

Vol. XII. No. 3

March, 1920

THE PLEBS

AGITATE - EDUCATE - ORGANISE

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*CORRESPONDENCE, REVIEWS*

*&c., &c.*

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THE PLEBS

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

Vol. XII.

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DOWN WITH THE PIONEERS!

THE greatest foe of all progress is the superannuated pioneer. . . . After us the deluge, so far as progress is concerned, is the attitude of the pioneer who has done his work." Thus Belfort Bax in an essay with the above title written in the '90's of the last century. It sounds a terrible long time ago, but it is less remote than the relation between the revolutionary movement of those times and the present, judged by the position of living participants. Who nowadays thinks of Hyndman, Blatchford, Will Thorne and John Burns as revolutionaries? Yet in the "nineties" they were rightly regarded as of that proud order. The continental movement affords similar evidence in justification of Bax's war-cry; Kautsky, for instance, whose *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* has just been published by the I.L.P.

The book seeks to prove the anti-Marxian character of the Russian Soviet Republic on the grounds that it is a violation of the "principle" of "free democracy" (1) by the forcible suppression of a section of the Russian people—*i.e.*, the supporters of property and privilege, and (2) that even within the working-class it forcibly suppresses opposition, even when that opposition comes from supporters of "Socialist ideals."

Now what is all this but a recognition of the fact that, hitherto, political Socialists have been mainly engaged in discussions, with supporters and opponents alike, as to the *ultimate* conditions of existence in a fully established Socialist society. In those discussions Socialist propagandists have been concerned to show that the oppression of one class by another has its basis in the passion for private property and wealth accumulation in all historical societies; that with the development of Capitalism all the pre-existing barriers against the establishment of conditions guaranteeing ample wealth for all have been removed; that the social ownership of the means of life and the sources of culture will necessitate a radical break with the existing forms of social control; and that

the government of men will be superseded by a system concerned only with the administration of the social needs and conveniences. Inevitably in these discussions the appeal to the workers has naturally taken the form of the practical programmes of the Parliamentarians. These have unconsciously clothed our conceptions of change in the terms of the existing institutions, until concepts, based upon a condition presupposing social equality, have become mixed up with immediately necessary steps towards the final establishment of such equalitarian conditions. Therein lies the root of the pioneer's failure to keep an imaginative pliability and the consequent need for his suppression as events take the place of discussions. Here lies, too, the cause of vacillation among the old guard when the need for action becomes imperative. They have tried to graft the living slip of communist theory on to the decaying trunk of the Capitalist State tree. And the result is a hot-house flower too frail for the rude winds of actuality.

The most hopeless type in any movement is the individual who cannot make up his mind. Unable to go the whole hog in his own national struggle, he is just the one likely to lecture other national leaders and movements on the way they should conduct their struggle. Kautsky is a notable instance of this type. In the German struggle he is unwilling either to follow Noske and Co., or to make common cause with the Spartacists. As a consequence, his effectiveness in modern revolutionary struggles is confined to countries outside the Fatherland. In Germany action is essential, and Richard-Yea-and-Nay is taboo. But, however suspect Kautsky may be in Germany, he is welcomed by the invertebrates elsewhere, and by those of the Allied Powers in particular. As far as the capitalist section is concerned, it is quite clear that Kautsky's arguments are welcomed, because they give a theoretical status, from the working-class side, of their own need to temporise in the matter of an official peace with Soviet Russia. Their hope lies in (1) the exhaustion of the Russian proletariat and the acceptance by the workers there of a settlement that defeats the Revolution, and (2) in the chloroforming of working-class opinion in other countries. So far as the invertebrates in our own movement are concerned, they distrust the rank and file and are fearful of violence—"that force which is the midwife of an old society pregnant with the new." That forcefulness of purpose which declares "better an end with fright, than a fright without end," is not theirs.

Kautsky has a well-deserved and established reputation to be exploited. It is being exploited nowadays on behalf of views alien and hostile to those upon which his international reputation was built up.

How comes it that historians who are acute enough to discover the most trivial circumstances of possible moment to the often puerile actions of a *monarch* almost invariably forget to take account of the state of war when they concern themselves with the actions of a democratic and even communistic commonwealth fighting for its life? . . . A state of siege has always led to the temporary suspension of civil rights and privileges, and to the transference to the military authority of an unlimited power over the life and property of the people; so much so indeed that the words "state of siege" imply the setting aside of freedom and ordinary judicial methods. Communism has, unfortunately, not yet discovered the miraculous elixir that shall make this necessary consequence of a state of siege superfluous. Neither could it prevent the siege of Münster leading to a military dictatorship.*

Thus Kautsky the revolutionary to Kautsky the Pioneer! For what else is the above but a statement of the position and condition of Soviet Russia to-day? Chatter about "free democracy" when the working-class takes "the first step that costs" on the road to Communism must be counted either as treachery or unpardonable weakness.

* Kautsky, "Communism in Central Europe in the time of the Reformation." P. 245 and p. 250.

And reading this latest book one cannot but feel that Kautsky has lost his grip. There is further evidence of it in the Editor's Preface. "In his letter to the Hungarian Communists he warns them not to attempt to copy too closely the methods which have been adopted in Russia." Our Hungarian comrades didn't. But when another revolutionary uprising occurs in Hungary, they are not likely again to follow Pioneer Kautsky's advice! What can we think of a person of the latter's calibre when in commenting on Marx's statement in the *Gotha Programme**—"Between Capitalist and Communist Society lies the period of revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. This requires a political transition stage which can be nothing else than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat," he says:—"He (Marx) speaks not of a *form* of government, but of a *condition* that must everywhere arise when the proletariat has conquered political power." "Form," "condition!" Oh, Pioneer!

In all the interminable literature and talk about the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and the endless conjuring tricks of verbalism with the writings of Marx and Engels, what has the ordinary person to consider and decide upon? Simply this:—Given a favourable opportunity for a revolutionary uprising against the existing State, are we, the working-class party, to jeopardise a victorious result through a respectful adherence to the formula of "free democracy," or any other concept of "freedom"?

What is "free democracy" anyhow? The right to vote when and how the stage is set by our capitalist governors. Against us—Press, Pulpit, Platform, Police, Parliament, ownership and control of Production, Prejudice in all its State forms, and finally, we expect, the Pioneers. This is what our rulers have in mind when they prate about "free democracy." And we are to fight under these rules! Kautsky has been buried in Germany, or he would never write about the possibilities of peaceful transition in "democratic" countries like—England and America!

Think of Churchill's recent remark at Dundee:—"I do not believe that despotism [Russia] is fit company for a democratic [!] Government like ours." That from the representative of a class which entered into an unholy alliance with Czarism before and during the war; which to-day is holding India, Egypt, Ireland, etc., with machine-guns and tanks; which acts as chief salesman at the auctions by the Allies of the rights of the "wee-frees" among the nations. A class that has sunk so low in prestige that even the Barnes's and the Roberts's are deserting it!

