own lands or those over which he was over-lord.

Strictly speaking, a *tallage* could only be levied on his own manorial tenants, but the levy of a *tenth* and a *fifteenth* imposed respectively on tenants in boroughs and tenants out of boroughs, regardless of whether they were or were not tenants in royal demesne, was a development of the sovereign lord's claim to tallage *all* his tenants immediate and intermediate, to establish rights as over-lord equivalent to those which he exerted customarily as lord. This development of the theory of lordship, *fostered by the royal judges*, sprang directly out of the realisation by the king and his ministers that there was now an accumulation of wool to be appropriated. First, there was the material basis, the wool, there available. Then there developed the idea of the legality of a new system of contributions to meet royal requirements.

In his *The Early English Customs* (Harvard Economic Studies) Mr. Gras says :—

> The national system which has persisted throughout the centuries was, like equity, built upon the woolsack . . . the chief custom . . . in England from 1275 onwards . . . was on wool, with the two very secondary commodities, woolfells and hides added (p. 95).
>
> The outstanding feature, however, is that England's chief exports were wool and cloth, not wool at an earlier period and cloth at a later, but both together, at least from 1303 when the accounts dealing with cloth begin (p. 108).

The customs were permanent in character and, generally, imposed under royal prerogative. The subsidies were, to begin with, temporary grants made by parliament. From 1350, however, customs and subsidies were steadily consolidated.

The wool subsidy, like Danegeld and the income-tax of to-day, was in its inception a measure of war finance. It was necessary to equip the armies and pay for the campaigns required to recover the French domains lost by the kings who had come after Henry II. Without the wool-trade, the resulting money economy and the intercourse with Italian and Low Country merchants, it would have been impossible for Edward I. or Edward III. to carry on their wars against France and Scotland. The trade policy of these kings, especially the latter, is now conceded by all the authorities to have been prompted by no higher motives than those of financial expediency. Both Edwards taxed manufactures lest wool should in any way be exported without paying tribute to their hungry exchequer. Both of them favoured Italians and other alien merchants, because these could provide them with cheaper and more ample money and war-stores. Both of them were utterly unscrupulous in their dealings with their creditors and their subjects.

The very strategy of Edward III. was determined by the exigencies of the trade in wool, without which his armies could never have marched.

His aim was to recover territories in the South-West of France, but to secure the sinews of war he needed to commit himself to an embarrassing alliance with the merchant cities of Flanders and to fight in Picardy rather than in Gascony and Guienne. Nor would these cities, feudatories of the Count of Flanders, feudatory of the King of France, commit themselves to him and his alliance until, by advancing his utterly untenable claim to the throne of France, he had made it impossible to compromise, impossible to retract, impossible to leave them in the lurch. Only then would the Flemings advance him money, and even then, on one occasion, they prevented him leaving the country until he had paid the interest, and on others kept as hostages, for the due meeting of his liabilities, members of his family and high ministers of state.

Edward III.'s much-vaunted settlement of Low Country weavers in this country was mere provision for the more unfortunate among his allies, a move in a diplomatic game. His establishment of the Company or the Merchants of the Staple was a concession wrung from him by natives when no one else could or would provide him with money. Professor Unwin, who has made a special study of this aspect of Edwardian policy, has scant patience with the view that the Staple was established to foster English trade apart from the money it would bring in to the Exchequer. Only when Henry IV. came to the throne and parliament became a power (as the needed ally of an insecure monarch) did policy reflect a desire to foster the growth of trade in English hands by grant of the Charter to the Company of the Merchant Adventurers.

But in the 15th and early 16th centuries the political influence of the Merchants of the Staple and the Merchant Adventurers was very small and very irregular They could rarely bargain with kings as could the merchants of Italy and the Hause. The great issues of internal history were being fought out between the Crown, employing material resources bought with the revenues of the wool and cloth trade, and the lords of the plough-lands who, from the days of Magna Carta and the Barons' War, through those of the Lords Ordainers, the deposition of Edward II. and Richard II., to the Wars of the Roses and the final ruin of Bosworth Field, were vainly endeavouring to stabilise the feudal polity sapped and undermined by the swirling currents of early commodity production, of the wool-trade and of money economy.

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD

(To be continued.)

THE ROOTS OF REFORMISM

EXPLANATION is always the surest and best method of attack. The key to history which Marx gave us is also a key to current problems—to history in the making. And evil roots, remember, cannot be dislodged successfully until after they have been clearly located. A problem well worth our attention is :—Why has Britain been a stronghold of Revisionism ? Why is Fabianism so great a power in the official Labour Movement ? Why the persistence of Reformism ? What are the real reasons why the middle-class intellectuals—Duhrings still needing an Engels !—are taking service in the ranks of Labour ? Why should the Second International find its last home in London ? Here is a problem which cannot be settled by under- or over-estimating the personal ability or industry of individuals, or by imputing low or high motives —of career-hunting or altruism—to any particular person.

The first point obvious to the historical materialist is that *Socialism is a product of capitalism.* And it should reassure timid souls, who bewail the splitting of their particular propagandist group whenever any new phase of Socialism comes to the front, to know that there have been considerable changes in the content of Socialism. Socialism has always been changing as capitalism itself has developed. And these changes, observe, have not come as some " unfolding of the human mind," but have been produced by the very earthbound development of capitalism. The Socialism which is the result of modern capitalism must be a very different thing to the " Socialism " of a century ago.

We can ignore here the period before the productive forces made modern capitalism possible. In the decay of ancient civilisation the Christian communities could only institute a *communism of consumption* because industry was still in the petty handicraft and household stage. W. W. Craik recently well put the contrast between then and now by saying that Christianity and its leader came from the small carpenter's bench, but that modern Socialism and its followers come from the large-scale steam joinery. Plato's earlier Republic was certainly far enough away from ergatocracy. The Utopia that More pictured—which he could " rather wish than hope for "—was something to be brought about *for* and not *by* the people. Like the Humanists, of whom More was the chief English representative, John Bellers, and later still Robert Owen, appealed to the rich and educated classes for support for their schemes. There was no distinct working-class movement to which they could look. Uneducated, degraded, and later stunned by the coming of the machine, the workers seemed helpless to help themselves. It was to mark the difference between this kind of Socialism, which even in the fighting days of the G.N.C. " deprecated a militant class-war attitude," that the section of progressives then busy giving clarity and precision to their own views, called themselves Communists, and in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 expressed their scorn for the Utopians, though recognising the utility of their critique of capitalism. At present the words look likely again to develop the same associations.

The Chartist Movement was neither Socialist nor Communist, though it received sympathy and help from both quarters. Feargus O'Connor definitely repudiated Communism. A working-class still suffering from the social convulsions occasioned by the Industrial Revolution could not be expected to see the way to a new society. Postgate (*Revolution*, p. 104)

vividly pictures the English working-class as " a helpless prisoner, knocking hopelessly at one door, turning to the other, returning again to the first, and all in vain." The amelioration brought about by trade prosperity in the 'fifties took the wind of hunger and desperation out of the sails of the Chartist agitation, and despite the association of the Junta with the 1864 International, we find no general theoretical understanding of the case against capitalism until the 'eighties. (Britain's lead in world domination was then being challenged; America and Germany were catching up to her in the race.)

