

Vol. XIV. No. 12.

December, 1922.

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The Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

THE PLEBS

I can promise to be candid but not impartial.

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An OPEN LETTER to a PLEB

Please note that this is not an "official" editorial, but a frankly "partial" statement on a matter to be discussed at the N.C.L.C. Conference and Plebs Meet. It expresses, however, the considered attitude of the Plebs L.C.

DEAR COMRADE,—I am addressing you as a "Pleb" simply, since that is the shortest and handiest label for a worker in the Independent Working-Class Education movement. You may not—yet—be a member of the Plebs League. None the less you are a "Pleb," or you wouldn't be reading this magazine. You are a supporter of what may quite fairly be called *the Plebs movement*; for that movement actually began with the formation of the Plebs League by a handful of Labour students fourteen years ago. It came to be known later by the alternative title of *the Labour College movement*, the establishment

of Labour Colleges and Classes being the practical means of realising its educational aims. But all the time the Plebs League, and its organ, The PLEBS, has been the backbone of the movement.

The question I want to discuss is :—*Is the Plebs League to remain in existence, and if so what is to be its function in the I.W.-C.E. movement as constituted to-day?* This is a matter on which there are quite honest differences of opinion amongst some of us.

How is the I.W.-C.E. movement at present constituted ?

Three separate bodies—institutions or organisations—are linked together :—The Labour College (London), a residential college owned and controlled entirely by two Trade Unions, the Railwaymen and the South Wales Miners ; the National Council of Labour Colleges, which, as its name implies, is a council of representatives of district Labour Colleges, none of them (with the exception of the London College) residential institutions, but all concentrating on evening-class work ; and none of them (again excepting the London College) *owned* by any Trade Unions, but supported by affiliation fees or special grants from T.U. branches or districts ; thirdly, there is the Plebs League, *an organisation of individual members* pledged to work for Independent Working-Class Education and to support the N.C.L.C.

Note that these three, though in their various ways they are all working for a common aim, are all quite distinct, in scope, in constitution, and—so far as the last is concerned—in *function*. However closely they may work together, each has to tackle its own special job, and no one of them can do the work of the others. The London Labour College cannot run evening classes for workers in various parts of the country ; though it can help those classes materially by training men to become tutors. The National Council of Labour Colleges, though it (or rather, its constituent districts) can run classes, cannot enrol individual members ; it is a council of official representatives, and no more. The Plebs League could—and once did—run classes, but it has definitely handed over that part of its original work to the N.C.L.C. ; it consists, not of official representatives of particular districts or institutions, but of individual workers—the rank-and-filers as well as the “ elected persons ” of the movement, the students as well as the tutors.

Now what has been the relation of the Plebs League to the other sections of the I.W.-C.E. movement in the past ?

In the early days, when the maintenance of the London Labour College (then called the Central Labour College) was the most important point to be aimed at, the League existed to gain support for that institution. A group of Plebs were actually running the College ; and although the class movement in the country had begun, everybody agreed that the securing of Trade Union support

for the College itself was the main practical issue. In 1914-15 that support was quite definitely secured. Two Unions took over the College, made themselves responsible for its maintenance, and, of course, thenceforth controlled it.

The Plebs League's relation to the College was accordingly changed. It had now become a strictly "unofficial" body, and it had to choose between two courses—uncritical support of the College and whatever its new Governors chose to make of it; or an independent attitude, giving all its support to the College so long as it stood for the principles on which it had been founded, but ready to criticise it if those principles were departed from, or if its efficiency were in any respect open to question. It chose the latter course. And nobody has ever questioned the good sense of that decision.

The League was now free to concentrate more of its energies on the establishment and encouragement of provincial classes. From 1915 onwards those classes grew and multiplied by leaps and bounds; they were the result of local effort, and of locally organised and financed committees or councils (e.g., the Scottish Labour College, the North Eastern Labour College District, etc., etc.). But in every district individual Plebs were playing their part, and the Plebs League and Magazine were links keeping all in contact.

By 1921 it became clear that some sort of national organisation of these various districts was desirable. The Plebs League convened a conference at which the National Council of Labour Colleges was formed. That Council, as I have already remarked, consisted of representatives of its affiliated bodies; *i.e.*, representatives appointed by the Labour College committees in the districts (and of the Plebs League and London Labour College). Those committees in part consist of Plebs, *i.e.*, of fully conscious I.W.-C.Ers., in part of representatives appointed by those Trade Unions, etc., giving support to the local Colleges.

Now what is to be the attitude of the Plebs League to the N.C.L.C.? It has already settled that by pledging itself to the support, by every means in its power, of "all working-class educational institutions affiliated to the National Council of Labour Colleges." The question at issue is—Did it, by that promise, surrender its independence; or does that pledge, as in the earlier case of the Labour College, mean that it remains an "unofficial" body, reserving the right to criticise, through its organ, The PLEBS, any action or decision or policy of the N.C.L.C. if it thinks fit? To put it in the form in which it has actually arisen:—Is The PLEBS, the organ of the whole I.W.-C.E. movement, to be controlled by the Executive Committee elected by League members—the individual workers, tutors, organisers, students and rank-and-filers of the movement; or is

it, so far as its "policy" is concerned, to be controlled by a "Policy Committee" representing the "official" bodies of the movement, as has been suggested by the Exec. of the N.C.L.C.?

Is *an organisation of individuals* still desirable inside our movement? And if so, should it control—as hitherto—its magazine? Or has the time come to make the Magazine an "official" organ in the ordinary sense of that term?

My own feeling—and I speak as an N.C.L.C. worker (a class tutor) as well as a Pleb—is that an organisation of individuals is just as desirable as ever it was; and, further, that it is as necessary to keep the Plebs League and The PLEBS Magazine independent now as it was seven years ago, when the Unions took over the Labour College. The resolution of the Plebs E.C. on this matter is printed in "The Plebs Page" in this issue.

My space is up, but I want to make it clear that this involves no sort of rivalry or hostility between League and Council. How could it, when the same people will be working in both? "Duplication," you say? Not at all. In the N.C.L.C., Plebs will work, *along with T.U. representatives and other "finance-controllers,"* to run classes. In the Plebs League they will be banded together, *as conscious I.W.-C.Ers,* to run an I.W.-C.E. magazine, write and publish I.W.-C.E. books and pamphlets, and so keep the *guidance* of the movement in their own hands.

Do you agree that this is a desirable aim?

Yours fraternally,

J. F. HORRABIN.

THOSE DAMNING TESTIMONIALS

THERE is a good motto which reads, "Beware the policy that draws praise from the enemy." In the August PLEBS the *South Wales Daily News* was quoted as advising employers to support the W.E.A. as an antidote to Labour propaganda. This recognition by a governing class organ of the valuable assistance given to the reactionary forces by the W.E.A. does not stand alone. A pamphlet issued a short time ago by that anti-Labour organisation, the National Alliance of Employers and Employed (which Mr. Pugh, by the way, has at last seen is not intended to help the Labour Movement), paid a well-deserved tribute to the W.E.A. by saying that the latter "is doing exceptionally good work, sometimes under difficult conditions." In addition, Mr. Highton, the Scottish Secretary of the W.E.A.,

unguardedly admitted in the excitement of a controversy in the *Forward* of 5th August that both the National Alliance and another well-known anti-Labour educational body, the Scottish Economic League, approached the Scottish W.E.A. with a view to getting its help. That the suggestion was not accepted in no wise alters the fact that in the eyes of both these tools of Big Business the W.E.A. is doing excellent work.

Such tributes are, of course, decidedly embarrassing to the representatives of the W.E.A. in their struggle to stem the attacks of the National Council of Labour Colleges, and all the more so as these damning testimonials fall thick and fast on their organisation. The *Spectator*—that organ of governing class interests—has been praising the good work done by the W.E.A. and by the Central Council for Economic Information. Mr. G. D. H. Cole is rather troubled about it. He says in the November issue of the W.E.A.'s journal, the *Highway*, that the Central Council, which the *Spectator* "takes to its heart, in the name of impartial education," is a propaganda body for capitalism, and he declares that the W.E.A. is quite different.

The W.E.A.'s principal object, he says, is "to help the workers to a clear understanding of the economic and social problems which confront them, and to fit our students for better service in the working-class movement." Doesn't Mr. Cole recognise that the Central Council or any other anti-Labour body could subscribe enthusiastically to that aim? It is simply a question-begging generality which can be interpreted to mean either capitalist education for the workers or independent working-class education. It is by means of such ambiguous phrases that the W.E.A. presents a smirking face to the State's education departments and a heroic countenance to the Labour Movement whose money bags it is equally anxious to tap. Its rôle is that of Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, and its officials have to bleat like sheep and roar like lions alternatively—according to which party they are trying to please at the moment.

To the sentence above quoted, defining the W.E.A.'s aim, Mr. Cole adds another: "With those who set out to preach social peace and the divine right of capitalism we have nothing in common." Are we to take it that the W.E.A. stands for social war and the abolition of capitalism? That is the only possible interpretation the plain man could put upon that sentence. But Mr. Cole knows as well as anybody that, though that may be his policy, it is *not the policy of the W.E.A.* Why then does he mislead his readers? The fact is that, from the workers' point of view, the W.E.A. as at present constituted is useless and that, as he admitted some time ago in *The Plebs*, Cole himself disagrees with the official policy of the W.E.A.

Why then, in the name of workers' education, does he not get out of it and cease to serve as an educational stalking-horse for the class whose interests are served by the *Spectator*, the National Alliance, the Scottish Economic League and the *South Wales Daily News*?

J. P. M. MILLAR.

N.C.L.C. Annual CONFERENCE and PLEBS MEET

Will all N.C.L.C. Districts and Plebs Groups note carefully particulars given below. Please keep this copy of the Magazine by you for reference, as the January issue will probably not reach you before the date of the Conference.

THE second annual meeting of the National Council of Labour Colleges, and the fourteenth Annual Meet of the Plebs League, will be held on SATURDAY and SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30th and 31st, at
"The Briars" Guest House,
Crich, Derbyshire.
Station—Ambergate (Midland Railway.)

The house is 1½ miles distant from the station—so don't burden yourself with a lot of luggage. The terms for board and residence, from tea (Saturday) to tea (Sunday) (inclusive), are 10s. per head. Meals can be provided for visitors not staying a night—Dinner, 2s.; Tea, 1s.

The meetings will commence on Saturday at 3 p.m., and Sunday at 10.30 a.m., and the agenda, which will be drafted by joint agreement between the N.C.L.C. Executive and the Plebs E.C., will be sent to all N.C.L.C. affiliated bodies and Plebs groups as soon as possible before the date of the Conference.

N.C.L.C. SITTINGS :—All affiliated bodies are urged to send a delegate, who should be provided with credentials. Only affiliated bodies can record their votes on questions of policy, but it is hoped that as many districts, classes, etc., as possible will send representatives to take part in discussions.

Names and addresses of delegates, with full particulars of accommodation required, should be sent *before Saturday, December 16th*, to :—

The Secretary, N.C.L.C., 11, Penywern Road, London, S.W. 5.

PLEBS MEET :—Every individual member of the Plebs League is entitled to be present and take part in the discussions during the sessions arranged for Plebs business. All Groups are urged to send at least one representative.

Will all Plebs intending to be present (unless they are “registering” as N.C.L.C. delegates) send names, and particulars of accommodation required, *before Saturday, December 16th*, to :—

The Hon. Sec., Plebs League, 162a, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W. 1.

☛ **PLEASE NOTE LAST DAY FOR “SENDING IN”**
—DECEMBER 16th.

“ THINKING IMPERIALLY ” and its Economic Basis

Plebs' Textbook No. 2, “An Outline of Modern Imperialism,” is to be published on December 2nd, and next month we hope to be able to print some opinions about it, from friends and critics. Meantime, to give our readers a taste of its quality—and incidentally to show by actual quotation that it is written in a style which will appeal to workers—we are printing the following extract from the Appendix, dealing with “Ideological Influences in Imperialism;” and also quoting a few lines from the appreciative Foreword to the book contributed by our friend, George Hicks.