The revolutionary situation nowadays calls for a new structural form of society and that structural form will be industrial. Up to the present the political form, the State, has been the only social system known to the working-class. A revolutionary upheaval would be evidence that the State no longer met the needs of the latter class. It would presuppose a change of form. What change? Those who give the impetus to the workers in the direction of revolution have a new system in view, a system that evolves from the process that the workers are already familiar with—the process of production. Starting with the industry as the unit of government and organised on the basis of administration of things the social system will soon cease to be a mysterious complex process, and will present itself simply as a means of promoting the happiness and well-being of the peoples; instead of, as now, a system of promoting the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few.

That only a limited number of the working-class party have yet clearly conceived the *form* of a creative revolution is inevitable under the conditions. That a section, therefore, will take the lead in establishing and maintaining the new social order is also inevitable. If in the revolutionary period they are able to carry with them the mass of the proletariat, and to secure the establishment of this particular form of social control, are they acting contrary to "free democracy" in any sense in which we are prepared to accept the term, even though they may have forcibly to oppose another proletarian section whose views differ? In normal times it is possible to discuss at length and vote upon internal differences represented in the various class organisations, but when the fight is on quick resolute decision is the essence of strategy and the determinant of success.

The truth is that the Parliamentarian is incapable of extricating himself from the forms and conventions of the Capitalist State machinery and ideology; and this is the result of his preoccupation with preliminary propaganda work, which from being a means to an end has become an end in itself. It is one of the drawbacks of the political period of our struggle that it gives such a fine stage to the word-spinners and the resolutionists. Theirs is only a part and, the more the movement grows, the least important part of the work. When revolution comes the "debater" may, and usually does, find himself pushed aside. His struggle to reassert the revolutionary character of the struggle only emphasises the necessity of Bax's tactic—"Down with the pioneers!"

POSTSCRIPT.—It is a relief to turn from Kautsky to Bukharin, whose *Programme of the World Revolution* is now issued by the S.L. Press (1s. 3d., post paid, 1s. 4½d.) It is a vigorously written and simple presentation of the conditions confronting a successful revolutionary uprising of the proletariat. One might describe it as another *Britain for the British*, written by a Marxist who is also a Bolshevik—one needs to add that nowadays! The case for large scale production, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the nationalisation of the banks and their conversion into "a communal bookkeeping department of Socialist co-operative production," the Soviet *v.* the bourgeois republic, in fact all the uppermost questions of the hour are dealt with in convincing fashion. The technical side of the book might have been improved, but this must be put up with in view of its propagandist value.

GEO. SIMS

WHY RAILWAYMEN ARE DISSATISFIED

DURING the past few weeks there has been a heavy slump in the expectations of the mass of railwaymen—especially the lower-paid grades. To gauge correctly the extent of this slump one must go back to February, 1919, when negotiations were commenced between the N.U.R. and the Railway Executive on the National Programme for railway workers (drafted in November, 1917, at Leicester). This programme included standard rates of pay for railwaymen, and the principle of standardisation was explained by Mr. J. H. Thomas in a letter to the members of the N.U.R., through the columns of the *Railway Review* of March 21, 1919, as *standardisation upwards*. In August the principle was conceded to Locomotivemen, but refused to the other grades in September, the railway strike being the result. In the Albert Hall on September 27, Mr. J. H. Thomas said—"Why is it that the Government cannot apply to the other

grades the principle they themselves established for the drivers and firemen?" And that question was undoubtedly echoed by every member of the rank and file.

So, too, was Mr. Thomas's further statement at the same meeting—"If the Prime Minister will now say to us, officially, himself, not influenced or intimidated by anyone else, that he is prepared to concede to the other grades in the railway service the same principle that the Government concedes to the drivers and firemen, this strike could stop at once." When, therefore, eight days later came the telegram "settlement satisfactory to everybody," the natural conclusion was that this principle was within easy distance of attainment. Despite Mr. Thomas's declaration that "I am one of those Labour Leaders who believe the public is entitled to know everything," the negotiations following the resumption of work were secret. It was only in January that the fact came to light that standardisation upwards had yielded to standardisation on the average.

In face of this fact the telegram terminating the strike calls for some explanation. Was there an understanding between our Executive Committee and the Government that there should be standardisation upwards for all grades? If not, why the telegram announcing satisfactory settlement? And if there was, why the departure from this principle after months of further negotiation? Not only do we get this change of principle, but we get also a change of opinion regarding that principle, inasmuch as Mr. Thomas who held forth so valiantly on its behalf at the Albert Hall, at Birmingham eulogises the new settlement in the following words:—"In my judgement, history will record the fact that this settlement was a just and honourable settlement, and one that the railwaymen of this country ought to be proud of in the future."

Whatever pride the settlement may generate in the future, it has resulted in little or none at the present, as has been clearly shown by the opposition of the mass of the men to acceptance of the offer, notwithstanding the short period for consideration allowed by our Executive Committee in fixing the date of the Special General Meeting. This body has the final word in the acceptance or rejection of any offer relating to the N.U.R., and should act upon the instructions of the rank and file members. In this case, in spite of the overwhelming rejection by the rank and file and also the initial rejection by the Special General Meeting, the Government succeeded in gaining its point.

Naturally the difference between the programme put forward and our achievements, is causing great dissatisfaction among the Railwaymen, notably upon the two issues of control and standardisation. Instead of equal representation, national and local, upon the management of all railways in the United Kingdom, we are fobbed off with a representation of 4 in 12 (only two of which are N.U.R. men) and that only nationally and in an advisory capacity. Instead of standardisation upwards as granted to the Locomotivemen, we get "standardisation on the average," and also the entirely new principle of the sliding scale.

Why this right-about-face? At Birmingham, Mr. Thomas said:—"It is because I know what it means that I say to you that, in my judgement, the alternative of a strike would have been disastrous to the Railwaymen, ruinous to the country, and would have put you in a position not to secure these terms, but of being compelled to accept terms that would have been *ten thousand times worse*." The idea of conditions ten thousand times worse than they are at present rather staggers one, seeing that there are thousands of Railwaymen rated at 5s. to 6s. per week, and the highest paid locomotive drivers only receive

£4 10s. for a forty-eight hour week. (As one of the lowest-paid drivers the writer's rate is £3 12s.) It will be seen that the majority of Railwaymen come considerably below the £6 per week estimated by Ernest Bevin, at the Transport Inquiry, as the cost of decently maintaining a family of five persons.

