

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

GOETHE

THE
"Plebs" Magazine

Vol. V, No. 3.

April, 1913

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The "Mlebs" League

Object

To further the interests of the Central Labour College, for working men and women, at London, and to assist in the formation of similar institutions elsewhere, all of these institutions to be controlled by the organized Labour bodies.

Methods

The holding of an Annual Meet: the issuing of a monthly Magazine, the pages of which shall be open to any proposed application of reason to human problems: and the formation of Local Branches to promote the object of the League, and for the study of Social Questions, History, and Economics—from the working-class standpoint.

Membership

All Students (R. C. and C. L. C.), past and present (Resident and Corresponding) and Sympathizers are eligible for membership


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

Management

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

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

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

 The Fifth Annual Meet will be held in London (Bank Holiday), August, 1913

G. SIMS, Secretary-Treasurer

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

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

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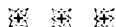
EDITORIAL

ENTER: The National Union of Railwaymen. Exit: The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, the General Railway Workers' Union and the Signalmen and Pointsmen's Association.

Something Done

On Sunday, the thirtieth day of March, this positive and progressive achievement was signalized from more than a hundred platforms. It is one thing to talk about the world. It is another thing to change it. Not that talking is unnecessary. But unless our talking and theorizing materializes in practical results, in something not only attempted but in something done, then "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." For some time back there has been a considerable amount of writing and talking done on this question of consolidation. There are more resolutions upon the minute books of the A.S.R.S. that any of us would care to count, all proclaiming the necessity of the unification of forces. But now the passage from the abstract to the concrete has been made and resolution is succeeded by realization. *The word has become flesh.* We do not of course for one moment mean to infer that finality has been reached, that the National Union of Railwaymen marks the terminus. Rather does this all-inclusive body, so far as railwaymen are concerned, indicate the removal of the previously existing stop-blocks, the extension and junction of the lines, the broadening of the gauge, and the general enlargement and unification of the system so as to provide for the conveyance of a larger consignment of traffic and its more expeditious delivery. While resolution has led to realization, realization leads to resolution on still higher achievements. There is no danger in going forward. There is danger only in

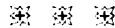
standing still, or rather in falling backward, for in reality there can be no standing still. The resolution and speeches of last Sunday were directed to summoning within the new organization, not merely the non-unionist element, but more particularly the craft-unionist organizations. For the craft union breeds, rather than breaks down, non-unionism. In the degree that division between sections disappear, non-unionism becomes more and more impossible. The craft-union form of organization implies a difference of interest and thus lends its own countenance to those who are outside the organization. And as the craft-union weapons become increasingly ineffective, failing even to check the downward tendency, there is less incentive to the non-unionist to join the ranks of the organized. The greater the unification of forces, the more militant and aggressive the organization, the more successful is the organization, and therefore the greater the diminution of non-unionism. It is well known how even in the history of craft unionism, when the militant spirit arose, when demands were being formulated and preparations for war made, there accompanied these activities a great increase in the numerical strength of the organization. But when this aggressive mood and forward movement waned owing to the weakness of craft weapons and tactics, and the narrow craft consciousness which is the mental companion of the craft practice, when the hands of the organization became tied behind its back with the cords of a five or ten years' contract, then the outgoing superseded the incoming. The active mood can alone build up the tissue of solidarity. And this active and aggressive spirit can no longer find its basis in the craft-union. Those who advocate the adoption of new tactics and policy in line with the changed economic conditions are frequently branded as impossibilists. But it is not the branded that are impossible. The real impossibilists have always been the people who are out of step with evolution, out of touch with reality. Reality, however, is no respecter of antiquity or precedent, and it takes summary vengeance on those who disregard it. The craft-union is meeting with the same experience as that which the hero of Cervantes made when he ran full tilt at the windmills. This is the fate of individuals and institutions who interpret things as they are by things as they were, who attempt to dominate the world with the tales and tactics of their grandfathers.



Two organizations still remain outside of the National Union of Railwaymen—the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, and the Railway Clerks' Association. The feud between the A.S.L.E.F. and the A.S.R.S. is one of fairly long standing. Neither have gained anything out of the contest. Each has stood in the way of the other. This much, however, has been gained for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear—the experience that the solution

**The Dis-
Associated**

to the problem is *the abolition of each*. Now the A.S.R.S. has yielded up its individuality in the larger organization of the National Union. But the A.S.L.E.F. still retains its craft existence. True in recent years this last mentioned body has united on a number of occasions when battle with the forces of capital upon the railways was impending, or when battle the actually began in August 1911; and the great and unparalleled demonstration of solidarity that took place during the memorable two days of August was possible only because sectionalism had for the time being disappeared. That strike was a complete justification for the industrial unification of railwaymen. And indeed it contributed largely to hastening the creation of the National Union. *The joint action of the four different unions was nothing less than a proof of their single handed inadequacy*. But only three of those unions have realized this lesson and merged into one organization. The A.S.L.E.F. have remained outside the new structure. That attitude however cannot long be maintained. It was difficult for the A.S.L.E.F. to be effective when the A.S.R.S. existed. But it is ten times more difficult now that the National Union has become a fact. What can it do for its members? If it was dependent upon the three separate unions in August, it is no less dependent upon the larger organization into which the three separate organizations are now unified. Nay, it is more dependent, because the National Union is stronger than the power of the three separate unions even acting together. The added strength flows from the oneness of the organization, from the superior economy of the National Union over that of the three separate autonomies. The A.S.L.E.F. it is true might stop the work of the locomotive department to a considerable extent. But the National Union can paralyze every department of railway working. For in the National Union men are organized as they work. And that is the scientific principle which must be laid hold of by the working class in the conduct of the class struggle.