It is only necessary to state some of the main points about the " Socialism " most widely adopted in Britain to show not only how it differed from the earlier Socialism, but also from those later ideas which, in the garb of Industrial Unionism, Syndicalism and Guild Socialism have since made their appearance here and elsewhere. Competition was the evil. Nationalisation of land, mines, milk and everything else of importance was the panacea. The class-struggle was glossed over or rejected. Later still, from the chief theorist of the I.L.P.—biologically trained—came the idea that society was an organism. The State was the people. This once accepted, compulsory arbitration and the demand for increased production must " biologically " follow. The Fabians, who largely supplied the other Socialists with ideas to supplement their ethical, religious, and democratic appeals, visualised society from the point of view of the consumer. In economics, the Labour Theory of Value, which showed value determined *in production*, was put on one side for the theories of " the accredited British professors," who now based value upon the psychological state of mind of the *consumer*. No longer was there to be any Chartist attempt to " rush " the governing class, no " sacred month " nor general strike. The capitalists themselves were to be " permeated." Whitehall was to be stormed by Fabians in rubber-soled shoes, armed with Blue Books, who would afterwards set up State Departments for carrying on industry. There was no place for mass action on the part of the workers in this scheme.

While the theoretical basis of what to-day is again being recognised as workers' Socialism (or Communism) was being reduced to rigid orthodoxy by the S.D.F. sect,* Fabianism won increasing support. Let us now endeavour to explain the origin of Fabian ideas, and to show how the development of the powers of production brought a change in the social relations and in turn produced a new outlook.

In the first place, large-scale production found it necessary to grant certain reforms. Unfortunately (from the point of view of the capitalist) capitalism cannot feed the workers as fast as their appetite grows. Inevitably, and increasingly, the workers tend to develop the spirit which Mr. Dooley inculcated when he observed, " Don't ask for rights. Take thim. An' don't let any wan giv thim to ye. A right that is handed to ye f'r nawthin' has somethin' the matter wid it." The capitalist can only give reforms by foregoing some of his profits, hoping to make up for them by a more intensive exploitation of the contented worker. (Hence " scientific management," etc.) However, the majority of the capitalists can't give fast enough; which means that the worker has to *get* reforms for himself.

Now no Socialist propagandist, making dozens of milkmen serve the

* See letters from Engels to Sorge, quoted in review by " J. F. H." of Pease's *History of the Fabian Society* (PLEBS, July, 1916).

same street, is keener on removing the waste of competition than the Trust. Big Business deals very effectually with competition. Municipal undertakings for the most part aid rather than injure private enterprise. A good tram service and cheap dwellings assist the local factory. The Post Office is a vital necessity to the modern capitalist, and he benefits from its use much more than the wage-worker can. Big companies are not above benefiting from research made at the public expense.

In short, the stock arguments for "collective enterprise" were inherent in the new conditions of production. The growth of the big machine, and the big company which alone can use it, makes capital impersonal, and leaves directive and supervisory functions in the hands of a few captains of industry and the growing professional class—the black-coated proletariat. The lower layers of the middle class, especially those with fixed incomes, would directly benefit from municipal enterprise. Public services are not so great a boon to the wage-worker. If he is actually employed in them he finds little difference between being robbed by a public or a private employer. But it needed experience to make that clear, just as it needed the present bitter experience of unemployment to prove to many workers that Imperialism, wars, and indemnities are ruinous —to them. For a while even the thinking minority of us wage-slaves accepted and propagated Fabian ideas. We did not detect incipient Imperialism in *Clarion* propaganda.

Turning to the reflex in economics, we find that even so acute a thinker as "G. B. S." failed to resist the new theory of value favoured by capitalists when once they had retired from active participation in industry. In the days of Smith and Ricardo things were otherwise; then it was easier to recognise the basis of the exchange of commodities as being labour—then the landlord was the blood-sucker who grew richer out of the "diminishing returns" of industry. The tragedy is that many Fabians—and followers—worked hard for what was really after all only a super-capitalism. Reforms, instead of being used as spring-boards, were made an end in themselves.

In the needs of large-scale production, then, we find *the* root of Reformism. But large-scale production has also created a class-conscious proletariat, and has moreover shown that proletariat how to organise on a larger and larger scale. The great change can—and must—now be achieved *by* the people, and not merely *for* them. Marxian education will prevent us proletarians ever being deceived again, by giving us a clear understanding of the imminent social change which Reformism can no longer prevent.

SPARTACUS

ECONOMICS WITHOUT HEADACHES

V.

A SMALL amount of gold represents a large amount of value. Because of this, it is necessary to have a series of coins for making small purchases. A shilling's worth of gold would be so small in size that it would find its way out of a pocket with no holes in it, while a pennyworth . . . !

Silver and copper coins differ from sovereigns in that they are not full value for money. They are only tokens, therefore a purchaser can only be called upon to accept them up to the limit of " legal tender "—silver to 40s., pennies and halfpennies to 1s., and farthings to 6d. If people were called upon to accept very large amounts of money in these token coins, they would really be in possession of wealth that was not wealth strictly speaking, If these coins were melted down, the value as metal would be less than the face value or value stamped upon them. Of course we do accept larger amounts than those mentioned, but that is because we are not anticipating an immediate collapse of the existing order.

Some people hold the view that there should be a double standard of value. These " bimetallists " claim that if silver and gold were used as full value currency it would solve many of our present-day problems ; but silver has a habit of altering in value, sometimes very rapidly, and its relationship with gold changing in this way, it would be very difficult to calculate the value at any given moment of a stock of bar silver or gold.

Silver and copper coins can only be issued for the purposes we have mentioned so long as the value of the metals contained in these coins is *less* than the face value of them. If there was more than a shilling's worth of silver *as silver* in a shilling, the shilling would be melted down and sold for its intrinsic value. During the last few years the value of silver has risen very much, and the authorities have had to discuss quite seriously the possibility of the silver coinage being over its real value. If that happens, all the silver coins would disappear. At first the advisability of issuing five-shilling notes was considered, but instead we have got the new nickel-silver money, in which there is less silver than before.*

One other form of money is always looked upon as being full value, and that is the Bank of England note. In 1694 a number of merchants agreed to take over the Royal Debts of £11,000,000, on condition that they were allowed to issue bank notes to that amount. Later, the figure was increased to £14,000,000, and in 1905 it was brought up to £18,450,000. This is known as the Fiduciary Issue. Against this amount securities are lodged by the State, because the Bank of England is an ordinary limited liability company and pays dividends (good ones, too) in the ordinary way. All other notes issued by the Bank must have a gold backing. To secure this, if anyone brings gold in he can be given notes in exchange, and when notes are brought in gold can be given for them.

The amount of gold coin and notes in circulation, 30th June, 1914, was :—*

	£
Fiduciary Issue	18,450,000
Bank of England Notes against Coin or Bullion	38,476,000
Gold in Coin in circulation and Banks	123,000,000
	£179,926,000

A Bank of England note is really only a piece of paper. If it was accidentally burned no wealth would be lost, and if the number was known its value could be claimed. Nevertheless, because every note is " backed " it is looked upon as real value.

The whole question of money has been much complicated during the last few years by the issue of State Treasury Notes. These are not money in the real sense, and gold is not taken from circulation as they are sent out. It costs about one penny to print a pound note, and if notes could be printed *ad lib.* then the Government could set all the printing presses in the country to work turning them out, and soon all the National Debt would be paid off and we could all be made rich. But of course if that was done pound notes would be worth one penny each *and no more.* Since 1914 Treasury notes have been issued without much regard for the elementary principles of money issue. The Government has to some extent tried to pay its debts by printing quantities of notes, and the result has been that the value of the pound has fallen, until it is worth now, perhaps, eight shillings.