Why a strike would be disastrous at the present time, Mr. Thomas does not tell us. Are we to assume that the forces pitted against us are too strong, the Government preparations too complete? If so, we can only expect that the longer the interval, the more complete the preparations will be. This does not hold out much hope for the future, unless our officials are looking forward to the time when a Labour Government is in power. Assuming this to be the opportunity they are awaiting, have they any definite information that there is a possibility of this coming to pass in the very near future? If not they are running a grave risk of creating divisions in the ranks of the N.U.R. in the meantime, not only by departing from the principle for which the men fought last September, but more particularly in accepting the introduction of the new principle of the Sliding Scale.

The acceptance of this new principle will mean that the members of one organisation will be governed by different wages agreements, thus making a universal programme extremely difficult. The Sliding Scale does not apply to the Shopmen, Clerks, or Locomotivemen; as a matter of fact, it does not apply to the grades which are catered for by craft unions in addition to the N.U.R. With an increase in the cost of living it is reasonable to assume that the grades not covered by this sliding scale will endeavour to obtain increases in wages. Once the sliding scale is in operation, however, those N.U.R. members who are covered by it will be excluded from taking part in a demand for an increase due to the rise in the cost of living, as they are provided for by the operation of the sliding scale. We see, therefore, that what should be a *general* demand covering all grades of the N.U.R. only becomes a demand from a *particular* section, thus lowering the incentive to strike in a solid body—so essential to carrying on a strike successfully. Obviously, the Government set out to attack the principle of Industrial Unionism last year and chose the Railwaymen's weakest link—the Locomotive section (weak because divided)—to try to break the power of the N.U.R. To this end, having conceded the demands of the Locomotivemen, the Government came forward with an offer to the other grades which precipitated the strike. However, the unexpected happened, and the Locomen stood firm with the other grades. Thwarted for the time, the Government then set about to secure, through negotiations, what they had failed to secure by fighting, viz., division among the men in the N.U.R. through varying agreements, thus preparing more favourable conditions for the next fight. It can easily be perceived that if the men are to be ruled by these diverse agreements, and especially with no explanation from the officials with regard to this change of front, there is great danger of a split in the N.U.R. before a Labour Government materialises.

If it does materialise what will be the position of the organised workers who are seeking a greater share of the product of their labour? Will the Government attempt to function within the present capitalist system of society? If so, there will be a great probability of prohibition of strikes in order to make possible the smooth running of the Government machine. Officials who are, admittedly, adverse to strikes under a capitalist Government can hardly be expected to favour strikes under a Labour Government. Failing strikes, there must be concessions to workers which in turn will react upon capitalist interests. Those people who aim at changing the capitalist system entirely by parliamen-

tary action are mainly actuated by the belief that parliamentary power would give them absolute command of the armed forces of the country. It is rather difficult to share this belief when one reflects that the armed forces of the country are officered mainly by members of the capitalist class. We have only to remember the Carson episode, and the Ulster volunteers, formed with the specific object of fighting the Government which threatened to interfere with their interests, to realise that, in the event of capitalist economic interests being threatened by a Labour Government, the class consciousness of these officers would probably rise above Parliamentary loyalty.

From the above it appears that the Railwaymen are between the devil and the deep sea, in that their officials will not face a strike now, and, in the alternative of a Labour Government, they are scarcely likely to allow a strike later. Where, then, do our hopes lie? First of all in an overwhelming rejection of any principle that makes for division in our ranks. Following that, the establishment of machinery that will secure control of our representatives and ultimately control of our industry; machinery that will be available and efficient in time of crisis.

J. HEBER PRATT

THE LABOUR COLLEGE & THE W.E.A.

[We have been requested to publish the following correspondence, which is not without interest to Plebs in various parts of the country. Its publication may also save other enquirers' time and trouble.—Ed. PLEBS.]

To the Secretary,

LIVERPOOL,

THE LABOUR COLLEGE.

February 16.

DEAR COMRADE,

I WAS at a public meeting last night at which the Liverpool and District Organiser for the W.E.A., Mr. Garstang, was the speaker. In stating the case for the W.E.A., he made certain statements concerning the Labour College which I challenged, but he persisted in his assertions; I hope, therefore, that you can favour me with an official denial so that we can give it the same publicity. His statements summarised are as follows:—

(1) That the W.E.A. and Labour College have come to an arrangement and are now working in harmony in London. Proof:—That Comrade W. Craik is sitting on a Committee, which also has W.E.A. representatives, to consider adult education. That this Committee has issued a joint report which Craik has signed in agreement with the W.E.A. That one of the governors of the Labour College is a prominent W.E.A. worker.

(2) That Frank Hodges, in a speech recently at Nottingham, had stated that there was no fundamental difference between the Labour College and W.E.A. views on Education, and that efforts were being made to bring both organisations together. Also that C. T. Cramp has recently publicly stated the same views. Mr. Garstang implied, of course, that Hodges and Cramp were speaking officially from the Labour College standpoint.

As Mr. Garstang is now busy attending T.U. Branches, etc., and no doubt making the same assertions, you will realise the importance of immediately taking steps to counteract. It appears that this is a general policy of the W.E.A., as I hear of similar statements in other districts.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN HAMILTON

(Sec., Liverpool & Dist. Committee for Independent Working-Class Education).

February 17, 1920

DEAR HAMILTON,—With reference to your letter of the 16th inst., giving particulars of statements made by the W.E.A. Organiser at a public meeting at Liverpool. We emphatically and unreservedly deny that any consideration has been given to the question of harmonious working with the W.E.A. The antagonistic views on education held [by the two bodies make any such agreement quite impossible.

In addition, I have, this morning, had a conversation over the 'phone with Mr. Mactavish on the matter, and he states that Mr. Garstang has *no authority* to make the statements:—(1) "That a working agreement has anywhere been made between the Labour College and the W.E.A. (2) That Mr. Craik has signed any Report in conjunction with the W.E.A." Mr. Mactavish has promised to write Mr. Garstang asking him to desist from making such statements in the future.

While it is quite true that Mr. Craik, Principal of the College, and Mr. Geo. Mason, a member of the Labour College Board of Governors, were deputed to be present at a meeting called by the W.E.A., to consider the question of Adult Education, they took no definite part in the meeting beyond making it quite clear, in reply to Dr. Temple, chairman of the meeting, that they were only present with a watching brief and had no authority to make or support any proposals put forward.

Mr. Craik has not signed a Report of any kind in conjunction with representatives of the W.E.A. His opposition to the W.E.A. remains unchanged.

Mr. Charleton, the Governor of the College referred to, has always loyally supported the educational policy of the College, while acting in his capacity as Governor.

With regard to Mr. Frank Hodges and Mr. C. T. Cramp we have no authority to make any pronouncement on their private views with regard to the W.E.A. We can only say that if those views are favourable to the W.E.A., then they are in direct opposition to the standpoint of the Labour College and the majority of the members of their trades unions, as represented by their support of the Labour College—which support was secured on the principle of a definite antagonism to the educational policy of the W.E.A.

In conclusion, the Staff of the Labour College, *now as ever*, are all pronouncedly antagonistic to the "impartial" educational policy advocated by the W.E.A.

