

THE  
“Plebs” Magazine

Vol. I.

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No. 1.

EDITORIAL.

**E**NTER the “Plebs,” not from above but from below, not to fight a sham battle among the shadows by the orders and for the interests of our masters, but to fight a real battle in the full light and with a clear knowledge of the issue before us. We hope we are

**Enter the  
“Plebs.”**

sane enough and brave enough not to accept our appointments for battle from the hands of those who stand to lose by our victory. The “Plebs” League and its magazine is no graft movement from without, but a growth from within. It originates with the past and present students of Ruskin College, with a body of men representative of the working-class, having in common with each other the ideal of working-class emancipation. From this clay is the Plebian structure fashioned. To make clear the real position of Ruskin College, to point out its present weaknesses, to outline its possibilities, to demonstrate its value to the Labour Movement if definitely founded thereon, to stimulate active interest in working-class education and to open out propaganda of an educational character from the working-class point of view—such will be the policy pursued in this magazine.



Its management will be entirely free from any connexion with existing organizations. We desire to emphasize the fact that we are not appealing to any party or section of the working-class but to all workers irrespective of whether they are I.L. Peers.

**Its Manage-  
ment.**

S.D. Peers, Trade Unionists, or Non-Unionists. For the present the committee, consisting of four students in residence at Ruskin College, together with the Secretary, who is an ex-student, will be jointly responsible for the editing and publishing of the magazine.

It had been arranged that Mr. Dennis Hird, of Ruskin College, should act as editor, with Mr. A. J. Hacking, also of the College, as sub-editor, but circumstances have arisen to prevent this arrangement being carried out. The "Plebs," we understand has been the subject of some discussion by the Ruskin College Executive, and they, in their wisdom, have decided that no member of the staff shall be allowed to associate themselves in any way with the League or its magazine.

In such an attitude and in such a decision there is revealed further justification, if that were necessary, for the existence of the "Plebs." It proves that the time is ripe for our appearance as a movement.



By this action, the Executive, it would seem, are not in agreement with the policy of the "Plebs," with its mission, which is to bring about a definite and more satisfactory connexion between Ruskin

College and the Labour Movement: in other words  
**Its** that this institution shall be open to all workers,  
**Mission.** that it shall be controlled by a representative assembly  
of the workers, and finally that the education imparted  
there shall be of a kind and of a quality capable of application in  
the interests of the workers as a class. What are the interests of  
the working-class? Society to-day is divided into two distinct  
economic classes: the producers and the non-producers. This is  
a plain and simple fact which might just as well be recognized first  
as last, for it will have to be recognized some time. Truths are not  
put down by mental inhospitality—they are simply put off. We know  
that there are many, who, when this truth regarding class-divisions  
is presented to them, successfully emulate the pursued ostrich and  
burying their heads in the sand, pretend that what they do not see  
does not exist. Time is the only doctor that can cure ostrichitis.

Granted then, that there are two economic classes in society,  
who is there who will deny that the only class essential to society  
are the producers, and who is there who will dispute the fact that  
they who produce nothing, depend for their livelihood either upon  
the philanthropy or upon the robbery of those who produce every-  
thing? Outside of actual working, all the experience of mankind  
does not show us any other way of obtaining a living. We know  
perfectly well that the non-producing class do not secure a mainten-  
ance by begging, any more than they secure it by taking in each  
other's washing. There is only the other word for it. We are sorry  
we cannot call it by some more respectable name, such as klepto-  
mania. The old-fashioned Saxon word, we feel, will express our  
meaning better. And surely it must be as clear as noonday that,  
if in society there is a class of people who produce nothing, and  
in order to live must have something, they who produce that some-

thing do not get all they produce. Further, it must be equally obvious that the more of that something goes to those who produce nothing, the less will go to those who produce everything—the workers. A cake cannot be divided between two persons so that each shall have the larger share. Now the non-producers want more and more, and the producers want more and more. But in order that the former may get more the latter must take less, and inversely. From these pregnant economic facts we deduce the principle that the interests of the producers, of the working class—lie in the securing of the entire social wealth they create. In order that these interests may be promoted, it is essential that the teaching the worker receives shall be in harmony with those interests, that it shall contain no apology for the existence of those "who toil not," that it shall not require of the student that particular mental condition known in "the home of lost causes" as "the open mind," *open*, in order that the apologist may write his sweet will upon it and close it with the seal of the verbal juggler.

If the education of the workers is to square with the ultimate object of the workers—social emancipation, then it is necessary that the control of such an educational institution must be in the hands of the workers. Any other kind of control means ultimate disaster. If the ship is to be safely steered to the haven of economic freedom, then only they whose interests are centred in reaching that point must take the helm. To trust the safe passage of the vessel to those whose interests lie in an opposite direction is clearly to invite shipwreck.

We may be told that these people are "very sympathetic towards the working class," that they are anxious "to do something" for the welfare of working men. All this may be perfectly true only there are cases we know, where if these professions were sincere, something tangible would be done for the working men nearer home in the shape of higher wages and shorter hours. To learn,—one must have leisure. Where then can be the consistency in an individual who gives a sum of money to an institution for the purpose of promoting the education of working men, as a proof of his desire "to do something" when he, in his own industrial concern, makes education for his employees impossible, by denying them sufficient leisure and by paying them a bare subsistence wage? If we might utter one warning it is this: Beware of the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal of ruling-class professed sympathies for Labour. And all history justifies us in sounding that warning note. Inability to recognize the class cleavage was responsible for the downfall of the Plebs of the Roman Empire. Let the Plebs of the 20th century be not so deluded. The clear seeing of the field of battle will alone save us from the follies and tragedies of compromise.