THE National Union of Railwaymen is open to all workmen employed on or about the railways of this country. Any other condition of membership would have been futile. Of course it will certainly call

**The More
Excellent Way**

forth the opposition of the craft-unions who cater for engineers, carpenters, &c. We shall hear many protestations from these quarters, and at the Trade Union Congress, the crime of stealing members will doubtless be charged to the account of the National Union. What reason is there for a workman joining a union? That he may secure and extend his egoistic wants! This he cannot do individually. Just as the production of those things that meet his wants is not the result of an individual act but of mass-action, so the ability to secure the return of these products to adequately satisfy the wants of the individual workman depends also

upon the mass-action. But how shall this mass be determined? What shall be the extent of the co-operation? What is the extent of the co-operation in production? The whole producing class, the class of workers! While the working class is the foundation of society's existence, society and the workers are not, however, under the present social order co-extensive. Society includes also those who take no part in production, but who notwithstanding live, and live well, upon its results. This they do because they own the means of production. As a result of such private ownership they own the producers as well, such ownership being expressed in the appropriation of the values created by the co-operation of the producers. In the case of the railways, for every shilling in value produced the owners of the railways take eightpence, and the railway workers receive the remaining fourpence in the shape of wages. Such a system, it goes without saying, works to the detriment of the producers. Through this exploitation they are oppressed in various ways and the development of this system, the growth of industry upon a large capitalist scale, intensifies this exploitation and heightens the oppression as well as the consciousness of it. All those who co-operate in production suffer in common from the same evils. This common ground marks the extent of the action of the sphere of co-operation in the battle against oppression.



THE mass-action becomes class-action. The unity of the working class marks the solution to the common problem of its members. But the members do not see this solution at once, the path of unity is not found at the outset. It is found only after, and

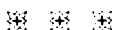
The Road to the Revolution

as a result of, much wandering in side tracks, much experimenting, many failures, and above all, the growth of the critical consciousness that reviews those experiences and their effects. The National Union of Railwaymen is not synonymous with the Social Revolution, but it certainly brings the means nearer to that end. Only people for whom the Social Revolution is merely a phrase will sneer at the coming into being of such an organization. We cannot become accomplished swimmers merely by listening to a series of lectures on swimming. We must enter the water. The first exhibitions may be very crude and ungraceful. Still only in and through these primitive performances is the end of expertness attained. To-day we may be able to swim only four lengths. But if we cannot swim four lengths then we can never swim twice four. To-day the four lengths' accomplishment is a progress on yesterday's three lengths. So it is with the development of the working-class movement. What it builds to-day may to-morrow be worthless, and superseded by a finer structure. Yet the "after" is a consequence of the "before." And out of the ruins of the old there is derived that positive acquisition which makes the new possible,

The development of organization of workers on the basis of industry instead of on the basis of craft, makes for the extension of the sphere of mass action. The division of labour in the workshop

so far as the hand craftsmen is concerned, has been effaced by the progress of machinery. The craft ceases to be a reality in production. In the degree that this development takes place the craft-union becomes more ineffective. It becomes ever more possible for men to pass from one division to another within an industry after quite a short period of training. The growing recognition of this experience leads to the shifting of the base of working-class organization from that of the craft to the industry. This means that a blacksmith working upon the railway would belong to the organization of railway workers; not to the blacksmiths' craft-organization. Similarly with an engineer or any other artisan. If the only justification for joining an organization be, as we have already stated, the necessity of satisfying the individual wants, then the particular organization which he is to join can only be reasonably determined by which is the more effective for securing such satisfaction. On that determination the blacksmith employed upon the railway will join the National Union of Railwaymen. It so happens that many of these artisans employed upon the railways are working below the standard wage recognized by the craft-organization. As a consequence they are not allowed to join the latter. They are thus made non-unionist by craft-unionism. What could the craft-organization of blacksmiths do to secure the standard wage for those employed upon the railways? They might call out their members on strike. But that would not be likely to move the Railway Companies, who after all employ a small number of blacksmiths in comparison with those employed outside the Railway shops. On the other hand, the withdrawal from work of the members of the National Union of Railwaymen *would* affect the Railway Companies very profoundly and would be more likely to effect success in the direction indicated than would the efforts of the craft-organization of blacksmiths. The opening of the National Union of Railwaymen to such workers as those referred to, means, of course, a decrease in contributions to the various craft-organizations as well as shutting the door to a possible increase in the contributions. And that is the sore point with some of the officials of these organizations, who look upon the Union above all else as a dues-paying machine, and who therefore look unfavourably upon aggressive polices as means to deplete the money-chest. But the point of view of the man who pays the dues is the point of view that matters. And if he joins a union to advance his interests and apprehends that this can be realized only through effective fighting weapons, then he will take up his place in the industrial union. It has fallen to the lot of the National Union of Railwaymen to initiate this new principle. And they will succeed. They will succeed not only in organizing

industrially those employed upon the railways irrespective of grade, but they will compel the other organizations in other industries to go and do likewise.



INSIDE the National Union opportunity is given for the independent handling of Departmental Questions. The Departments are more or less modelled after the Railway Coy's own departmental scheme.

Departmental Autonomy

The Locomotive workers will have opportunity and freedom to deal with whatever matters merely concern them. They will have the power to appoint their representatives to the National administration in common with the other departments. *All matters which concern all grades will be dealt with by all grades.* And these will be found to be the primary and most important matters. Doubtless there will be discovered certain defects in the new scheme, certain improvements will be necessitated as experience of its working grows. But its foundations are sound and give ample scope for the general strengthening of the structure that is built thereon.



COMING to the question of the Clerks, they too have to realize that the interests of the pencil and the shunting-pole manipulators are mutual and can only be mutually realized. Some of them, we are afraid, have listened too lovingly to their "master's voice" and found it flattering to their silly vanity.

The Clerk

But the destroying angel of capitalist experience does not pass the door of the clerks. They too feel the pinch of increasing pressure. They too are beginning to realize that as a separate organization their powers of resistance grow weaker. The Railway Companies have before to-day shown to what base uses a clerk may be put when the other railway workers fold their hands. The National Union therefore needs the clerks. And the clerks need the National Union. It gives them a power which separately they can never possess. The railway clerks are to-day both badly organized and badly paid. These two go together. The National Union can alone remedy this dual difficulty and they will do it all the sooner and all the more effectively, that the Railway Clerks' Association put aside their craft exclusiveness and find a larger life in the greater whole.