We have already said that gold has no price in the strict sense of that term, because gold measures itself, and therefore a sovereign contains a sovereign's worth of gold. We saw that an ounce of gold made sovereigns to the value of £3 17s. 10½d., and so the price of gold was £3 17s. 10½d. per ounce. Now, however, the issue of paper money (and other factors) has so depreciated the value of the pound, that gold is worth *in paper money* £5 5s. per ounce. Thus it is impossible to put gold sovereigns into circulation again, because the Government could not pay £5 5s. per

* The average price of silver prior to the war was 27 $\frac{1}{16}$d. per ounce ; during 1917 it rose to 55d. per ounce, and at the moment of writing it is 32d. per ounce.

* *Report of the Committee on Currency and Foreign Exchanges.* 2d. C.D. 9182. A very valuable document to the economics student.

ounce for gold, and make less than four sovereigns with the ounce, or obviously it would lose considerably on the transaction.

How the amount of money in circulation has risen may be seen if the following table is compared with the one given above :—*

	£
Fiduciary Issue	18,450,000
Currency notes (not covered)	230,412,000
Total Fiduciary Issue ..	248,862,000
Bank of England Notes (covered)	65,368,000
Currency notes (covered) ..	28,500,000
Gold Coin in Banks	40,000,000
	£133,868,000.

These figures state the position on the 10th July, 1918, and are the latest I have. If the two tables are compared, it will be noted that the ratio between the amounts of money in circulation in June, 1914, and July, 1918, respectively, is about the same as the ratio between the cost of living at each of these periods.

How much money should there be in circulation ?

This is best answered by stating the case of a worker who receives £4 per week. Every Friday £4 is handed to him, and by the following Friday he is ready and waiting for another pay. His previous week's wages have been spent, have gone to the shopkeeper, on to the wholesaler, and from thence to the bank to be drawn out again by the cashier of the firm for whom he works. Every week he gets the same money back again, or if he does not some person in the next street or next town will. What is required to pay £4 per week to a worker for 52 weeks is not £208, but £4 only. Put into more technical language, we say that the sum of all the year's wages, £208, divided by the number of times the money changes hands (52) $= \frac{£208}{52} = £4$ is the amount required.

Apply this method to the whole of the purchases made in society, and we have the amount needed :—

$$\frac{\text{The sum of the prices of all commodities}}{\text{The number of moves the money makes.}}$$

The economic law which should regulate the issue of paper money is :—"The issue of paper money must not exceed the amount of gold that would circulate if there was no paper money."

Because all the capitalist Governments of the world have broken this law the value of *paper* money changes from day to day.

W. McLAINE

STUDENTS' NOTES AND QUERIES

N. K. asks the probable effect of the Allies' exaction of the German indemnity on (1) International finance, (2) British commerce, (3) Real wages. He also quotes Bismarck as saying that the 1871 indemnity was disastrous to Germany and beneficial to France.

The sheer impossibility of Germany being able to fulfil the present conditions makes one disinclined to consider seriously any probable results. If, and it is a big IF, a nation were a true unity, it would be quite possible for her to force tribute in gold or other commodities from another nation. Intelligently handled, this indemnity would free its receiver to expand its fields of investment and divert its industries to the making of means of production. Perhaps the remark of Bismarck—and of others who talk in a like fashion—was due to observing the *temporary* effects of the 1871 indemnity. Other writers inform us that the French gold payments enabled Germany to adopt the gold standard while selling her silver currency at a good price. At any rate, judging by the huge increase in the German iron and steel production (see p. 124 Boudin's *Socialism and War*), the crippling effect was very short-lived. To put it in simpler fashion, if a body of Germans could be forced to keep a body of Britons in bread, then the latter could devote the time otherwise used in growing corn and making bread to building schools, roads, reservoirs, or power-stations.

But capitalism, because of its very nature, cannot work like that. Apart from rivalry in the division of the spoil, and the fear of losing it, capitalism has found that forced labour does not pay. If the Germans were forced into being mere chattel slaves, such super-greed would in time defeat itself. It is an utter impossibility for one modern nation to hold another permanently to ransom. Then, again, that pre-supposed national unity, and that intelligent handling of a forced tribute, are both conspicuously absent. Even in the capitalist class itself, particular sections are now being hit by German competition, and are yelling out for protection. But how can Germany get gold unless she buys it with goods ? How can she get goods unless she takes British markets ? The particular section interested in the expansion of the Empire will not be the one to complain, neither will those making the munitions and Dreadnoughts—for the "bailiffs."

The workers' present experiences reveal very clearly that the supposed national entity idea is a complete and dangerous farce. The worker is a fool to think that the over-exploitation of German or any other workers will benefit him. The situation to-day shows how exceedingly valuable is Marxian

* *Report of Committee on Currency and Foreign Exchanges.*

economics in giving him a clear understanding of his real position in society—a mere living repository of labour power; from that position he is sooner or later forced to view every problem.

To summarise the reply: (1) International finance will first have to lift Germany on to its feet before any large part of the indemnity can be paid. After, finance will be free to extend its operations. However, here again complications are probable. If the miners of the Ruhr are forced to work seven days a week, ten and a half hours a day, on black bread and lard, it will increase the chances of a revolution there and elsewhere. Unless the rival Empires agree peaceably to partition out the world, sooner or later war must again occur. Capital is not likely to accumulate while insecurity from these two causes exist. International finance is still struggling with its sphinx-like post-war problems.

(2) British commerce will suffer a slump, and its extent and duration will depend upon the intelligent handling mentioned above.

(3) Real wages, if nominal wages can be kept unaltered by strength of organisation, would go up, as a slump would mean a fall from previous high prices. But unemployment on a vast and spreading scale is preventing the strongest union maintaining single-handed its wage standard. (Note current happenings in mining industry.) And because the German worker's standard of life is being lowered, that must in time lower the general working-class standard of life irrespective of national groups.

(For space reasons statistics have been omitted. Chiozza Money's notes in the *Observer* during January and February are useful in this connection. Brailsford in *War of Steel and Gold* gives a useful summary of Kautsky's argument against the Norman Angell view of Imperialism, and chapter 2 of Cahn's *Collapse of Capitalism* attempts in a suggestive way to explain Revisionism, and the failure of the German Socialists, by the fact that some sections of the workers there shared in the benefits of Imperialism.)

A London student sends some interesting details of his experiences with the Metropolitan College, which he took to task for omitting Adam Smith and Marx from among the leading economists; and which failed to supply him with an explanation of the "peculiar" nature of crises. . . . We think the reasons the College gave for regarding London as the world financial centre are in the main correct, if the start in commercial supremacy which England enjoyed is taken into account. New York is certainly becoming an increasingly dangerous rival.

Q.—If Capitalism digs its own grave, and contains the germs of its own decay, why organise Social Science classes?

A.—This question has whiskers. If our comrade will ask: How does Capitalism dig its own grave? Where is the cemetery—in Mars or on the Earth? Who are the grave-diggers, and what causes them to dig? If he thinks over these questions, the need for teaching the grave-diggers quick and efficient methods will be obvious to him, and he will realise, too, the part to be played by intellectual forces in producing the desired change.

Authors' Corrections

Will students note the following corrections:—

On p. 22 of Ablett's *Easy Outlines*, read "Quesnay and Turgot" instead of "Boisguillebert and Sismondi." B. wrote in 1697—a century before S., and foreshadowed the coming of the Physiocrats and the Classical School, while S., at first (in 1803) a populariser of Smith, became later a critic of his conclusions, and in many ways furnished weapons to the Socialist critics of Capitalism.