Ruskin College provides the necessary machinery for turning out men capable of playing an important part in the fight for freedom.

Much has been done during the period of its existence, but much more remains to be done, and can be done if we move along the correct lines and adopt the best tactics. Our *ultimate* object is to make Ruskin College a definite wing of the Labour Movement. To accomplish this our *immediate* object must be to secure the financial support of that movement and the greater representation of that movement upon the Executive of the College.

Such are the aims and ideals of the League of the "Plebs." It seeks to bind the students of Ruskin College, past and present, in closer union with each other and for a definite purpose. It endeavours to permeate the Labour Movement in all its ramifications with the desire for human liberation. Realizing that the propelling force behind all social progress is social knowledge, it aspires to the dissemination and continuity of such knowledge among those whom it will reach.



Its mandate clear and pronounced is nothing more nor less than *the education of the workers in the interests of the workers*. If it were not that, then were it worthless. For after all there are but

**Its** two sides to the medal,—the obverse and the reverse.  
**Mandate** Especially in this is it true that "he who is not for us, is against us."

The position occupied by Ruskin College has never been properly understood or its possibilities as an educational force adequately estimated. To place it in its true light, to point out what it *tends* to be and what it *may* be is our primary object. The moment is a critical one. To-day Ruskin College stands at the parting of the ways. We ask for the support of the Labour Movement, of whatever organization, that we may avert the danger of the wrong turning, that we may guide the College along the way that leads to INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY.

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The only thing of consequence is what we do.—*Ruskin*.

A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich ;

A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong.—*Browning*.

The tendency of what we call material progress is in no wise to improve the condition of the lowest class in the essentials of healthy, happy, human life.—*Henry George*.

I wonder is it because men are such cowards in heart that they admire bravery so much, and place military valour so far beyond every other quality for reward and worship?—*Thackeray*.

## The Relation of Ruskin College to the Labour Movement.

**T**HE march of events in the industrial history of the 20th century has produced in a more tangible form than ever the definite appearance of the workers as a class. All the avenues of social activity present, at the present time, the appearance of a determined effort on the part of the workers to gain recognition as a distinct element in the composite bodies of society. Where the workers have attempted to stand out clearly and definitely on the basis of their economic activities, i.e. as an independent class, there they have been most successful; as witness the political struggle in which the independent element has dominated and triumphed all along the line. With the successful growth of independence in the political arena the hosts of reaction, in their innumerable guises, are making desperate attempts to prevent the same success in other departments. Nowhere is this more evident than in the controversial sphere of education. The number of attempts to impose education from "above" are legion. Prominent among them stands the University Extension movement with its powerful ally the Workers' Educational Association. While probably the intention of the promoters of these movements are of the most benevolent character, few will deny that the effect of their success would be to militate against the self-reliance of the workers in their own educational movement. Workers who have thought their way to an independent movement will recognize a parallel between these movements in the field of education and the Radical and Lib.-Lab. movements in the field of politics. Others will cavil at a parallelism between education and politics. They will say—"Though it is true that you must have different parties in politics, because of different economic interests, the same thing does not apply to education, which is far above party squabbles." This contention might hold good in that sphere of knowledge known as the physical sciences. But the veriest tyro in the study of social science, e.g. history and economics, knows full well the fundamental division of opinion that traced to its foundation is seen to originate in diverse social strata. Education, particularly the kind needed by the workers, is not that impartial universal thing so much gushed about by educationalists.

### The Struggle for Interpretation.

What part then does Ruskin College play as an educational force? Where are we to place it, and properly appreciate its functions? The answer to these questions will emerge as the result of a great conflict now going on. On the one hand stand the philanthropists paternally extending their hands to the *promising* young men of the working class

crying "Come and receive our interpretation of social knowledge." On the other hand stand the enlightened workers: erect with the knowledge of their own potentialities they reply—"The working class must work out its own salvation. To the workers belong the future. This mission demands a self-reliance and discipline that will not permit of dependence upon others however good their intentions." What will be the issue? The evolution of industry; the growth of the workers as a class; the social needs of the time; all seem to indicate that the workers' movement must dominate. From the point of view of the worker then, the place and mission of Ruskin College begins to take definite shape as a part of the Labour Movement. It has been a proud boast—worthy of pride too—that the Ruskin student in spite of tempting baits remains in and with his own class. The significance of this lies in its implied recognition of the position of the College as a part of the working-class movement. What is now imperatively necessary is the open proclamation of this fact, and changes in its curriculum and governing authority to render it obvious. Then Ruskin College will take its place as an integral part of the Labour Movement. This is the work that the League of the "Plebs" has set itself. A work which seems to have as great and as promising a future as any of the modern movements of the working class.