There are other aspects of this new movement which we should like to open up for consideration, but space forbids. Later on we may take the opportunity. Meanwhile on behalf of the League and the League we extend heartiest congratulations and good wishes to the National Union of Railwaymen.

W.W.C.

Central Labour College

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The College is still badly in need of Funds in spite of the splendid results to date from the Appeal—and we do not hesitate to ask our readers to obtain more Cash.

Book Review

THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS. An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions. *By Thorstein Veblen.* New York: The Macmillan Co.

The late critic of a book has the same advantage as the critic of an old painting. He need not have any ideas of his own. He has learned what the proper thing to say is, and he has nothing to do but to say it. In the present case the proper thing to do is to condemn the book and call it pessimistic, even "cynical." Pessimism now means: looking facts in the face; seeing things as they are; calling a spade a spade. Anyone who does this is deserving of censure as disturbing the order of things. If there is one thing that the world does not want, it is truth. Truth is a medicine that must be administered in sugar-coated pills. A very little of it reacts upon the public system and will not go down. This is no modern fact. It has always been so. It is what they used to burn folks for. Nowadays they merely put their books on a sort of moral index *librorum expurgatorum*.

The trouble with this book is that it contains too much truth. It also suggests a great deal of truth that it does not contain, and this is quite as bad as to tell the truth outright. Galileo and Servetus were not persecuted for what they said, but for the deductions that their persecutors made from what they said. The reviewers of this book base their criticisms almost entirely on the conclusions they themselves draw from what is said in it, and scarcely at all on what it actually says. They forget entirely that it is, as its secondary title states, "an economic study in the evolution of institutions," and they assume in all gratuity that it is an attack on existing institutions. That is a pure deduction, but one for which there is no warrant in the book. Someone has said that the law of gravitation would be attacked if it was suspected of jeopardizing human interests. The history of man is exactly paralleled in the history of plants and animals, but no one has inveighed against the facts of biology, because they concern sub-human creatures. Darwin was soundly belaboured for supposed consequences to man of his facts, but only for such.

Now, no truth has come more clearly forth from the most thorough study of organic evolution than that its whole method is essentially wasteful. Darwin showed this; Huxley multiplied examples of it; and even Herbert Spencer, who would have man imitate nature in all things, has supplied some of the most striking examples of the prodigality of nature. In describing this prodigality, naturalists have not been suspected of condemning the habits and instincts of the birds and animals, of the fishes of the sea and the infusorians of the pool. But when an economist of a strictly scientific habit of mind investigates the history of the human species, discovers that human evolution, like organic evolution is the

outcome of the rhythmic action of great cosmic forces, one set of which is centrifugal and destructive, and tells us how these wasteful processes go on in society in co-operation with the conservative ones, he arouses hostility and is regarded as dangerous. And all because the specimens he has to investigate are men. In fact, the book is a mirror in which we can all see ourselves. It is more. It is a telescope through which we can see our ancestors, and when, all at one view, we see all the generations of our pedigree down to and including ourselves, we perceive how little difference there is, and the image takes on a rather ugly aspect. That is why it offends. This tracing back institutions, customs, habits, ideas, beliefs, and feelings to their primitive sources in barbarism and savagery, and showing what is the real basis of them, is not pleasant occupation for people who are proud of their ancestors, for many such have nothing but ancestors to be proud of.

It is perfectly legitimate to endeavour to show that the facts are not as stated, but a critic who does this must proceed scientifically. He must not waste his efforts in showing that there are other facts that have an opposite tendency. He must remember what the author of the book has set himself as a task, and in this case it must be admitted that he has clung tenaciously to this one field, resisting the temptation, which, as anyone can see, must have been strong, to go out of that field and deal with the opposite class of facts. There is no doubt that he could write as strong and able a book on the "instinct of workmanship" as he has written on the "instinct of sportsmanship," and it is to be hoped that he may do so. But in dealing with this book the critic has no right to complain that it is not a book on some other subject than the one chosen. As a matter of fact, there is much gained in dealing with one aspect of human evolution at a time. Very few writers are able to keep the different factors distinct. It requires a clear head. Nearly all the treatment we find of highly complex subjects is vitiated by the perpetual mixing up of the fields of inquiry, until all is muddle and *wirrwarr*. Here for once we have a single subject clearly handled and consistently adhered to, at the risk even of giving offence to those whose suggestibility is so strong that they cannot keep other subjects out of view.

It may be said that the author ought at least to have shown how this very leisure class, and solely by virtue of its leisure, has made the greater part certainly of the earlier scientific discoveries and worked out some of the most important problems; that even modern science owes as much to this class as to all other classes combined, as shown by de Candolle in his *Histoire des Sciences et des Savants*; that all the important "institutions," including the learned professions and the sciences, have, as Spencer has shown, developed out of "ecclesiastical institutions," and owe their existence and advanced modern character to that typical "leisure class," the priesthood, given over to "vicarious leisure" and "devout observances"; that no class and no human being, as the labour reformers so justly insist, can do any high intellectual work, or even cultivate the mind, without a

certain amount of leisure and respite from incessant toil. Our author might, it would seem to some, have at least dwelt upon these well-known and universally admitted facts relating directly to the leisure class. But, in the first place, he is not engaged in explaining the intellectual and moral progress of the world, and, in the second place, these facts are too well known to need restatement, and he seems to have no taste for hackneyed topics. Such facts are not opposed to anything he says, but are simply also true. They are patent, while what he tells us are latent, and he chose between the two classes of subjects, telling us a good many things that we did not know before instead of telling us so much that we did know. In the third place, and principally, his point of view is strictly economic, and he deals with a subject within his own speciality and has not seen fit to branch out into wider fields, as economic writers are so much in the habit of doing. *Ne sutor ultra crepidam.*

In a word, our author is dealing with the question of wealth, and his whole treatise is confined to the "pecuniary" aspect. He finds that everything has a pecuniary value, which has little to do with its intrinsic or rational value; that this pecuniary value has grown out of a long series of events in human history leading back to the age of barbarism. It is a typical case of conventional ideas as distinguished from rational ideas. It can only be made to seem rational when we know and can trace its history, and see how, under all the circumstances, it could not have been otherwise. Pecuniary value is the result of natural causation, like everything else, but the series of terms consists of a long winding labyrinth of causes and effects that have ultimately produced something which, looked at directly, appears irrational and absurd. In this it is no exception to the general law of survivals in ethnology. Every lawyer knows what a legal fiction is, but most of them are mistaken in imagining that only advanced races are capable of creating such fictions. The study of ethnology shows that early institutions are a mass of fictions. The savage is more logical than the civilized man. Analyse the *couvade*, considered as the fiction by which the matriarchal was transformed into the patriarchal system without a break in the chain of logic.