LET us take a fanciful instance : Mr. John Smith, of Smithville, sees that the prosperity of his home city depends on the prosperity of the iron and steel industry of Smithville. Hence all the things he values associated with the prosperity and splendour of his home town—he may value fine city buildings, art galleries, public parks, education of the children of Smithville—appear to him to be wrapt up in the economic prosperity of the iron and steel industry on which Smithville depends. If the leading men and capitalists of the city are influential, as they will be if the industry is an essential one to the country, they will have access to Cabinet Ministers and leaders of political parties, or perhaps be related to them ; and so over port wine and cigars they will be able to point out how the scheme of the Cape to Cairo Railway will benefit the iron and steel industry and hence promote the prosperity of the country, and how if the Cabinet Minister's Party assists the scheme, his Party will have the support of the very influential capitalists of Smithville, together with the support of the newspapers in which the capitalists of Smithville hold shares.

Then the Professors in the University of Smithville, relying on the capitalists of Smithville to endow their University liberally, will begin to teach the theoretical soundness of the supremacy of the white race over the black, or of the Anglo-Saxon race over the rest of the world. The Press owned by capitalists with investments in the iron and steel industry of Smithville will begin to preach the doctrine of Imperialism, and retired Army Colonels, who hold the floor in London Clubs, school teachers, clergymen, and well-meaning spinsters (who perhaps also have a few odd pounds invested in the firm of Smith Company of Smithville) will begin to think how nice it would be for their nice young nephews from Harrow and Eton and Oxford to go out to teach British ideas to the "savages" of India and Africa. And the "nice young nephews" from Oxford with a thirst for adventure take up the idea enthusiastically.

So gradually people begin to regard "Empire" as a thing to be desired for its own sake; and the political and ideal factors become an influence of their own on world policy. But the primary cause of the political change is a change in economic conditions. As Woolf puts it:—

Three kinds of beliefs, moral, sentimental, strategic, all affect men's ideas and ideals of Empire, and therefore they have influenced the policy of Imperialism. But they are not fundamental. They would not of themselves collectively or singly have been sufficient to set in motion or to maintain in motion the expansion of Europe and the subjection of Africa and Asia. . . . At every step in the imperialist expansion of Europe the impulse of economic causes is evident. . . . The motive power behind modern imperialism is economic; it springs from economic beliefs and desires. There are other ingredients in the ferment which has caused the Europeanisation of Africa and Asia, but if they had all been absent and the economic causes and motives had remained, the same effects would have resulted. (*Economic Imperialism*, pp. 24, 26 and 35.)

Middle class theorists have studied merely the "ideal" factors in Imperialism, and have as a rule neglected the relation of ideals to economic conditions; or they have lumped together the Imperialism of Rome and the colonial expansion of the 16th and 17th centuries with Modern Imperialism, and have failed to analyse the peculiar features of Modern Imperialism and its specific causes. For the purpose of understanding the present world situation, the *differences* between the various forms of colonial expansion are of very much greater importance than the points of similarity between them—a similarity which is mainly superficial.

The importance of this *scientific* method of studying Imperialism to the working class to-day is that it shows that the cause of Imperialism is a particular form of capitalist organisation of industry. Hence Imperialism, which is wrecking civilisation to-day, cannot be removed by superficial political patchwork—the formation of Leagues of Nations and the holding of international conferences

and all the other quack remedies of middle-class pacifism—but only by going to the root of the matter—capitalist control of finance and industry.

GEO. HICKS writes in the Foreword:—"Both these subjects (Econ. Geography and Imperialism) go to the very root of world-wide capitalist development, and *they are subjects that concern all workers intimately*. . . . International events will become more and more vital in the class-struggle as time goes on, because they reflect the wider aspects of that struggle as world interests become more and more inter-locked. When Press, Pulpit and Platform urge you to the shambles of war, for *what is the call to sacrifice?*"—read this book and see.

The OPENING-UP of CHINA A Study in Present-day Imperialism

*There is no more fascinating problem for the student of history, past and present, than that presented by China. What causes made this great Empire—a vast land mass of 1½ million square miles, with a teeming population—the longest-lived of all civilisations? How is it that to-day this same Empire has become a battle-ground for the financiers and diplomats of the rest of the world? It is the aim of this article to answer these and similar questions, and to provide the working-class student of Imperialism with the essential facts about China and her exploiters.**

AT the present stage of Capitalist Imperialism, control of the undeveloped resources of China is a vital matter for the great industrial World Powers. It is a matter almost of life or death for one of them—Japan; of life or death, that is, from the capitalist point of view. And it is so supremely important, also, for America and for Britain that it is not surprising to find the question of China's future was the crucial matter discussed when the representatives of these three Great Powers met to settle world affairs at Washington a year ago.

A glance at the political map illustrating this article will show how the vultures have gathered round the carcass. Japan has got

* For details of much recent history see Plebs Textbook, No. 2, *An Outline of Modern Imperialism*, particularly Chap. X. This article should be read as supplementary thereto.

THE PLEBS

a firm foothold on the mainland in Korea (annexed 1910); and her troops only evacuated Vladivostok a few weeks ago. America has her outpost in the Philippines. On the south-west, Britain and France have occupied territories touching the Chinese borders, and Britain holds tight to her "gate" of Hong Kong, commanding the sea-way to Canton, the southern capital of China. The role of the other great Power—Russia—has naturally changed



POLITICAL MAP OF THE FAR EAST.

The map shows China and the neighbouring possessions or spheres of influence of the Powers. Note that although Japan is reported to have evacuated Vladivostok she is still occupying the northern (Russian) half of the Island of Sakhalin. Also, that although the Washington Conference resulted in her leaving Shantung, she still has an "economic stranglehold" over that province—which is the obvious next step on the mainland from Korea.

since the Revolution. After the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) the two former enemies agreed upon a joint policy as regards China. But a Bolshevick Russia and an Imperialist Japan must once more

be deadly rivals ; all the more so because Russia's geographical position makes it impossible to leave her out of count when reviewing the forces likely to operate in Chinese history in the near future.

What is that near future likely to bring forth ? Is there any likelihood that China may become a second Japan, absorbing Western science and technical knowledge, and becoming herself an Imperialist power ? Can any sort of Chinese independence be preserved amidst the fierce rivalries of outside powers ? Will there be, as Bertrand Russell suggests is possible, a period of foreign domination, ending in a massacre of all foreigners planned and carried through by Chinese secret societies ? Or will industrialism create a new and vigorous section for the Workers' International ? Will a Socialist East—Russia and China—be arrayed against a capitalist West ? The development of China is bound to react on every country in the world. Her resistance to Imperialist expansion would hasten its end, while, if her huge masses of cheap labour-power are to be made available for international capitalism, the workers of the world would soon find their own standards of life falling. Just as the great capitalist groups cannot leave China alone, so the workers cannot allow the wage-slaves of China to remain outside their organisation.

With European complacency we often refer to the late beginnings of capitalism in China as the end of China's long sleep. It is true, of course, that throughout recorded history Chinese development has been a placid pool compared to the rushing cataracts of the West. The attempted explanations of this placidity, this lack of change, have been many and various. H. G. Wells has emphasised the dead-weight of the ideo-graphic alphabet, with its thousands of separate characters, each symbol standing for an idea, not a sound. Russell (*Problem of China*, p. 31) mentions others ; e.g., the Confucian system of ethics which places duty to family higher than duty to country or community ; and the government by "intellectuals"—*literati*—chosen by stereotyped examinations, and solely for their proficiency in writing.

But all these factors are rather instances of stagnation than causes of it. An elaborate and difficult script did not prevent the meteoric advance of Japan after 1867. Economic changes are now producing a movement in favour of a phonetic alphabet in China itself. And as Russell dryly notes, we too chose our leaders mainly from those trained in writing and reading dead languages, but that did not prevent the emergence of Joseph Chamberlain.

Geography throws much light on Chinese history. The Hwang-ho (the "Yellow River") is the Nile of China. But the vastness of the fertile river plain, and the protection from invasion (except by much inferior numbers) afforded by the highlands of Tibet and

the Gobi desert afford clues to some of the differences between Chinese civilisation and the river-valley civilisations of the West. The more complete natural protection made unnecessary a military caste like that of Assyria ; and the national heroes of China are men who engineered canals or devised means for preventing floods. Not uniformity of language but uniformity of conditions made China static and unchanging ; that, and her isolation from the rest of the world outside. " The unparalleled cohesion which the Celestials have displayed for thousands of years was probably due less to any inherent racial genius than to the seclusion of the country as a whole, giving it comparative peace to work out its own destinies in terms of the inward unifying geographical conditions . . . China, which invented printing, gunpowder (?) and the compass, must have possessed not only initiative but tremendous progressiveness in the past, and, like Egypt, only 'stagnated' through lack of the forces of peaceful variation from without as well as within " (Cowan, *Master-Clues in World History*, pp. 58, 59).

For centuries, the small holdings in the rich alluvial soil, tilled by the spade or primitive plough, were an all-sufficient basis for Chinese life. Successive invaders, Mongol and Manchu, were absorbed without any resulting change in that basis. Trade acted as the dissolving agent of many civilisations ; but the fruitful returns of Chinese horticulture abolished any incentive to any great growth of trade. China was self-supporting and self-sufficient ; and no tales of accumulated riches in other lands tempted Chinamen to dare the dangers of the ocean. The polite but contemptuous reply of the Emperor of China to Lord Macartney, the first British envoy sent to the court of Peking, in 1793 (quoted by Russell) vividly illustrates how completely insignificant Great Britain and indeed all the outside world appeared to the Celestial Empire.

These facts, geographical and economic, give us the real clues to Chinese racial characteristics and to Chinese history. And similar facts—*e.g.*, the tremendous reserves of coal and iron in China, as well as of labour-power—give us the clue to what is happening in China to-day.

But first let us note a few of the chief dates in the record of Chinese development :—

- 3000 B.C. Chinese combatting inundations of the Yellow River.
- 772 B.C. History known in detail from this point.
- 221 B.C. Political unification of whole of the country. The Great Wall built, to complete protection against invaders from the north-west.
- 900 A.D. End of great Tang dynasty, China's most " pro-

gressive" period, during which contact with India, Persia and Rome existed.

13th century A.D. Invasion by—later absorption of—the Mongols.

1644—1911 A.D. Manchu dominance.

LATER EVENTS.

1793. George III.'s envoy, Macartney, shown the door.

1840. Opium War. Cession of Hong-Kong to Britain, and opening of five ports to trade with foreigners.

1856—60. Peking attacked by British and French. Indemnity, opening of Yangtse River and of seven more ports, gained.

1870. British diplomat murdered. Another indemnity and five more ports opened. The French took Annam, and the British Burma, from Chinese suzerainty.

1894—5. War with Japan. Loss of Korea and Formosa.

1897. Germans take Kia-chow and railway and mining rights in Shantung. (Japanese got these as a war-bribe from the Allies, but U.S. at Washington Conference insisted upon their return to China).

1900. "Boxer" rising against foreigners. More indemnities, and Foreign Legation established in Peking.

1910. Banking Consortium. All the big Banks, backed by their national Powers, agreed to act in consort in making loans to China.

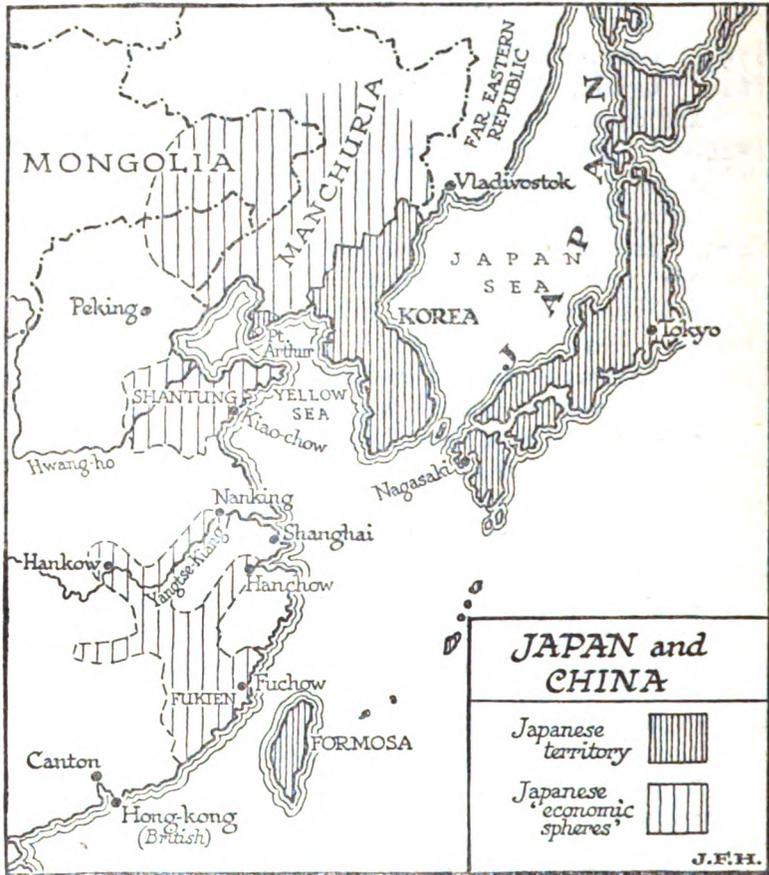
1911. Manchu Dynasty ended. Republic declared.

