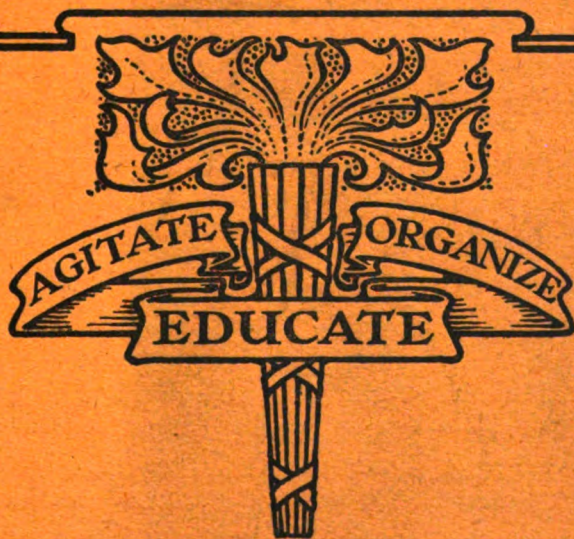


Vol. VII, No. 2

March, 1915

The
PLEBS
MAGAZINE



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MONTHLY

TWOPENCE

The "Plebs" League

Object

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

Methods

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

Membership

Open to all who endorse the object of the League.


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

Management

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

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

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

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

G. SIMS, Secretary-Treasurer

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

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

THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

THE majority of our readers will ere this have learned with much satisfaction that at a Special Conference held at Cardiff on February 6th the S. Wales Miners' Federation decided "to accept the arrangement with the National Union of Railwaymen for a joint contribution for the purpose of paying off the mortgage on the buildings of the Central Labour College; the Federation in future to take over the maintenance and control of the College." The Conference further instructed the Executive Council to prepare a

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scheme for the management of the College, this scheme to be submitted for the approval of a future Conference, at which the members of the Board of Management of the College are to be elected. The lengthy negotiations which, we hope and trust, are thus finally settled (so far, that is, as the safety of the College is concerned) were briefly outlined in our last number. But we must once more emphasize the fact that the College is still *in urgent need of financial assistance to meet immediate expenses*. While negotiations drag their weary length along the College has to be kept going; rates have to be paid and meals to be found—for man cannot live by Marx alone. Not a few good friends (including, as usual, many Railwaymen) have already sent letters, with enclosures which have gladdened the heart of the Secretary. Both the Staff of the College and we of *The Plebs' Magazine* are fully conscious of the thousand and one claims made on the generosity of Trade Unionists at the present time. But we have no reason to be modest about the worth and value of the College to the workers, and we need only point out once again that a very small contribution from *every* supporter would amply meet the case. We *have* heard of the College being criticized for so persistently mentioning the fact that it really was in urgent need of help. Its duty, we presume (like a good many other people's at present), was to lie down and die quietly without making a song about it. Better dead than guilty of a breach of propriety! Those of our readers who underwent a Christian upbringing may remember a certain story about a priest, a Levite, and a man in a bad way by the roadside. Doubtless the priest and the Levite were indignant at this luckless individual exhibiting his misfortunes so blatantly in a public place. Priests and Levites and persons with assured incomes can afford to be particular about points of etiquette. Fortunately, now as then, there are good Samaritans in the world.

* * *

THAT "nimble paragraphist," Mr. L. G. Chiozza Money, M.P., filled a column and a half of the *Daily Chronicle* recently with a heart-to-heart talk to Trade Unionists on the War and **Trade Unionists and the War.** "The Doctrine of Equal Sacrifices." This doctrine, expressed in simple phraseology suited to the comprehension of the mere wage-worker, runs as follows:—

We must all work harder and labour longer, so that our sacrifices at home may enable us to accept honourably the sacrifices of the men in the fighting line.

Put in another way, of course, it might read like this:—

We must—some of us, *not* all—allow ourselves to be exploited for our betters' benefit, and ask no questions—like good little wage-slaves; so that we and our brothers in the fighting-line may all be exploited together!

Equal sacrifices, in short, for wage-slaves and soldiers. But Mr. Money doesn't mention the simply incredible sacrifices which our army contractors, shipowners, and coal merchants (to name no others) are making.

He works in a peroration, however :—

There are many fine chapters in the history of trade unionism. Trade unionists have it now in their power to add another splendid page—a page upon which it shall be written that in a great national emergency they strengthened the arm of the nation by special exertion and willing sacrifice, *trusting to the honour of the nation* that the welfare of their children should not be imperilled.

The *honour* of a Capitalist State! Quaint, isn't it? One pictures the trade unionist handing his reduced wages to his wife, and remarking, more or less in the words of the poet,

“I could not bring thee, dear, too much,
For I love honour more.”

* * *

WE are indebted to a correspondent for some most interesting cuttings from the *Co-Operative News* for January 30th and the two following weeks, giving a report of an appeal made by a deputation of members of the Ruskin College Governing Council at a meeting of the United Board of the Co-Operative Union, held in Manchester on January 23rd. Had space permitted we should have liked to quote from the speeches of Mr. C. W. Bowerman, M.P., who headed the deputation, and Messrs. Bell (Amal. Weavers) and Young (A.S.E.), who assisted in putting the case for Ruskin College. Since none of these gentlemen's remarks, however, were characterised by any striking novelty or originality, either of matter or form, our readers will be able to bear this deprivation cheerfully. A week later the correspondence columns of the *Co-Operative News* were enlivened by a vigorous letter from our friend F. B. Silvester, who made good play with Ruskin College's latest achievement—the winning of a monetary grant (subject of course to certain conditions) from the Board of Education. (Evidently a Good Conduct Prize). The following week, one William Edgar Lawrence “felt compelled” to talk seriously to Mr. Silvester. William Edgar's letter is as touching a specimen of childlike innocence and unspoiled faith as it has ever fallen to our lot to wonder at.

Mr. Silvester complains that the Board of Education has dared to recognize this College and speak well of it. I wonder what he would have said if the Board had ignored the College, and thereby made the issue of diplomas valueless? . . . Let me say that a

College that can turn a labourer into a tutor (!), a coppersmith into an inspector under the National Insurance Act (!!), and a collier into a journalist (!!!**!) is more than fulfilling the hopes of the promoters of the College. . . .