### **The Strategy of the Position.**

The question here inevitably arises—What is the importance of the strategic position of Ruskin College to the Labour Movement? It is a rule generally recognized in the tactics of any conflict that any position which excites the envy and desire of the opposition, is worthy the effort of preservation. But it is quite unnecessary in the present instance to depend upon such a negative policy. The advantages of Ruskin College to the Labour Movement calls, at most, for no more than their mere enumeration. The first, and greatest of these, lies in the necessary calibre of the students. Here are fifty students annually from the trade unions, from every industrial quarter of the country. They are essentially men who have already qualified themselves for active service in the Labour Movement. And, above all, they have ideals necessarily untainted by the commercialism that is such an unfortunate blot upon most educational institutions. In the present loose democracy of the trade-unions, individuals count for much. Such a body of men, scientifically trained to adapt themselves to the needs of the workers with a knowledge of the economics of Labour coupled with the ability of speech and the pen, would naturally be expected to wield a great influence in their respective localities. Gathered together in a little community for one or two years; the interchange of ideas; the various methods of improving conditions; the lessons to be gained by successes, and failures; these things constitute advantages of too great, and unique a character to be overlooked. The various minor advantages that

flow from these will surely be noticed by the most casual observer. On the other hand, if the attempt now being made to attach Ruskin College to the University—and the consequent permeation of University ideas into the minds of the young bloods of Labour—should succeed, then the main source of the future strength of the Labour Movement will be drained away into channels useless from the point of view of the mission of the workers stated above. There are people who oppose this view, who think Ruskin College, if attached to the University, would permeate instead of being permeated. Who fails to call to mind the modernized A'sop's version of the zoological procession to the Ark, and the gnat turning indignantly to the elephant and exclaiming, "Do you know, sir, who you are pushing?" As ridiculously disproportioned as this is the notion that Ruskin College, *inside*, will permeate the University. All who have in any way come in contact with the latter will recognize this. Besides, as an attempt to permeate the University, the method of attaching Ruskin College to it is hopelessly superficial. The University is what it is, not so much because of its constitution and the Dons, as of the division of society into classes. The governing classes require such a place, and so long as they maintain their economic status so long will the University be compelled to cater for them. Clearly, then, the capture of Ruskin College by the University will be its absorption. A state of affairs which every thoughtful worker must surely recognize as reactionary. Others argue that if care be taken to select men of sufficient force of character, the danger of the absorption will be met. This, however, has the fatal weakness of being an ordeal which some may successfully emerge from, instead of being the necessary conclusion of a previously thought-out plan. Evidently, then, Ruskin College is in a critical state. If it is absorbed by the University its interest to the working class will be nil. *They will then have to look in other directions.* If on the other hand, the workers take control of it, a new era will have dawned in the annals of the Labour Movement. The education of the workers will assume a new and fuller meaning. One more point of vantage of the utmost importance will be gained, and the early decades of the 20th century will become all important to the historian of the Labour Movement. Whether this will be achieved or not depends upon the trade unions. The "Plebs" have dug the trenches and are informed of the enemies' fortifications. They herewith call upon the trade unions in the interest of the working class to join them in what may be one of the greatest and most fruitful movements of modern times. What will be the response?

NOAH ABLETT.

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Nothing sinks a young man so surely as timidity and diffidence. If he thinks he shall not, he may depend upon it he will not, please.—*Chesterfield.*

## Labour : Rebel or Ruler !

ONCE, runs a tale of the Norse Mythology, there reigned in Gothland a great king named Frodi ; son of the Sungod Freyer. Blessed by his father's smiles the kingdom prospered, the fields bore double harvests, no cottage lacked a plentiful store of food, and the land was so peaceful that the king, rich with the spoils of a dragon's hoard, kept his silver and gold and precious jewels in the open air and no one dared touch them. Among his chief treasures were two quern stones, apparently ordinary mill-stones, only differing from others in their size. But these were magic stones. No grain need be poured between their jaws. They only required to be moved to grind from nothingness anything their owner wished. But as no man in Gothland could move them, Frodi for a long time gained nothing from his treasures. It chanced, however, that he saw in the household of the King of Sweden two slave women of giant strength and stature, so he bought them and set them to work. To his joy they handled the stones as if they were pebbles, and Frodi commanded them to grind gold. The slave women, Menia and Fenia, ground on and on, all day and all night ; yet the king urged them to grind more and more. Tired with their labours the women pleaded for rest, but greed had made their taskmaster cruel. No rest would he grant except for the time the cuckoo was silent in the spring or during the time one verse of its song was sung.

Menia and Fenia murmured in vain. Then they grew angry, and hungered for vengeance. The ships of an invading king were seen sailing o'er the sea. His warriors landed ; Frodi's men sprung to meet them, but the women no longer grinding gold were now singing a song welcoming the invaders and grinding armed men to augment their forces. Against such odds the fight was hopeless ; the great king and his defenders were slain, and the conqueror took the women and the magic stones away in one of his ships. Foolish as his predecessor, however, he ordered them to grind salt, and kept them grinding until the ship was overloaded and sank. And so, said the old Norsemen, the sea has been salt ever since.

This old story might be a modern allegory. King Frodi is King Capital, lord of land and gold, ruler of commerce and industry ; the magic quern stones the mechanical marvels inventive genius has presented to the world ; and the industrious strong women—the grinders of gold, the great simple Giant Labour ceaselessly toiling that others may be rich. Originally, however, the religious and ethical teaching of the story was aristocratic. It warned the governors of men that the simple stupid Giant Labour, if too harshly treated, would turn and rend them, raze to the ground their proudest edifices, and resolve civilization into primeval chaos. Mercy was the Prince's shield against the uprising of the lower orders and universal



distraction. Menia and Fenia asked for *mercy* not for *liberty*. They sought not to control their own actions, they quarrelled not with slavery, and only rebelled against excessive cruelty. And this for the most part has been the attitude of Labour throughout the ages, submission only broken by spasmodic insurrection when the conditions of servitude became intolerable. In the past the giant only asked for a good master, not to end the relationship. The women had to choose between destruction and servitude. To-day there appears another alternative. Labour lisps the alphabet of Democracy. Not a good master, but no master, not light tasks and heaped flesh pots, but freedom, even if freedom involves a sojourn in the wilderness, is the new ideal.