These few facts need little comment. In a word, the 19th century saw the invasion of China by the European powers. At first these Powers acted independently. Later, when the victim showed signs of resistance, the vultures formed the Consortium; and all the attempts of smaller birds to break that ring—from the Crisp Loan* (1914) to Pernotte's Banque Industrielle de Chine (1921)—have failed. Japan's attempt, during the War, to act independently of the other Powers and make herself dominant in China was very largely checkmated at the Washington Conference.

Russell (*Problem of China*) points out that because she has far and away more capital to spare than any other country, the United States now dominates the Consortium; and that she champions the "enlightened" demand for the Open Door in China—a fair field and no favour to all comers—for exactly the same reasons

* Mr. Birch Crisp undertook to raise a loan for the Chinese Govt., in face of the direct opposition of the British Foreign Office and the Banking Consortium, which was thus forced to give better terms to the Chinese.

which made 19th century British capitalism swear by Free Trade : because under such conditions she will inevitably reap the biggest advantages. While posing as the friend of China, and her defender against the aggression of Japan, America will be able to exploit the Celestial Land for many years to come.



A map showing the chief areas of Japanese "influence" in China:—In the north, Manchuria and Mongolia; south of that, Shantung; and further south again, the Yangtse valley and Fukien (opposite Formosa). Note in this latter area that Hankow, Nanking and Hanchow are three of the most important industrial districts in China.

Since the establishment of the Republic in 1911, the unsettled and often chaotic state of Chinese affairs has given ample excuse for all kinds of intervention. After the Emperor had been forced to abdicate, the Liberal Sun-Yat-Sen, who stood chiefly for the trading interests of the southern ports, was not strong enough to prevent the Conservative Northern general, Yuan-Shi-Kai, becoming Presi-

dent ; for the latter, who stood for Law and Order, got the backing of the foreign banks. Yuan died in 1916. Since then a helpless President and Parliament have had to look on while rival generals struggled or manœuvred for power. Three figures have emerged. Sun-Yat-Sen, backed by American capital, is dominant in the southern provinces—despite British opposition centring at Hong-Kong. Chang-tso-lin has his main base in Manchuria. He is reported to have been defeated by Wu-Pei-Fu, who controls central China and keeps Sun-Yat-Sen confined to the south. Chang, Wu and Sun are, it is said, respectively favourites of Japanese, British and American capital. And it is to be noted that this state of insecurity is, at any rate temporarily, very definitely to the advantage of the foreign investor ; for the greater the insecurity, the higher the rate of interest. (E.g., the Peking Government, April, 1922, had to borrow money at 40 per cent. in order to carry on.)

On the other hand, industrial development cannot proceed apace until the internal affairs of China have reached some sort of equilibrium ; and industrial development must be the great deciding factor in determining the future of the country.

Let us glance at railway development in China, as illustrating the projects of rival nationals, with their implied political control by the financiers and heavy industrialists.

RAILWAYS (see map overleaf).

1875. Shanghai-Woosung. Built by foreigners, and destroyed by Central Government.

1895—1908. Peking-Hankow. (Belgian.)

Hankow-Canton. (American, unfinished.)

Harbin-Mukden-Peking. (Russian, to connect with Trans-Siberian line.)

Kiaochow-Tsinan. (German. Seized by Japanese during War. Washington Conference decided that this was to be bought back by the Chinese Government within 5 years.)

Yang-Tse Valley. (British.)

Southern Railway. (French.)

1908. Railways built by foreign loans and controlled by Chinese Government—Tientsin-Suchow Shanghai-Hangchow.

The total mileage of railways shows a rapid growth :—

1905	3,000	miles
1919	6,852	„
1921	7,000	„ (and 2,000 under construction).

In line with her policy of the "Open Door," America favours

THE PLEBS

nationalisation of the Chinese railways ; since this would be more favourable to American interests than railways controlled, say, by Japanese capitalists. Probably American engineers are already dreaming of linking Bokhara with Peking by steel tracks and aeroplane stages following the old trading routes.



Note that the two great waterways of China, the Hwang-ho and the Yangtse-kiang, form the main routes of east-and-west communication. The principal railways run north and south—Peking-Hankow-Canton being the great trunk line which is yet to be completed in its southern section.

Chinese foreign trade is rapidly growing, as the following figures show :—

	1916.	1918	1920.
	£	£	£
Net Imports.. ..	86,067,833	145,658,383	258,847,474
Exports	80,299,561	127,544,295	183,928,962

The respective shares (1920) of the three great industrial Powers were :—British Empire, 18.64 per cent. ; Japan, 28.14 per cent. ; and America, 16.10 per cent.

Yet to how tiny an extent China has yet been industrialised, in the European sense of the word, may be seen by comparing the following figures with the estimated total population of 350 to 400 millions :—

		<i>Factory hands.</i>	<i>Mine Workers.</i>
1916..	..	560,000	406,000
1922..	..	1,000,000	1,000,000 (approx.)

But the growth already apparent in that brief table indicates that China will not remain an exporter only of cotton,* tea and silk. Cottage looms are being replaced by mills—and wages in these textile factories ranging from 7d. to 1s. 10d. a day are thought to be high!

China's immense and as yet scarcely worked reserves of coal and iron have already been mentioned. In the iron-fields Japan has entrenched herself; in 1919 four out of five of the chief iron-mines were under Japanese control. This monopoly is a vital matter to Japan, whose own supplies of iron are hopelessly inadequate to the needs of a modern Power. So tight has her grip on Chinese iron been that when ships were being built by the Chinese, the steel had to be imported from America and Europe.

Eckel's estimate (in *Coal, Iron and War*) of China's coal reserves is that she possesses somewhere about one quarter of the total reserves of the world; *i.e.*, more than the whole of Europe. And that, compared with some other estimates, would certainly appear to be no over-statement.

China also has copper, gold, silver and lead mines. She exports annually 10,000 tons of tin ore, and she supplies 60 per cent. of the world's output of antimony. Oil is worked in the Upper Yangtse and in the Shensi province.

This, then, is China of to-day. The economic advance sketched above means that the technical science of the West is being applied to the exploiting of the resources of the East. It means that the peasants of China are, in great measure, to be proletarianised; and their lower standard of life used to degrade the standards of the workers of other countries. The solution of that problem lies, not along the lines of colour prejudice and race hatred, but in the strengthening of the World International of all Workers, Eastern and Western; and in the intensifying of the fight against capitalist exploitation at home and abroad.

MARK STARR.

* China ranks third among the world's producers of raw cotton.

A FRUSTRATED POET

This study of the effect of Industrialism on a great poet will be read with interest by every worker interested in literature.

PROFESSOR HOUSMAN'S new book of poems proves him again not merely a fine poet, but a poet of wide and general appeal.* This new volume has the same restraint and the same marvellous perfection, in its limited scope, that sold the *Shropshire Lad* through twenty editions. The whole output of Mr. Housman, so far as the non-classical world is concerned, consists now of two volumes of poems, very small, and published at an interval of twenty-seven years. They need no words of mine to recommend them; they have forced their way into the pockets of readers who refuse to read any other poet, or only Mrs. Wilcox; they have discomfited the superior person by being both undeniably good and immensely popular.

But there is more in these little volumes than a handful of some of the most charming songs in the English language. There is a dead soul. One of the leaders of the unemployed (who and where I cannot remember) recently said that the industrial machine affected men in three ways. Some it made into rebels. Some it degraded into brutes. But "there is a third class, who are not strong enough to be rebels and whose minds are too fine to let them become brutes—they commit suicide." Mr. Housman's mind was one that revolted, but he had not, like Morris, the temperament or desire to turn him into a rebel. As he was not poor, he did not commit suicide, but hid himself away and turned his mind to other things, hiding from his eyes what he was not strong enough to alter.

If these poems are autobiographical—and they seem to be unquestionably such—that story of frustration rises plainly from them. The last thing I wish to do is to be impertinent to one who is a fine writer as well as probably the greatest living classical scholar, but it seems to me clear that here we have a case where our present industrial system has destroyed, for all practical purposes, one of the finest minds of this country. Capitalism could not use Mr. Housman, so it sterilised him.

* The books of A. E. Housman's referred to in this article are: *Last Poems*, 5s. (just published), *A Shropshire Lad*, 1s. 6d., *M. Manilii Astronomicon I recensuit*, A. E. H., 4s. 6d. (in Latin). All published by Grant Richards.

The earlier poems (most of those in the later book are of the same date—1895) tell us of the life of a Shropshire farmer's boy. Externally, there is nothing to trouble him but the ordinary troubles which have troubled men for all time—too much drink and money spent at Ludlow fair, and girls who are loose with the other fellow ; nothing very much to attract him but the countryside, the earth and sky, and the occasional passing of a regiment of redcoats that suggests far distant lands and adventures. But all the same, there is the disquiet that all of us feel, some time, and either choke it down or follow it where it leads. To him it called to the battle, but it gave no hope :

What evil luck so-ever
For me remains in store,
'Tis sure much finer fellows
Have fared much worse before.

So here are things to think on
That ought to make me brave,
As I strap on for fighting
My sword that will not save.*

The only thoughts that the call brought to him were thoughts of Thermopylæ, where three hundred Spartans held up the hundred thousands of the Persian King in the narrow pass between sea and mountain, till they were overwhelmed and died and there was an end :

*The King with half the east at heel is marched from lands of morning ;
Their fighters drink the rivers up, their shafts benight the air ;
And he that stands will die for nought, and home there's no returning .
The Spartans on the sea-wet rock sat down and combed their hair. †*

The attitude of heroic despair, the obstinacy of Thermopylae, cannot last a lifetime. There must be some hope, or if not hope, at least some conviction of the possibility of victory afterwards, maybe after one's death. But Housman never felt this. His poems tell us only of a desire to struggle, an impulse to do the impossible, and a foreknowledge of defeat :

We for a certainty are not the first
Have sat in taverns while the tempest hurled
Their hopeful plans to emptiness, and cursed
Whatever brute and blackguard made the world. ‡

He told us, in the earlier volume, that the Shropshire Lad at home, had homely comforters ; the earth, the standing hills, " the beautiful

* *Last Poems*, p. 14.

† *Last Poems*, p. 51.

‡ *Last Poems*, p. 24.

and deathstruck year," but that it was when he came to the city, to London, that he was helpless, alone and defeated :

Here in London streets I ken
 No such helpers, only men ;
 And these are not in plight to bear,
 If they would, another's care....
 Undone with misery, all they can
 Is to hate their fellow man ;
 And till they drop they needs must still
 Look at you and wish you ill.*

The country boy's longing for the countryside he has left, and his hatred of the town that is breaking him, has given us some of the best of modern songs. To quote one, just for its beauty :

'Tis time, I think, by Wenlock town
 The golden broom should blow ;
 The hawthorn sprinkled up and down
 Should charge the land with snow.

Spring will not wait the loiterer's time
 Who keeps so long away,
 So others wear the broom and climb
 The hedgerows heaped with may.