You may make any use of this letter that may be desirable.

Yours fraternally, GEO. SIMS, *Secretary*

ERGATOCRACY—AND GREEK: IN CONCLUSION

I HAVE opened every recent number of PLEBS with fear and trembling—somebody or other seems certain to be after my blood because of my profane disrespect for the Greek lexicon. Let me (in the hope of peace by negotiation) restate my position and then leave the philologists to the enjoyment of their etymologies.

Eden and Cedar Paul, following their practice of developing Marxist theories by fresh applications, observe the profound difference between bourgeois and proletarian democracy; and suggest that this distinction might well be marked by the adoption of a new term, viz., "ergatocracy," signifying the "Rule of the Worker." On theoretical grounds, and thinking only of Workers' Rule as a

general proposition, there can be no question that the term would be useful. But considered practically in the light of the needs of a teacher of study classes for proletarians, it is open to the objection that while it makes a useful distinction between Bourgeois and Proletarian Democracy, it suppresses entirely their historic interconnection. It will do this all the more surely and certainly (and in doing it help to perpetuate the very metaphysical mode of reasoning which it is our mission to destroy) in the case of men who not only know no Greek, but perforce know little enough of their native tongue.

Again—the point at issue as a practical problem is between Parliament and Soviet as instruments of social regulation and control. Thus to affix the term *ergatocracy* to the latter and the term *democracy* to the former is to concentrate attention on the *form* rather than the essential and historic *content* of both terms. Democracy has had many forms other than its Bourgeois-Parliamentary-Constitutionalist one; and it is so necessary to lay stress upon these in our class work that I feel the uncritical use of the antithesis “Ergatocracy”—“Democracy” might, and very probably would, do more harm than good.

That is all there is at issue between the Pauls and myself. But two distinct arguments have arisen out of my original contribution, of which one only was raised by them. My chief point, which in no way concerned them, was a protest against pedantic and doctrinaire methods in our class teaching, and a plea for a becoming humility (in the presence of proletarians seeking knowledge) of those of us who are distinguished from our fellows merely by the fact that we have taken to books instead of to drink, or dogs, or football or religion.

The fact that a man has read a lot is no guarantee at all that he understands even a little; and there are far too many “only” Socialist parties already without breeding a fresh set of word-stuffed highbrows to cumber the earth and impede the self-emancipation of the proletariat.

I asked at the outbreak of hostilities—“why speak Greek?” And without blinking an eyelash, people rush to tell me that “Latin and Greek are international languages among scientists!” May I invite these brethren to ask themselves why this should be so?—and also who are these “scientists”? If they run over with their mind’s eye the concrete humans generalised in that term they will find an aggregation of professors at bourgeois universities and their protégés. (Is Marx accepted as a scientist? or Dietzgen? or Engels?) Now a very little acquaintance with the works of these gentlemen shows how wide is the difference between a man who merely knows the moves of the pieces in a laboratory game, or the ritual management of symbols in an equation, and the man who can *think scientifically*. (Oliver Lodge is a classic instance.) Greek and Latin are not international languages among university professors because of their intrinsic merits as languages, but wholly because of the historical conditions of class rule. As thus:—

Latin was the language of the Church at a period in which the Church was all that was left of the Roman Empire. It was thus the speech of the only literate class in Western Europe, the class that disputed the control of Europe with the growing feudal monarchies. When the bourgeoisie in its turn needed intellectual weapons with which to conquer the feudal clerico-military aristocracy they turned perforce to the only alternative literature—Greek, newly-made available by the Mohammedan conquest of Constantinople. In these ways Greek and Latin came to be the “international languages” of the “men of learning” required as functionaries by the ruling class. And the “vested interest” of endowed universities has sufficed to establish the superstition that Latin and

Greek are essential hall-marks of a "cultured" man. It is not a question of devoting "undue" attention to Greek and Latin; it is a question why these languages should be studied at all.

To the mediæval churchman, requiring an intimate acquaintance with the *Vulgate* and the various *Decretals* and other authoritative documents of his Creed and Church, Latin was indispensable. Hence if he had any taste for other studies it was easier for him to use Latin than anything else. The Modern European languages were mere *patois*; it was Latin or nothing. To the scholars of the Reformation epoch, vitally interested in the authoritative claims of the Roman Church it was imperative that they should be able to appeal from the authority of Jerome's Latin version (the *Vulgate*) to the still greater authority of the (pseudo) original Greek of the Gospels and Epistles. Hence, in addition to Latin they needed as much Greek as they could compass. The speculative philosopher of this period, as well as the experimental explorer of natural phenomena, could find in the remains of the Greek literature world concepts and speculative systems which he could employ for the comparative criticism alike of the official world philosophy of the Church and the observed phenomena of nature itself. The political and juridical functionaries and standard-bearers of the bourgeoisie could extract from the same sources—from the monuments of Roman Law and the political treatises of the Greeks—material invaluable for their pressing practical needs. The histories of the Greek states and of the Roman republic, too, provided invaluable precedents for both revolutionaries and reactionaries in a period of social transformation. On all these grounds Latin and Greek became for urgent practical reasons the prime studies of the scholastic institutions of the modern States.

We in like manner must judge in the light of our practical needs. And as our specific need is an understanding of the forms and conditions of the proletarian struggle, to the records in which the facts and details of that struggle are set down we need to pay prime attention. The literature of Greece and Rome, whatever be its excellence as literature, is from the nature of the case only of incidental importance to us. What Greek was to the revolutionaries of the Reformation, English, German and French are to-day.

I hope that I have made it clear that my objection is anything but "puerile." It all comes to this—I hate "swank." And our class has so much need of our *work* that we have no right to waste time in striking graceful or imposing attitudes. And for that reason I am—on this subject—*finished*. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Master's business?"

THOS. A. JACKSON

THE PEACE TO END PEACE

The Economic Consequences of the Peace. By J. M. KEYNES. (Macmillan. 8s. 6d.)

WHATEVER may be thought now of the origins of the war, and of the real as opposed to the ostensible motives of the Allied countries, it is quite certain that many who have since been disillusioned looked for great and good things to come of the Peace. President Wilson's famous Fourteen Points seemed to be the final draft of the charter of the world's political freedom, and the signing of the Armistice, based as it was on those Fourteen Points, appeared as the earnest of international peace and amity.

Versailles disenchanted everybody; the real meaning of the war is apparent in this "Peace to end Peace." It enables us to decide for ourselves how much

truth there was in the platform rhetoric of politicians and recruiters, and to contrast the actual with the alleged causes of the war.

Mr. Keynes in this great book has given a résumé of the actual terms of the Treaty, more especially in so far as they bear directly upon the problems of the economic future of Europe. His analysis demonstrates vividly a very extraordinary internal conflict in the Treaty itself. We have displayed in it two antagonistic, mutually-destructive tendencies. On the one hand is the desire, dictated by war-passions, to "make Germany pay." On the other hand is the determination to crush her, commercially and industrially.