On p. 63 insert after "Wage-labour" in line 15 the words "as the general and dominant kind."

The illustration on p. 83 concerning Absolute Rent needs redrafting.

The qualification "collectively" or "through its members" is needed after "owned" in line 23, p. 47, *Worker Looks at History*, where the guild is being compared with the modern trade union.

M. S.

TRA LA MONDO

ESPERANTO NOTES BY POPOLANO

Maxim Gorki.

THE Esperanto weekly journal, *Esperanto Triumfonta* (April 3rd) contains an appreciation by Maxim Gorki of the importance of the international language. Here is an extract :—

"Conservative thought obstinately maintains that Esperanto is a Utopia. The arguments of the conservatives are refuted by the living reality, which is developing, slowly but surely, in accordance with natural law. . . .

"Esperanto, in my view, is healthy and capable of further development as the embryo of the international language. Even now it possesses a literature of appreciable size and is successfully studied theoretically. This work will be most successful and rapid if scientific philologists, convinced of the necessity of human unity, are attracted to it.

"It is said that a language does not develop artificially. I am not an Esperantist, but I know that this artificial language, developing fairly rapidly, is becoming quite natural because it responds to the need of present-day humanity to find, to create, a common tongue. In 1910 an acquaintance of mine, J. A. Semenovich, travelled all over Europe without knowing even one European tongue, and speaking only in Esperanto. He did it to convince himself personally of the spread of the 'artificial' language. Almost in every town he found an Esperantist organisation, hotels, journals, literature. Italy is particularly rich in these organisations, as also are the Mediterranean ports.

"I am profoundly convinced that the organised will of the peoples is quite capable of rendering this 'artificial' language natural. Is not the whole of our culture 'artificial' ? "

Finland.

On the 2nd of March the Finnish Parliament voted 25,000 Finnish marks as a subvention to the Esperanto Society of Finland. The voting did not follow party lines apparently, as the motion for refusal—rejected by 86 votes against 74—was proposed by Ailio, Social Democrat, and seconded by Suolahti, National Coalitionist. This temporary "coalition" was referred to sarcastically by another Socialist deputy.

Italio.

Oni malfermis en Milano 25 Esperanto-kursojn por infanoj 10-12 jaraj. Laŭ *Esperanto Triumfonta* la nombro da infanoj kiuj lernas en Milano estas 1000.

Rusio.

Samideano el Moskvo skribas al *E.T.* la lan de Feb., ke la Popola Komisarejo por la Klerigo eldonis 30,000 ekzemplerojn da Esperanta lernolibro 'Cart & Pagnier.'

"La etika progreso, konsiderate de la plej ĝenerala vidpunkto, konsistas en la iom-post-ioma disvastiĝado de l'principoj de la reciproka helpo, komencante de la gento al ĉiam pli ampleksaj sociaj formacioj, tiel ke la ideoj de la reciproka helpo fine iam ĉirkaŭprenos la tutan homaron, sen diferenco de religioj ; rasoj kaj lingvoj." Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid.*

La Standardo. "Ni ambaŭ aŭtomate ekstaris sur la rando de la vojo. En la momento kiam la standardo preterpasis nin, la kutimo ĝin saluti tremigis mian brakon. Sed kiel juse, la levita mano de la episkopo ne klinigis min, mi restas senmova, kaj ne salutas.

"Ne, mi ne kliniĝos antaŭ la standardo. Ĝi ne timigas min, mi ĝin malamas kaj akuzas. Ne, ĝi ne havas belecon, ĝi ne estas emblemo de naskiĝa terangulo ; ties bildon ĝi malklarigas per sia sovaĝa kaj fi-kolora makulo. Ĝi estas la sengusta insigno de la gloro de l'batoj, de militarismo kaj milito. Ĝi flirtigas tra la vivantaj ondegoj signon de supereco kaj de superregado." Henri Barbusse en *Clarté*, citita en *Esperantista Laboristo*.

NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

CHESTERFIELD Plebs are asked to get into touch at once with C. W. Delicate, 57, Sterland Street, Brampton, who is making a splendid attempt to rally Leaguers now that Com. F. Rogers, through illness, has had to give up the work. Thanks to Rogers, there was a good sale of PLEBS in Chesterfield, and Com. Delicate wishes to work this up again, as well as to run classes next winter. Sheffield Plebs should also be able to help the Chesterfield branch to its feet again, not only in the matter of tutors, but also by personal help and suggestion.

SHEFFIELD Plebs Branch is running a series of lectures on the Materialist Conception of History, every other Sunday morning at 11 (commenced April 4th), at the branch headquarters, 63, Blonk Street ; lecturer, F. Horsfield.

Will Plebeians in Kensington, Paddington and Willesden communicate with Ernest Hoare, League House, 8, Bonchurch Road, N. Kensington, for the purpose of forming a NORTH-WEST LONDON branch of the League? It will greatly help the London Council for I.W.-C.E. if Plebs are formed up into groups before next winter, as these groups will be the nucleus from which to develop the District Councils.

Com. Riding, 28, Conway Road, NEWPORT, is forming a Plebs group, and local comrades are urged to write him. He has already booked the names of twelve good men and true, so Plebs propaganda will be persistent in Newport presently.

A group of FERNDALE (Rhondda) comrades took advantage of the Editor's recent visit to "them parts" to get a Plebs branch inaugurated. The Secretary is Francis Davies (46, Fountain Street). We trust that the new branch will serve as a useful link between miners and school-teachers, who, in Rhondda regions, are becoming more and more interested in Proletcult aims and ideals.

BIRKENHEAD has now a branch of the League with Com. A. Williams (185, Price Street) as secretary. The LIVERPOOL Council should be able to rely on Birkenhead for strong support during the coming winter. Jack Hamilton reports a stiff fight to keep going, and the best way to get support is to get active groups in surrounding districts. Plebs groups can help themselves and us by pushing the Magazine, and at the same time help the Councils and their work as well. A "Meet" of all supporters and sympathisers in Lancashire will be held at the Ribble Valley Club House on Saturday and Sunday, May 21st and 22nd. Those desiring accommodation for the night must forward deposit of 2s. at their earliest to J. Hamilton, 99, Botanic Road, Liverpool. The charge for three meals and bed will be 7s. We sincerely hope the Meet will be successful, for the Liverpool classes have done splendid work, and we feel sure financial difficulties can be got over if only all comrades will "get together."*

We have to offer our hearty congratulations to two Plebeians who have recently stepped up into positions of bigger responsibility—and more opportunities:—Geo. Dagger and W. G. Cove. The former, an ex-Labour College student, member of the S.W.M.F. Executive, author of *Increased Production*, and social science teacher, by a recent ballot has succeeded the old stalwart, Geo. Barker, as Miners' Agent for Western Valleys District. The latter, who has lectured for several years under the auspices of the Labour College, was recently elected Vice-President of the N.U.T.—a very great victory for a "left winger." May they both prosper in their new activities.

From the MANSFIELD District comes a heartening report of the first year's educational work. Those two constantly recurring problems—finance and provision of tutors—have both been tackled energetically. T.U. support was systematically appealed for, and has been forthcoming: and there is every prospect of increased support in the near future. Ten classes in all have been run in the district, and Com. C. Brown has done yeoman work, officiating at five of these. Other tutors have been Coms. Scott, Grooms, Hildreth and Hickin. Heartiest congratulations to all these, and to the Sec. (G. Abbott, 37, Carter Lane, Mansfield) and Committee The Committee, by the way, with a view to increasing the supply of lecturers, has suggested to the Labour College the inauguration of a Special Tutorial Correspondence Course for would-be lecturers.