The autocratic fighting kings, tested in the carnage of bloody battlefields and approved as the supremely gifted man-slayers, have gone; the kings of Capital, victors in commercial conflicts, the supremely successful gold heapers, must also go. Democracy demands that the money-grubber should follow the bravo. Labour the slave, Labour the rebel, must become Labour the ruler. Too long, like the giants of ancient stories, has he been mastered by magic words. He must learn to speak these words. He must apply his intelligence to matters outside the mysteries of manual craftsmanship, and become the directing brain as well as the digestive system of the social organism. Vulcan must share in the Olympian Councils. Knowledge is the magic word. Once spoken and the changeling of brutal aspect assumes the human form. The teacher is the new Prometheus.

The Ruskin College Movement stands for this truth. Ignorance is the great barrier to progress. Science and reforming zeal need to co-operate for the improvement of the human race; Labour must know in order to do. Ruskin College came into existence because of the desire to give such knowledge. It is a lamp for Labour's guidance, and Labour needs all the light it can obtain.

Severed from the Labour Movement, however, of what note were this institution? A small, almost insignificant addition to Oxford's numerous halls of learning. Is its function merely to provide cheaply for the poor what they are said to provide extravagantly for the rich? to give the studious Lazarus a few educational crumbs from the rich man's table?

Assuredly not! Ruskin College is significant because it is a Labour College. In its teaching it knows no creeds and strives to observe strict impartiality. And this is right and fitting. But its sympathies lie in a definite direction. It aims to teach and train Labour the Ruler. Its natural ally is the party now striving to make Labour the Ruler. It is well to have this brotherhood realized, acknowledged and proclaimed. Success to the new League and its Magazine.

J. ARNOTT.

## The Mutation Theory.

"Species have been modified chiefly by the *natural selection of numerous slight variations*, aided in an important manner by the inherited effects of use and disuse, and in an important manner by the *action of external conditions*."

—DARWIN, *Origin of Species*.

**D**URING the fifty years which have elapsed since the publication of the "Origin of Species," the researches undertaken in every field of biology have enriched enormously the evidences of organic evolution. So overwhelming have these evidences become, that today it would be difficult to find a biologist of any eminence who does not adhere to the doctrine of descent. But while the theory of evolution has gained both scientific and general acceptance, authorities are more than ever at variance with regard to the factors which have operated to bring the transformation about.

Lamarck's factor of "use" and "disuse" has for some time past fallen into discredit, and the severe handling which it received from Weissman, is probably familiar to most people. With the more recent aspects of biological controversy, however, especially that involving the utility of the Darwinian principle of "natural selection" the outside world is not so familiar.

The modern criticism of the Darwinian position differs from the earlier attack in that it is now exclusively carried on by biologists themselves. A further distinguishing feature is the advancement at the same time of many new theories of organic change. In the main, these theories have been put forward as subsidiary to the theory of "natural selection," though in a few cases they have raised the claim of entirely supplanting it. One writer, Korschinsky, believing the struggle for life to be a positive hindrance to evolution.

Of the new theories advanced the most important perhaps is that known as the "Mutation Theory." According to its exponents, new species suddenly appear with definite characteristics which are fully and faithfully transmitted to offspring. The fundamental distinction between this and the Darwinian position is, that the former assumes species to come into being *all at once*, whereas the latter holds that species are formed *gradually* by the accumulation through natural selection of numerous slight variations. Bateson, a leading English mutationist, distinguishes the two claims by the terms "discontinuous variation" and "continuous variation" respectively.

It will be seen at once that the mutation theory possesses many advantages over the Darwinian theory. The geological record, still admittedly very imperfect, harmonizes far better with a theory of discontinuous, than of continuous, variation. Evolutionary time would be considerably shortened, were the new view found to be correct. Another objection, by far the most serious ever urged against the Darwinian theory, i.e. the view that the numerous accretions which go to make up a structure would be of no use to their possessor during

the incipient stages of development, is very largely overcome by the theory of mutation. An example will make the meaning of this clearer. Take the wing of a bird. Now in order to be of use for flying, the wing must, in the first place, have attained a considerable size; the muscles for moving it; the supporting skeleton parts; the nerves running to it; must have a definite formation and arrangement. Only when in a more or less perfect state would such a structure be of any advantage to its possessor. The numerous gradations in its development, postulated by the Darwinians would seemingly be more of hindrance than an aid to their owner. And there is the further difficulty as to whether the appropriate variations appear at the time when needed. Both these difficulties confront the mutationist as well but, by the assumption of larger steps, they are much minimized.

The great prominence of late accorded to the mutation theory, is largely due to the efforts of a Dutch botanist, named Hugo de Vries. The idea, however, is not peculiar to De Vries, it having been expressed long before by Von Kolliker, the embryologist, Francis Galton, Bateson, Korschinsky, and others. Darwin discusses it at some length in his work *Variations of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, and after giving the then available evidence his usual careful consideration rejected the theory, and definitely committed himself to the view aforementioned. The chief merit of De Vries consists in his having provided the mutation hypothesis with a theoretical, and, to some extent, an experimental basis. With these few prefatory remarks we will pass on to a consideration of the theory in the form it has taken at the hands of De Vries.