Pecuniary value, as distinguished from intrinsic value, is a survival, and it has probably never before been so well traced out. Here are a few of the steps, but the book must be read to see them all and how they are connected: As soon as property became recognized as the thing that chiefly insures the satisfaction of desire, the "law of acquisition" went into effect, and thenceforth the problem was how to *acquire* the most with the least effort—not how to *produce* the most. The "least effort" part of the formula lies at the foundation of the author's distinction between "industry and exploit." Exploit is comparatively easy. Industry becomes synonymous with drudgery. The love of activity, i.e., the actual pleasure in the exercise of the faculties, which is the essence of the "instinct of workmanship," could scarcely be eliminated, and "leisure" is by no means incompatible with activity. But excessive activity—the prolonged and laborious

exertion required for the constant re-production of the objects of consumption—is essentially irksome and has always been avoided when possible. But these objects must be produced in order that their consumption may be enjoyed, and the only way to possess them without producing them is to make others produce them. Any power to do this is immediately exercised and as things have been constituted in the history of mankind, this has taken the form of creating a dependent industrial class and an independent leisure class. The simplest form of this was slavery, and, as the author shows, the first slaves were women; afterwards captives were made slaves; and finally all were enslaved but the few having privilege and power. Extensive modification of this normal state, of course, took place with time.

Now, the most natural thing in the world is that these two sects of persons should form two great classes totally unlike in almost every respect. The dependent class is low, debased, degraded. The independent class is high, noble, exalted. This is not merely the judgment of the higher class, but also that of the lower. It is the universally recognized relation and constitutes what is called the *regime of status*. All the occupations of the dependent class are in our author's happy phrase, "humilific," and all the occupations in which the independent class can engage must be "honorific." These occupations must not cross each other. They must be wholly different. The humilific occupations are all industrial, productive. Therefore the leisure class must pursue no industrial or productive occupations under pain of being suspected of dependence. The humilific occupations are the only ones that are "useful" in the economic sense. Therefore no member of the leisure class may do anything useful. The leisure class derive pleasure from the exercise of their faculties, but such exercise must involve no "utility," and must be characterized by "futility." There are certain directions in which the pleasures of activity may be indulged without the suspicion of dependence or necessity. Among these purely futile occupations we find war, the chase, gaming, politics, ruling, religious observances, &c. Then there are many incidental ways in which the leisure class, when in full power, are able to enjoy themselves. Thus it is said that a common amusement of the Roman nobles was to knock down a plebeian and then hand over a sesterce, which was the amount of the fine fixed by law for such offences; and the idea of "fun" that the young British gentry entertained in the sixteenth century was to disfigure the faces of the poor they met in the streets by means of a sharp pointed cane that they carried for such purposes. Everything done must be in the nature of sport, nothing must have the character of work. The surplus energy must express itself wholly in non-industrial and absolutely parasitic ways, otherwise there is a loss of caste.

The above may give some idea of the general nature of the fundamental antithesis that sprang up naturally, as shown, and has persisted even down to our own times. The distinction has been characterized as "invidious," and this word has been criticized as imputing blameworthy motives. But it is used in a literal sense, as that which has *envy* at its root, for not only does the industrial class envy the leisure class, but every member of the leisure

class is perpetually striving to gain the envy of the others of that class. Though all the members are exempt from drudgery, they are by no means all equal in their "ability to pay," and, as there is no limit to the possibility of conspicuous futile consumption, no one ever has as much as he wants in order to outdo and eclipse his rivals. There is thus brought about, not only a hierarchy of wealth, but a perpetual scramble to excel one another. Wealth becomes the basis of esteem. The standard is wholly pecuniary. Not only must wealth be possessed, but there must be a show of its possession: It must be made obvious to all that there is an inexhaustible reserve. Hence leisure must be made conspicuous by "conspicuous consumption" and "conspicuous waste." If only enough persons and the right persons could see it and know it, it would be highly honorific to light a cigar occasionally with a thousand-dollar bill. A man must not limit his consumption to himself and his family. He must live in a palace many times larger than he can possibly fill, and have a large retinue of servants and retainers, ostensibly to minister to his wants, but really to make clear his ability to pay.

From this arises the important principle of "vicarious leisure" and "vicarious consumption." Most of these servants must also be exempt from any productive work, and the women of his household must be absolutely non-productive and inactive. In the modern system of semi-industrial and quasi-predatory exploitation by the bourgeoisie the "captain of industry" must manage his business, and therefore seem to be doing something, mayhap something useful, but appearances must be kept up as in the feudal manor, and upon his wife devolves the "performance of leisure" and the display of her husband's ability to pay for useless things. He confers on her a vicarious leisure, and in dress and social appointments she is able to show his ability to consume and to waste to any required extent.

It will be seen that it is throughout the application of the fundamental maxim of "political economy"—the greatest gain for the least effort. But as effort is itself agreeable, the effort meant is only industrial, productive, useful effort. Primarily war and the chase were the principal honorific employments, growing out of the antecedent state in which both were more or less productive. War for booty gave way to war for captives, i.e., slaves to do the productive work, and ultimately the chase entirely lost its productive value and was indulged in merely for sport. Witness the contempt in our day for the poacher and the "pot-hunter." At first all exploit was predatory; it has now become what our author aptly calls "quasi-predatory." There is no more regard for real justice or right now than then, but the exploitation must conform to the laws made by the exploiting class, and so have a show of justice. The purpose is to acquire at all hazards, but it is not enough to say that this must be done irrespective of whether anything is produced or not. All acquisition must be non-productive under pain of falling out of the leisure class.