That tireless worker, Will Coxon, sends us copies of two appeals issued by the NORTH-EASTERN (Northumberland and Durham) District, one to all I.L.P. branches in the area, *enclosing a specimen copy of our new pamphlet*, and the other to the classes, urging the need of keeping up the circulation of the PLEBS during the summer, and recommending the appointment of a responsible "salesman" by every class. This is the sort of Agitation and Organisation which helps on the cause of Education. Other districts please copy!

The EDINBURGH District (Scottish Labour College) is carrying on business during the summer months. Three classes—Industrial History (tutors' training class), Science of Understanding, and Speakers' Class—are to be run; tutor, J. P. M. Millar, the indefatigable. We hope to print next month the syllabus of the Tutors' Industrial History course, which will be useful to many students and tutors as an admirable programme of reading.

The doings of the University Socialist Federation do not exactly come within the scope of "our" movement, but for two reasons the Conference held at Oxford, April 1st—3rd, is deserving of comment here. First, because of the Executive's decision to issue a leaflet urging University students *not* to enrol for "national service" or any other blacklegging work during the strike—a decision which betokens a refreshingly healthy distrust of the old gags about non-partisanship, the "community," and so forth. And, second, because one of the three general "discussions" on the Conference programme was devoted—in Oxford, observe!—to the subject of Independent Working-Class Education, the Editor of the PLEBS having been invited to open the ball with a statement of Plebs' aims and methods. Not very many of those who took part in the debate appeared to have grasped the idea that the fact of the class-struggle had a very definite bearing on Education (though M. H. Dobb (Cambridge) and R. P. Dutt were honourable exceptions). But the above-mentioned decision of the Executive gives ground for hope that U.S.F. members are realising that, in every field, "he who is not with the proletariat is against it." W. H.

* BOLTON also going strong. Successful conference, April 17th. Course of 10 lectures, by Com. J. Leach, commences in A.E.V. Rooms, Sunday, May 1st, 10.45 a.m. (Secretary, J. Crossley, 36, Grosvenor Street).

OUR COMPETITIONS

The CIRCULATION COMPETITION is extended for a month—to May 18th.

We offer £5 WORTH OF BOOKS

to the class-sec., organiser, student or League member who sends us before that date the greatest number of

NEW POSTAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

to the PLEBS. Subscriptions may be for six months (3s. 9d.) or twelve months (7s. 6d.) and the cash must, of course, accompany the names and addresses you send. You've over a fortnight in which to Get Busy for us. So far, the winner is H. WALLACE, Glasgow. But you've still a chance to beat his record, and claim the Books!

Start now!

OUR MOTTO COMPETITION.—We offer 10s. worth of books monthly for the best motto, *of not more than 24 words*, suitable for use on our front cover. Mr. Shortt did not claim his prize last month, so we are awarding two prizes this month. (1) To J. P. M. MILLAR (18, Westholmes Gardens, Musselburgh) for the motto used on our cover this month. (2) To A. W. LOVEY (29, Station Road, Taunton) for the quotation from Wm. Morris's lecture on "Communism":—"*Intelligence enough to conceive; courage enough to will; power enough to compel*"—an admirable example of the *kind* of quotation we ask you to dig out for us.

ESSAY COMPETITION.—£1 worth of books for the best critical essay, by any student or tutor of a Plebs or Labour College Class or any Plebs' League member, on *Creative Revolution*, by Eden and Cedar Paul. Not more than 800 words. Sending-in date, May 7th.

OUR POUND FUND

Latest donations received are from:—

Will Lawther; Geo. Mearns; G. Watson; J. C. Witcher; Jas. Robertson; W. Begley; J. J. Crowther; E. Evans; Wm. Plant; R. F. Poole; J. J. French; H. Hanby; Emily Toger; A. Pratt; F. W. Anstee; S A. Chandler; K Wilson; H. A. Pearce; C. and M. Pendrey; L. Barnard; Geo. Grainger.

CORRESPONDENCE

LISSAGARAY'S HISTORY OF THE COMMUNE

DEAR COMRADE,—In his article on Theophile Ferré, R. W. Postgate made the following statement in a footnote:—"I wish to withdraw a remark made on p. 66 of my *Workers' International*, which suggests that this [commune police] service was incompetent. I was misled by Lissagaray (p. 224), a most prejudiced writer."

I desire to ask the source of the information which led Postgate to withdraw the remark in his *Workers' International*, and also what evidence he has to justify him in calling Lissagaray "a most prejudiced writer." When one takes into consideration that the *Histoire de la Commune* was "entirely revised and corrected by" no less a person than Marx, one can understand the desire of a student of proletarian history to get correct information about such an important event in the history of the working class as the "Commune of Paris."

Yours frat.,

R. REYNOLD

R. W. Postgate writes:—Marx, it is true, looked over the English translation of Lissagaray, but he was not in Paris during the Commune and could not speak with authority on questions of historical fact. It is also clear, from the form in which the translation was permitted to appear, that he only looked over it in the most general way. Anyway, we are not bound hand and foot to every phrase in Marx's own works; and we are even less bound to accept as gospel the opinions of every writer over whose works he had the courtesy to glance.

In Lissagaray's work, the members of the Minority, whom he supported, appear all as long-sighted, courageous and admirable; the Majority appears uniformly vacillating, incompetent and ridiculous. This complete division is improbable, at the least.

The Editor will not allow me room to give a general disquisition on the character of the Commune and the relative value of the authorities. I can only say that extensive and recent reading leads me to conclude that Lissagaray was misled by his party spirit. Rigault and Ferré being members of the Majority.

The best and most final refutation of Lissagaray's vitriolic attack on Ferré and Rigault is in G. Da Costa's *Commune Vaine* (3 vols.). Da Costa was an assistant of Rigault, and the mass of detail which he gives destroys Lissagaray's contention.

Simplified Economics

Dear Comrade,—Many attempts have been made from time to time to "simplify" Marxian economics. The general impression amongst those who have sought their aid is, however, that it were better to have stuck to Marx himself. One of the ablest of living Marxians declared that simplification could be made only at the expense of theoretical clarity. And there is a good deal of truth in this—as well as a warning to would-be simplifiers.

Marx and headaches are closely associated in the minds of many students, but in trying to rid ourselves of the headaches we must take care lest Marx be discarded with them. The Plebs is at present publishing a course of simplified economics. I venture to suggest that, as the leading Marxist periodical in this country, it cannot afford space for loosely-worded misstatements of Marxian economics.

"Student" drew attention to certain terms used in the March instalment, but anyone reading the April contribution will agree that something more than a mere complaint about terminology is necessary. Let us examine one or two statements: "If gold was produced as easily as iron, its value would be the same as iron—perhaps less, *because iron is more useful than gold.*" (!) Had this appeared in an article by Marshall, Cannan, or some other orthodox economist, with what joy should we have quoted it in order to demonstrate the absurdity of the utilitarian basis of value. Yet this is from the pen of a "Marxian"!

And what an illuminating sentence is this: "Gold, the universal money commodity, is real value. It is not a 'symbol' of value, but sound 'hard cash.'" Poor beginner! "Metaphysical" value. "Real" value. "Hard cash." What a cure for headaches!