Oh, tarnish late on Wenlock Edge,
 Gold that I never see ;
 Lie long, high snowdrift in the hedge
 That will not shower on me.†

Nevertheless, this was but the prelude to defeat. Mr. Housman's mind had instinctively turned to defiance of old custom, and to the search for truth in spite of all. It is said that when he delivered his inaugural address on taking up his present post (Professor of Latin at Cambridge) he gave great offence by saying : " It is customary for those in my position to praise the former occupants of this chair. Of my predecessor I said when he was alive that he had only touched the fringe of his subject. I shall not unsay it now that he is dead." But he might insult the Senate of Cambridge University ; he could not fight the industrial system of Great Britain. " Man and God " together were too strong for him :

How am I to face the odds
 Of man's bedevilment and God's ?
 I, a stranger and afraid
 In a world I never made.‡

* *Shropshire Lad*, p. 59.

† *Shropshire Lad*, p. 57.

‡ *Last Poems*, p. 28.

Thence it is an easy descent ; from a consciousness of defeat to an abandonment of the struggle. He had begun by a genuine desire to right injustice, to avenge innocent suffering ; he abandoned the struggle.

Ay look, high heaven and earth ail from the prime foundation ;
 All thoughts to rive the heart are here, and all are vain ;
 Horror and scorn and hate and fear and indignation
 Oh, why did I awake ? When shall I sleep again ? *

And in the same poem we find the final surrender, in these ghastly lines, which a reviewer has inappropriately called " noble " :

Be still, my soul, be still : it is but for a season :
Let us endure an hour and see injustice done.

But it is not in man's power to endure even an hour and *see* injustice done ; he must turn away to where he cannot see it, and can pretend it does not exist. So Mr. Housman turned himself away. He shut and double-barred and bolted the doors of his mind against the call :

Our only portion is the estate of man.
 We want the moon, but we shall get no more.

He turned to editing and studying the obscurer Latin poets, and his best and most remarkable scholastic work was an edition of Manilius. Now Manilius is a very obscure, very dull, almost forgotten Latin poet, whom very few read and none desire to read. His subject is Astronomy : his poem is very long and its lack of merit had secured to it no more than a passing attention. Here, in studying Manilius, was surely peace and quiet. Nothing in the subject could recall the struggle he had abandoned ; among rival scholars he would find no face he had met outside. The noise of the battle would never come through his study doors.

In Housman's astonishing preface to his *Manilius* are strewn numerous and important indications of his frame of mind, and the reason why his genius has given us only two chips of gold instead of the untold wealth it might have produced. There are reminiscences of what drove him back in defeat ; it is shown again to have been the apathy and lack of desire for truth of his fellow-men. " Error, if allowed to run its course," he observes, " secures its own downfall and is sooner or later overthrown, not by the truth but by error of an opposite kind." On the same page, he has occasion to refer to " the average man " in classical criticism, and says of him : " His opinions are determined not by his reason,—' the bulk of

* *Shropshire Lad*, p. 74.

mankind' says Swift, 'is as well qualified for flying as for thinking'—but by his passions; and the faintest of all human passions is the love for truth. He believes that the text of ancient authors is generally sound, not because he has acquainted himself with the elements of the problem, but because he would feel uncomfortable if he did not believe it; just as he believes, on the same cogent evidence, that he is a fine fellow, and that he will rise again from the dead" (p. xliii).

The work which he did on Manilius, and elsewhere, undoubtedly placed him in the first rank of classical learning. It showed him to be a scholar of the calibre of Scaliger, Bentley and Madvig—in a world that no longer cared at all even to know who Scaliger, Bentley and Madvig were. But he had not the serenity of those great men. He had closed the doors of his mind, but he was not at rest. He was tormented, and every page of his preface bears the marks of a furious, unceasing rage, a bitterness that does not know its own origin and fastens on any adversary. It may involve a little tedious explanation, but let us glance at some examples. Manilius, like other classical authors, is preserved for us in various manuscripts, whose texts differ and are in some cases obviously all wrong. To correct these errors the editor will compare the readings of the various manuscripts, giving to each the weight that the reliability and age of the manuscript demands, judging it by sense and grammar, and if necessary, rejecting all the existing readings and correcting by conjecture. But recent editors of Manilius (it appears) being unfit for their jobs, have taken the simpler course of assuming one manuscript to be always correct and following it in disregard of probability, and sometimes even of sense or grammar.

An editor of no judgment, perpetually confronted with a couple of MSS. to choose from, cannot but feel in every fibre of his being that he is a donkey between two bundles of hay. What shall he do now? Leave criticism to critics, you may say, and betake himself to any honest trade for which he is less unfit. But he prefers a more flattering solution; he confusedly imagines that if one bundle of hay is removed he will cease to be a donkey. (p. xxxi.)

These editors he treats with a violence and savagery that would be notable even in an election address. The style is formal and polished, but the abuse is deadly:—

If a man is acquainted with the Latin tongue and the speech of poets, he is sharply warned of corruption in a Latin poet's text by finding that he can make neither head nor tail of it. But Mr. Vollmer and his fellows receive no such admonitory shock; for all Latin poets, even where the text is flawless, abound in passages of which they can make neither head nor tail. Thus they gradually come to regard Latin poetry as having absurdity for its main characteristic; and when they encounter in a corrupt passage the bad grammar or nonsense that they habitually impute to an author by misunderstanding what he has written, they encounter nothing unexpected. (p. 1.)

His (*i.e.*, this type of critic's) trade is one which requires that it may be practised in perfection, two qualifications only; ignorance of language and abstention from thought. The tenacity with which he adheres to the testimony of scribes has no relation to the trustworthiness of that testimony, but is wholly dictated by his inability to stand alone. . . . And critics who treat MS. evidence as rational men treat all evidence, and test it by reason and by the knowledge they have acquired, these are blamed for rashness and capriciousness by gentlemen who use MSS. as drunkards use lamp-posts—not to light them on their way but to dissimulate their instability. (p. liii.)

And who are these people overwhelmed with such a torrent of deserved abuse? They are adversaries who are just alive, just not ghosts—Messrs. Ehwald, Vollmer, Birt and others, small German professors who had crept into comfortable obscure jobs in virtue of a presumed scholarly capacity that nobody cared to question. They are just sufficiently real to struggle and squeak before they are killed, and in this battle with shadows, Housman has poured out more energy and ferocity, more embittered, soured fury than most of us could spare for the real struggles of to-day.

His last book gives us the full sum of what he has produced of creative work during this whole later period. Most of the book dates, as has been said, from 1895. The later stuff stands out fairly clearly. There is an *Epithalamium*, a pleasant and moving imitation and recollection of Greek originals. There is the record of a nightmare (*Hellgate*) which, like all dreams, ends without a meaning. There are a few astronomical poems—by-products of Manilius. There is finally a poem on an event that penetrated to even the quietest study, and the eight lines of the Simonidean *Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries* stands for ever as another reminder of the great poet that we lost.

At first, it seems, his abandonment of the struggle produced disquiet and wretchedness in his own soul. The poet and great man did not die easily, and this period is the period of the tormented and furious editor of Manilius, a ravening lion among classical scholars, a man whom it was bad to cross or annoy, because his soul was dying. Now the work that the industrial system began the chloroform of Manilius has completed, and the trouble in the heart of a man who might have been a great poet is ended. In his preface, Mr. Housman says:—"I can no longer expect to be revisited by the continuous excitement under which in the earlier months of 1895 I wrote the greater part of my other book, nor indeed could I well sustain it if it came." It is true. Mr. Housman must now be nearing seventy, and it is twenty-seven years since he laid down his sword. Weapons go rusty in so long a time; the mind that has spent more than a quarter of a century on Malinius cannot if it would turn to resume the battle it abandoned.

R. W. POSTGATE.

CHAPTERS from WORKING-CLASS HISTORY in SOUTH WALES

III.—THE EARLIEST UNIONS.

MOVEMENTS which adopt underground methods are weak and persecuted movements, and such were the workers' movements in South Wales in those early days. The competition for the available work was such as practically to force the workers already employed to secure their positions, as far as possible, by combinations. The preserve of the "boss" and his undercutting tactics led to a general agreement amongst the workers concerned as to what price they would do certain work for. The "Union Club" rules express opposition to a threefold attack upon the livelihood of the workers; first, the oaths and secrecy betray the legal and economic persecution by the employing class; second, the refusal to instruct others shows the fear of the effects of the great mass of unemployed and a desire to monopolise and preserve their craft; and third, the rules relating to prices and quantities of work reflect the price-cutting propensities of the "boss" in the works.

Although organisations of workmen had been made legal by the repeal of the combination laws in 1824, the workers in these unions were to feel heavily the displeasure of the capitalists. Early in September the campaign against the "Union Clubs" was launched by the employers. At the Neath Abbey Works some fifty or sixty men had joined the union, and endeavoured in numerous unpleasant ways to compel the rest of the men to join. The employers called a meeting of the men, and told them that the "union men" were not to be allowed to continue working. All the men who "trusted their employers" were asked to move to the right of the meeting place, whilst those who were in the union and intended remaining in the union, were asked to move to the left in order that they could be dismissed. By this method the "Union Club" at this works was smashed, to the great rejoicing of the local capitalist newspaper.*

This process of breaking down the "Union Clubs" was not always so easily effected. It will be sufficient to cite the instance of "union smashing" around the large centre of Merthyr, as it was

* *Cambrian*, Sept. 11th, 1831.

typical of a good number. About September 2nd, the secretary of the Merthyr "Union Club" was discharged from his employment, and it was hoped that his dismissal would do much to break up the local branch. For a week or so the workmen took no action, and in the meantime, another workman had been obtained from a distant works to fill his place. This imported man met with the reception generally given to "blacklegs," and although the following account is fairly highly coloured, it doubtless has a strong kernel of truth.

On Monday the 5th, J. Williams, of the Melin Griffith Works, began to work as a roller at Dowlais Ironworks instead of a man who was discharged. It seems that the poor fellow was not a member of the Union Clubs at that place, and during his work great numbers of the workmen assembled around him without actually molesting him; he was, however, alarmed by what he saw as he was heard to say: "I think I shall be killed to-night." Owing to the state of confusion he was in, or from some other unfortunate cause, he reached one of his legs too far back, and it was entangled in the level wheel, and so mangled as to require instant amputation high up the thigh. The poor fellow (considered as an interloper) was left a considerable time on the ground in the most wretched and agonised condition, before any of the members around him would render him the least assistance, or even pick him up.*

The eyes of the above writer, with his spectacles of capitalist interests, evidently could see no need for the "railing off" of dangerous wheels. The truth is that the above statement illustrates vividly the desperate temper of the workers.

Press propaganda continued against the unions and, as usual, continually brought to light "cases of illtreatment" of non-unionists.

On the 6th of September another poor fellow belonging to the Plymouth Coal Works, Merthyr, was overwhelmed by a fall in the works, and one of his arms was broken. The other colliers saw him under the fall and refused to assist him because he was not one of the union....

However much it is to be lamented that a rate of wages should exist which is scarcely sufficient to procure the necessaries and conveniences of life in return for the hard labour of the industries, a state of things which we are sure is felt by none more acutely than the employers of these poor men, yet we are satisfied that it is impossible that any combination, such as the one in question, can raise wages, when labour cannot be employed to the advantage of the employer.†

The employers now gave notice that after a certain date no union members should be employed. At a joint meeting of the Dowlais, Plymouth and Merthyr branches, the workers decided to keep their organisation and await the lock-out. By the end of September the unionists were locked out, and were not allowed to

* *Merlin*, Sept. 17th, 1831.

† *Ibid*.

return except on the condition that they would "give up their union."

Crawshay and his fellow capitalists, the enthusiastic reformers, with their cries of freedom, were as energetic in denying the workers the freedom to organise, as they were enthusiastic in their agitation for their own freedom as expressed in the Reform Bill. Freedom to Crawshay and his fellows meant in this case, as in most others, freedom to exploit the workers. The lock-out continued through October and the position of the unionists was most pitiable. They received 4s. to 5s. each per week and later on supplies of flour were sent by neighbouring branches to be distributed amongst them.

Many workers applied to the magistrates for parish relief. Bruce and Rev. G. Thomas heard their appeals, and took the opportunity of severely chastising them for their obstinate persistence in remaining members of the union. Holding, as they did, the whip hand over the workers, these two magistrates attempted to draw from the workers the secrets and objects of the unions. But their Christian charity was not sufficient to grant relief to succour even the starving wives and children of these poor workers.