There's a grasp of the situation for you! There's arguments! Think of it—colliers transformed into journalists! Will the members of the S.W.M.F. kindly note the dazzling futures they have missed by not completing their education "in the historic city of Oxford" (as they all say in their perorations).

* * *

THE proposed Conference of Members of C.L.C. Classes is to materialize—at Blackpool, on Good Friday. This is indeed a big step forward, and to ensure the success of the

Important Notice Conference we hereby specially appeal to all class members, particularly those in Lancashire and Yorkshire, as well as to *Plebs* readers generally, to forward their suggestions on the following points, or any others that strike them:—

- (1). The best way to make the classes more widely known among the workers.
- (2). Ways and means to make those classes already in existence more effective—by systematization, co-operation, or extension of activities, &c.
- (3). The possibility of propaganda work among the Labour and Socialist organizations on behalf of the classes and the College.

☞ Also, will all those desirous of attending the Conference (which is open to all sympathisers) inform the Acting Secretary, Plebs League, 13 Penywern Road, Earls Court, S.W., *not later than March 16th*, in order that the necessary arrangements can be made. This Conference should mark the beginning of a new chapter in C.L.C. history. And the combination of Blackpool and a Plebs' meeting ought to prove as bracing as a fortnight's holiday.

J.F.H.

To Our Readers

We are naturally anxious that *The Plebs Magazine* should be a help (financially), and not an hindrance, to the work of the Plebs League. You can assist us in this by doing your utmost to increase the circulation—which already, we are glad to report, is on the up-grade. We have decided to throw open the pages of the cover for book advertisements. This decision, we need hardly say, does not mean that the *policy* or *opinions* of the Magazine will be in the smallest degree affected by considerations of advertisement revenue. At the same time, we ask you to do what you can to support our advertisers, thereby making it plain that *The Plebs* is a desirable advertisement medium for Publishers of books likely to interest intelligent students of social and political subjects.

A Defence of Historical Materialism

(Continued from last month)

“**W**HAT Marx overlooked, in the passage quoted, is that one factor of a complex synthesis cannot constitute reality ; least of all can one aspect of one factor do so. The total material conditions, omitting the mental factor, are as purely abstract as the mind itself divorced from its material expression is abstract. Still more does the economic element by itself, severed from the other material conditions, become an abstraction ; being, indeed, an abstraction of an abstraction.”

What Messrs. Hyndman and Bax have overlooked in this criticism, is the “passage quoted.” What they present to us in the above paragraph, as Marx’s “abstraction of an abstraction,” is really the result of their own *subtraction*. With Marx, to *distinguish*, was not to “sever.” It is Messrs. Hyndman and Bax who “sever” that which Marx has distinguished. They tell us that, according to the “passage quoted,” Marx views historical reality as consisting of nothing but the economic, that all else according to Marx is superfluous and unreal. But if we refer to what Marx actually did say, something quite different to the version of the critics is found.

“The totality of these relations of production form the economic structure of society, the real basis upon which a judicial and political superstructure raises itself, and to which determinate forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of the material life of society conditions the socio-political and intellectual life process generally.”

To distinguish the foundations from what is *raised* upon the foundations, is, for Marx, not to deny either the complexity or the reality of the latter. On the contrary, the reality of the superstructure is therein affirmed. For a basis on which nothing is based is no basis at all. The socio-political and intellectual life process is therefore, according to the “passage quoted,” *a part of history*, as well as the economic anatomy. What Marx did claim, was that these superstructural manifestations were not intelligible in themselves, but could only be clearly understood when connected with the underlying economic structure ; that while no economic structure has existed which was not accompanied by these socio-political and intellectual manifestations, on the other hand there has been no such manifestation which did not by its genesis recall a

specific economic structure. To be sure, Marx never suggested that to understand the history of society it was merely necessary to set on record the economic relations of given periods. He has shown us by the application of his own method that it is necessary to take account of the superstructural formations as well. Otherwise the connexions between the specified economic conditions and these derived formations, more or less upon the surface,—connexions often indirect and tortuous—will remain illegible and obscure. The defect of the great host of Marx-critics consists in the fact that they remain on the surface, where they succeed in raising such a dust, that they might well be unable to recognize the superiority of Marx's historical method over their own superficial and barren speculations.

The comrades Hyndman and Bax find, in the "passage quoted," that Marx excludes the intellect from reality. I have already tried to show how much or how little there is in this charge. But what does the "passage quoted" really tell us?

With the transformation of the economic basis, the whole immense superstructure sooner or later undergoes a complete bouleversment. In considering such revolutions as these, one must always distinguish between the material revolution in the economic conditions of production, and the judicial, political, religious, artistic or philosophic—in short, the ideological form, in which mankind becomes *aware* of the conflict and under which it is fought out. Just as little as one can judge an individual by what he thinks of himself can we judge such a period of revolution from its own consciousness alone.

Evidently then the consciousness of man is included in the real world and the history of the internal activities of man as a part of the history of man. Here it is stated in plain language that man makes his history by means of "mentality." So far from Marx divorcing the mind of man from the conditions of his material life, as the critics allege, he lays bare the *connexion* between them. And he was able to clearly set forth this connexion between the internal consciousness and the external conditions of experience, *because* he "distinguished between the material revolution in the economic conditions and the ideological form." Man only becomes "aware of the conflict" in this form; he only participates in the conflict "under" this form. But to be "aware of the conflict" and to be aware of the source of the conflict, i.e., to be clearly conscious that it arises from a "material revolution in the economic conditions," is not one and the same thing. The case of the belief in the Second Advent, quoted by the critics, as an