Gold is a peculiar commodity—"it has no price." Yet within twelve lines a price is suddenly placed upon it—and we are informed that a careful reading will enable us to understand why it has none. This little paragraph contains other interesting information. If one speaks of the price of gold it is equal to saying "the price of a new hat is a new hat." ". . . Gold measures its own value as well as the value of other things." Its peculiarity, seemingly, is that it has no equivalent! The value of an ounce of gold is an ounce of gold, or 20 pennyweights.

In this way we succeed in making Marx simple! Or do we make ourselves appear simple to the rest of the world?

Yours frat., W. H. Mainwaring

[That there is a very widespread—and heartfelt—demand for "simplified" economics our letter-bag has proved again and again. A good many of us have been hoping for a long time that Mainwaring himself would tackle the job. So far as his specific points of criticism are concerned, we must leave McLaine to answer for himself.—Ed. Plebs.]

Reviews and Recommendations of Books

Dear Comrade,—Recent letters, etc., to the Plebs seem to call for a word on the above subject from the point of view of at least one occasional reviewer.

It seems to be understood by some readers that, because one happens to recommend a book, it is therefore hall-marked as being, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion! It is forgotten by such people that our movement has not yet produced text-books or complete guides to every subject of scientific inquiry. Far from that being the case, we have not a single text-kook or complete guide to any of the principal subjects of our studies. And that being so, we are compelled to use in our studies many books written from an orthodox viewpoint.

In making a choice, therefore, we are compelled to choose books that most nearly approximate to our point of view, or our method of treatment in any given subject. The same applies to general books on various subjects. As an example. I recently reviewed a book on *Modern Finance* which dealt primarily with the *mechanism* of the credit system in simple and clear manner. As such, and specifically from that angle *only*, I recommended it to our students. Now because the writer had *incidentally* touched upon the *theory of money* in a way that laid him open to criticism from our experts on the basis of the credit system, I was immediately adversely criticised for recommending the book.

On another occasion I recommended an historical work, and was later confronted by a scornful reader because the same writer (in another work) had referred to wages as "pay for work done." As though a writer could not be a good historian because he happened to use a loose phrase regarding economics.

One must ask, therefore, that reviews be read carefully, so that the recommendation of a book for certain specific matter of value is not translated to mean that *every* word in the book—or even whole sections—are above reproach or criticism. In recommending books one does so because the book is a good simple statement of some particular point of view, or treats of a subject from a new standpoint, or because *some parts* of it are so good as to warrant the possession or reading of it on these specific points.

One assumes, that is, an intelligently critical reader. Until we get a complete library of scientific works on every subject written from our own viewpoint, we shall be compelled to rely upon works written from the orthodox point of view, and therefore only partially approximating to our needs. One has only to read the syllabuses of the subjects taught in the Correspondence Department of the (London) Labour College to realise how few suitable and exhaustive books are available at present for our tutorial work.

Yours frat., G. S.

Postgate *v.* a "Plebs" Principle

Dear Comrade,—May I join issue with R. W. Postgate on the question of the subjects that do and do not matter in "Proletcult"? "The rise of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are the only subjects of importance to the workers; 'Primitive Communism' and 'Mediæval guilds' are frippery." Thus R. W. P. in the *Communist* (16th April).

I would suggest to our comrade that he cannot understand correctly the growth of the state or of private property unless he goes to "primitive communism." Unless he studies these social beginnings there is much in nationalism upon its emotional side which he cannot hope to diagnose. He cannot thoroughly explain the territorial basis of modern political representation or monarchical institutions unless he goes far back behind the Year One of the French Revolution.

Again, how does he propose to examine the origins of the bourgeoisie and the urban proletariat without some study of "mediæval guilds"? Has he no appreciation of these forms of association by which the oppressed of earlier days conducted the class struggles of their time? Does he seriously contend that the great conflicts of English constitutional history, revealing as they do the class war in every line, have no interest, no importance for those of us who every day of our propagandist lives are running up against the argument that this is a constitutional country to whose very nature all use of violence is fundamentally alien? Does he so little realise the centuries old insularity of our people that he has no use for the epics of our peasantry and our craftsmen?

As a student of history, of economic history, trained like himself in a bourgeois university with its habit of chopping up history into periods and interring its devotees in document and muniment chests, I would suggest that he revise all his methods of approaching, of learning, and of applying history. Only when he has grasped firm hold of the materialist conception as a principle running through *the whole record of economic and social life* can he thoroughly apply himself to the study of manifestoes and the understanding of the politics of Imperialism.

Yours frat., J. T. Walton Newbold

Materialist Misconception?

Dear Comrade,—It was with a decided shock that I read in the opening paragraph of Ernest Johns' "Poet of the Final Phase" that Shelley and Swinburne were respectively inspired by, and prophets of, the English and Continental bourgeois revolutions.

Ye Gods! Here with a vengeance is materialist misconception! Not that I object to his thesis as applied to Kipling, who in all his literary existence barely wrote three real poems. Kipling is primarily a political versifier, a descendant of the old race of ballad and broadsheet mongers, and he is consequently easy to bring into line with the Marxian conception. Neither do I assert that this cannot be done with Swinburne and Shelley. Possibly it can—but not by the airy dogmatism of Comrade Johns.

Take first Swinburne's "material basis." One very important factor therein is too often neglected by modern theorists, one which Engels, living closer to it than we do, never left out of account. I mean the English land-owning aristocracy, from which both Swinburne and Meredith sprung, and whose tradition nourished both. This class hated Victorian industrial civilisation as bitterly as did any Socialist then or since. It was this hatred, combined with the more general intellectual reaction against Victorianism, then just beginning to find its voice, and also with a sentimental enthusiasm for the European nationalist movements, that drove Swinburne into revolt.

As for nationalism—this is the one thing that most persistently evades the acid test of historical materialism, the one exception which must exist to prove the rule, the only social movement in which we ever find both classes united. . . .

But it is when we come to Shelley—the inspired of revolutionary capitalism!—that I must make my loudest protest. For here is neither sense nor history. When, O when, were our early capitalists *revolutionary?* Surely the strangest thing about the French Revolution is that in England only its extreme left wing got any footing. Again, the French Revolution cannot be so curtly dismissed as "bourgeois." . . . But I have not space fully to defend my view of the special nature of the French Revolutionary influence in England.

In this proletarian movement—for it was proletarian in England—Shelley was not backward; rather was he in the full front of the battle. Mary Shelley tells us—"He looked on all human beings as inheriting an equal right to possess the dearest privileges of our nature—the necessities of life when fairly earned by labour and intellectual instruction." And we can be sure that Shelley's interpretation of the words "necessaries" and "intellectual instruction" would still make the average Briton's hair rise. But the following verses explain him even better:—

> The seed ye sow, another reaps;
> The wealth ye find, another keeps;
> The robes ye weave, another wears;
> The arms ye forge, another bears.
>
> Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap;
> Find wealth—let no imposter heap;
> Weave robes—let not the idle wear;
> Forge arms—in your defense to bear.

If, after these lines from the "Song to the Men of England," they still have any doubts as to what Shelley thought of the capitalist society of his day, Plebeians should re-read

" Peter Bell the Third." Bear in mind also that in 1819–1823 Robert Owen was first becoming articulate. I do not mean that Shelley was influenced by Owen. So far as I know he never heard of him; but I would point out that Socialism was " in the air."