In one of his chapters, Mr. Keynes refers to the great and rapid growth of Germany as a world-power since the different States, half a century ago, were welded by Bismarck into a single whole. She attained a foremost place among the great capitalistic nations, more and more specialising in manufactures and to that extent becoming increasingly dependent upon ever-larger supplies of coal and iron, and upon her great and growing merchant fleet.

Briefly stated, the terms of the Treaty which directly affect these necessities of Germany as a manufacturing nation are these:—three-fourths of her coal supply, two-thirds of her iron, practically the whole of her merchant fleet are taken away, and she is largely deprived of her internal transport; yet a colossal indemnity, the total amount of which is not yet decided upon, is demanded of her, an indemnity which would have taxed to its utmost the capacity of pre-war Germany, with all her magnificently organised resources.

This is a case of a clearly-defined alternative. It may, perhaps, be possible to "make Germany pay," but in that case the Allies must permit, nay, must even assist in the reconstruction of Germany's industrial life and commercial expansion; or, on the other hand, it is, given the present relative strength of Germany and of the Allies, at any rate conceivable that it would be possible to annihilate her trade and industry. But if the Allies are resolved upon that course, all thoughts of indemnity must be put aside as mere frivolity; well enough, maybe, to gain the applause and capture the votes of a people still burning with hatred, or easily rekindled to hatred, of a late enemy, but to be regarded purely as a means to that end. So contradictory a Treaty could exist only on paper—it could not be translated into practice, and there is a growing recognition of the fact. But meanwhile Mr. Keynes points out that while the Peace makes no provision for the economic rehabilitation of Europe, nor even to promote economic solidarity among the Allies themselves, many clauses are directly and admirably calculated to stimulate racial animosities in preparation for the next "war to end war."

A specially interesting chapter is that on the Conference. The description of the drama enacted in the Conference Chamber, and the pen portraits of Clemenceau and Wilson are vivid and unforgettable. Not the least successful result—whether consciously attempted or not—is the picture of Lloyd George which Mr. Keynes contrives to give us in certain clever comparisons and contrasts between the three men. He does it without the detailed description of the appearance, and the subtle analysis of the mentality, which he gives of the Frenchman and the American; and yet the impression left upon the mind of the reader is by far the least flattering of all three. Clemenceau absorbed in the one supreme object of crushing his enemy; Wilson baffled and bamboozled by the unaccustomed surroundings and task—to which he was incapable of adapting himself—and by the mental subtlety and adroitness of the other members of the Conference, but doggedly determined "to do nothing that was not just and

right"; finally, Lloyd George, concerned only "to do a deal and bring home something that would pass muster for a week"—in that phrase Mr. Keynes crystallises the character and career of the British Prime Minister. Here we have the personifications of Imperialist ambition, outworn Liberal idealism, mere political opportunism; these three, and the vilest of these is opportunism!

Mr. Keynes contrasts also "the frivolous scene" of the Conference with the appalling situation in Central and Eastern Europe; its remoteness from the disease and desolation of those suffering countries, as if the work that the Conference was engaged upon had no relation to that suffering, though all the time the blockade was continued. And, indeed, inasmuch as the framers of the Treaty failed so utterly to grasp the needs, the realities, and the possibilities of the moment, there was a sense in which their work did not affect the future; the futile offspring of their long labour was doomed from the first by its own dissociation from realities.

But if the agony of the peoples of Central Europe for so long has been unheeded, the rapid and alarming fall in the exchanges is compelling the attention of the politicians and those for whom they stand. International conferences are to be called to discuss the problem of the financial bankruptcy which threatens civilisation; the complacency with which widespread moral bankruptcy was regarded is exchanged for a feverish anxiety to make the world safe again for international capitalism.

Mr. Keynes, himself an idealist disillusioned by the failure of the Allied statesmen to give practical expression to the international policy for which he believes the peoples of the world were prepared, takes a pessimistic view of the possibilities of the near future. He regards the movement of events as having passed out of the hands of the statesmen and as being swept along "by the hidden currents flowing continually beneath the surface of political history of which no one can know the outcome"; and although he puts forward several proposals for the immediate needs of the moment—the fixing of the total indemnity at £2,000 millions without interest, the cancelling of inter-Allied war-debts, an international loan to stabilise the exchange and to restart production, and, finally, full and free trading with Russia—yet these are only temporary expedients, and he places his faith for the more distant future in education along international lines. It is to this end, "to the formation of the general opinion of the future," that Mr. Keynes dedicates this fine book.

We think that the praise which has been lavished upon it is, both as regards matter and style, abundantly justified.

THOS. ASHCROFT

CORRESPONDENCE

HEALTH: SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL

DEAR COMRADE,—The sentence in my article under the above heading (p. 28) beginning "*Sporadic* forms of disease . . . are, etc.," should read "The sporadic form of disease . . . is . . ." The point I wished to make clear was that all disease is divided into two forms:—the *scourge* form, due to the prevailing method of production and distribution; and the *sporadic* form, not due to that cause.

Yours fraternally, E. ROBERTSON (M.B., Ch.B.)

[We owe Comrade Robertson, as, indeed, we owe many of our contributors, apologies for somewhat drastic "cutting" of their contributions. The only remedy for that (and it lies in the hands of our supporters) is an enlarged magazine, and adequate space for the discussion of subjects of interest.—Ed. PLEBS.]

THE TWO MARXES

DEAR COMRADE,—"Monist's" question about the "two Marxes" is answered by implication in Loria's *Marx*, and our preface thereto, which will be published any day.

Yours fraternally, EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL
G. B. S.

DEAR COMRADE,—Where has Rip van Lavin been slumbering during the last quarter of a century? Has he only just discovered that the one and only G.B.S. is a Fabian, and long ago—apparently in a fit of "middle-class morality"—swore lifelong allegiance to his friend Sidney Webb? He is also a non-smoker; but that fact need not deter us slaves to nicotine from appreciating his wit, his intellect, his G.B.S.-ness in short, need it?

Yours fraternally, ALFRED DOOLITTLE

STUDENTS' PAGE

ECONOMICS

(1) Q.—*Is money a commodity?*

A.—Only in the sense that a king is a man. When gold, through its natural fitness, is made the money-commodity, it becomes the king of commodities, because it performs the distinctive functions of being the measure of value and the medium of exchange. Just as a king in his realm has no king so money has no price. It can also delegate its functions to its symbols and tokens, which may be intrinsically of hardly any value. [Compare the "infancy of the analysis" Vol. i., p. 64 with p. 77. The point is also stressed in the *Critique*, pp. 51 and 112.] When in everyday conversation we talk about money being "cheap" or "dear," we really have in mind interest-bearing capital. [Vol. iii. Part v., p. 398 and 401.] Money when potential capital becomes a commodity, but a peculiar kind, for which the user agrees to pay to the owner a part of his anticipated profits which is named interest. Popular parlance says that money is "cheap" when the rate of hiring or interest is low, and calls it "dear" when, as potential capital, it is hard to obtain and the rate of interest is high.