illustration against Marx, is on the contrary an illustration of the soundness of the Marxian method. The early Christians while they were "aware" of a conflict were yet not "aware" of the real source of that conflict. Neither therefore can we rise superior to those Christians in understanding what they failed to understand, from their ideological views "alone." Only when their "mental combinations" are taken in connexion with their *material conditions* is it possible to understand both the *source* of the conflict and the "ideological form." Hyndman and Bax evidently understand neither the one nor the other. And they never will, so long as they persist in severing the one from the other. Still that does not prevent them from talking quite glibly about the shortcomings of Marx, about his divorcing the internal from the external, about his "abstraction of the abstraction." It is not Marx who is in need of liberation from this metaphysical bacillus, but the critics. It is they who sever the "ideological forms" from the material facts in which the forms are immanent, and then hey presto! there are two coins where there was only one. Thus Bax gets "his two ultimate elements of reality," which he has presented with the compliments of "active mentality" to the readers of his "Essays on Socialism." It is this which is again served up in the pages of the *English Review* and noted by the *Manchester Guardian* as having made another big hole in the Marxian doctrine. The only addition to the synthetic philosophy appears to be in the authorship which has now also become synthetic. It is not difficult to recognize which is the "material" and which the "formal" element in this "complex synthesis."

After taking Marx to task for his abstract generalities the devil plays his little joke as follows:—"In the domain of social psychology, family and tribal feeling, internal and external perception, mental combinations, imagination, etc., all have their influence." Such are the homeless ghosts which do duty in the "complex synthesis" as historical factors, and which are supposed to serve so much better as means of explanation of historical development, than the crude "abstractions" of Marx, not to speak of course of the "abstraction of the abstraction." "The devotees of this materialist cult of abstraction" it would appear, attempt to adjust "apparently irreconcilable historic developments to the theory." Whereas synthetic philosophy, with its "feeling," "perception," "mental combination," "imagination," "etc.," presents "more obvious reasons for what has taken place." See for example how superior is this latter method to that of Marx, in explaining the "profound belief" in "the Second Advent of the

Christ," and the "indifference" of the early Christians, "to this world and its material needs." How is the "profound belief" explained? By "imagination"! "By no possible perversion of ideas can "this belief" be attributed to the economic forms or the economic development of the time"; on the other hand it had "a powerful influence upon the actions, as well as upon the teachings of the early Christians." There are two questions indicated in the foregoing sentence: (1) the source of the belief, and, (2) the influence of the belief. Now Historical Materialism does not require of its adherents anything so stupid as that they should deny the influence of ideas or beliefs upon the actions of the men who hold these ideas or beliefs. To tell us therefore that the crudest superstitions have greatly influenced human action, is to tell us something which we quite well know. But the belief—from whence did that arise? The critics inform us that "the hope of another world with its sempiternal happiness for disembodied spirits, brought about an indifference to this world and its material needs." But how did this "hope of another world" arise? That it appeared under the form of the imagination tells us no more than that it appeared there. To say that such a belief was a crude superstition, an "absurdity" to the "modern mind," does not appear to me to help the explanation. To reject a thing as absurd is not to explain it. So if that is what the comrades Hyndman and Bax intend for "the more obvious reasons for what has taken place," then they by that show themselves to be not so very far removed from the early Christian "superstitions." They have succeeded only in bringing us from the absurdity of the Second Advent to the second advent of Absurdity.

Do the synthetic philosophers intend to convey that the "belief" of the early Christians was the pure born creation of the imagination, a sort of virgin birth? Will they then explain to us why the imagination of the Greeks of Homer or the Israelites of Moses fails to reveal this Second Advent ideology? Will they also tell us why it has disappeared from the "modern mind?" And above all will they undertake this task while remaining within the closed field of the consciousness, and without descending to such insignificant facts as those which are called economic? By the way, economic conditions are not synonymous with economic interests. According to Hyndman and Bax, Historical Materialism would explain the "indifference" of the Christians to this world, their readiness to die the martyrs' death, on the grounds of economic interest. Is this "simplicity," or is it something else? Both of the critics know that they cannot point out in the "passage quoted" anything

that will justify this exchange of economic interests with economic conditions. This misuse of terms has been pointed out, to Bax especially, time and again. But of course the readers of the *English Review* will not be so fastidious as those, let us say, of the *Neue Zeit*.

W. W. C.

(*To be continued*).

THE WAR

Its Effects on the Textile Workers

WHEN, in June last, I shook off the opulent indolence of College life, and braced myself for another desperate plunge into the turbulent sea of industry, I found the patron saint who presides over the destinies of Lancashire—St. Cotton Trade—suffering from a bad attack of congestion. So serious, indeed, was his condition that he was ordered to undergo a rest cure of eighteen days, extending over a period of three months. But the war came along and laid the old chap by the heels, and while his disciples cursed the insurance rates and the cheap cotton that would interfere with a profitable realisation of existing stocks spun from higher-priced material, we, his minions, went forth to work at such hours and under such conditions as it should please him to call us. When he omitted to call us for a certain period we meandered down to the club-house, and partook of the Holy Sacrament in the shape of the huge funds that have been accumulated in order to pay friendly benefits, and were much strengthened thereby.

However, a good dose of Government orders got the old chap on his feet again, and with the revival of the Indian trade he is hustling around almost as lively as ever. Germany took only one per cent. of our exports of cotton piece goods, but about 25 per cent. of yarn exports went to that country, this yarn being principally of the finer varieties; hence the depression is being felt chiefly in the fine counts section. But against this, Lancashire, no doubt owing to the curtailment of German trade, is obtaining orders that previously went to Germany. In addition, Lancashire trade is sure to benefit from the taking over by our Government of the German colonies of Togoland and the Cameroons, as in recent years there has been a considerable development of the cotton trade with West Africa.

And, as often happens, while the masters rose to the occasion with a moratorium and other stimulants to prevent a collapse of the credit system, we, the workers, bowed meekly to the same occasion, and when the industrial truce came along were quite ready to prostrate ourselves in submission. At present we are striving to work amicably, often under conditions that are heartbreaking, fulfilling Government contracts in many cases by machinery quite unadapted to the class of work required, and suffering from harder work and less wages in consequence. These Government contracts catch us both coming and going. Their cost must be paid out of the wealth we help to create, and we must lose now in order that that cost may yield a good profit to the masters, who, to maintain the highest margin of profit will not make the necessary alterations in material and technical processes. We have dropped our agitation on the cleaning question, our demand that we shall have stoppage and payment for cleaning machinery, and we keep on quietly paying out benefits for accidents that occur through cleaning machinery in motion. As to the cost of living, let that soar as blithely as it may, we have a wages agreement that does not terminate until July, and so far we have made no effort to improve on it.