Recognizing the vital importance, to any view of species formation, of a theory of heredity, De Vries elaborated the following hypothesis of elementary units. "The characters of an organism," he says, "are made up of elements that are sharply separated from each other. These elements can be combined in groups, and in related species, the same combinations of elements recur. Transitional forms do not exist between the elements themselves, any more than they do between the elements of the chemist." This view of elementary units, capable of infinite combinations, if true, clearly banishes the need for transitional forms, or "missing links" between species. Each new species results from a new combination of elements, and the new forms are thereby completely and sharply separated off from the species from which they have come.

This conception of elementary units with capacity as defined is, it should be mentioned, purely speculative. The existence of these elements has never been demonstrated, nor is there any likelihood of such a demonstration with our present microscopical appliances. In the absence of any direct proof of the reality of the postulated units, the theory must be judged, as other theories are judged, viz. by its ability to explain the observed facts.

*To be continued.*

## Reports.

### Inaugural Social of the "Plebs."

#### FORMATION OF AN OXFORD BRANCH.

Commercial Road Schoolroom, St. Ebbe's, was the scene of an enthusiastic meeting during December. The occasion was the founding of the Oxford Branch of the "Plebs," a movement of Ruskin College students and sympathizers. Mr. Noah Ablett occupied the chair, and in opening explained the objects of the Movement. The two things felt by past Ruskin College students to be essential to the full development of the ideals of Ruskin College, he said, were a bond of union between those who were enthusiastic for independence in the education of the workers, and the more definite connexion of Ruskin College with the Labour Movement. One of the much-needed things that would be achieved by this Movement would be the classification of Ruskin College as a social force. Those who were interested in educational movements had been asking, "Is Ruskin College another educational experiment?" "What part does it play in the education of the nation?" To these questions the Movement was a reply. Ruskin College was not an educational experiment in the ordinary sense of the word. It arose out of the necessities of the Labour Movement. It was a temporary and specialized institution, and therefore could not be considered as part of a national scheme of education. The present institution, Mr. Ablett continued, was not owned and controlled by the Labour Movement, and this was a defect that this League of the "Plebs" was going to put right. The time had arrived in the history of the working class when the strategic position occupied by Ruskin College must be won, definitely and distinctly, for Labour. If the present institution could not be secured, then other institutions must arise to fulfil this now indispensable function for the working class. This movement, though it would undoubtedly command the enthusiasm of thousands of thoughtful workers, did not depend only on enthusiasm. It was, so to speak, in the "flood of time," and they were there merely as an expression of social forces that would of necessity soon be materialized. (Applause.)

An excellent programme of song and dance was thoroughly enjoyed by a large and appreciative assembly. Those who contributed to the success of the evening were Misses Stevens, Witts, and Smith, Mrs. Narroway, and Messrs. Williams, Davies, Jenkins, T. Evans, Flint, Smith, Craik, and Barrett.

#### THE "SOUTH WALES WING OF THE 'PLEBS.'"

It will please all "Plebs" to learn, that, at a meeting of South Wales "Ruskin" students and sympathizers, duly convened for the purpose, and held on the evening of January 2nd, in the York Hotel, Cardiff, it was decided to form "The South Wales Wing of the 'Plebs.'" The meeting, though not so well attended as one might have expected, was fairly representative. There were present—Students: W. H. Stevenson (resident 1906), Noah Rees and W. L. Cook (resident 1907), Noah Ablett, Ed. Gill, J. and T. Evans (resident 1907-1908), S. Morgan, A. Jenkins, W. J. Edwards, and W. Davies (resident 1908), and Will Craik (resident 1908-1909). Sympathizers present were, Charles Bent (Blaenclydach), and Fred Bartlett (Trealaw). As might be inferred from the above list, it was an extremely happy meeting, which, though called for a serious purpose, smacked very

much of a Christmastide family gathering. One felt like being back at "Ruskin" again. N. Ablett was appointed Chairman (*pro tem.*), and T. Evans was elected Secretary.

The Chairman gave a lengthy and lucid statement of the circumstances which gave rise to the formation of the "Plebs," and a good discussion followed, in which most of the members took part. There being not the faintest suspicion of dissent, the resolution was put to the meeting and carried with the utmost unanimity and enthusiasm. It was also resolved "that the first meeting of the South Wales Wing shall be held at Cardiff on the 10th of April—members, in the meantime, doing all that they possibly can to increase their number."

For the purpose of effective propaganda, it was decided, for the present, to divide South Wales and Monmouthshire into three districts, each having three representatives on the General Committee, as follows:—(1). MONMOUTHSHIRE—W. L. Cook, A. Jenkins, E. Gill; (2). RHONDDA, ABERDARE AND MERTHYR—W. H. Stevenson, S. Morgan, W. Davies; (3). OGMORE VALLEY AND WESTWARD—J. L. Rees, Rhys Bowen, J. Rees. The work of the Committee will be to carry on propaganda in backward places, to assist in the formation of "Plebs" branches, and in the circulation of the "Plebs" Magazine.

Business being over, a right hearty toast was drunk to the "Plebs," and the remainder of the short time which was left was devoted to a free-and-easy talk, bristling with amusing stories of "Ruskin," which will always make rich the memories of its resident students.

Thus passed a very happy meeting, and a hopeful one for the future of the "Plebs" in South Wales.

### By the Way.

The attention of our readers is called to the articles of our Association (inside front page of cover). The "Plebs" League is open to all who believe in the education of the workers being controlled by the workers. In the forming of branches it is very desirable that this should be made as widely known as possible.

As soon as a branch is formed efforts should be made to start classes in Sociology, History, and Economics. By means of these our fellow-workers will soon begin to appreciate the importance of the object of the League.