Lastly, let me urge Comrade Johns, for a better understanding of this period, to read Mark Rutherford's *Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, a book which should be written on vellum in letters of gold and placed on the altar of the English Proletarian Revolution.

The misuse of the materialist conception has brought much well-deserved ridicule on our movement. Is it for nothing that Labriola and Croce have pleaded with us on this subject? Let us remember that the materialist conception can account for nothing in the social sciences, any more than the physical scientist can give the " Why " of any single phenomenon. It is a method of research, an acid test, a widening of outlook and a great contribution to human knowledge. But that is all. It has its limits. We shall be wise to keep within them.

Yours frat.,
RALPH FOX

WOOL

DEAR COMRADE,—The article in the April PLEBS on " Surplus Values in the Woollen Industry " reminded me of certain " Lines to a Sheep " (signed " Lucio ") which appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* a year or so ago, a cutting of which I am glad I kept by me. I hope you can find space for it in full:—

O sheep, whose days are so demurely spent,
I wonder if it's past your comprehending
That you and I between us represent
The starting of a process and its ending?
On you the wool, on me the cloth and hose—
Thus swings the cycle from its start to close.

But not direct, old thing—O not direct!
'Twixt shearing you and my " spring suiting " choices
There intervenes a host of the elect
Who jazz around in Daimlers and Rolls-Royces;
Well-nourished coves, with apoplectic necks,
Who drink champagne and sign colossal cheques.

A-down the path from you to me they stand
(Who tries to dodge them only comes a cropper),
And each with outstretched and expectant hand
Collects the tribute that he thinks is proper.
Your wool would stand on end if you could see
The final price at which it's charged to me.

Therefore I call you " comrade " from my heart,
Although we two adorn a different genus;
If you and I are plainly in the cart,
At least we share the vehicle between us.
We have one point in common, Brother Beast,
We both exist in order to be fleeced.

True, the poem is the heartfelt cry of a *consumer* only. But the figures quoted in last month's PLEBS make it clear that the *producers* in the woollen industry have also earned the right to chant those last two lines!

Yours frat., SCISSORS

REVIEWS

A DISCOVERER

Government and Industry. By C. Delisle Burns. (Allen & Unwin. 16s.)

This large volume attempts a detailed survey of the changing relation of the State towards industry. The author, in short, has discovered that the new Imperialist State is in many respects different from the " night watchman " State of earlier capitalism. He still believes, however, that " the State stands for the people," so that he has yet something to discover.

He has also discovered that Trade Unionism is broken up by craft squabbles; which also sounds scarcely new to some of us. Some day, perhaps, Mr. Burns will discover that the workers themselves have for some time been busy devising and carrying out plans to remedy this.

There is a good deal of quite valuable material in the earlier descriptive chapters. Here, for example, is a passage we commend to the notice of Dr. Arthur Shadwell, who has discovered that the growth of Big Business is a myth:—" The number of new companies on the registers in the United Kingdom on December 31st, 1918, was about 67,000. The new companies registered in 1917 were 3,963 and in 1918 the number was 3,504; there were fewer new companies in 1918 but their nominal capital was £127,879,495, as compared with £67,813,926, and the average amount increased from £17,111 to £36,495 which indicates the increase in the size of the units of organisation." This is followed by European figures showing that the tendency is international.

In the section on " International Trade " Mr. Burns discovers that—especially in the struggle for oil—financial groups use " the prestige and power of governments as instruments of private gain." But Boudin told us as much with greater theoretical clarity six years ago.

M. S.

JERRY-BUILDING

The Great Rebuilding. By H. Denston Funnell. (Leonard Parsons. 15s. net.)

Mr. Funnell is anxious to remould the social edifice nearer to his heart's desire. But he does not, apparently, think there is anything wrong with the present foundations. So that a more fitting title to his book would have been " Renovations." Any proposal

for anything more drastic than a few trifling repairs—guaranteed harmless to everybody—he condemns without qualification. One would hardly have imagined that "a course in violent thinking" (his own cure-all) would have resulted in such a big book with so little in it. But perhaps the author forgot to do any thinking himself before starting to write.

From the chapter on "Knowledge and Education" we take this gem, whose lustre will be especially appreciated by Plebeians:—

> "It is a matter worth consideration whether a supplementary grant or salary might not be made from State funds both to trade union secretaries, or sectional representatives upon the higher public authorities, who had taken an approved university degree—and, conversely, to university graduates accepting a salaried position in any trade union or similar association. In this way, industrial organisations would tend to secure a greater degree of intellectual and expert guidance than hitherto, in the discussion and formulation of their policy, and the State, on the other hand, in the adjustment of disputes, would have the advantage of dealing with trained minds presenting a case on its real merits rather than with extremist partisans relying mainly on the threat of force."

When one looks out on Europe to-day and views the social chaos achieved by the "trained minds" who have "taken an approved university degree," one realises to the full the simple beauty of this proposal. Fortunately for the world the workers are beginning to lose their faith in "approved university degrees." And of course people like Mr. Funnell will continue to be horrified at their impertinence. J. R.

Chords from a Harmonium

Industrial Problems and Disputes. By Lord Askwith. (John Murray. 21s. net.)

This book might have been entitled "Confessions of a Professional Strike-Breaker." It contains the reflections of a keen observer upon the relations of Capital and Labour. Obviously it is unnecessary to state from what standpoint these relations are judged. It is the work of a highly-trained mind selected for the specific purpose of securing, as far as possible, harmony in the industrial world. From the author's standpoint tactics are all-important, so that the shortsighted policy of employers is often more severely criticised than the demands of Labour.

In this book Lord Askwith offers to the capitalist world the fruits of his experience and the best advice he can give. Trade Union leaders will find here something approaching a psychological study of themselves, and, more interesting still, illustrations of the manner in which Askwith masks his own guns and leads them on to betray the hidden positions of their own batteries. To those who have taken part in the strikes, etc., of the last thirty years this book is interesting reading, and it is certainly worthy of study by those who will have to meet the Askwiths of the future.

W. H. M.

Bertrand Russell on Marxism

The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism. By Bertrand Russell. (Allen & Unwin. 6s.)

Everybody who reads this book will be struck with the variety of tone in its parts. This may be explained by the fact that consecutive chapters were not written consecutively. In the Preface (probably written latest) we find: ". . . I believe that the heroism of Russia has fired men's hopes in a way which was essential to the realisation of Communism in the future. . . ."

The first three chapters are reprints of the *Nation* articles. The salient point of these articles is that Russell went to Russia expecting to find some form of bourgeois Anarchism with a seasoning of Marxism to make it work. What he found was proletarian Bolshevism, which seemed to him ferocious and fanatical. He found Lenin dominant and not Gorki, as he hoped. So far as one can make out, bourgeois Anarchism is a society in which one sits down and writes poems about the Bolsheviks of the past. This helps us to understand why we are told that Bolsheviks are heroes in the Preface (written latest) and fanatics in the first three chapters (written earliest).

Part II. consists of a theoretical criticism of Marxism. It begins: "The materialistic conception of history, as it is called, is due to Marx. . . . It means that all the mass-phenomena of history are determined by economic motives." It may be noticed that "economic" is substituted for "materialistic" in the second sentence. Arguments are then adduced to show that there is "no logical connection either way between philosophic materialism and what

is called 'the materialistic conception of history.'"

"The 'materialistic conception of history' may be false even if materialism in the philosophic sense should be true."