(2) Q.—*Does not the fact that many unskilled wage-workers are able to provide their children with the opportunities to become skilled wage-workers contradict the theory that the value of labour power (monetarily expressed as wages) is the amount of S.N.L.T. needed to reproduce it?*

A.—Taking the individual wage-worker by himself, there is an apparent contradiction, for in his wages there seems to be sufficient not only to reproduce his kind but a higher kind of labour-power. But the value of labour-power is not determined by the needs and standard of life of the individual, but upon the general standard of life of his class relative to its time and locality. Otherwise, the bachelor worker, the married worker without children, or the individual who sleeps in a tent and eats only a handful of nuts would get a lower wage than the normal worker. Again, in an industry where it is exceptional for the female members of the family to be employed, if in a particular family they are earning wages, then the individual family wage is more than is needed to reproduce its labour powers. To the extent that this becomes general then the advantage of any individual family disappears.

The wage in any particular industry is not based on the cost of mere physical necessities; outside these it leaves a margin in which personal abstinence can operate. Some workers live carefully in order to become the owners of (more often than not) jerry-built mansions. Others puritanically work regularly and avoid every possible expense in order to give their children the training and education of a skilled worker. However, these are exceptions and they differ from the average in the size of the family and the standard of life. The fruits of their self-denial is balanced by the opposing tendency of a minority of the already skilled workers who, either because of large families or the practice of opposite habits to puritanism, are unable to reproduce their kind, and whose offspring sell simple and

not complicated labour-power [1st Vol., pp. 11, 151, 179.] While some rise others fall. If all workers adopted abstemious, self-denying habits, their advantage to individual workers would no longer exist, and if all wage workers sent their children to technical schools and colleges, competition, producing lower salaries, would make their sacrifice in vain.

(3) Q.—*How would you explain the fact that a docker often receives a higher wage than a more highly skilled worker?*

A.—A temporary monopoly, or demand, being greater than supply, may possibly cause price (wages in this case) to fluctuate above value. Often the difference is only favourable to the unskilled worker when the wages for an hour, a day, or a week are compared. Seasonal good wages must be averaged over slack periods. A very high sounding hourly or weekly wage may be a very low yearly wage. In some cases, where risk of accident and disease are very high, the average shortness of the working life must also be considered; and intensity of work under unhealthy conditions has the same effect.

HISTORY

(1) Q.—*Is not the Slavery Abolition Movement and the War between North and South America (1861-5) difficult to reconcile with the M.C.H.?*

A.—In reading of the agitations of Wilberforce and other prominent Abolitionists, what should puzzle the objectors to Historical Materialism is not why these men fought hard to liberate the coloured chattel-slave, but why these same men were so long in recognising the more terrible contemporary slavery which the Industrial Revolution imposed on the white child slaves of Britain. With the victims of an inefficient superseded mode of production, they actively sympathised; but the slavery of the new mode, hidden beneath the wage-form of payment, was never fully apparent to them. Why? Simply because the modern wage-working class was the same to them as the chattel slaves were to Aristotle and the ancients. It was the capitalist mode of production which made chattel slavery unjust. The sincerity of these agitators cannot be questioned, but that does not hide the fact that the modern wageworker—as the employers of Southern America later admitted—is more profitable than was the chattel-slave. There is, for example, a vast difference between a piece-worker and a convict in the work performed. This agitation was only an additional example of social physical necessities being raised into moral ones.

Turning to the larger question of the War:—The struggle was for political control of the Union rather than for the emancipation of the slaves. The "paramount object," said Lincoln, "was to save the Union and not to destroy or preserve slavery." The breakaway of the South in 1860, with its seizure of forts, arsenals and public buildings, forced the North into action. If man's ideas are not determined by his social existence, why should the South especially have been the upholder of slavery? Do the warm

climate, the fertile soil yielding a return to inefficient labour, and the heat, favouring inactivity and necessitating enforced labour, do these freeze "the so-called development of the human mind" and prevent it seeing the wrongness of slavery? How strange that Jefferson of the North in an oratorical flight on the subject of slavery "should tremble for his country when he thought that God was just," while away in South Carolina and Georgia the Christian Churches themselves used their influence to maintain that very institution. The more far-seeing capitalists and thinkers such as Hume, Adam Smith and J. S. Mill had already shown that slavery was an incubus to industry. Tradition and the nature of the work—sugar-cane, cotton and tobacco growing—and of the favourable climate and soil made its longer retention in the South possible; and the friction between the two methods of wealth production, reflecting itself

in a conflict of ideas and a tussle for political control, ended with the proclamation of the slave's freedom in 1865 and the recognition of his "citizenship" and "equality" in '70.

The following quotation has a direct bearing upon the question and is suggestive as regards the intimate relation between geographic-climatic conditions and chattel-slavery as a whole. Coming from a non-Marxian writer, it is the more interesting:—"Mountainous West Virginia was politically opposed to the tide-water plains of old Virginia, because slave labour did not pay on the barren 'upright' farms of the Cumberland plateau; whereas it was remunerative on the wide fertile plantations of the coastal lowland. The ethics of the question were obscured where conditions of soil and topography made the institution profitable."—E. C. Semple.

MARK STARR

REVIEWS

COAL

The British Coal Industry. By Gilbert Stone. (J. M. Dent, 3s. 6d. net.)

THIS book is written confessedly for the purpose of bringing home to its readers the "dying need of increased production." The capitalist section of the "people" being already convinced of the need, we may take it for granted that the book is meant for the workers. What the author overlooks, in common with others writing and speaking from the standpoint of the employers, is that the workers altogether fail to associate the needs of the "State" with the needs of their own class.

Eight chapters in all cover a brief history of the coal industry, a description of present-day conditions, the problem of production (as the author sees it) and the means to its solution. The historical section, added as an afterthought, will, at least by mine workers, be judged the most useful. It will also be subject to least criticism, as the author, obviously lacking personal knowledge and experience, in dealing with present conditions, does not suffer to the same extent in arranging historical material.

In his description of the conditions under which miners work he displays a considerable degree of ingenuousness. He has obviously accepted statements from men whom he would probably find it hard to suspect of untruthfulness. His inquiries, we suspect, led him to the employers' camp far oftener than to that of the workers. Thus we find him commending the state of ventilation in the average mine; and giving it as his opinion that the inclusive price list is the best form of piece work system. Where is the miner who will agree with this principle? Miners know from experience what it leads to. True, from the employers' point of view, it is the best—because it is the cheapest; but from the workers' standpoint it is the worst possible, since it leads to a cheapening of life as well as of coal. It encourages disregard of personal safety in order to win more coal (and

wages). A capitalist we know would, but would Mr. Stone purchase increased production at the price of asking the miner to add to the already too dangerous character of his calling?