Much of the wretchedness of the workers expressed itself in a religious form, and many of the phrases of the old prophets echoed around the small meeting places. Denied a happy existence in this world, the workers looked and sought after a happy existence in a future one, but the key even to that happy heaven was denied them if they were members of the union. The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists held an assembly at Tredegar on the 19th of October, and condemned the "secret union clubs" and further, decided that no unionist should be admitted to church membership and called upon all to sever their connection with the union movement. How often, in religious movements, does God's favour go hand in hand with the employer's interests!

The condition of the workers was becoming more wretched as the lock-out continued, and even the capitalist papers admitted that the men, with their wives and children, were starving. A letter written from Merthyr at the time said "This place is in a dreadful state. The moment the news arrived of the disturbance in Bristol, the Union Clubs all met—what happened I know not. All is quiet, but everyone in apprehension. Thousands are out of employment and starving. The men know all that passes, and are evidently plotting. They talk of revolution. . . . Twiss, the agitator, is still here. He preached last week from 20 (24) Isaiah, 21st verse. We expect the close of this week to climax our efforts."* Yes, because thousands were starving, because babies were crying for

* *Merlin*, Nov. 12th, 1831.

food and tugging at breasts which could supply no milk—because of these things, the close of this week did “climax our efforts.” The workers were beaten, returned to work, and gave up their Union Clubs.

The presence of the soldiers had kept those hungry babies from being satisfied by pillagings, and the great Crawshay was once more able to set his works going and get his profits, which a few years later assisted Raikes to start his Sunday School in Merthyr and drill godliness and Christian charity into the hearts and heads of those very babies—if they survived the effects of that hungry period. But the Welsh capitalists did not succeed in crushing out the resistance of the workers; rather did they drive it into more secret channels, into a new form. The cause of the workers’ activities remained, and if suppressed in one direction found expression in another. In this way arose that movement known—or should it be said hardly known?—to history as the Scotch Cattle. It was composed of the more ardent spirits who had been so active in the “Union Club” movement, and was strictly limited to those workers who could be relied upon. Each iron-works and pit had its own little lodge or club, and they held their meetings in the back room of an inn or in a quiet spot upon the mountain side. It was not upon force of numbers that they relied to put into effect their decisions. All decisions were enforced by terroriſt methods, by threats and violence.

The first sign of this new movement appears in February, 1832. Messrs. Russell and Brown, owners of the Nantyglo, Blaina and Coalbrookvale works had “made a proposition, previous to the coming into operation of the Truck Bill, to lower wages five to six per cent., at the same time to advance cash two or three times per week if the workers wished it, and also to lower provision prices in their shop by ten or fifteen per cent.” The workers refused to accept this proposal and struck work. They wanted the abolition of the Truck System according to the Anti-Truck Act of October, 1831, which their previous activities had forced from the government. After the strike had continued for a fortnight, the workers became desperate. Blacklegs had been employed, and this irritated the workers more than ever. The works manager’s house was stoned, and a bull’s head painted in red upon the doors of the blacklegs’ dwellings. This bull’s head was the warning sign of the Scotch Cattle. Still, however, the blacklegs continued working. The following night the vengeance of the Scotch Cattle was felt.

On the night of 17th of February, 150 to 200 men met at a place called the Cornish Pit, where they were commanded by their leaders to turn their coats and black their faces—an order which was promptly obeyed. They then proceeded, headed by a man blowing a horn, to the cottages of two

marked men...and broke open the windows, destroyed the furniture, and beat the offending inmates in a most brutal manner.

The military were called in. But the presence of the 98th Regiment was not able to prevent the workers from continuing this process. On Sunday, April 8th, the Scotch Cattle went, in the darkness, over the mountain to Abersychan and destroyed the house and furniture of a blackleg who was working at Nantyglo. A reward of £15, a very large sum in those days, failed to bring any information as to the identity of the Scotch Cattle, such was the fear of revenge and the solidarity of the workers. . . .

Lord Melbourne, the Home Secretary, had not altogether believed the urgent letters he received from the employers, it seems, and he requested Lord Bute to send in a report of the position. Among the papers of that report, the following document has the greatest interest. It was written in the Welsh language and red ink was used to symbolise the blood of the workers :—

To all Colliers, Traitors, Turncoats and others.

We hereby warn you the second and last time.

We are determined to draw the hearts out of all the men above named, and fix two hearts upon the horns of the Bull ; so that every one may see what is the fate of every traitor—and we know them all. So we testify with our blood.

X.,
Hoarfrost Castle,
April 19th, 1832.

(A portrait of a bull with bleeding hearts on each horn concluded the letter.)

These ghastly threats give some idea of the temper born of the horrid squalor of working-class conditions.

NESS EDWARDS.

CLASS ROOM NOTES

For Students and Tutors

PLEBS everywhere have been doing their bit in the workers' front line during the Election. Most classes were temporarily suspended, and students and teachers alike had the opportunity of applying their knowledge to concrete "topical" problems. The storm which raged everywhere round the Capital Levy gave us the chance to prove that our study of Economics was a practical matter, and to expose some of the nonsense talked by the £ s. d. owners. Lord! What

definitions of capital were solemnly put forward by its proprietors and apologists ! Our old friend "the goose that lays the golden eggs" was working overtime. And the anti-Labour vote in many a working-class constituency is a challenge to us to extend and intensify our work. Here was an Election fought largely on a plain *class* issue ; the barest and most elementary knowledge of working-class economics would have been sufficient to make every proletarian proof against the "arguments" poured out by the other side. Let us accept the challenge, and re-double our efforts. And above all let us aim at relating every one of our studies—History, Economics, and Economic Geography—to real issues and practical questions. *Our education is a means to an end—and that end is working-class emancipation.*

School teachers in France have within their ranks a section indignant against the mis-education of the State schools. They are trying to form a teachers' international. To show up the falsities of national histories they are asking in *Novaj Tempoj* (their Esperanto journal) for their colleagues in other countries to send them "orthodox" national accounts of the French Revolution. These will be put side by side in parallel columns and the exposure of ruling-class bias will be complete.

Capital is becoming a hindrance to production. Not only are monopolies escaping from the average rate of profit but restriction of output is being introduced on a wider scale. The *Daily Herald* (19/10/22) had a comment upon the boom in rubber shares due to Government restriction of output. More detailed evidence, supplied by the Labour Research Department, was given in the *Assurance Agents' Chronicle* (14/10/22) concerning restriction in eighteen primary producing industries. And yet people still swallow the yarn that a Labour Government would be "bad for trade."

Walton Newbold, (M.P.) in recent articles has been at pains to suggest that—contrary to the usual idea of the pacific nature of textile capitalism—Cotton has become "the standard bearer of predatory capitalism." This is an interesting point ; though one need not go the length of regarding Cotton alone and above all as the clue to current imperialism. Increasing rivalry for supplies of every raw material, and the general tendency towards monopoly, are surely the real "keys."

Sir Arthur Keith, F.R.S., the world-famed anthropologist, we know. But the same gentleman as sociologist is not so worthy of respect. In the *R.P.A. Annual* (1913) he cites the life and works

of Charles Darwin as "a crowning example to justify our capitalist system." His "argument" is that capitalism provides the money and leisure necessary for the Darwins to make advances in knowledge. But how many potential Darwins are now wasted—for lack of that necessary money and leisure? The man who can seriously champion capitalism as a means for the advancement of culture would, one feels sure, be also in favour of the original Chinese method of obtaining roast pig—burning the house down to get it!

C. O. writes :—In reply to your correspondent, H. S., the anonymous author of *Thomas Wanless, Peasant*, was Mr. A. J. Wilson, the well-known financial writer and City editor, author over his own name of such remarkable books as *An Empire in Pawn*, *The Resources of Modern Countries*, and other works on politics and finance. He was for many years City Editor of the *Standard* in the days when that paper exercised a powerful influence; and was the founder and editor till the day of his death, which occurred in the summer of last year, of the financial weekly, *The Investor's Review*, which is still carried on by his daughter. In my own much valued presentation copy of *Thomas Wanless*, the author has noted that the book was written in 1877. It appeared, I believe, in the first instance as a serial in the *Aberdeen Free Press*. *Nicol Thain* is not in my view such a striking production as *Thomas Wanless*. I imagine both books are out of print and can only be picked up by a fortunate chance in a second-hand bookshop, the publishing firm of Wilson and Milne being no longer in existence.

LONDONER.—The meeting places of the First International are still most of them preserved. St. Martin's Hall is in Long Acre. This was where the first two conferences were held—'64 and '65. It is not a stone's throw from Covent Garden Tube, but they will not welcome you if you go there, because it is now *John Bull* offices. The General Council used to meet in 18, Bouverie Street, off Fleet Street, and by the look of it the place hasn't changed much. It is now used by the *Star*. When they were chased out of there they went to 256, High Holborn, which we believe is still a bookseller's shop. (See Postgate's *The Workers' International*.)

For historical geographers :—It is interesting to note that the turning point of the great war between Athens and Sparta in Greek history was the capture by the latter of the peninsula in the south of Asia Minor on which was the town of Halicarnassus. After that the Ionian towns one after the other revolted and the Athenian empire was finished. Now Halicarnassus was the port of call for corn-ships from the east; and Athens was partly dependent

on foreign food. Therefore it is not improbable that food difficulties assisted in the Athenian fall. But *this is hypothetical*; we cannot jump to that conclusion. No ancient historian at all gives any authorisation for such a view, or even mentions it.

Here is a question for some student. It appears that in 1881 or 1882 the T.U.C. resolved that only matter approved by the Parliamentary Committee should be circulated in the regular envelopes to delegates, because previously papers with "obscene remarks" on them had been inserted in the delegates' envelopes. This was just about the time of the Protectionist ("fair trade and sugar bounty") attack on Broadhurst, and it looks as though there were mere secret history to this. Does anyone know exactly what occurred?

AN APOLOGY:—Will students, secretaries and tutors kindly pardon the delay in the delivery of copies of our new Imperialism Textbook. The Election caused considerable delay at the printer's, but the book will be ready within a day or two of the issue of this Magazine.

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REVIEWS

ANOTHER BOOK ON MARX
Marx and Modern Thought. By G. V. Portus. (W.E.A. of New South Wales. 3s. 6d.)

THIS is a steady and stolid little book, by another of these well-meaning University Persons (and an Australian University Person at that!) who find pleasure in the instruction of the Working Class. It is slightly better than the average book on Marx by such persons. It is not merely pretentious flatulence, like Laski's pamphlet. But it has two notable limitations.

In the first place, there are a number of errors in detail. The date of the Communist manifesto is wrongly given on page 9, and that of the *Critique* on page 19. On page 84 it is stated that the common element of all commodities is labour-power, when what is meant is abstract human labour. These are only samples of many similar small but irritating errors.

Secondly, Mr. Portus remarks (page 13): "Marxism is really two things—a theoretic system and a plan of proletarian tactics." Whereupon he proceeds to devote some chapters to the theoretic system and separates off the plan of proletarian tactics to be dealt with in the last chapter. He exhibits no comprehension of the all-important fact that apart from the plan of proletarian tactics the theoretic system is the most meaningless academicism; and conversely, that without a sound theoretic analysis of the workings of capitalism the plan of proletarian tactics will be confused and doomed to failure.

This lack of comprehension vitiates the whole book. Little else matters. Mr. Portus desires that the Socialist movement should retain some Idealism. He tries to argue that there was no element of class struggle in the Protestant Reformation. (He has apparently never heard of the Peasants' War or of the Anabaptists.) He exhibits symptoms of credit-reformism. He is fond of boiling down Marx and then remarking affably that "when all these qualifications have been made,

we must recognise that the class war theory contains a solid basis of truth." He particularly likes to talk of Marxism "ecclesiasticism" and of the appeal of Marx to the "moral nature" of the Marxian. He is fluffy-minded about education. He observes (page 171): "For the communist, education is to be a frankly propagandist affair, not so much expository as didactic. For the socialist it is to be a business of the examination of facts, of discussion and controversy...." (As if communists and I.W.C.E.ers didn't examine facts, discuss and controvert!) And so on, and so on.