As will be seen elsewhere our Welsh members have made a very promising start in the campaign. Encouraging reports are also to hand from Scotland. What are our North of England members doing? We shall always be pleased to receive reports of the work being done by our members everywhere.

The signed articles appearing in the Magazine are not necessarily an official expression of the views of the League. Correspondence received regarding them, or on any other matters of general interest to the Movement, will be published from time to time, subject only to the exigencies of space. Correspondents are therefore requested to be brief and to the point.

The Editors will gladly welcome any criticisms and suggestions for improving the Magazine, or the methods of propaganda. Articles will also be received for publication on all matters of educational interest to the workers; if not used, or put by for future use, they will be returned forthwith. Articles and letters to be written on one side of the paper only, and if more than 1,200 words, marked for division, for publication in instalments.

Since going to Press we hear that a branch has been formed at Aberdare. Information with respect to this branch may be had from W. J. EDWARDS, 26 Cardiff Road, Aberdare.

## Reviews.

**SHEAR MY SHEEP.**—By DENNIS HIRD, M.A. (Fifield), 94pp. ; 1s. net. —Mr. Dennis Hird has achieved a reputation as the wielder of a facile pen, the possessor of a brilliant fancy and a daring wit. He revels in tilting at humbugs, in unmasking the shams of modern life. He has a happy vein of satirical humour and he is never dull. *Shear my Sheep* is one of the heaviest broadsides that has been fired at the present social order. There are those we know to whom it will cause many searchings of heart and much gnashing of teeth. Mr. Hird is sore upon Oxford and many of his gibes will go home. The dusky ruler of the island of Gold Shadow is unable to learn "the secret of England's greatness" in "that home of lost causes." Nothing so comic has ever appealed to the author, as the idea, that such a "secret" *could* be discovered in Oxford, "whose chief interest is to understand the secret of being five hundred years behind the rest of Great Britain." A tutor is eventually found for the inquiring Prince in the Earl of Fitz Long Finger, who made his position in the social scale secure "by extracting the sweetness of the sugar and manufacturing a substance remarkably like paste diamonds, which he sold as pure sugar." With dignified indifference the Earl, in detail, lays bare the "secret of England's greatness," which he proves to be "the adorable virtues of the British working-man." Chapters on Religion and Woman contain much that must be in the nature of a revelation to the working-man and woman. The great value of the book lies in its contrasts of social life amid those who toil not and those who toil unceasingly, and while it is not the kind of work to send to a country parsonage, or homes of such like intellectual serenity, it cannot fail to accomplish its desired end—the awakening of the working-class consciousness. As a work of art it manifests true genius of a very high order, is never dull, and is often as stirring as a trumpet, or the flourish of a red rag in a Spanish arena, and I say it advisedly, that never book has issued from the press so calculated to strike at the foundation of that state of society, misnamed *civilization*.

W. W. C.

### BOOK EPIGRAMS.—"SHEAR MY SHEEP."

"No nation makes a Constitution before it is a nation. Before the Constitution was, the nation is. Just as the man lives years before he wears a man's suit of clothes. The clothes are there because the man has grown, not the man because the clothes were ordered."

"How will you test intelligence? Who build our railway stations, our palaces, our cathedrals? Who chisel the stone, build our locomotives, our ships, our motor cars? Who grow the loveliest flowers and the choicest fruit? Who weave our marvellous fabrics and teach our imps of children? There is but one answer. The poor devils who are in the ruck of the thirty-eight millions. Not only are they intelligent but they are so intelligent that we none of us could do their work. If any catastrophe should deprive them of intelligence it would destroy all our industries, our commerce, our army and navy. Our luxuries, our comforts, nay, our very necessities would vanish; one universal famine would brood over our markets and our fields, and we should be like starving rats in a golden trap. Do let us be clear on this point, for it is of the utmost importance—the greater part of the intelligence lies with the 38 millions. So if you pit strength against strength and intelligence against intelligence, they are 8 to 1. . . . My God! If they wished to use their power they could scatter their lords and rulers like mummy dust on the sands of the desert."

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# THE GOLD SICKLE,

OR

## Hena, the Virgin of the Isle of Sen.

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### A TALE OF DRUID GAUL

By EUGENE SUE,

Translated from the Original French by DANIEL DE LEON.

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#### TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

*The Gold Sickle ; or, Hena the Virgin of the Isle of Sen,* is the initial story of the series that Eugene Sue wrote under the collective title of *The Mysteries of the People ; or, History of a Proletarian Family Across the Ages.*

The scheme of this great work of Sue's was stupendously ambitious—and the author did not fall below the ideal that he pursued. His was the purpose of producing a comprehensive "universal history," dating from the beginning of the present era down to his own days. But the history that he proposed to sketch was not to be a work for closet study. It was to be a companion in the stream of actual, every-day life and struggle, with an eye especially to the successive struggles of the successively ruled with the successively ruling classes. In the execution of his design, Sue conceived a plan that was as brilliant as it was poetic—withal profoundly philosophic. One family, the descendants of a Gallic chief named Joel, typifies the oppressed ; one family, the descendants of a Frankish chief and conqueror named Neroweg, typifies the oppressor ; and across and adown the ages, the successive struggles between oppressors and oppressed—the history of civilization—is thus represented in a majestic allegory. In the execution of this superb plan a thread was necessary to connect the several epochs with one another, to preserve the continuity requisite for historic accuracy, and above all, to give unity and point to the silent lesson taught by the unfolding drama. Sue solved the problem by an ingenious scheme—a series of stories, supposedly written from age to age, sometimes at shorter, other times at longer intervals, by the descendants of the ancestral type of the oppressed, narrating their special experience and handing the supplemented chronicle down to their successors from generation to generation, always accompanied with some emblematic relic, that constitutes the