No biologist can fail to observe parallels in the organic world to many of the facts set forth in this book. Space forbids their enumeration, but one can scarcely refrain from noting among nature's many wasteful ways the

phenomena of secondary sexual characters, typified by the antlers of the stag and the gaudy tail of the peacock. These may be compared to wasteful human fashions, such as are enumerated in the chapter on "Pecuniary Canons of Taste." The principal difference is that nature, in producing these useless and cumbersome organs, has really given them a higher degree of intrinsic beauty, even as judged by human tastes, while the products of human fashion, based on the canon of "pecuniary beauty," or costliness, are useless impediments to activity without the slightest claims upon any rational standard of taste.

The author's theory of why fashions change is ingenious, and must be largely true. The ugliness caused by their superfluous cost renders them intolerable to behold for any great length of time, so that a change is demanded by the aesthetic sense even of the leisure class; but the new ones can be no better, because they, too, must have these marks of "reputable futility" and "conspicuous waste," that are necessarily offensive to taste, which is based on the instinct of workmanship. They must therefore also soon give way to others no better than they, and so on indefinitely. It is a perpetual conflict between pecuniary beauty and rational beauty, which are incompatible, but in which the former always prevails, and all the latter can do is to condemn the product and compel the victor to bring on another.

The genesis of a great number of institutions, customs, practices, and beliefs is worked out in the book, and their barbaric origin clearly shown. It would be useless to attempt their enumeration here, and only a few of the most curious can be named, such as the exemption of women from labour (vicarious leisure); inebriacy and dissipation; costly and un-aesthetic decoration; the non-punishment of crime when on a large scale; religious ceremonial evolutions recalling the terpsichorean stage or dance; the higher learning, or "classicism"; preference for inferior hand-made over machine-made goods; love of archaism in general; the respectability of conservatism; the conservatism and degeneracy of the higher institutions of learning; patriotism, duelling, snobbery; English saddles, walking sticks, athletic sports, college fraternities, the "cap and gown," &c., &c.

The author has certainly handled the English language with consummate skill, and, notwithstanding his indictment of "classicism," he displays no mean acquaintance with the classics. The book abounds in terse expressions, short antitheses, and quaint, but happy phrases. Some of these have been interpreted as irony and satire, but, as said above, this is the work of the critics themselves.

The language is plain and unmistakable, as it should be, but the style is the farthest removed possible from either advocacy or vituperation, and the language, to use the author's own words, is "morally colourless." Some of it, if it is not classical, is likely to become so. His general terminology has already been used to a considerable extent in this review, the peculiar terms and expressions being put in quotation marks. Many

others might be given if space permitted, such, for example, as "reputable wasteful expenditure," or "reputable waste," "reputable futility," and "pecuniary reputability" and he speaks of certain things that have "advantages in the way of uselessness." On the other hand, we have such expressions as "vulgarly useful occupations," "vulgar effectiveness," and the "taint of usefulness." Then we have the "predatory animus," "quasi-predatory methods," "predatory fraud," "predatory parasitism," and "parasitic predation." Many incidental expressions are noteworthy, such as the "skilled and graded inebriety and perfunctory duelling" of the German students, and his statement that the "higher learning" chiefly confers a "knowledge of the unknowable." He says that the "exaltation of the defective" and admiration for "painstaking crudeness" and "elaborate ineptitude" are characteristics of "pecuniary standards of taste." And anyone who has noted how all athletic sports degenerate and become restricted to a few professionals will appreciate his remark that "the relation of football to physical culture is much the same as that of the bull fight to agriculture."

As has already been seen, the two great social classes are characterized by an assortment of sharply contrasted words and phrases, and not only their occupations, but their underlying instincts, are clearly marked off by such expressions as the "instinct of sportsmanship" and the "instinct of workmanship"; "exploit and industry," or "exploit and drudgery"; "honorific and humilific" occupations, and "perfunctory and proficuous" activities, all forming the primary contrast between "futility and utility." In each of these pairs the first belongs to the leisure class and represents the superior fitness to survive in human society. The leisure class constitutes the biologically fittest, the socially best, the aristocracy.

Of the general make up of the book, as of all that issue from that well-known house, there is nothing to be said but praise, unless it be to note the retention of the superfluous *u* in such words as "honour," "favour," "colour," &c. To speak of our American "Labour Day" is a clear case of "archaism" and "conspicuous waste," and might be cited in defence of the main thesis of the book.

LESTER F. WARD.

We must some day, at last and for ever, cross the line between Nonsense and Common Sense; from Political Government and Industrial Administration.—THOMAS CARLYLE.

The value of criticism turns on whether the critic views the subject from the sewer, the gutter, a second-storey window, the roof of a sky-scraper, an aeroplane, or from the moon.—PHILISTINE.

Just see these superfluous ones! They steal the works of the inventors and the treasures of the wise. Culture they call their theft—and everything becometh sickness and trouble to them.

—NIETZSCHE,

The War-Song of Dinas Vawr

The mountain sheep are sweeter,
 But the valley sheep are fatter ;
 We therefore deemed it meet,
 To carry off the latter
 We made an expedition ;
 We met a host, and quelled it ;
 We forced a strong position,
 And killed the men who held it.

On Dyfed's richest valley,
 Where herds of kine were browsing,
 We made a mighty sally,
 To furnish our carousing.
 Fierce warriors rushed to meet us ;
 We met them, and o'erthrew them :
 They struggled hard to beat us ;
 But we conquered them, and slew them.

As we drove our prize at leisure,
 The king marched forth to catch us :
 His rage surpassed all measure,
 But his people could not match us.
 He fled to his hall-pillars ;
 And ere our force we led off,
 Some sacked his house and cellars,
 While others cut his head off.