There is a shortage of labour too, in the cotton industry. In Oldham it is most acute, not only among youths and boys, but also among young girls. We have a fine chance to effect many reforms, but the only thing we have done, as a collective body, is to enter into agreements with our employers that notices to cease work shall not be posted at any mill until the matter in dispute has been considered by joint committees, local and central. This achievement, which was initiated by Government officials, is a further development of the industrial truce and is bad enough ; but the idea behind it on the part of one section of the operatives is even worse.

Briefly, these are the facts. In the spinning section of the industry, as apart from the manufacturing (weaving) section, there are two big operatives' organizations, the Operative Spinners, and that of the Cardroom and Ring Frame Operatives. The Operative Spinners are mule spinners who produce yarn. The Ring Frame Operatives are ring spinners, who also produce yarn, but not in so great a variety. The Cardroom Operatives are the workers in the preparatory processes for both the above-named sections, neither of which can continue work for many days without their co-operation. It will be seen that this amalgamation of cardroom operatives and ring spinners makes it possible for their organization to strike every spinning mill in Lancashire, both mule and ring, but

during a dispute with the mule spinners the ring spinners could work unless they had an agreement to the contrary. As these two societies have had no agreement for mutual support since 1913 the recent agreement with the employers presents a possibility of the ring spinners remaining at work when the mule spinners are locked out or on strike. Whether this hope will be realized will of course be a matter of tactics with the employers. Agreement or no agreement, so long as they own the mills, they can stop them on some pretext or other when it best suits them. But there are many mills entirely devoted to ring-spinning, and for these to continue operations during a dispute between employers and mule spinners would be a very serious matter as they could help defeat the mule spinners by supplying urgent contracts for yarn.

True, the mule spinners are not free from blame as they neglected to organize the ring spinners (who are mere females) on their entrance into the industry ; but, still, the proceeding is so reactionary that only a goodly dose of the Materialistic Conception of History can counteract its depressing influence. Having this infallible pick-me-up to rely on, those of us who believe in Industrial Unionism are not down-hearted. Just as the shortage of spinners' assistants is making the position of the spinner as their nominal employer more and more untenable, so will the folly of sister and wife fighting against husband, father and brother, be borne in upon the participants on its practical demonstration. So that, bad as the effects of the war on the textile workers now appear to be, there is good reason to conclude that the present crisis is fashioning a melting pot for the craft unions, a crucible from which will emerge, for the use of the workers, a weapon stronger and more potent in the class conflict.

ALICE SMITH.

Correspondence

The Late Dr. Gustav Bang.

[We have received the following letter from Comrade S. Jonnson, who was for a time at the Central Labour College and is now living in Denmark. As a personal tribute to the memory of the great Danish Socialist it is perhaps more interesting than a more formal 'memoir' would be.—EDITOR].

Gustav Bang was born in 1871, the son of a clergyman himself famous as an historian. From childhood he displayed unusual aptitude for historical studies, and assisted his father in his researches. After obtaining his M.A.

degree at Copenhagen University, he wrote an essay on *The Decline of Nobility* which gained for him the title of Ph. D. Through his historical studies he soon became interested in social economy, and these combined studies soon made him a convinced Socialist. He joined the Social Democratic Party, and from that time to his death his whole energy was devoted to Socialism. Excelling both as speaker and writer he worked early and late, agitating and educating. By his oratory and masterly style his audiences were swept away as by the irresistible current of a great river ; yet every word of his (and here strangely enough I quote one of his opponents) was based on an invincible scientific foundation.

Men who, like him, take the leadership in a severe and protracted struggle generally become the objects both of devoted affection and of deadly hatred ; but Dr. Bang's fairness and uprightness of character made it impossible for even his bitterest antagonists to hate him. It is not too much to say that the whole Danish nation loved him ; it is doubtful indeed whether the French people felt such an affection for Jaurés, even when the members of every political party wept over his body. Seldom, indeed, has such a funeral been seen in Denmark as when Dr. Bang's remains were laid to rest.

Bang never enjoyed robust health, and was always overworking himself. For some time before his death he had been away from Copenhagen recuperating, but ill though he was he took part in the great debate in the Danish Parliament on the maximum prices of food-stuffs. It was on this occasion that he caught the chill which brought to such a tragically sudden end his extraordinarily active career.

The world, I suppose, will not hear much of his death. Yet there is one less 'true man' on the globe. If instead of writing in a language spoken only by three millions of people he had used one of the languages spoken by scores of millions, his name would have been known the whole world over. Not that even as it is his own nation alone reads his works, which are widely circulated over all the Scandinavian countries, either in the original or in translations. But Denmark inherits his achievements, and she will always be proud to count him among her greatest sons.

Very few writers attain to his mastery, and *simplicity*, of style. Though his writings are before all else scientific, yet a child could understand him. I wish I could find time to translate something of his for *The Plebs*—for instance, his refutation of the Henry George doctrine Danish Socialist literature I find to be both extensive and interesting.

Gustav Bang was a Marxist ; or since all Socialists claim to be that, let me say a Marxist of the same school as Kautsky. In fact that is the only Socialist school in Denmark, and it is the unity of the movement which has made it so strong here

With very best wishes, Yours,

Denmark.

S. JOHNSON.

P.S.—A thousand thanks for the Magazine, and let me congratulate Mr. Craik on his sound and able discussion of the world-crisis. It is so rare to find so much common sense on that subject.

THE WAR—AND AFTERWARDS.