first name of each story. The series, accordingly, though a work presented in the garb of "fiction," is the best universal history extant: Better than any work, avowedly on history, it graphically traces the special features of class-rule as they succeeded one another from epoch to epoch, together with the special character of the struggle between the contending classes. The "Law," "Order," "Patriotism," "Religion," "Family," &c., &c., that each successive tyrant class, despite its change of form, fraudulently sought refuge in to justify its criminal existence whenever threatened; the varying economic causes of the oppression of the toilers: the mistakes incurred by these in their struggles for redress; the varying fortunes of the conflict;—all these social dramas are therein reproduced in a majestic series of "novels" covering leading and successive episodes in the history of the race—an inestimable gift to the world's workers.

It is not until the fifth story is reached—the period of the Frankish conquest of Gaul, 486 of the present era—that the two distinct streams of the typical oppressed and typical oppressor meet. But the four preceding ones are necessary, and preparatory for the main drama, that starts with the fifth story, and that, although carried down to the revolution of 1848 which overthrew Louis Phillippe in France, reaches its grand climax in *The Sword of Honour; or, The Foundation of the French Republic*, that is the French Revolution. These stories are nineteen in number, and their chronological order is the following:

1. The Gold Sickle; or, Hena, the Virgin of the Isle of Sen.
2. The Brass Bell; or, The Chariot of Death.
3. The Iron Collar; or, Faustine and Syomara.
4. The Silver Cross; or, The Carpenter of Nazareth.
5. The Casque's Lark; or, Victoria, The Mother of the Fields.
6. The Poniard's Hilt; or, Karadeucq and Ronan.
7. The Branding Needle; or, The Monastery of Charolles.
8. The Abbatial Crosier; or, Bonaik and Septimine.
9. Carlovingian Coins; or, The Daughters of Charlemagne.
10. The Iron Arrow-Head; or, The Maid of the Buckler.
11. The Infant's Skull; or, The End of the World.
12. The Pilgrim's Shell; or, Fergan the Quarryman.
13. The Iron Pincers; or, Mylio and Karvel.
14. The Iron Trevet; or, Jocelyn the Champion.
15. The Executioner's Knife; or, Joan of Arc.
16. The Pocket Bible; or, Christian the Printer.
17. The Blacksmith's Hammer; or, The Peasant-Code.
18. The Sword of Honour; or, The Foundation of the French Republic.
19. The Galley-Slave's Ring; or, The Family of Lebrenn.

Long and effectually has the influence of the usurping class in the English-speaking world succeeded in keeping this brilliant torch that Eugene Sue lighted, from casting its rays across the path of the



English-speaking peoples. Several English translations were attempted before this, in England and America, some fifty years ago. They were all fractional: they are all out of print now; most of them are not to be found even in public libraries of England and America, little more than a faint tradition being left of them. One of them was published by Trübner & Co., jointly with David Nutt, both of London, in 1863; the other was published by Clark, 448 Broome Street, New York, in 1867. The former was anonymous, the translator's identity being indicated only with the initials "K. R. H. M." It contains only eight of the nineteen stories of the original, and even these avowedly abridgments. The latter was translated by Mary L. Booth, and it broke off before well under way—extinguished as if snuffed off by a gale. Even these two luckier fragmentary translations, now surviving only as curios in a few libraries, attest the vehemence and concertedness of the effort to suppress this great gift of Sue's intellect to the human race. It will be thus no longer. *The Mysteries of the People; or The History of a Proletarian Family Across the Ages* will henceforth enlighten the English-speaking toiling masses as well.

DANIEL DE LEON.

*New York, May 1st, 1904.*

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CHAPTER I.—THE GUEST.

**THE** who writes this account is called Joel, the brenn\* of the tribe of Karnak, he is the son of Marik, who was the son of Kirio, the son of Tiras, the son of Gomer, the son of Vorr, the son of Glenan, the son of Erer, the son of Roderik chosen chief of the Gallic army that, now two hundred and seventy-seven years ago, levied tribute upon Rome.

Joel (why should I not say so?) feared the gods, he was of a right heart, a steady courage and a cheerful mind. He loved to laugh, to tell stories, and above all to hear them told, like the genuine Gaul that he was.

At the time when Caesar invaded Gaul (may his name be accursed!), Joel lived two leagues from Alrè, not far from the sea and the island of Roswallan, near the edge of the forest of Karnak, the most celebrated forest of Breton Gaul.

One evening towards nightfall—the evening before the anniversary of the day when Hena, his daughter, his well-beloved daughter was born unto him—it is now eighteen years ago—Joel and his eldest son Guilhern were returning home in a chariot drawn by four of those fine little Breton oxen whose horns are smaller than their ears. Joel and his son had been laying marl on their lands, as is usually done in the autumn, so that the lands may be in good

\*The Gallic word for chief.

condition for seed-time in the spring. The chariot was slowly climbing up the hill of Craig'h at a place where that mountainous road is narrowed between two rocks, and from where the sea is seen at a distance, and still farther away the Isle of Sen—the mysterious and sacred isle.

"Father," Guilhern said to Joel, "look down there below on the flank of the hill. There is a rider coming this way. Despite the steepness of the descent, he has put his horse to a gallop. As sure as the good Elldud invented the plough, that man will break his neck. Where can he be riding to in such a hurry? The sun is going down; the wind blows high and threatens a storm; and that road that leads to the desert strand——"

"Son, that man is not of Breton Gaul. He wears a furred cap and a shaggy coat, and his tanned-skin hose are fastened with red bands. A short axe hangs at his right and he has a long knife in a sheath at his left. His black horse does not seem to stumble in descent . . . Where can he be going in such a hurry?"