We there in strife bewild'ring,
 Spilt blood enough to swim in :
 We orphaned many children,
 And widowed many women.
 The eagles and the ravens
 We glutted with our foemen ;
 The heroes and the cravens,
 The spearmen and the bowmen.

We brought away from battle,
 And much their land bemoaned them,
 Two thousand head of cattle,
 And the head of him that owned them :
 Ednyfed, king of Dyfed,
 His head was borne before us,
 His wine and beasts supplied our feasts,
 And his overthrow, our chorus.

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK.

Mark Rutherford

[Died March 14th, 1913.]

BRIEF paragraphs in the daily newspapers of March 17th announced the death of one of the most distinguished, if least notorious, of contemporary English writers. Little space could be spared to the announcement, for the obituary columns of the same day had also to chronicle the deaths of a bishop and a famous clown, while whole pages were perforce devoted to detailed accounts of the "triumphal progress" of the King and Queen from Buckingham Palace to the East End. From the standpoint of the modern newspaper, life is seen in quaint perspective.*

William Hale White, better known as "Mark Rutherford," would probably, as Mr. Massingham once observed, "have long ago had his guerdon in modern France; the literary Press would have fêted him, the Academy would have thrown its doors open to him." But it is doubtful whether in France or elsewhere "Mark Rutherford" would ever have enjoyed wide popularity. He had none of the qualities that make for huge circulations in these days of literary "booms." "He was not," to quote Mr. Massingham again, "a world-genius like Dumas or Hugo. He tilled corners of the vineyard of life; but tilled them with a care and skill not easily surpassed in modern literature."

It is hard to attempt to analyse the genius of a writer so individual, so aloof from all the literary "schools." Superficially, "Mark Rutherford's" novels remind one of George Gissing; but the likeness is only superficial. "Mark Rutherford," like Gissing, could not but see the hideousness of our modern civilisation; yet no one could have called him a pessimist. He faced life in the spirit of the Stoics. On the title-page of the *Deliverance*, he set down two quotations:—

"Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs thro' the roughest day,"

and

"Having death for my friend, I tremble not at shadows."

There is more than a little of the spirit—and even the manner—of Epictetus in such a passage as this (from the *Deliverance*):—

Cease the trick of contrast. If I can by any means get myself to consider myself alone without reference to others, discontent will vanish. I walk this Old St. Pancras Road on foot—another rides. Keep out of view him who rides and all persons riding, and I shall not complain that I tramp in the wet.

* One is glad to be able to record the fact that the *Daily Herald* found it possible to condense its report of the Royal progress into some 30 lines, and to afford space for intelligent comment on the death of "Mark Rutherford."

Or again in the following :—

Had I followed my own natural bent, I should have become expressive about what I had to endure, but I found that expression reacts on him who expresses, and intensifies what is expressed. If we break out into rhetoric over the tooth-ache, the pangs are not the easier, but the worse to the borne.

Yet if "Mark Rutherford" was a Stoic when he faced hardships for himself, he was much more warm-hearted when he thought of the hardships of others.

All the ordinary copy-book advice of moralists and poets as to the temper in which we should earn our bread is childish nonsense. If a man is a painter, or a physician, or a barrister, or even a tradesman, well and good. The maxims of authors may be of some service to him but if he is a copying clerk they are an insult, and he can do nothing but arch his back to bear his burden and find some compensation elsewhere.

That he had himself born the burden of monotonous drudgery, and could feel for his fellow-toilers, is plain from this :—

If a man wants to know what the potency of love is, he must be a menial ; he must be despised I cannot write poetry, but if I could, no theme would tempt me like that of love to such a person as I was—not love, I say again, to the hero, but love to the Helot.

When he writes of women, "Mark Rutherford" challenges comparison with Meredith. One doubts indeed whether even Meredith paid a nobler, more whole-hearted tribute to modern womanhood—to woman "in revolt"—than did his less famous contemporary. In real life, "Mark Rutherford" would seem to have been a reserved and retiring man ; yet he knew what real friendship was :—

Blessed is love, less blessed is hatred, but thrice accursed is that indifference which is neither the one nor the other—that muddied mess which men call friendship.

Which in turn reminds one of a significant beatitude of his—
"Blessed are they who heal us of self-despisings !"

"Mark Rutherford's" was not a gigantic literary output ; half-a-dozen novels, a few essays, and one or two critical biographies, make up his total contribution to English literature. Yet it is a significant contribution. And not to know "Mark Rutherford" is to have missed contact with a very fine and inspiring personality.

J. F. HORRABIN.

Just see these superfluous ones ! Sick are they always ; they vomit their bile and call it a newspaper. They devour one another, and cannot even digest themselves.—NIETZSCHE.

Spargo Spanked

[The Book Review of the Stuttgart *Neue Zeit* of December 13, 1912, has the below article by Franz Mehring, commenting on John Spargo's book: *Karl Marx: His Life and Work.*]

THIS work of an American Socialist appeared some years ago in the English language, but has been ignored by the German party press for the simple reason that it presents a worthless compilation from a mass of preponderating German writings.

This holding back is explained by a regard for the most likely good intentions of a foreign comrade, but was probably out of place, as now unfortunately a creditable publisher has been caught by the insufficient work. He apparently realizes that himself; in an introduction to the German edition he says: "The matters of fact in the work were all, so far as possible, verified, and a number of errors and misunderstandings of the American author were corrected." But his work of purifying was extended only to the most humorous blunders. In the English original, it is said, for instance, that "Rudolf Erbrecht" was a teacher of Marx; Spargo happened to read in my Marx's posthumous edition that Marx studied "Erbrecht" (inheritance right) under Rudorff. This "Erbrecht" the publisher now corrects, but the "Rudolf" he retains, though he could have found the right name in my text.