It is then argued that though there is no connection between Marxism and philosophic materialism Marxism derives much of its authority from its supposed foundation of philosophic materialism. "The dogmatic character of Marxian Communism finds support in the supposed philosophic basis of the doctrine. . . . It has the fixed certainty of Catholic theology, not the changing fluidity and sceptical practicability of modern science." A modern bourgeois philosopher naturally feels "changing fluidity" to be desirable. It is interesting to note that Marx says: "Perpetual agitation and uncertainty distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all others" (*Communist Manifesto*).

It is obvious that much plausible criticism of Marxism can be made by assuming "economic" to mean "economic" in the narrow sense. Modern Marxians would not agree that this assumption is justifiable. Their interpretation of history makes use of all the sciences. But they will admit that Marxism in the past has paid too little attention to certain sciences, owing to pre-occupation with the central factor.

Russell's views on methods of achieving social emancipation, such as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, are not of so much importance. He disbelieves in temporary Dictatorship because he feels that the leaders would desire to perpetuate their position after the necessity for it had passed. He considers that the love of power, which would be the evil principle in this case, is one of those instincts the importance of which Marxians under-estimate. Consequently he prefers reformist methods, even if the Proletariat have to stand bourgeois domination for a few more generations. Which is characteristic of a bourgeois philosopher who has no real knowledge of proletarian conditions of life.

J. G. C.

THE PLEBS BOOKSHELF

I LIKE that little occasional exhortation at the foot of the *Daily Herald's* "Post Bag" column: "Correspondents should realise that . . . first choice must be given to those who keep what they have to say down to 100 words. Essays will be counted out!" It's astonishing how few people trouble to tot up the number of words in their contributions to periodicals—daily or monthly. But their carelessness in this respect is easily surpassed by their indignation at being "cut." Inevitably, the fool editor deletes their finest passages, wrecks their cunningly devised arguments, and entirely alters the sense of what remains. 'Twas ever thus! Where literary composition is concerned the Reddest Communist can be superbly individualistic. It doesn't seem to strike him that a periodical, daily or monthly, contains a fixed number of lines of type; that the unlucky editor's job is to get into those fixed limits as much variety of contents as possible; and that the only alternative to cutting down one fellow's contributions is leaving out another man's altogether. In fact, as I've already suggested, he ceases to be a Communist, or to think of himself as one of a "team" whose common aim it should be together to turn out an interesting journal; and ponders only upon his own abbreviated contribution, nursing a sense of wounded dignity. Sometimes he nurses it so assiduously that it inspires him to bring railing accusations against a particular editor; and then paragraphs of this sort result! . . . We will not pursue the sad subject further.

* * *

Any student of the daily (capitalist) press of this country will agree that the *Manchester Guardian* stands in a class by itself. It is, according to its lights, honest and sincere; and it takes the trouble to be well-informed. All the more amazing, therefore, was this editorial footnote appended to a correspondent's letter, under the heading "The Vogue of Marx in England," a month or so ago:—

> The vogue of Marx in England was greater in the last century than now. It declined under the careful examination of his theories by the leaders of Socialist thought in this country, and as a leader of advanced thought he has long been obsolete. This is not to say that he is no longer read. The Soviet revolution in Russia has shown that he is, and his obsolescence is being aided by the Soviet Government's admission that a system founded upon Marx has become, in a complete form, impracticable.—ED. "GUARD."

That paragraph is just about as ill-informed (to put it mildly) as anything the great House of Northcliffe is in the habit of printing and publishing. Half of it is stark falsehood; and the other half is clotted nonsense (and don't ask me which half's which). I suggest to the *Guardian* that it engages Dr. Shadwell to lighten its present darkness regarding the general tendency of "advanced thought" in England to-day. Otherwise I shall be confirmed in my feeling that what Manchester thinks to-day England was thinking somewhere about 1860.

* * *

By the way, the *Manchester Guardian*, reviewing recently a critical study of H. G. Wells by a French writer, made one excellent point. The Frenchman was wrong.

it remarked, in assuming that Mr. Wells's England was the whole England. The only England Mr. Wells knows is the England of the southern counties. Of the industrial North and Midlands, the essential England of to-day, he knows nothing; hence a serious limitation of his work considered as "social criticism." I believe that is true. And I believe, further, that that is why Mr. Wells isn't a Marxian. In his England—the England of London and its suburbs and its seaside extensions, and the little backwater market-towns which dot the "home counties"—class distinctions are blurred. A semi-proletariat shades off into a small shopkeeper class; and retired shopkeepers, of varying degrees of affluence, shade off again into "gentry." In an atmosphere like that the "Class Struggle" or a "Conscious Proletariat" seem hopelessly unreal generalisations. And that is the atmosphere Mr. Wells has always breathed. He should spend a week or two in Rochdale—or the Rhondda. If he sat—as I've had the pleasure of doing recently—on a hillside overlooking a Rhondda mining village, and noted the three main features of the landscape—(1) pit-head, (2) a bunch of small, ugly houses, wedged tight together in straight rows, (3) a single decent-sized house, standing apart from these in its own grounds—the residence of the colliery manager; if he saw this "pattern" repeated in village after village and valley after valley—the only variation being in the design of the manager's house or the extent of its grounds—he would, I think, begin to appreciate Marx's analysis and Marxian terminology. A writer, like other folks, is the creature of his environment. And if his environment is a backwater . . .

* * *

I'm rather sorry no one has joined in the discussion about Geography begun by Archbold last month; particularly because considerations of time and space have necessitated the omission of our "Geographical Footnote" from this issue. But, anyhow, I'm going to squeeze in some strong, if short, recommendations to students of Economic Geography:—(1) Every colliery institute or class library should get *Coal, Iron and War*, by E. C. Eckel (Harrap, 12s. 6d., post paid from PLEBS, 13s. 3d.). The book is a statistical rather than critical presentation of the case for Economic Imperialism; that is to say, it regards international politics merely as the reflex of world problems of production, manufacture and distribution, and it is therefore full of valuable matter for proletarian students of world affairs. Mr. Eckel is not a Marxian; but he is a 20th century engineer. Therefore he is about five-sixths a Marxian (unconsciously). When that type of man takes the remaining short step to "consciousness" he is an ally worth having—Krassin is a case in point. Meantime, though he remains lined up on the other side, we can profit a good deal from his researches and summaries. (2) The Labour Publishing Co. (whose first catalogue contains three or four items of particular interest to Plebs) issues *Big Navies and Cheap Labour*, by "Deucalion" (6d.). This is an excellent short statement of the Pacific Problem—the author's articles on which in the *Herald* a few months ago will be remembered. I've no space here to do more than urge everyone to get it. It will be referred to again in a "Geographical Footnote" shortly. (3) A new I.L.P. pamphlet, *Capitalism and the Far East*, by Geo. Horwill (2d.) should be read along with the above, or used as an appendix to Woolf's *Econ. Imperialism*. It is a first-rate piece of work. What on earth does that poor muddled man, J. Ramsay MacDonald, mean by bewailing (in the current *Socialist Review*) the "devastating" effect of Labour College teaching, when his own Blessed Party is issuing pamphlets like this one—admirably adapted for Labour College class textbooks? . . . Puir laddie. . . . No space is left to deal adequately with H. N. Brailsford's *The Russian Workers' Republic* (Allen & Unwin, 6s.). Those who heard Mr. Brailsford lecture at the Labour College recently will not need to be told that his method of estimating the outstanding results of the Russian Revolution by studying them against the background of a single provincial town makes for a refreshing vividness and freshness of treatment. But I must come back to this book later.

J. F. H.

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