We may quote one true remark which Mr. Portus has made—when he says that "not the least notable feature of this renaissance of Marxism [after the war and the Russian Revolution] is the stress that has been laid upon his political and sociological ideas, compared to that given to his economic theory" (page 119).

But one true remark and some good intentions on the part of an author are not worth three shillings and sixpence—especially when the "get-up" of the book is unpleasant. No! Flebs who want a three-and-sixpenny book on Marx will be well advised to stick to Beer.

G. A. H.

THE PRESS GANG.

The Press and the Organisation of Society. By Norman Angell. (Labour Publishing Co., 3s. 6d.)
The Press. (Labour Research Dept., Paper, 6d. Boards, 1/-.)

Plebs will scarcely need this book to convert them to the view that the Press of to-day exists, not for the objective pursuit of truth, but—primarily—to support the existing social order. Angell is a tireless if somewhat uninspiring crusader, and he here supplies a good deal of useful detailed evidence in support of that general charge. Always there are lingerings of Radicalism in his outlook. He is a firm believer in Reason, and Freedom of *Discussion*, as practicable means of arriving at social betterment.

This does not lessen the value of

his book as an indictment. He is indeed all the more effective as a critic because he expects something else from a pig but a grunt. He views the question of Press control with the greater concern because he accepts Seeley's dictum that "The ultimate foundation of every State is a way of thinking." He is therefore the more dismayed when a Northcliffe or a Bottomley, speaking for "the million," turns "public opinion" into a farce.

No Pleb will undervalue Angell's aims—striving as we are not merely for a workers' Press but for a new ideology. But it is finally the means whereby men live that determines our thoughts, and if the *Daily* — were not accompanied by the daily bread, then it would not much longer control the daily mind.

Angell declares that proprietary interests are not so strong in England as in America. He is not so much concerned about coal kings owning papers to push coal owners' interests (though he admits there are cases of this kind, e.g., the Cardiff *Western Mail* and its campaign against nationalisation). He views the newspaper company as out for its own profits, and regrets that to safeguard these it plays down to the lower instincts, exploiting them as against the more slowly working reasoning powers. But the direct domination of the Press by Big Business is growing. We have already several Stinnes in the making.

On the constructive side, Mr. Angell hopes pathetically that journalism might be given as high a status, and be able to act as impartially as the judiciary. Where is he living? . . . Then he outlines a rather sketchy scheme for centralised publishing and distributing by the Labour movement.

His suggestions do not inspire one with confidence. What is wrong with

the Press at present is that, like all else, it is run for Profit. Not until the "organisation of society" itself is altered will it be possible to alter the basis of the newspaper industry. But in the meantime one takes comfort from the fact that capitalist development itself is rousing forces—Plebs education among them—which are making more and more people "Press-proof."

A more—recent and much more valuable—publication is the little volume on *The Press* just issued by the Labour Research Dept. This is Vol. II. in the exceedingly valuable "Studies in Capital and Labour." For detailed and up-to-date information concerning the above mentioned proprietary interests and the conditions of newspaper workers it cannot be too warmly recommended.

A. B.

A USEFUL BOOK OF REFERENCE.

British and Continental Labour Policy.

By B. G. de Montgomery (Routledge, 21s.).

A compilation of 529 pages, with appendices added, of Labour policy in Britain, France, and the Scandinavian countries; dealing extensively with social and economic conditions; the various sections of the political and industrial movements; the legal position of Trade Unions; questions of Conciliation, Arbitration, the Minimum Wage, Unemployment, etc., etc.

The author cannot be accused of revolutionary opinions, as when discussing the question of nationalisation he says, "Confiscation is inconsistent with principles of public morality." Nevertheless, the book, although not written objectively, is a very useful work of reference for any working-class library.

J. H.

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RECONSTRUCTING CAPITALISM.

What Next in Europe? By F. A. Vanderlip. (Allen & Unwin, 8s. 6d.).

An examination of the present state of Europe, based on a four months' tour of the Continent without any difficulties in the way of passports, etc., and a forecast of its future, from the pen of one of America's foremost bankers, can hardly fail to be of interest to the student of the post-war international situation; and this book is certainly interesting. It is divided into three parts, the first two of which add yet one more to the ever-growing list of attacks on the Entente peace policy; and a tolerably vigorous attack it is, too; but it adds little to what Keynes and Brailsford have already said with more restrained but not less effective eloquence.

It is the third part, dealing with Reconstruction, to which the student will turn. What has a representative American to say of the future of Europe? According to Vanderlip, two forces at present operating in Europe are making for reconstruction, which means to him the reconstruction of Capitalism. These are the League of Nations, and, secondly, "the new attitude of the workers of the Continent which promises to allow Labour and Capital to work in harmony together without the menace of class warfare and revolution."

As for the League of Nations, the author recognises that, though he himself says it, "merits respectful and sympathetic consideration," there is no hope of America entering without drastic modification of the Covenant. What he chiefly fears is that his countrymen are not sufficiently alive to the importance of finding some way in which they can help in "putting a dangerously distraught world in order."

Next in importance to knowing the aims and aspirations of governments, says Mr. Vanderlip, is to know those of the labour unions. As suggested above, he takes a highly favourable view of the attitude of Labour in the present crisis. "Some of the best economists in Europe are Labour leaders. I think that some of the most statesmanlike minds may be found among Labour Unionists." A

very natural thought indeed—for it is clear that the views of many of the Labour leaders, in this country at any rate, bear a striking resemblance to his own! There is, for example, an extraordinarily familiar ring about his strictures on the 'canny' policy, which we can only suppose is due to the long and oft-repeated sermons of certain leaders on that subject. These same leaders will also re-echo Mr. Vanderlip's assertion that, "If Labour leaders are to lead they must first retain their positions. To do that, they cannot get too far ahead of the average sentiment of their constituents." If there is any difference at all between the views of these same representatives of Labour, and those of the financial magnate, it is that, while they have a conscientious objection (on democratic grounds) to holding, or at least to expressing, any view which the masses do not hold, they still wish to retain their position, not as mere spokesmen, but as *leaders*.

But alas and alack! Despite the sound statesmanship and the practical economic knowledge of the Labour leaders, they have

a difficult problem to solve. First they must convince society that their aspirations are not too radical, and are for the general good of society, and at the same time they must convince their followers that their leaders' views are not too conservative and that they are sufficiently centred on the direct interests of the Labour class.

Already a difficult problem, truly, and likely to become yet more so.

The author's contributions to the problem of reconstruction are two in number. The first is the organisation of a kind of Gold Reserve Bank for the "United States of Europe," based on the principles of the American Federal Reserve Bank. The other has to do with the debt of Europe to the United States; his proposal is that America should demand payment, but should for the present forego the receipt of it and devote the whole that can be paid to the rehabilitation of European civilisation. Both these proposals he works out in considerable detail.

Railwaymen should find this book

of especial interest. Apart from the fact that it adds the weighty confirmation of a leading American capitalist to those views on the relations of Capital and Labour with which their Political General Secretary has familiarised them, the lofty liberal idealism to which the author gives expression will form a striking illustration of their Industrial General Secretary's recent illuminating declaration that "in all negotiations he found good men on both sides." T. A.

LIBERAL ECONOMICS.

Economics of Unemployment. By J. A. Hobson. (Allen & Unwin, 4s. 6d.).

This book is neither "fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring." If one's enemy writes a book which is a sound piece of scientific analysis, one can respect its intellectual excellence, and its contribution to science, while deploring its "tendency." If a book has good class-conscious "punch" about it, one can forgive any lapses from scientific soundness of which it may be guilty. But Mr. Hobson's book exudes Liberalism of the most insipid kind, and at the same time suffers from all the evils of loose thinking and fallacious argument.

Mr. Hobson expounds his old theory about all the evils of society being due to a wrong distribution between "saving" and "consumption." Consequently society suffers periodically from under-consumption, involving over-production and unemployment.

With this he associates the perfectly sound theory that industrial crises come because there are more constructional goods produced than are at the moment needed. But he neglects the fact that the over-production of constructional goods can be adequately explained as caused by conditions of *production* (see Plebs Economic Text-book), quite independently of how much capitalists in general decide to save. There seems no reason to believe that recurring over-production of constructional goods would be lessened if saving were decreased relatively to consumption by Mr. Hobson's liberal reformism. The volume of investment, in so far as it depends on expectation of profitable return on investment, seems to depend on conditions of pro-

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duction, rather than the reverse as Mr. Hobson maintains. In fact, he admits this (page 53), and does not meet the criticism by his dissertation in Chap. 3 on *long-period* rate of interest.

The main fallacy behind Mr. Hobson's curious obsession about the danger of over-saving seems to be his failure to appreciate the fact that when money is "saved" and invested, it merely means that the power to consume, which that money represents, is merely *transferred* from the investor to the producers of the constructional goods, in the production of which the investment has been made; and increased investment, in so far as it creates a demand for constructional goods, will ease the over-production of constructional goods, and not cause it as Mr. Hobson claims.

In fact, Mr. Hobson's theory, if true, would be a gospel of despair; for increased productivity usually presupposes increased "saving" in some form; hence if this cannot come without an equivalent increase of consumption, the world has to mark time—in a socialist as in a capitalist society.

M. H. D.

A COMEDY OF YOUTH.

Captain Youth. A Romantic Comedy for all Socialist Children. By Ralph Fox. (C. W. Daniels, 2s. 6d.)

The philosopher Kant said that it was a mistake to imagine that childhood is the happiest period of life. It is true that a child's capacity for joy is greater than a grown-up's, but if the surroundings that make for happiness do not exist, what is the use of that capacity?

How can the proletarians' children be happy in the modern industrial city?

Here is the keynote of Ralph Fox's little drama:—

Oh, Youth goes forth this morning
To battle, gay and strong,
And lifts his standard, scorning
All hatred, envy, wrong.

Before his bright sword's glancing
His foes fall out from strife,
And heart and sword go dancing
Across the hills of life.

The half-serious comedy is continuously illuminated by fine imagination, especially the delightful lyrics. Ralph Fox has the literary gift, and a still deeper inspiration should give him power to do great things.

J. G. C.

LETTERS from PLEBS

DEAR COMRADE,—I have read with considerable interest the remarks in recent issues, particularly "The Plebs Page" for September and November, on the precise function of the Plebs League inside the I.W.-C.E. movement.

I take it that most of us are agreed on the desirability of maintaining, as an integral part of that movement, an organisation linking together individual I.W.-C.E.s. But it seems clear that unless some specific task is allotted to this organisation—*i.e.*, the Plebs League—it will appear to many people to be merely superfluous, and in fact to make for unnecessary "duplication." The suggestion made in the September "Plebs Page," that Plebs Branches should undertake the propaganda work for the N.C.L.C. was turned down, I gather, by the N.C.L.C. Executive, on the ground that such work must, wherever a Labour College is in existence, be initiated and controlled by the College Committee itself. Obviously, this is a good and sufficient reason.

But the remaining items of activity suggested for Plebs—recruiting for classes, "pushing" The PLEBS and other publications—although they would keep many individuals busy (and usefully busy), scarcely form a sufficient *purpose* for the League considered as an organisation.

I would like to make the suggestion, therefore, that the Plebs League be recognised as the organisation concentrating primarily on methods of teaching, on syllabuses, on opening-up new subjects, etc.—that is, on the specifically educational-technical side of our work, as distinct from the actual job of organising and running classes, which is done by the N.C.L.C. The League would aim at enrolling as members all tutors and advanced students; and local branches would make it part of their business to discuss the purely educational side of the work, and make suggestions both to the centre and to their own Labour College Committee.

Of course, at present, most N.C.L.C.ers are Plebs—or should be—and all Plebs are N.C.L.C. workers. But this will not always be the case. As T.U. representatives come onto the Labour College Committees, these latter will become less and less fitted for the task of deciding on tutors' problems, methods of presentation, etc., etc. It is all the more desirable, therefore, that here and now the *conscious* educationists should get together in the League and contribute their bit towards making it the real *dynamic* factor in the N.C.L.C. movement.

Yours frat.,
TEN YEARS A PLEB.

LABOUR COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS.