SIR,

When Mr. Cuthbert opened the discussion upon Socialism and the War I was hopeful that at least it would have elicited a much freer expression of opinion than has actually taken place. Of course, a discussion to be of use should lead to something more than a whetting of stones or sharpening of blades by a few individuals. If the writing and the talking does not lead to action then it would have been as well to have left them unwritten and unsaid. But a discussion is necessary before we can understand each other's point of view, or formulate a programme for which we can all strive. No reader of the *Plebs* would suggest that each should go his own way, irrespective of what the others think. If we are to be effective in any of our aims it will be as a result of joint and not individual effort. That is why I am fully convinced that there is a great need at present for the provision of some common ground from which we can view the situation and possibly find a solution for some of the difficulties we are faced with.

That this need for unanimity does exist, even amongst Plebeians, no one can deny. We have the awful example before us of individuals who pride themselves upon the soundness of their (Marxian) views, taking up an attitude that has brought them on to platforms alongside some of the extremest reactionaries, making patriotic speeches, assisting at recruiting meetings, and even enlisting themselves for service against the enemy! Others have given their unqualified opposition to the war, and refused to assist the authorities in any way. And, of course, we have the inevitable middle couriers, who, following the line of least resistance, condemn all wars in general, but think there are grounds for our supporting this one in particular.

To obtain unanimity amongst these upon the question of their attitude *towards the war* would be impossible. But there are questions *in connection with and arising out of* the war upon which we can reasonably hope for it. Such a question, *e.g.*, is the reorganization of the International, which is being so widely discussed at present amongst Socialists throughout the neutral countries, especially in America. The basis of that reorganization deserves some consideration. What shall that basis be? Shall it be, as the *New Review* puts it, upon the lines suggested by the following questions:—

I. Are Nationalism and Socialism mutually exclusive?

II. Should a test Socialist Internationalism consist in relentless opposition to militarism, and the steadfast refusal of the Socialist legislators to vote military appropriations, whatever the pretext may be?

III. Should the International be reorganized to include International Socialists alone, with "Nationalistic Socialists" rigidly denied admission?

Personally I am of opinion that to organize an International upon any such lines is to organize, not the working-class, but outside of them; and that effective International organization will be possible (at least as far as

the prevention of war is concerned) only when we have perfected and consolidated the national unions. These unions must themselves be reorganized upon such lines as will prevent the almost complete domination by officialism which obtains at present, and will provide a means whereby the rank and file can give expression to their opinions.

Another question deserving attention is the appeal made on behalf of the Government to the Labour Party—that the Trade Unions should be induced to “relax their rules,” and assist in forcing all physically fit workers to join the army. Exactly in what way they would like the relaxation of rules, customs and conditions of work to be arranged is not made clear, but one can surmise to some extent what their ideas are. We shall have to be prepared to work with the unskilled, or at least the semi-skilled, the unfit and the non-unionist; for non-unionist he must be if he is unfit, especially in those industries where fitness is a test for membership, as a consequence of the friendly benefits provided by the unions. The proposal means compulsory military service for Trade Unionists. The Unions are asked to cease to be Trade Unions and to forget all the old antagonisms. Capital has reached a stage when it must appeal to organized Labour to come forward and render every assistance in its power. *Officially* the movement has already compromised itself up to the hilt. Its grievances have been forgotten, its programme laid aside. Its ‘leaders’ have stumped the country for recruits, and it is now asked to come in and fight the battle out.

In these days we see the activities of the State being considerably increased. This form of Socialism is hailed with joy in some quarters, but to those who are engaged in fighting Labour’s real battles it means simply an increase of their difficulties, since their future struggles, instead of being waged against individuals and private Capital, will be against the State and collective Capital.

Does anyone doubt that we shall have to deal with these and similar questions during the course, and immediately following upon the end of this war, and that there is therefore urgent need for a common plan of action being decided upon? Members of the Plebs League have often severely criticised other sections of the Labour and Socialist movements for making what they considered to be reactionary proposals or holding theories not in accordance with facts. Now, it seems to me, is the opportunity for the Plebs League to justify its own existence. To stand aloof, criticising other parties, is not an altogether honourable position to take up unless we are ourselves prepared to do something. The unpreparedness of the International in the face of war is no excuse for our neglecting to take the necessary steps to meet both the present and future emergencies.

I am in full agreement with the suggestion made by Mr. Silvester, that some kind of a conference should be called. In any case we want to know where we really stand, to feel our strength, and decide upon a common policy.

W. H. MAINWARING.

THE B. S. P. AND THE C. L. C.

COMRADE DUCKWORTH, Secretary of the Padiham Branch, B.S.P., writes us a very welcome letter congratulating us on the Magazine and expressing his own indebtedness to it. He mentions that he recently wrote to *Justice* recommending some of the contributors to the discussion in that journal on "Is the War a Capitalist War?" to study certain articles in *The Plebs*; also alluding in his letter to the fact that he and several comrades had derived great benefit from the C.L.C. classes during the last three winters. *Justice* editorially replied (Comrade Duckworth quotes from memory)—"Classes such as you mention are not everything. By all means get well grounded in Socialist theory; but we must remember that those theories have to be applied to *practical problems*, or otherwise the 'schools' are apt to develop into 'cults.'" This scorn for 'cults,' coming from *Justice*, is just a trifle quaint. True, C.L.C. classes are not 'everything'; for that matter neither is *Justice*, nor even the B.S.P. itself, 'everything.' But we share with Comrade Duckworth the opinion that some of *Justice's* contributors would be no worse for a little more 'grounding in Socialist theory' before they proceed to tackle practical problems.

CONGRATULATIONS—AND A SUGGESTION.

SIR,

I am delighted, and more than delighted, to find that the C.L.C. is at last saved. The action of the South Wales Miners' Federation is a great step in the long march.

I deeply regret that the E.C. of the N.U.R. could not see its way clear to do its duty towards the workers. But there, some people need an earthquake to make their duty plain to them, and I hope that very soon they will get it.

You have asked for an expression of opinion as to the matter of the Magazine; may I make a suggestion? Could you include an article or two, dealing with money, its place, its function, especially paper-money and postal-orders; why, for instance, seeing that postal-orders are paper-money they are not legal payment to-day. I think for us Socialists this subject should be of vital importance.

We shall be expecting great things of you in the future, so start away now.

Barry. S. Wales.

JOHN JONES.