But as now the book has been translated into German, it becomes a duty of the German Party Press to express its opinion, be it only to prevent working men's libraries from throwing away their good money on this "first Marx biography." Spargo himself cannot complain, because he himself is rather blunt in making negative compliments to German authors from whom he cribs. He does that in two ways, in which I wish to cite Liebknecht and my humble self as types. Regarding Liebknecht's writings on Marx, Spargo, in the introduction to his own work says, it is "sadly inaccurate in details, and almost trivial when considered as an account of the man and his work." We may leave aside the injustice of this verdict; the "inaccuracies" of Liebknecht are due to the fact that his presentation portrays with a kind of artistic freedom a picture of Marx, which, in every feature may also betray the hand of Liebknecht, and for that very reason be anything but "trivial."

But then, no doubt, Liebknecht is compensated because of Spargo's copying many of his "inaccuracies" literally.

I am treated the opposite. I receive a word of praise in the introduction, but in return for that Spargo copies me with grievous inaccuracy. Where I analyse Marx's doctor's essay, and conclude

from my analysis that Marx, after the Communist Manifesto HARDLY thought any more of publishing the works of his youth, Spargo writes, in total ignorance of all analysis, NO DOUBT, after the Communist Manifesto, Marx thought of publishing it. Or when I say that Marx, on April 15th, 1841, at Jena, had a degree conferred upon him in his absence, Spargo says, "On the 15th of April Marx was in Jena and received his diploma as doctor of philosophy. Thus the first part of his ambitious programme was realized." That sounds no doubt, more erudite than my, to be sure, correct, but highly "trivial" observation that Marx obtained his Jena degree "in absentia."

To that he was impetuously roused by Bruno Bauer, who, on April 12, 1841, wrote Marx: "Is it still possible for you to leave Berlin this month? Do all you can to make it possible. You thereby seclude yourself, set your bride at ease, arrive at an understanding with your folks, and you can still lecture in Bonn. Edgar will certainly do everything. Give him the manuscript of your immortal work; let him attend to the printing and corrections, and the sending of the things to Jena, so that the diploma may be sent you from there to Bonn or to Trier, or Edgar may receive it in Berlin and then send it to where you will. You needn't wait for these matters in Berlin." I quote these sentences in my posthumous edition to show how anxious the ten-year older Bruno Bauer,—whose standing in the world of science was recognized—was to have young Marx at his side in Bonn. Whether or not Edgar Bauer had done the small favours at Marx's promotion appeared to me to be no world-historic matter. But no! says Spargo, the protest against this proposition—a protest that no one knows anything of—shows Marx in all his greatness.

Based on these few lines, which he copies literally from my posthumous edition, Spargo asserts that Bruno Bauer "had always in mind the plan" that Marx should secure for himself the influence of Edgar von Westphalen. "True," says Spargo, "he might perhaps enlist the powerful support of Jenny's brother, Edgar von Westphalen, who had always been friendly to him, but he could not bring himself to seek that, regarding it as a great humiliation. . . . Bauer urged the enlistment of Edgar von Westphalen's powerful influence, but Marx was obdurate, rejecting the proposal with all the scorn of his youthful, independent spirit." All that phantasy Spargo extracts from Bruno Bauer's lines of April 12.

He shows thereby how "trivial" facts must be historically estimated. There exists, indeed, the "trivial" fact that not only did Bruno Bauer have a brother whose name was Edgar, but also that Marx had a brother-in-law of the same name, and the further possible "trivial" fact that Marx had not only one, but rather two brothers-in-law, besides Edgar, also Ferdinand von Westphalen. Edgar was a loyal friend and comrade-at-arms of his brother-in-law Marx, but also like

him, a poor devil, who never had a "powerful influence" with the German government and universities. Ferdinand, for the rest, only a many-years older half-brother of Frau Marx, was never a friend of his brother-in-law, although Spargo in another part of his work solemnly assures us so; he was, at the time of Marx's graduation first Government Councillor at Trier, that is, likewise no man of "great influence"; later he became, as is well known, the most reactionary member of the reactionary ministry of Manteuffel, but according to Spargo he remained an intimate of Karl Marx.

Space forbids the citing of more examples of the glaring confusions which Spargo's book shows on almost every page. It is also superfluous to underscore particularly the fact that if he fails to appreciate properly the most simple facts, he goes completely to pieces when he attempts to make clear Marx's development scientific-ward. There he remains stuck in superficial phrases. Thus, for instance, regarding the break between Ruge and Marx he writes, "It is perhaps enough to say that Ruge was petty and irascible, and that Marx was imperious and tempestuous." . . .

It is surely no pleasant task to pass so disapproving a verdict upon the book of a comrade. But an indulgent silence must come to an end after Spargo has "authorized" a German edition of this book. We should lose all right to place bourgeois literature on Marx under our lens as critically as we are accustomed to, if we should not just as sharply criticize such things as this so-called biography.

And this is not even our foremost reason. Not consideration for the opponent, but consideration for our own party, demands that such things be disavowed. From Liebknecht's work, which Spargo views with such condescension, he could at least have learned that such bungling and patchwork that has Marx as its object, is an insulting disregard of international Socialism.

Weekly People, NEW YORK.

We have a few sets left of the plaster-cast busts, 6½ inches high, of Dennis Hird, Darwin, Huxley, Spencer and Ruskin—to clear stock we will supply them at 1/2 each, or 5/- the set, carriage paid. Address:—

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

The Unfair Sex

BEFORE me lies a small book, written twenty years ago and published in the Land of the Free. It is called *The Rights of Women*, and its author is Karl Heinzen, a worthy German who, to quote from the preface, "having broken his fetters in despotic Europe," (whatever that may mean), settled in America, there to pen this "Address to an unknown lady reader."

It is strange, but nevertheless true, that books written about the rights of women are generally concerned with the wrongs of women—"women and whine" as the wag remarked,—and this little volume is no exception. The women Heinzen wrote for were "ladies," whom he calls "fair readers," but for all his bed-side manner there are thoughts in his book that must have caused his fair readers to swoon. We have advanced a little during the last twenty years, but to call a parson "a pestilent propagator of ignorance" would even now merit at least a column in the *Daily Express*. It is terrible to try to think what must have happened twenty years ago. There is no record of it, but one feels sure that this book must have created a sensation.