This book has many defects, but also contains much useful information. W. H. M.

Workers' Control in the Mining Industry. By Frank Hodges.

A pamphlet explanatory of the plan of control put forward by the Miners' Federation. The literature upon this subject is not very plentiful, so that any new contribution is welcome to those interested in the problem. This pamphlet, however, deals simply with the general features of the miners' plan, and while making the most of this adds nothing new in the shape of theory or suggested structure.

Hodges justifiably contends that what is required is a scheme which is practical *now* and which can be put into operation immediately. Even so criticism can still be levelled at the suggested scheme.

We imagine that from the miners' point of view the criticism will take the form of the need of controlling the controllers. To be governed by a National Mining Council elected once in three years, particularly in the "democratic" way generally adopted, will be an advance few miners will appreciate—even if all the council were elected from industry.

The advanced section of the miners will support the present campaign *despite* the plan of control as laid down by the Federation.

One point in this pamphlet should receive appreciation from the advanced school, and that is the bold admission by Hodges of the fact of reduced output and of the underlying cause. Most leaders of trade unionism content themselves with a parrot-like repetition of phrases learnt from the lips of employers and politicians. Hodges, however, puts to the credit of the growing consciousness amongst the workers a growing opposition to the existing order.

W. H. M.

A NOVELIST LOOKS AT HISTORY

The Outline of History. By H. G. Wells. (Newnes, Part vi., 1s. 2d.)

These must be hard times for the professional historians. Only recently their sacred precincts were invaded by Mark Starr who, as a memento, gave us *A Worker Looks at History*; and now Mr. Wells is busy teaching them their job.

Part vi. deals with the history of Judea up to the Babylonian Captivity, and with the early stages of the history of Greece. Mr. Wells begins with the Hebrews as wandering herdsmen, who, from their niggardly highlands cast longing eyes on Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey.

Palestine, to use the modern name, was as a result of geographical location, a corridor connecting the civilisation of the Nile Valley with the civilisation of the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates. This fact, on the one hand, thrust the Hebrews into trade, and, on the other, made them the prey of the armies of these civilisations in their endeavours to expand. As Mr. Wells wittily puts it—"For three centuries the life of the Hebrews was like the life of a man who insists upon living in the middle of a busy thoroughfare, and is consequently being run over constantly by omnibuses and motor-lorries." In the course of his sketch the author deprives Solomon of much of his glory, although he is given credit for his variety in wives! He was, we are told, "a mere helper in the wide-reaching schemes" of Hiram, the trading King of Tyre, who found it convenient to make use of Palestine as a way to the Red Sea.

Further on, Mr. Wells shows the important part played in the development of the Jews by the Babylonian Captivity. He says that they went into Babylon barbarians and came back civilised.

Chapter xxii. opens with the descent of the early Greeks into the Balkan peninsula, where they found and destroyed a civilisation of which Crete was the centre. The *Outline* describes how the Greeks at first retained their barbarian habits, scorning the towns and, like Saxon invaders of this country, living in open villages, but later became reconciled to walls and built up a civilisation greater than that they had destroyed. In the course of the chapter we find that Grecian democracy was in reality the dictatorship of a class. A few interesting paragraphs explain why the Greek City States never united into a nation.

Like its predecessors, Part vi. is well illustrated, the maps being particularly helpful.

J. P. M. M.

AN ANARCHIST'S POEMS

Poems. By L. A. Motler. (Satire Press, 47 Crown-dale Road, N.W.1.)

Our comrade is well known for his articles in various Left Wing papers, and the present writer carries a vivid impression of his personality. So that it was rather disappointing to find that his poems were more or less the ordinary sort of rhyme: one finds in magazines, except for the fact that their subject was The Spirit of Anarchy, Battle Songs, We the Workers, etc. Motler was deprived of speech and hearing at an

early date. He owes the Fates a double grudge and satire should come easily to him. His fiery spirit, his will to work for the good of his fellow workers, hardly seem to have got themselves expressed in these poems.

Frankly, I don't know what the poem called "The Spirit of Anarchy" is about; when I read—"I am there where revels the hateful, the evil twixt sky and sea

Anarchy cometh the fateful: who taketh his stand by me?"

I am left guessing. One feels that if Comrade Motler would forget such words as "yestereve," "hell-hounds," "greensward," "aureolated," if he will give Phœbus and Aphrodite a miss, and remember that verse as well as human beings can be free, he will do better work. W. H.

In *The Meaning of the World Revolution* (Palmer and Hayward), Hamilton Fyfe investigates the forces at work—and busy at it, too!—knocking the bottom out of our old social institutions and upsetting the smug self-satisfaction of the ruling class everywhere. It is a very entertaining book and marks a big stride forward in the writer's outlook. That he will go even farther and lose some of his amorphousness is to be hoped, for he can write and he has a refreshing forcefulness of phrase. G. S.

BOOKS RECEIVED

[Other than those noticed above.]

What's Wrong with the Middle Classes? By R. Dimsdale Stocker. (Palmer and Hayward. 6d.)

First Principles of Mental Culture. By H. Main. (22 pp. 1s.) *A Night Out with the Fairies.* By A. Hunter. (1s.) (Universal Publishing Co., Chorley, Lancs.)

Education: Its Scope and Meaning. By J. C. Powell. (4d.) *The Relation of the Board of Education, the Universities and the Local Education Authorities to Adult Education.* By Arthur Greenwood. (4d.) *Presidential Address.* By Rev. Canon Wm. Temple (4d.) (W.E.A., 16 Harpur Street, London, W.C.1.)

Russian Code of Labour Laws. (People's Russian Information Bureau. 32 pp. 3d.)

The Coming of Socialism. By L. Deslinières. (9d.) *Revolutionary Essays.* By Bela Kun. (7d.) (B.S.P.)

An Outline Sketch of the Political History of Europe in the 19th Century. By F. J. C. Hearnshaw. (Macmillan. 3s. 6d. net.)

The Revolt of Labour Against Civilisation. By W. H. V. Reade. (Blackwell. 3s. net.)

The Trusts Grip Cotton. By Z. Hutchinson. (3d.) *Political Crooks at the Peace Conference.* By Jos. King. (2d.) (I.L.P.)

The Better Germany in War Time. By H. Picton. (National Labour Press. 5s. net.)

THE PLEBS BOOKSHELF

Joe Walker sends us another pamphlet, *Parsons and War* (Reformers' Bookshop, Bradford. 4d.), in which his knack of lively phrase—"it is high time we were evolving out of the fighting Bull Pup and Kilkenny Cat stage of existence"—and of apt quotation—Christ and Tom Paine, Lessing and John Bright appear on the opening page!—are as evident as in the two publications by him reviewed recently.