DEAR COMRADE,—I am somewhat surprised that the criticism of the Labour College curriculum in your July issue has aroused no more comment than the letters of B. Woolf and F. Lewis. The former made what appear to an outsider to be some very good points; and his (seemingly) excellent suggestion that successful candidates for Labour College Scholarships should be required to pass a certain elementary standard before taking up residence at the College, seems to me to deserve much more consideration than F. Lewis gave it. If such an arrangement would make for more efficiency and better results from the College, it should be tried. And I would remind F. Lewis that "where there's a will, there's a way"; the railwaymen and miners he mentions could get to evening classes if they wanted to. As Woolf put it, "the increased facility for 'swotting' that such practice would give would more than repay the time spent." I take it he means the men, when they reach the College, would be more efficient students. Surely the workers who send them to the College have the right to demand that they should first of all equip themselves to make the best possible use of their time.

Your original article put forward the suggestion, if I remember rightly, that only those students who had been through two or three years' training in N.C.L.C. classes should be given scholarships at the College. This in my opinion might operate unfairly against certain workers at present, as N.C.L.C. classes are not yet established, as they ought to be, in every town and village throughout the land.

This is a question which should be of interest to every intelligent worker who realises the importance of the experiment made by the Labour College. Let us have some discussion of it, and not stray off into side-tracks about whether Woolf was entirely accurate in all his remarks, or not.

Yours fraternally,
A. D. B.

BISHOP TEMPLE ON I.W.C.E.

DEAR COMRADE,—How's this for a PLEBS cover motto?

"To expect Tutors supplied by

our Universities to teach History or Economics from the viewpoint of the working class would be to expect the ridiculous."—Extract from the speech of Dr. Temple (Bishop of Manchester and President of the W.E.A.), at the Annual Denomination of the Workers' Educational Association, Oct. 27th, Albert Hall, Manchester.

The Bishop went on to say that the view the men of the Universities would naturally take would be the view of the shareholding class. Of course, he went on to modify the effect of this statement by endeavouring to show what a great service the W.E.A. was doing by bringing groups of workers into contact with University men through the agency of the tutorial classes, thus helping to modify and correct the view point of the Professors.

Altogether the Bishop's speech was such a frank statement, so full of damning admissions that a verbatim report could very well be published with the title of "The Case for *Independent Working Class Education*," by the President of the W.E.A.

Yours fraternally,

A. L. G.

[We have been unable to obtain a full report of Dr. Temple's speech in time for publication this month, but hope to be able to comment on it later.—Ed. PLEBS.]

A PRISONER'S POEMS.

DEAR FRIEND,—Ralph Chaplin, a commercial artist with a bent for verse writing, was tried before Judge Landis in 1918; was sentenced under the Espionage Act, and is now serving a twenty year sentence in Leavenworth Prison. It was his membership in the I.W.W. and his editorial work on *Solidarity* that sent him to gaol.

Mrs. Nearing and I have undertaken the publication of a little book of Chaplin's verses for three reasons:—(1) They are well done. (2) The publication of the book will help to ease the terrible strain of a long prison term. (3) Mrs. Chaplin, in whose name the book is copyrighted, is working from day to day for the support of herself and her little son. Every cent that is made on this book, above the actual cost of manufacturing and distribution, goes to her.

You will want to do your part toward assisting the family of this man who is serving a gaol term in the name of all our liberties. This is a real opportunity for each of us, by doing a little, to help this man and his family a great deal.

Yours truly,
New York City. SCOTT NEARING.

[Chaplin's poems, *Bars and Shadows*, have just been published in this country by Allen & Unwin, at 2s. 6d. Obtainable from Plebs Book Dept., 2s. 8d. postpaid. All our margin of profit on sales will be forwarded to Dr. Nearing.—ED.]

MARKISM AND LITERATURE

DEAR EDITOR,—A. P. L.'s reference to my letter of September, 1921, seems to make it necessary for me to present a tardy reply to your editorial comments on the same. Like A. P. L., I had been awaiting further criticism and, apparently, had failed to recognise it when it came.

(1) I was not confusing two separate lines of approach to fiction, but as I was replying to Comrade Johns, and he had demanded the test of accuracy as well as the application of the wider method of critique, I had perforce to deal with both.

(2) My unhappy phrase, "contracting tests of science," was used in no derogatory sense, and its condemnation as "simply mid-Victorian nonsense" was rather absurd. Surely the essence of scientific research (in the practical sense) is contraction, through elimination. The scientific method applied to fiction, with the M. C. H. as judgment basis, would result in the elimination of all that makes fiction valuable. Beauty of form and expression, individuality, characterisation, description, would be dismissed as inessential, while the usually negligible factor (of importance to Marxians) which might be traced after diligent search, would be falsely elevated. Subjected to such treatment, I still contend that most of the greatest works of fiction—particularly modern fiction—would have to be dismissed as valueless.

I have no quarrel with the Short Syllabus which appeared in June, and am surprised to find it mentioned

as an answer to my letter. If the subject of literature in general were under discussion, I could not do otherwise than agree with that form of presentation, but I had in mind the application of the M.C.H. to individual works alone. When we learn that Ibsen was the "pioneer" who "introduced ideas into drama," we enlarge our knowledge of the significance of Ibsen in the history of literature, but we learn little concerning his works, and when we turn to the works themselves we find that most of the ideas contained in them are no longer of manifest importance. However, we are not perturbed, for the "permanent element" in Ibsen's works is Ibsen himself. Shaw does not claim for his works originality, but Shaw as revealed in his works is unique. Many, like Synge, have turned to peasant life for inspiration, and have been greater realists than he, but Synge can cast a spell on us which others cannot do. There is a subtle all-pervasive charm about good fiction which the too ardent analyst will fail to note.

(3) I still contend that art is essentially a medium of self-expression, but I do not, and did not, assert that the artist's self was removed from all contact with the life and thought of his time. That would be lunacy. Still, individuality exists and manifests itself in art. Not even the psycho-analysts have explained it quite away.

(4) Nobody's views on *Robinson Crusoe* are of immense importance; but least of all the views of partial Britishers who were taught to regard it with awe and admiration almost in the cradle. Taine may be prejudiced, but he is certainly more detached. I must confess I bore your excellent critique with fortitude. It is precisely works like *Robinson Crusoe*, which you aptly describe as a Bourgeois-Manifesto, which lose nothing by such treatment, but if we confine our interest to works which reveal their social origin our loss will be immeasurable, and the adoption of Com. John's suggestion would in practice lead to this.

I have no original counter-schemes to present. The critic like the writer

should be free. If the former is a Marxian he will perceive sometimes in the works of the latter a factor which others would overlook, but to make that factor a test of excellence would in my opinion prove disastrous.

To prevent further misunderstanding, I suggest that Com. John's original letter be re-read.

Yours fraternally,

MYFANWY WESTROPE.

"MARX PERVERTED."

DEAR COMRADE,—To tell you the truth I was not overjoyed to read E. and C.P.'s translation of "No Politics," etc. Not that I belong to the "No Politics" school, but I can see a danger far greater than "No Politics" in the said article, as into it may be read support for any humanitarian red-herring.

What is the matter with Revolutionary Political Action? According to this article of E. and C.P. there are no alternatives but "potty" Anar-

chism and Parish Pump Reformism. I contend that this supposed translation of a historical document is propagandist to the last degree. Such being the case I request the privilege of equal space to rebut these "Senile Rightists."

Yours fraternally,

F. L. RIMINGTON.

[Com. Rimington's letter seems a bit mixed. Is he charging E. and C.P. with deliberately *mis*-translating Marx? That is a pretty serious charge, and one which we hardly think he will persist in if he ponders for a moment on its seriousness. Or is he labelling Marx a "Senile Rightist" and "Parish Pump Reformist"?... Perhaps he is really objecting to the seven-line introductory paragraph to the article (printed in italics), for which neither Marx nor E. and C.P. were responsible. In which case we can afford him equal space (*i.e.*, seven lines) to do his "rebutting" in.—Ed. PLEBS.]

ESPERANTO NOTES

NEW Classes. At the request of the Ilford Plebs League, Mr. M. C. Butler delivered a lecture on "The Practical Value of Esperanto," at the I.M.M. Institute, on November 8th. Comrade Jolley reports that 22 members meet every Sunday at 10.30 a.m. at 4, Eton Road, Ilford. They expect and will welcome more new members.

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Manchester and District Esperanto Group.

A meeting took place at the Labour College, Manchester, on September 25th, of the Manchester and Salford Communist Esperanto Groups, at which it was agreed to form an aggregate group and apply for affiliation to the B.L.E.S. The following were elected to the various offices:—President, F. Elder; secretary, H. B. Robinson; minute secretary, W. McGinley. Meetings of this Group take place every Friday in the Labour College at 8 p.m., and those desirous of becoming members should write to the secretary at 10, Jane Street, Eccles New Road, Salford, Manchester.

Edukistara Internacio. En sia lasta kongreso (Paris, 14 Aŭg. 22) E. I. post serioza diskutado elektis el la multaj internacilingvoj la ununuran propagandotan, kaj alvokis la tutmondan edukistaron jene: Ĉiulandaj geinstruistoj estas varme petataj lerni kaj praktiki la lingvon internacian plej disvastigitan, t.e., Esperanto. E. I. grupigas jam 20,000 ĉiulandajn edukistojn. Ĝi estas tute sendependa kaj akceptas grupojn kaj izolulojn laŭ tri jenaj kondiĉoj:—

1. Klasbatalo por starigo de nova edukismo.

2. Lukto kontraŭ milito kaj malamo en lernejo.

3. Starigo de Universala Unuforma Lernejo.

Individa aliĝo estas senpaga kaj rajtigas ricevan de ĉiuj dokumentoj. Progresemaj edukistoj aliĝu per Esperanto kaj vi ricevos senpage Esp. bultenon. Turnu vin al la helpsekretario:—Marcel Boubou, 96 rue St. Marceau, Orléans (Loiret) Rrancio.

El Rusio. En Moskvo fondiĝis Akcia Esp. Societo, prenanta tutan havaĵon de estinta Moskva librejo "Esperanto."

S-o Polakov raportis pri rusa sekcio de E. L. A. kaj. Nekrasov pri evoluo de Esp. lingvo. Deklamis S-oj Deŝkin, Nekrasov, Grizonskij kaj S-ino Fejgin. Kantis S-ino E. M. Romanoviĉ. Dum pasintaj du monatoj la klubon vizitis Esperantistoj el Bulgario, Hungario, Germanio, Ameriko, Anglio kaj aliaj landoj. En Moskvaj blindulaj institucioj; ra mezlernejo, ra infandomo

kaj ra muziklernejo komenciĝis Esp. kursoj. Novaj grupoj kaj kursoj en Ananjev, Arkardak, Brjansk, Bihov, Ĉerepovec (estas eldonata bulteno "La Unuaj Paŝoj"), vilaĝo Dvorjanskoe, Ekaterinoslav, Zajaĉij, Ostrov, Kineŝma Minusinsk, Oster, Pjatigorsk, Pugaĉevsk, Ribinsk, Tobolsk kaj en multaj aliaj lokoj.—El "Bulteno de Centra Komitato de Sovjetlanda Esp. Unuiĝo."

The PLEBS Page

THE fourteenth Annual Meet of the Plebs League is to be held (see announcement on another page for full particulars) on December 30th—31st. One of the biggest difficulties in arranging any such meeting is the fact that no one date suits everybody. The date of the meet was fixed this time to suit the convenience of tutors and organisers of classes, at the request of the N.C.L.C. Exec., at a week-end which, being a breathing space between two sessions, is the best time for getting a full attendance.

Individual members of the League are heartily invited to be present, and groups are urged to do their utmost to send a duly appointed delegate. While realising to the full the difficulties in the way of paying expenses, the fact that we have never had a fully representative "delegate" meeting of Plebs, and the importance of the discussion, this year, should spur members on to make a special effort. A little "pooling" on the part of a few enthusiasts would go a long way and even if the money had to be borrowed, there is all next year to pay it back in. Of course all resolutions affecting policy have finally to be submitted to a ballot vote of members, but a really good discussion at the meet itself is needed, and the more representative the meeting is the better from every point of view. *Members and groups are specially asked to consider the matter.*

The question of the future work and function of the League discussed in this page last month is a vital one and will be a main topic of discussion and debate at the Annual Meeting. All

members and groups should think carefully about the question and should read the matter that has already appeared and is appearing this month on other pages relating to it.