[One of the Staff irreverently suggests that Comrade Jones should send along a few specimens of paper-money to the C.L.C.—just, of course, to give the writer of the articles something to go upon!—ED.]

GOD'S PROMPTERS.—Strictly speaking, the (American) Marxians are not revolutionists, as they believe themselves to be; they are the interested pedants of destiny. They are God's audience, and they know the plot so well that occasionally they prompt Him.—WALTER LIPPMANN in *Drift and Mastery*. (Fisher Unwin).

A Phat-riotic Song

GOT the sack, and nothin' doin' ?
 Hard luck, mate ! What will you do ?
 Starve, or go and join the army ?
 That's the place for bloques like you.

Rally and defend your country !
 All the country that you've got
 Is about a pint of loam, Bill,
 Nestling in the flower pot !

When the old girl's bought the grub, mate,
 You won't have a blooming cent,
 All the same, that pleader, Buggins,
 (That's your landlord) wants the rent !

Rally and defend your country !
 If you don't, and Wilhelm comes,
 Strike me pink ! I shouldn't wonder
 If he pinched our lovely slums !

Pound those Germans into batter ;
 Spoil the bleating Kaiser's dial,
 Whilst the Boss, at Home, gets fatter :
 Lord ! you ought to see his smile !

Rally and defend your country !
 Whilst you're spillin' pints of blood,
 Mr. Patriotic Boss is knocking
 Wages downward with a thud.

Someone's got to do the fighting ;
 Someone's got to bear the brunt !
 That bloque 's you, 'cause Fat's too busy
 On the festive money-hunt.

Rally and defend your country !
 It's another Righteous War :
 You can bet the Boss will set you
 Eatin' dirt when all is o'er !

LANGDON EVERARD.

MERE MONEY !—We sincerely hope that it (the threatened strike of the Yorkshire miners) will be averted. A strike on this scale would indeed be a most discreditable exception to the good relations between employers and employed which have been one of the most striking effects of the war. And there is no excuse for it. The dispute dates from before the war *and it is all about money.*—THE TIMES, January 13th, 1915,

Letters on Logic

Economics

EIGHTH LETTER OF THE SECOND SERIES

BY classifying labour into natural labour and human labour ; by the subdivision of the latter into free labour and slave labour ; by further distinguishing slave labour (of which wage labour is one variety) into productive and unproductive labour, into accumulated dead labour and actual living labour, into competitive and uncompetitive labour, we have brought some light into the definition of Capitalism and Capitalistic economy.

You will by this have understood that reason is the capacity of *distinguishing* things. I do not pretend to give you a complete methodical system of Economics, but one sufficient to prove that this science has a system like any other. Right distinction means right perception. The more completely things are grouped, the more effectively can we study them. And Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* will serve to show you that it is possible to make more effective economic distinctions than those made therein.

In the early days of California, as afterwards in Australia, the placer miner who found in river bed or surface deposit, the glittering particles which the slow processes of Nature had for ages been accumulating, picked up or washed out his "wages" (so he called them) in actual money ; for coin being scarce, gold dust passed as currency by weight, and at the end of the day had his wages in money in a buckskin bag in his pocket. There can be no dispute as to whether these wages came from capital or not. They were manifestly the produce of his labour. Nor could there be any dispute when the owner of a specially rich claim hired men to work for him, and paid them off in the identical money which their labour had taken from gulch or bar. [Chapter III.]

Proceeding, Henry George further makes clear how the same process is taking place in the case of wage labour, although in a more concealed form. Everywhere the worker produces for the capitalist the thing from which he afterwards gets his wage. He gets his share not from past and dead but from actual living labour.

Yet our author's capacity for making distinctions is again very deficient here, because there is a great difference between the product of the gold digger and other products which he does not take into consideration.

Gold is money, but other products have sometimes to go through a long process—sometimes in vain—before they get value. Money, say the usurers, is a commodity like any other, and Henry George thinks the same ; the worker exchanges with the capitalist—he gives his labour and the other gives his gold—the one has as much value as the other. Despite the element of truth in this, I declare, on the other hand, “No. Gold, money, is not a commodity like any other. It is god amongst the crowd of commodities ; silver is also godlike, and nickel belongs to the trinity. Then follow other current commodities, till at last the common ruck of commodities has a chance to become blessed. The gold commodity possesses salvation *per se* ; the others must earn it.”

Money is a very important economic category ; to take it as a commodity like any other one is to deny its very meaning. Other commodities must depend for their value on whether they find a purchaser, but the money-commodity has value everywhere and at any time ; it has absolute value, and for that very reason is money.

Philosophers say that man has not created love but that love descends upon man. So, too, with liberty, equality and fraternity ; they also are not concrete, but still real, effective powers which influence humanity. The economic law which proves that ten people working together accomplish more than the same ten people when each of them is catching his own fish and digging his own bait has, however, no mystery about it ; no “higher power” thrust men without their knowledge and wish into division of labour. That this labour has a certain basis of brotherly love is proved by the producer’s sale and the consumer’s purchase—by both consuming not private products, but the joint product of an economic society. The desire for brotherly love found its first crude expression in exchange by barter, and then in the money system.

Since money is always a commodity, while a commodity is only under certain circumstances money, the money-commodity must be distinguished from other commodities. If the owner of a gold mine pays his workers with their own product, this is quite a normal proceeding ; but you must not come to Henry George’s conclusion that anywhere else and in general the workers are paid with their own product ; they would not be grateful for any such arrangement. The modern producer wants to have money in return for his commodity. Gold is a commodity, it is true, but a very peculiar one, the understanding of which is a special part of the understanding of the present economic system.

“The peasant,” says Marx, “belongs to the class which in the midst of civilisation represents barbarism”; he stands, that is to say, somewhat outside of society, since he is his own producer and consumer. So far as he is more and more compelled to exchange his products for money, he becomes to a greater extent a member of the competitive brotherhood. Exchange by barter was a clumsy process. With the money system we arrive at last at the first sign of general social fraternity.