In a notice of the current number of the *Listener Review* a few weeks ago, the *Times Literary Supplement* commented thus on Mme. Lenin's article on Adult Education:—"It is a revealing document. It is full of the cry of 'knowledge, knowledge, knowledge'—'as much instruction as possible in as short a time as possible' . . . Mme. Lenin does not seem to have begun to realise that 'education' has a very different aim from the mere acquisition of 'knowledge.' The formation of character, the sense of justice, humanity, culture, tolerance, sound judgement, the power of reflection, the quickening of the imagination, are matters the value of which her mind is apparently incapable of appreciating." Pretty cool, eh?—coming from a sheet controlled by that fine flower of "culture, tolerance, sound judgement, etc.," Alfred Harmsworth, Baron Northcliffe! But it would be labouring the obvious to point out those matters the value of which *his* mind is capable of appreciating.

A Sheffield comrade writes asking:—"Why may the W.E.A. be said to teach 'filleted economics' "? The answer is—"Because the bones of contention have been removed." He fines himself a bob for the conundrum, and encloses it to the PLEBS. At this price we don't mind how often he or any other reader indulges in the habit.

By the way, the *Highway* for February had a review of Craik's *Short History*, strongly recommending the book to W.E.A. classes. So some "permeation" may result! The reviewer remarked that it was written "quite definitely from the Labour standpoint, but there is no attempt to strain facts, and from first to last it is *historically sound and well-balanced*." Which appears to me to knock the bottom out of the theory that impartiality is a necessary ingredient of good history!

Congratulations to the writer of a letter "Concerning Education" in the *Post*, the organ of the Union of Post Office Workers. It was signed "Ergatocrat," which—as well as his arguments—suggested that he reads his PLEBS.

If you want half-a-crown's worth of THE latest in art and letters, send that sum to Mr. Henderson (The Bomb Shop, 66 Charing Cross Road, W.C.2), and ask for *Coterie* (quarterly). The most interesting thing about it to Plebeians is the ample evidence it affords of the disgust and contempt felt by many of the younger poets and prose-writers for the Existing Social Order.

Crawshaw Williams' "Psalm of Peace," for instance, which concludes:—

"In fact we wanted a clean peace; and they have made us a bloody mess."

Or Douglas Goldring's essay on "English Literature and the Revolution," with its instances of the present-day commercialisation of the arts. Or Chaman Lall's "What's Wrong With the Theatre"—

"The world's theatre has become a vast well-decorated brothel, where strong wine, bad music and forced prostitution pile up big dividends or colossal bankruptcies for the unscrupulous commercialist."

I think I like best of the poems the little one, "An Old Woman Outside the Abbey Theatre," by L. A. G. Strong. And Mr. Aldous Huxley's "Imaginary Conversation" is a spirited (not spiritual) little "reconstruction" of a minor event in history which makes joyous reading.

J. F. H.

MISCELLANEOUS

W. PAUL is delivering a series of five lectures in Aberdeen, under the auspices of the Aberdare Miners' District Federation, from March 1 to 5. The subject is *Human Solidarity*, and the lecturer will attempt to interpret the question of Racial and National "characteristics" from the Marxist standpoint. The title of the lectures are:—(1) Problem of Racial Differences; (2) Nationality, Language and Race; (3) Imperialism and Primitive Peoples; (4) Human Progress and Social Heredity; (5) Labour and Internationalism.

At the meeting of the Executive of the Labour College, N. of Eng. branch, on February 2, it was agreed unanimously to accept with regret the resignation (through pressure of private business) of the Secretary—T. Ethell. The Executive desire to record their appreciation of the services rendered by Com. Ethell in the face of great difficulties and discouragement during his term of office, and their conviction that although perforce abandoning his official position, the movement for Independent Working Class Education can count on no more devoted ally than our Comrade Tom Ethell. Com. Will Coxon (N.U.T.) has, at the request of the Executive, accepted the office thus rendered vacant. He is an assistant-master under the Durham County Education Authority—a good lecturer.—Thos. A Jackson, *Organiser*.

At a House Meeting of Labour College students held on February 6, the following resolution was unanimously carried:—"That this meeting learns with deep regret of Mr. Dennis Hird's inability to return to the Labour College owing to continued illness, and desires to place on record its high estimation and appreciation of his faithful and untiring services to the Cause of Independent Working-Class Education in particular, and to the Labour Movement in general."

BALLOT ON CONSTITUTION

The postal ballot of League members on the amended Constitution resulted in a unanimous vote in favour. There was one spoilt paper, the sender of which objected to the smallness of the annual subscription. We may point out that 1s. is the *minimum* merely, and that there is nothing in the rules to prevent members who are keener-than-a-bob from making that fact apparent.

WANTED—

Copies of the January PLEBS. The issue was completely sold out, and several would-be purchasers have been disappointed. Any reader who has spare copies will gladden the Secretary's heart by sending them on.

IMPORTANT:

THE NEXT PLEBS CONFERENCE

The Conference of class-lecturers and organisers which is to discuss plans and proposals for text-books, etc., is provisionally fixed for Saturday and Sunday, April 17 and 18, at Leeds or Bradford. Will everyone intending to attend send in their names without delay to the Secretary, PLEBS League, 11A Penywern Road, Earl's Court, S.W.5, in order that arrangements may be made in good time. (The date is still open to alteration, if it is found that another week-end is more convenient to the majority).

Early copies of PLEBS (1909-10-11-12), bound or unbound, odd copies or sets, are wanted—and will be paid for. Write Secretary, Plebs League.

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

METHODS

To assist in the formation of classes in social science, such classes to be maintained and controlled, wherever possible, by Trade Unions, Trade Councils, and other working-class organisations.

The issuing of a monthly magazine, mainly devoted to the discussion of Labour questions, theoretical and practical.

The assistance in every way of the development of the Labour College or any other working-class educational institution with the same educational policy.

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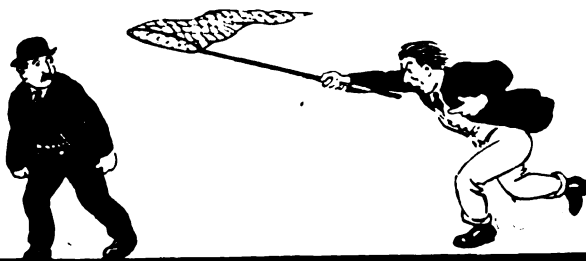
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Individual members, wherever possible, shall form branches to which local organisations can affiliate. Every such branch to be responsible for its own expenses and to have a voting strength at the Annual Meeting according to its membership.

Any alteration in the constitution shall be decided by a Postal Ballot of the individual members.

The seven Executive Members of the League, the Secretary and the Editor of the Magazine shall be elected by Postal Ballot.

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