The N.C.L.C. is developing the class movement. With a re-organised and re-vivified Plebs League backing up the work of the classes, but with its own work inside the movement clearly defined, 1923 should see a bigger move forward than ever before in our movement.

Plebeians would note that the N.C.L.C. Exec. Report last month suggested that a committee should be formed to control the policy of the Magazine, consisting of representatives of the League, the N.C.L.C. and the Labour College. This was discussed at considerable length by the Plebs E.C. at its meeting on November 6th, and the following resolution was carried:—

That having carefully considered the N.C.L.C. proposals for a Policy Committee to control Magazine policy, we are of the opinion that the interests of the I.W.C.E. Movement would best be served (1) By the continuance and development of the Plebs League as an organisation of individual I.W.C.Ers', and (2) By the policy of the Magazine being controlled as hitherto solely by the E.C. elected by League members.

While however we regard this last point as essential, we are strongly in favour of the greatest possible amount of co-operation and inter-communication between all sections of our movement; and we would suggest that to this end one (or two), members of the N.C.L.C. executive

join the Plebs E.C. in a consultative capacity, and that, one (or two) Plebs executive members be appointed to the N.C.L.C. executive in the same capacity. These members in neither case to have any voting power.

PROPAGANDA BY LANTERN SLIDE

Make a note of this offer

Nominations for the Plebs E.C. for 1923, are asked for and should be sent in before December 30th. Seven executive members are required, plus a secretary and a Magazine editor. All members of the League are eligible for election, but must be nominated by two other League members. The record of attendances of the retiring executive from March last (when the E.C. was elected) to November (9 meetings), is as follows:—

M. H. Dobb 5, J. F. Horrabin 9, W. Horrabin 9, C. T. Pendrey 4, R. W. Postgate 9, G. Sims 4, Mark Starr 3, C. Terry 5, A. Vandome 6. The small attendance of some of the above members is due to their having been away from London for considerable periods organising for the A.U.B.T.W. scheme.

Congratulations to Walton Newbold on his triumph at Motherwell; and condolences to Will Lawther, who just missed being a member of "his Majesty's faithful Commons" by 25! What one might call the Plebs group

A specially prepared slide of the November PLEBS cover design—with the portrait of the gentleman who fears that the workers will want to control *him* next—can be supplied, post free, for 1s. 3d.

Write J. Hamilton, Sec., Liverpool Labour College, 99, Botanic Road, Liverpool.

A BARGAIN—GET IT

in the House now consists of Newbold and Geo. Barker and—may we hope?—Mr. Charlton and Mr. Lowth (late governors of the Labour College).

The 2 pp. Book List leaflet with blank pages on which to print Class Syllabuses or announcements is now ready. We have had a few requests for this but can still supply secretaries with any number (within reason!) *free*—except for cost of postage.

W. H.

N.C.L.C. ITEMS and NOTES

Reports from class centres are unavoidably held over until next month. Will secretaries kindly accept this apology—and wait until next time!

FACTS ABOUT THE A.U.B.T.W. SCHEME.

1. The Union rules provide for the creation of an Education Fund by a yearly contribution of 1s. per member.

2. The Fund is divided into two parts: (a) 3d. per member towards sending students to the Labour College, London, for a two years course of study; (b) 9d. per member towards the setting up of local educational facilities in the way of Lecture Courses, Study Circles, and individual Postal Courses of study.

3. The education to be provided is not to be confined to members of the Union, but is open to all Labour bodies on payment of an affiliation fee or to individuals on payment of local class fees.

4. Affiliation fees and class fees will be fixed by Councils to be elected locally and composed of representatives of affiliated Labour bodies.

5. For the purpose of promoting the setting up of local Councils, conferences are being called in towns having branches of the A.U.B.T.W.

The members of the latter body are to be summoned for conferences and the local Labour bodies invited to send delegates.

6. To economise in the setting up of local Councils—and because the Union has funds immediately available for this purpose—the conferences are arranged by the Union on dates and at places to save waste of time and money.

7. The work of the local Councils is to arrange for the securing of the affiliation of local Labour bodies and, also, to enrol individuals as class students.

8. The secretary of the local Council need not be a member of the A.U.B.T.W.—although that would be an advantage wherever possible.

9. All forms of education arranged for are free to all members of the A.U.B.T.W., on production of their Union membership card.

10. Local Lecture Classes must be self-supporting—that is, they must pay for postage, rent of room, share of lecturer's fee and other expenses in-

curred in connection with the running of the classes.

11. To assist the work of local Councils and to simplify correspondence, etc., the following forms and pamphlets are issued by the Union:—

- (a) Suggestions for constitution of local Councils (see No. 4 above).
- (b) Printed postcards inviting local Labour bodies to send delegates to conferences.
- (c) Printed postcards notifying arrangements for lectures.
- (d) Letter-forms for inviting local Labour bodies to affiliate.
- (e) Pamphlets:—*Our Next Step—Education* (deals with kind of education).
Education Fund Manifesto (the plans for education work).
Do it's (a 4pp. leaflet for students).

NOTE.—Pamphlets can only be had in limited quantities and are to be issued only to members of local Councils and secretaries of Labour bodies. Apply for these to the Educational Dept., Head Office, A.U.B.T.W.

The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

is composed of Educational Organisations (such as the Labour College, London, the Scottish Labour College and the Plebs League) providing *independent working-class education* by means of

Residential Tuition
Evening Class Tuition
Summer Schools
Week-end Schools
Correspondence Tuition
Lectures by Post
Publications, etc.

Every working-class organisation should provide its members with independent working-class education. Get your organisation to arrange an educational scheme in conjunction with the N.C.L.C.

WRITE SEC., 11 PENYWERN ROAD, LONDON, S.W.5.

The PLEBS Bookshelf

SOME months ago one or two of us in The PLEBS were exploring the lack of any working-class point of view in the *Daily Herald* Literary Page, and were promptly told by Gerald Gould that we were "blinded by spiritual pride." At the risk of further chastisement for impertinence I am going to rush in again, and record the fact that there was a review of a poetry book in the *Herald* a week or two ago which *did* seem to me to be the sort of thing one ought to find in a worker's daily.

The book reviewed was an anthology of modern verse entitled *Shorter Lyrics of the Twentieth Century*; and the reviewer echoed W. H. Davies' observation in his foreword to the volume, that while a number of these poets are writing descriptive verse of a high order, "their poetry begins and ends in description, and neither casts any light on their own minds nor on humanity in general. These poets" (Davies continued) "seem to lead easy and placid lives, without having any *burning sympathies* to make them great as men." Which observation the reviewer underlined by pointing out that the only "strong poems" in the volume were concerned with man's cruelty to animals—with the poet's sorrow over "a murdered mole or a throttled rabbit." Their poems, said he, "leave an impression of almost fatiguing amiability and a never-failing interest in the weather." He pictured them "hurrying into Kensington Gardens to look for larks, and comment on the clouds, and the climate, and some sheep they once saw in Sussex"; and his final remark was, "mutton chops and Worcester sauce are more to my liking"—a good, sound, sensible, proletarian sort of remark, too! As a lady of my acquaintance once remarked, apropos of the vagaries of some of the ultra-cultured, "What these folks need is to have to do a day's washing!"

The whole review expressed in a good-humoured way exactly what any worker, in contact with the realities

of life, must feel about the clever insipidity, the utter remoteness from the world men live in, which characterises so much second-rate present-day literature. And that's exactly what one looks to *Herald* reviews to do.

I can't help feeling a sort of very special interest in Ralph Chaplin's prison poems, *Bars and Shadows* (see Scott Nearing's letter on another page). Chaplin was a commercial artist. So am I. In his spare time he did some editing for a Labour journal—and so do I. And *he* got twenty years for doing this...twenty years! I feel when I look at his portrait—"This chap's doing a bit of *my* sentence!" And so most workers in our movement must feel, I should imagine, when they reflect that he and the other I.W.W. prisoners were given savage sentences for the very crime we've all of us done our best to commit—"While living in an old and shattered social order, he had championed a new order of society and had expounded a new culture." Plebs haven't as a rule many spare half-crowns to spend on volumes of poetry, but this is a special case. *Bars and Shadows* will make a highly appropriate Xmas gift—for internationalists.

Those Plebs who heard Professor Soddy's lectures on Economics at Birkbeck College a year ago, or who read A. S.'s and J. J.'s articles on "Physical Economics," and Boudin's reply thereto, in our own pages, will be interested to know that the gospel according to Soddy has now been made available in sixpenny pamphlet form—*Cartesian Economics: The Bearing of Physical Science on State Stewardship* (Henderson's; postpaid from PLEBS, 7d.). Speaking for myself personally, as a great Labour statesman would say, I was chiefly interested in a footnote on the first page which runs as follows:—"These lectures owe much to a long controversial correspondence with Dr. H. Lyster Jameson, whose

sad death is just reported in the papers. Dr. Jameson upheld the neo-Marxian or proletarian view in economics and the determinist or, as I style it, the 'ultra-materialistic' philosophy, and from the controversy my own views gained in definiteness and clearness..." One's views generally *did* gain in definiteness and clearness after a round or two with Jameson!

The *New Leader* (Oct. 20th) had a book review headed "A Socialist Epic." It was all about a book by Maxim Gorky entitled *Mother*, issued by Appleton's, the American publishers. The final paragraph of this review ran:—"In *Mother* Gorky... gives us, at last, the great book of which one caught, as it were, distant gleams in his other writings... He wrote it in 1905; but the years that have passed until the appearance of this translation have done nothing to lessen its appeal." The funny thing is that from the brief description of the book which forms the substance of the review, it is clear that *Mother* is none other than the novel well known for years to English readers as *Comrades*. How long ago it is since *Comrades* was first published in English (by Hodder & Stoughton) I am not sure. But I know I read it in 1916, because I wrote something in "Bookshelf" about it in *The Plebs* during that year. The *New Leader* is a wee bit behindhand with its discovery.

Mr. H. G. Wells is the Arch-Sentimentalist. In a message to his Trade Union journal, the *Journalist*, he wrote recently:—"I count our profession of journalism as second only in importance to that of the teacher... We are not mere hirelings; our work is creative and responsible work." But why, if "we" are not mere hirelings—as things are—do "we" need a Trade Union? Mr. Wells, of course, means that under any decent order of society "we" should not be hirelings. But that does not alter the fact that we *are* hirelings to-day—unless Mr. Wells' idea is that we should try Coué's method and, by chanting "We are not mere hirelings" in unison, endeavour to persuade ourselves that the hire system has faded away.

An American literary critic, H. L. Mencken (not, so far as I know, a Socialist) faces facts a little more squarely. Writing recently about the present order of society and its hirelings, he said:—[To-day] "the lawyer and the clergyman are simply valets to the Business Man; the pedagogue blacks his shoes in the universities; the soldier collects his bad debts; even the physician is dependent on him for education and support. In America, indeed, practically all the sciences are dependent upon the generosity of wealthy cads."

And the sooner the clergyman and the pedagogues and the journalists face the fact that they *are* hirelings, and line up with the other hirelings to make an end of Wealthy Cad Rule, the better their chances will be of doing any "creative and responsible work."

The manuscript of Tom Mann's *Memoirs* is now in the hands of a firm of publishers. The question is—is it to be issued at a price within the means of proletarian readers, or at a high figure? The former can only be done if a large sale is guaranteed in advance. If 2,000 advance orders can be booked, an edition of 5,000 could be printed; and this would make it possible to publish the book at, say, 6s. for cloth-bound copies, and 3s. 6d. in paper covers—which would not be dear for a book of about 300 pp., with numerous illustrations.

We have agreed to collect names. No money is wanted yet—only guaranteed orders. Write to us, marking your letter "Tom Mann Memoirs," stating how many copies you will be prepared to take and pay for on delivery—at above prices (postage extra). We are pretty sure every Pleb will be interested in the book—the life-story of the most notable "agitator" of his day; and an agitator who has always been a good friend to our own movement—only a few days ago we heard from a S. African comrade that Tom Mann, while out there just lately, never failed to refer in his addresses to the good work the Plebs movement was doing in the old country. So send your name *now*, and help to ensure a cheap edition.

J. F. H.

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THE LABOUR MONTHLY

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