Those who sell a commodity, even if it is their own labour, are members of a society which intelligent people can perceive to have developed, evolved, on the same lines as the natural world itself. Had society been constituted systematically, gold and silver would still have been beautiful and brilliant, but they would not have been money. At present everybody must exchange the products of his labour into gold before he can consume them. The money commodity reigns over other commodities and decides whether the labour which they contain has been socially necessary. Society requires from producers that they do not waste their labour time, but that they use it in a competitive manner. In a systematic, economic society there would be a systematized division of labour; and every product would be a required social article.

It is the business of money to change our unsocial into social products. Everybody may not only consume what he partially produced, but his work is a part of the total production of society, which thus enables him to drink coffee from Java, or to eat rice from Carolina. But since this eminently sane idea was originally merely a blind instinct and not a conscious purpose, it could only find expression in a distorted form; first in the shape of barter, and now as the money system, which is dominating the whole world.

I repeat, it is a good idea that man should make use of social co-operation; but the *form* of that co-operation, which puts a gold fetish in the place of brotherhood, is a bad one. The kernel of the matter is good; labour will be more, not less, an affair of social co-operation. And this economic idea has been conceived by the world-spirit; not the mystical one, but the spirit according to Darwin, which brings order and purpose into the world by means of the struggle for existence.

Labour, therefore, is even to-day organized; but the organization is so clumsy that the workers are not rewarded by the fruits of their labour, but are themselves considered as commodities, and by means of competition brought down to the lowest possible purchase value.

I have shown you in the previous letters that for the proper understanding of economics it is necessary to do what Henry George has omitted to do, *i.e.*, to distinguish labour which is its own reward from wage labour, and in the same manner to distinguish the money-commodity, be it gold, shells or furs, from other commodities. But there is a logical rule which teaches us not to exaggerate a distinction; and we must remember that every common commodity has "the marshal's baton in its knapsack," that each product put up for sale aims at possessing social value. When the first fisher and hunter exchanged their products with one another, there was the same spirit in them which is to-day in the money process, the spirit which tends to make labour a brotherly—social—affair.

Translated for the *Plebs Magazine* from the German of Joseph Dietzgen by MISS BERTHA BRAUNTHAL.

Reports

Women's League Campaign in Bristol

As reported in last month's *Plebs*, Miss Mary Howarth, of the Women's League of the C.L.C., has carried out a very successful programme of lectures and addresses in South Wales, following that up by an equally successful visit to Bristol. During her stay in the latter city Miss Howarth addressed the following meetings:—

A general meeting of Trade Unionists at Bridgwater, organized by the Bridgwater branch of the Railway Women's Guild; meetings of the Bristol Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Railway Women's Guilds; the Bishopston Co-operative Guild, Bristol; and the Bristol No. 6, Avonmouth, Staple Hill, and Stoke Gifford branches of the N.U.R. All the meetings were successful; keen interest and great appreciation being shown and expressed at the able manner in which a working woman could deal with those matters which at this time—probably more than at any other—affect the workers so acutely.

Miss Howarth was very keen upon showing the effects which were most likely to accrue from the increasing employment of women in industry—how lack of experience and education in trade-unionism rendered women easy victims to capitalistic exploitation, and made it possible for them to be used as a means to the lowering of the remuneration of the male workers, and to the bringing down of the standard of living of the whole working class. She showed very clearly the necessity for the broadening out of industrial organization to include the women wherever and whenever they were introduced into industry.

In the Women's Branches many questions were asked in reference to scholarships for women. These showed that our efforts to bring a speaker from the C. L. C. into touch with the R. W. G. Branches has not been in vain, and it is hoped that the time is not far distant when the various women's organizations will be able to support a woman student at the Central Labour College.

Undoubtedly, Miss Howarth's ability as an exponent of industrial problems has won many new adherents to that educational policy for which the C. L. C. and *The Plebs* stand.

FAITH H. BROWN (Bristol).

Halifax C. L. C. Class

We have just concluded our first and very successful session on Philosophic Logic, under the able tuition of Mr. Harold Kershaw. During the session we have had a visit from Mr. W. W. Craik, who not only took the class one evening, but also gave an address to the local Trades and Labour Council on the European War and its effect on the Workers.

We have commenced our new session with an increase of students, the subject being: Ethics and the Materialistic Conception of History.

There has been a suggestion put forward for arranging periodical Saturday afternoon Rambles during the Summer months, so as to keep all students in fellowship with one another, and this no doubt will be arranged.

Our best thanks are due to our Lecturer for the painstaking efforts he has put forward on our behalf.

W. COLLINS, Secretary.

Rochdale C.L.C. Class

In the attempts to further the objects of the C.L.C., many difficulties have been met, the two most prominent being the financial one and the provision of lecturers for the existing and prospective provincial classes. During last summer, when preparations were being made in Rochdale and district for the forthcoming winter months, we decided to solve this problem of a lecturer by giving a trial to local students. The result has been a complete success, for not only have those who have undertaken the work given satisfaction, but the scheme has left us with no financial worry, notwithstanding the fact that the students' fees were reduced by 33 per cent.

At the outset we arranged that Mr. W. W. Craik, Sub-Warden of the College, should open the session with four lectures, entitled, "An Introduction to Social Science." When we take into consideration the fact that this was accomplished within the space of four days, I consider, in reporting a successful venture, that we had every reason to be satisfied with our efforts. In all 32 students attended the lectures, the smallest number present at any one lecture being 23.

After so promising a start we decided to take a course of lectures on Philosophic Logic to be completed in eleven lectures, with Mr. W. T. Jones as lecturer. Again we have been successful; altogether 33 students have attended and we have had an average attendance of 24. The class included 17 new students and these have shown the keenest interest all through. In connection with the class a Dance was held on January 30th for the purpose of wiping off some of the old debt.

Four popular lectures have been given by Mr. H. Kershaw on Philosophic Logic, as a general outline of the whole course, and we are following these by a course (with the same lecturer) on The Materialist Conception of History.

In consequence of some students having to work overtime, classes are now held on Sunday mornings instead of Tuesday evenings.

FRANK JACKSON, Secretary.

Reviews

ORTHODOXY—AND BOREDOM.