The fair readers must have been quite thrilled, also, to know that "their tender hands were a thousand-fold able to interfere in the course of events and the actions of men." Can it be possible—that it is pondering on such a thought as this that has changed Heinzen's fair readers into the "unsexed viragoes" of the Tory Press?

There ought to be a reprint of this volume; it would sell like hot cakes, for it upholds two theories which are cherished to-day, nearly as much as they were twenty years ago:—The Theory of the Wicked Depravity of Man" and "The Theory of the Sweet Submissiveness of Woman."

The way men cling to this idea of their own terrible wickedness is really quite pathetic. The mildest of them longs to have had a "past," or strives to get the reputation of a past. They do not like it to be discovered that they have taught in Sunday schools in their youth. They love to chant drinking songs, though their beverage is invariably cocoa. They hate to think that they ever signed the pledge. No! they were "gay dogs" or "Don Juans."

Every man loves to think himself a bit of a devil.

The author of this book is obsessed by this idea. He declares that "if every man were to write a 'Rousseauian' confession concerning his life, the greater part of women would be driven to despair or turn away in disgust." How it must have fluttered the hearts of those fair readers of his—and how terrible must have been their disappointment when they got to know the facts!

Women have been and are the mothers of men, as well as their sisters and their sweethearts. It is the mother in woman that turns away to hide a smile when men boast of their wickedness. It had been found by many women long before Shaw pointed it out, that it

was possible to carry chocolate creams in a cartridge belt! Women have discovered that all this show of wickedness was only to awe them into submission. They have now found out that life is too short to waste time getting excited over men's wrong doings, which at worst were foolish and rather nasty. The remnants of the tradition still linger, however, and it is interesting to read an author who is a true believer in the theory.

The other idea "The Theory of the Sweet Submissiveness of Women" is much more deadly, and can be seen in full bloom at the present time, though happily there are signs of its passing. It is this theory that is responsible for more than half the wrongs inflicted on women. Girls were and still are trained to put on this "sweet submissiveness" to hide their courage, their "cattiness," their cowardice, or their cunning. This theory makes good women liars, and brave women hypocrites. It has clogged the wheels of progress like some sort of thick treacle. Women find themselves unconsciously trying to please, when all the time they are longing to fight. There is only one thing to be said in its favour, and that is this—it is harder to live up to, than the theory of man's wickedness. It is comparatively easy to pretend to be wicked, but it is almost impossible to pretend to be good. Individual men have found it to be a fallacy. We are told that man worships in order that he may understand—perhaps we may hope that some day it will dawn on the entire sex that women are not "sweet" and good and beautiful, any more than men are nasty and bad and ugly, but that we are all human beings possessing all these qualities in varying degrees.

The militant women have smashed more than windows with their hammers. Is it too much to hope that the tradition of women's general submissiveness will vanish in the smoke from the burning railway stations?

It is twenty years since Heinzen wrote—perhaps if he had lived to-day he would have modified his views on the sweet, trustful, and clinging nature of women. Some measure of the truth was vouchsafed to him, as the following quotations will show:—

"Anarchy in its bad sense is barbarism, and in its good sense an impossibility." "A great part of that which hitherto has passed as 'manly' is nothing more than barbarity."

"For those who do not love each other the family has lost all value and all moral import."

There is just one quotation the author gives which is strongly to be recommended:—

Cato the elder said, "If every head of a family would strive to keep his wife in thorough subjection, according to the example of his forefathers; we should have less trouble, *publicly*, with the entire sex." It is that word 'publicly' that gives one so furiously to think. It may be that in that sentence is to be found, both the origin and the solution of the Woman Question!—WINIFRED HORRABIN.

C.L.C. Classes Reports

MANCHESTER

Industrial History Class.—The first of our classes, numbering twenty lectures, has finished, and the nature of the subject matter can be gauged by the fact that the comrades in Manchester will, by the time this is in print, have arranged to have the lecturer to ourselves for the season 1913—14. To express the idea of the students by saying the lectures were grand would be paying slight tribute to them. The readers of "Plebs" can appreciate my meaning when they realize that the students had very (?) often been victims attending all kinds of lectures (?) but none came up to those of the C.L.C. Even to those of us who thought we knew something, several of the lectures stood out prominently, viz., Rise of Woollen Trade; Expansion of Commerce; The Reformation; Trade Unionism; and last but not least, when Charles I (not Gibbons) lost his head.

However, to summarize all the features would require a larger sheet than your already small one, and I might conclude by a word for C. L. Gibbons who conducted the classes admirably. The language expressed was simple, yet fully explanatory of his meaning, the subject matter was the result of systematic collateration, and its presentation in relation to each other as parts of a whole and at the same time as parts which can be explained *severally* as self-contained. Gibbons was a treat, and when we have our Districts at Middleton, South West Manchester, Openshaw, Stockport, South Salford, &c., the students who gather there will verify the the remarks laid down by W. SMITH.

NORTH EAST LANCASHIRE AREA

March 24th, 1913.—In forwarding you my report for the above area, I am pleased to say that the spirit in which the classes started has been maintained throughout the Course. In fact the closing night at several of the classes, was the time for general speech-making, and from the enthusiasm displayed we are in for a more successful winter next year. As regards the finance, every class seems to have come out on the right side which speaks well for the first session. We have made arrangements for the summer in the shape of rambles for the purpose of keeping the respective classes in touch with one another; each class being responsible for a ramble and the others to co-operate.

Rambles as follows.

| | | |
|------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1st. | Arranged by the Nelson Class | May 11th, to Hurstwood. |
| 2nd. | Accrington | June 8th, to Rochester Clarion House. |
| 3rd. | Colne | July 13th, to Downham. |
| 4th. | Burnley | Aug. 10th, to Hardcastle Craggs. |
| 5th. | Padeham | Sept. 14th. to Hodder Woods. |

We have also arranged a list of speeches from the students of the various classes, who are prepared to do propaganda work during the summer months for the Socialist and Labour organizations in North E. Lancs. and so spread the work of the C.L.C. movement. I have written to the Blackburn A.S.R.S. re Tutorial classes and prospects seem very bright.

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