"Father, the man must have lost his way."

"Oh, my son, may Teutates hear you! We shall tender our hospitality to the rider. His dress tells he is a stranger. What beautiful stories will he not be able to tell us of his country and his travels!"

"May the divine Ogmi whose words bind men in golden chains, be propitious to us, father! It is long since any strange story-teller has sat at our hearth. Besides we have had no news of what is going on elsewhere in Gaul."

"Unfortunately so! Oh, my son, if I were all-powerful as Hesus, I would have a new story-teller every evening at supper. I would send men travelling everywhere, and have them return and tell their adventures. And if I had the power of Hesus, what wonderful adventures would I not provide for my travellers so as to increase the interest in their stories on their return."

"Father, the rider is coming close to us!"

"Yes, he reins in because the road is here narrow, and we bar his passage with our chariot. Come, Guilhern, the moment is favourable; the passenger must have lost his way; let us offer him hospitality for to-night. We shall then keep him to-morrow, and perhaps several other days. We shall have done him a good turn, and he will give us the news from Gaul and the other countries that he has visited."

"Besides, it will be a great joy to my sister Hena who is to come home to-morrow for the feast of her birthday."

"Oh, Guilhern, I never thought of the pleasure that my beloved daughter will have listening to the stranger! He must be our guest!"

"That he shall be, father! Indeed, he shall!" answered Guilhern resolutely.

Joel and his son alighted from the chariot, and advanced towards the rider. Once close to him, both were struck with the majesty of the stranger's looks. Nothing haughtier than his eyes, more masculine than his face, more worthy than his bearing. On his forehead and on one cheek were visible the traces of two wounds only freshly healed. To judge by his dauntless appearance, the rider must have been one of those chiefs whom the tribes elect from time to time to lead them in battle. Joel and his son were all the more anxious to have him accept their hospitality.

"Friend traveller," said Joel, "night is upon us; you have lost your way; the road you are on leads nowhere but to the desert strands; the tide will soon be washing over them because the wind is blowing high. To keep on your route by night would be dangerous. Come to my house. You may resume your journey to-morrow."

"I have not lost my way; I know where I am going to and I am in a hurry. Turn your oxen aside; make room for me to pass," was the brusque answer of the rider, whose forehead was wet with perspiration from the hurry of his course. By his accent he seemed to be from central Gaul, towards the Loire. After having thus addressed Joel, he struck his large black horse with both heels in the flanks and tried to draw still nearer to the oxen that now completely barred his passage.

"Friend traveller, did you not hear me?" rejoined Joel. "I told you that this road led only to the seashore, that night was on, and that I offer you my house."

The stranger, however, beginning to wax angry, replied: "I do not need your hospitality . . . Draw your oxen aside . . . Do you not see that the rocks leave me no passage either way? . . . Hurry up; I am in haste."

"Friend," said Joel "you are a stranger; I am of this country; it is my duty to prevent you going astray . . . I shall do my duty——"

"By Ritha-Gaür, who made himself a blouse out of the beards of the kings he shaved!" cried the stranger, now in a towering rage. "I have travelled a deal since my beard began to grow, have seen many countries, many peoples, and many strange customs, but never yet have I come across two fools like these!"

Learning from the mouth of the stranger himself that he had seen many countries, many peoples and many strange customs, Joel and his son, both of whom were passionately fond of hearing stories, concluded that many and charming must be the ones the stranger could tell, and they felt all the more desirous of securing such a

guest. Accordingly, so far from turning the chariot aside, Joel advanced close to the rider, and said to him with the sweetest voice that he could master, his natural voice being rather rough :

"Friend, you shall go no further! I wish to be respectful to the gods, above all to Teutates, the god of travellers, and shall therefore keep you from going astray by making you spend a good night under a good roof, instead of allowing you to wander about the strand, where you would run the risk of being drowned in the rising tide."

"Take care," replied the unknown rider, carrying his hand to the axe that hung from his belt. "Take care! . . . If you do not forthwith turn your oxen aside, I shall make a sacrifice to the gods, and shall join you to the offering."

"The gods cannot choose but protect such a worshipper as yourself," answered Joel, who, smiling, had passed a few words in a low voice to his son. "The gods will prevent you from spending the night on the strand . . . You'll see——"

Father and son precipitated themselves unexpectedly upon the traveller. Each took him by a leg, and both being large and robust men, raised him erect over his saddle, giving at the same time a thump with their knees to the horse's belly. The animal ran ahead, and Joel and Guilhern respectfully lowered the rider on his feet to the ground. Now in a wild rage, the traveller tried to resist, but before he could draw his knife he was held fast by Joel and Guilhern, one of whom produced a strong rope with which they firmly tied the stranger's feet and hands—all of which was done with great mildness and affability on the part of the story-greedy father and son, who, despite the furious wrestling of the stranger, deposited him on the chariot with increasing respect and politeness, seeing they were increasingly struck by the virile dignity of his face.

Guilhern then mounted the traveller's horse and followed the chariot that Joel led, urging on the oxen with his goad. They were in earnest haste to reach the shelter of their house: the gale increased; the roar of the waves was heard dashing upon the rocks along the coast; streaks of lightening glistened through the darkening clouds; all the signs portended a stormy night.

*To be continued.*