Political Economy, by Prof. S. J. Chapman; *The Evolution of Industry*, by Prof. D. H. Macgregor; *Unemployment*, by Prof. A. C. Pigou. [Home University Library, Williams & Norgate, 1/- net each.]

How is it that a series like the Home University Library, which contains volumes as interesting and valuable as John Masefield's *Shakespeare*, G. H. Mair's *Modern English Literature*, G. K. Chesterton's *Victorian Age in Literature*, Miss Jane Harrison's *Ancient Art and Ritual*, or Chas. Tower's *Germany of To-Day*, should also include such unsatisfactory contributions as the three named above? The answer to that question, when you come to think about it, provides the reason and the justification for the existence of the Central Labour College.

The authors of these volumes are Professors of Political Economy in the Universities of Manchester, Leeds, and Cambridge respectively. They are therefore well authenticated advocates of the proper orthodox point of view. And oh, they are so dreary! Nevertheless, a shilling spent on any of the three authorities would not, perhaps, be wasted. Working-class students of economics, indeed, would treasure the two first-named at least; particularly noting the problems that are left unstated, let alone unanswered, and the names and facts which are adroitly ignored.

As for Marx—

“Oh no! We never mention him—
His name is never heard!”

Prof. Chapman's volume is described as “a simple explanation in the light of the latest economic thought, prefaced by a short sketch of economic study since Adam Smith,” Malthus and Mill and Marshall are there; but

where is Marx? The 'latest economic thought' has apparently never heard of him. The opening sentences of the first chapter are interesting:—"This book is in no sense historical or concerned with social development. Its scope is confined to *things as they are* (italics ours) in communities which have reached a certain stage of civilisation." Comment is needless—the book reviews itself. Buy it and see for yourself that the latest economic thought has gone bankrupt.

Prof. Macgregor's volume sets out to describe "the recent changes which have given us the present condition of the working classes." If you want to appreciate Industrial History as taught at the C.L.C., read through this book, and then go down on your knees and thank Historical Materialism that you have been saved from studying under Prof. Macgregor. "A book so *dispassionate* in terms," one critic has already said of it, "may be read with profit by all." For our part we could discover no profit and little interest in it. One chapter is all about *Root Problems*; but neither that chapter nor any of the others ever 'come within a mile of the roots of anything.

Prof. Pigou deals with "some proposals of remedy or relief" for unemployment. Remedy, forsooth! These University gentlemen give one the impression of nice, amiable old ladies fussing about the body politic with bits of sticking-plaster and hot-water bottles.

Still—there *are* some very good shillingsworths in the Home University Library. But the latest economic thought is a trifle dear at that price.

J. F. H. & W. H.

THE W.E.A. WAY.

The War: Its Origins and Warnings, by Frank J. Adkins, M.A.
(G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 2/6 net).

The Board of Education has recently issued a Circular on the Teaching of Modern European History, recommending teachers to arrange special lectures or courses of reading suitable even for the younger pupils, dealing with the causes and progress of the present war. . . . It will be possible to point out how the remote past still lives in the present; as, for instance, in the existence of a debatable territory between France and Germany, which is ultimately due to the division of Charlemagne's Empire; the reason why the Low Countries have so often been the seat of war between the greater powers, and the continuity of English policy with regard to the independence of this district of Europe from the time of Edward I; the reasons for the late organisation of Italy and Germany as National States; the fall of Poland; the rise of Russia; and the historical position of the Austrian Monarchy, especially in connection with the Mahommedan conquests and the gradual recovery of territory from the Turks.

Now if the war achieved nothing else it would have something to its credit if it resulted in historical teaching of this kind superseding in our day-schools and evening classes the old unintelligent recitation of strings of

miscellaneous dates and figures, facts and fancies. Mr. Adkins' book is designed to fill the gap caused by the scarcity of text-books suitable for teachers who decide to adopt the Board of Education's suggestion. He deals with all the points enumerated above, as well as many others; and a good many of us would to-day have a lot less to learn—and to *unlearn*—if they had taught us history in this way in our schooldays. His four essays—Germany: Its Growth, Character, and Culture; France: The Pioneer of Civilisation; The Slavs and Their Problems; and England and Sea Power—are written, moreover, in an easy, unpretentious, readable style, which might well serve as a model to the writers of text-books on other subjects than history.

But this book is of particular interest to *Plebs* readers in that it is an exceptionally good specimen of the "W.E.A. Way." Mr. Adkins, we believe, has done a good deal of W.E.A. work, and these essays originated in lectures delivered by him to Adult Schools, Ethical Societies, and similar organizations in the Sheffield district. Since it is bad policy to under-rate one's adversary, it would afford excellent exercise for advocates of independent working-class education to take such a book as this—an exceptionally good specimen, we repeat, of W.E.A. teaching—and criticise it in detail from their own point of view. For, despite his wide historical knowledge and his exceptionally clear thinking—despite, it may even be, his own personal opinions—the fact remains that the author is a professional teacher compelled to earn his living under a given social system; and it is therefore impossible for him to say certain things, to criticise certain things, to view things, for instance, from the point of view of a wage-earner—though he be one himself! True, the fact that we are at war with Germany enables even a W.E.A. lecturer to emphasise, or at least to hint at, certain economic factors in connection with that country. But when he turns to France Mr. Adkins regards her as "the Pioneer of Civilisation"—a disguise in which it is certainly a little difficult to recognise the governing class of the Third Republic, that "clique of politicians," as Pannekoek has recently described them, "controlled by High Finance, and controlling Parliament by a corrupt party machine." The nations, indeed, appear to be somewhat like the characters in polite drawing-room drama—their manners, culture, and more picturesque adventures may be discussed, but not the way in which they earn their living.

Rival nations may, perhaps, be criticised. But where rival classes are concerned the W.E.A. teacher must aim at "impartiality"; he must speak of National Solidarity as though it actually existed anywhere. That is—and obviously must be—the W.E.A. way. Its teachers may be more widely read and "broader-minded" than our own. But its condemnation, so far as *we* are concerned, is that it cannot (because it dare not) offer a really satisfying analysis of such a crisis as the present to an intelligent class-conscious wage-worker.

J. F. H.

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