

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

GOETHE

THE
"Plebs" Magazine

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The "Plebs" 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 Sixth Annual Meet will be held in London (Bank Holiday), August, 1914**

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

(Continued from last month)

ALTHOUGH the wives of the bourgeoisie do not suffer like the women of the working class, in so far as the former are removed from the danger of want while the latter live continually under the shadow, the women of the ruling class nevertheless do not escape from many of the degrading effects of capitalist property. Precisely because they are women of the proprietary class, do economic considerations assert themselves most

**An Enemy
in the
Enemies' Camp** keenly in their marriage and family relations. Because they are removed from poverty only through economic dependence upon property-owning men, they are the more susceptible to man-rule. Notwithstanding the pompous paper declaration of bourgeois society, of the voluntary and free agreement of husband and wife, in no class is free selection in marriage more conspicuous by its absence than in the ranks of the ruling class itself. The great majority of bourgeois-proclaimed rights have remained special privileges for the property-owning class. But in the case of marriage, this right can become the rule only among the unprivileged proletariat, and for this reason, that in this strata of society, *property is missing*. We have already seen how the subjection of women arose from the birth and growth of private property. The need to protect and control property called forth the rule of the male as it is expressed in our one-sided monogamy. Where there is no property to hand down to heirs, where there is no prospect of rising to social eminence, where there is in short, “nothing to lose but your chains,” there, is the need for male rule absent. True is it that among the working class the breed of the boss is by no means extinct. We have already shown why; and also how in the proletarian home where the woman is a wage-earner, the rule of the male loses all meaning. Among the women of the propertied strata of

society, the rule of the male has its full meaning. There, the inequalities stand out most sharply and appear in the form of legal and political inequalities. It is because of this, at first sight, curious and certainly ironical difference between the women of the ruling class and the women of the working class, that the modern Woman's movement arises, not among the proletariat, but among the women of the classes above it. It is not at all strange that among the clamourers for Women's Rights, there should be numbered so many women from the camp of the propertied. Neither is it a matter for surprise that this movement should plant itself upon the belief that legal and political inequalities constitute the cause of their subjection, and that they should therefore address themselves to the conquest of freedom through the demand for certain political and legal changes.



THE political conception of society i.e. the view that places the foundations of social life in forms of state, that looks upon the latter as the author and supporter of the social order, is an illusion that rests upon taking the outward appearance for the inward and hidden reality. It is especially an illusion cherished by the ruling class, for the

As to Politics very practical reason that the state constitutes the shield and buckler for the defence of their interests against the rest of society. In this conception, the state appears as having existed from the very beginning of evolution, and will continue to the end, in accordance with reason and morality. But whose reason and whose morality? The reason and morality of no abstract man but of *a man of property!* From our viewpoint, the forms of the state are reducible to forms of property, and politics to the art of organizing forces for the favourable accumulation and protection of property. Forms of property find their genesis in relations of production, bourgeois property in the relations of producers of commodities. Finally, relations of production have always a correspondence with the definite stages in the development of the productive forces. If since civilization was ushered in, the State has always existed in some form or another, according to the form of property, this is nothing mystical or perplexing when we have understood that productive development which underlies all forms of property, and law, and politics, has so far only taken place through antagonisms of classes. For it is precisely those antagonisms or antitheses which form the necessity for the State's existence. The modern antitheses is that between *living labour*, personified in the class of wage-labourers, and *accumulated labour*, as personified in the class of capitalists. In the course of capitalist development through the growth of the productive agencies, accumulated labour increases at the expense of living labour. In other words, a larger mass of capital is reproduced progressively by a relatively smaller quantity of labour. The effect of this development is to progressively heighten the antagonism between the propertied

exploiters and the propertiless exploited, to raise an ever growing resistance on the part of the latter against the existing order of property, and therefore against the legal and political forms which favourably represent the maintenance of that order. This growing struggle between the working class and the class of capitalist proprietors, is at bottom, nothing but the growing rebellion of the productive forces against the capitalist form of production. The working class is, to speak in the language of our Historical Materialism, the appropriate mental instrument of this material development. As this development is antagonistic to the form of production, and therefore to capitalist property, the capitalist representatives are on the other hand unfitted to mentally penetrate to the hidden causes of the increasing industrial unrest. They either put the latter down to subjective cause, e.g., the demoniacal possession of some agitators, or where they do turn to industrial conditions to look for causes, such as increased cost of living, they conclude that such causes may be eliminated by a series of shrewd legislative enactments.

The more they tinker at the body social with their benevolent legislation, the more inadequate their legislation appears as a means of arresting friction, the more visible is their incompetency at the helm of history made manifest. Indeed so far from reducing friction, this legislation increases it, as witness the effects of Labour Exchange and Insurance Acts. At the same time internal differences assert themselves in the ranks of the bourgeoisie and add to the friction and confusion. The distinctions between Liberal and Conservative become less and less nominal as hitherto and become increasingly real differences. The larger capitalist elements cleave to the policy of Conservatism. The middle and smaller capitalist are collected together at the other pole of Liberalism. The latter party find themselves in ever greater need for something to lean on. It is they who are most anxious to prescribe for the diseases to which the working class is heir, so that it may the more firmly, with working class support, resist the encroachments of its big brother. The attitude of the Liberal Party toward the Labour Party is well known to readers of these pages. The Labour Party's defence of their bourgeois proclivities, viz. that there is a difference between Tory and Liberal camps and that as a minority in Parliament it must be prepared to take advantage of those differences, is quite true. But in practice, to take advantage of the differences between those two parties, the Labour Party must itself be an independent third party. That is just the condition that the Labour Party has not fulfilled. Hence their false opportunism and consequent failures. Such failures, however, in our view, so far from pointing to the withdrawal of the working class from participation in Parliamentary activity, point rather to the need for more effective and extensive action upon this field. What the Labour Party have failed to do only serves to show not that nothing can be done, but *what can be done* in the way of giving effective political aid to the struggle on the industrial battle-

field. The State is a public power owned and used for the defence of the interests of private property. The adoption of the new method of industrial organization by which the fighting area is enlarged will have the very revolutionizing effect upon politics of making more and more clearly necessary the conquest of this public power. Just as the recent political history has shown us the weakness in the industrial organization, so will the new industrial experience render more imperative participation in Parliamentary activity. Industrial conditions are necessary for political success. Political conditions are also necessary for industrial success. Just as practice makes perfect in industrial activity, so also in the activity of politics. Just as the extension of the field of battle in industrial warfare is progressive, so the extension of political activity makes in the same direction. Universal Suffrage which is the highest form of the State, offers the best and most effective aid to the conduct of the industrial warfare. It is because the Woman's Suffrage Movement makes for this political maturity, that it is to be regarded from a working-class point of view, as a step towards the goal of emancipation of both sexes.



THE Suffrage movement as we have already indicated, arose not among women of the proletariat but among women in the layers above. It starts out quite unconscious of the real root of the evil it has set itself to remove. It so little recognizes that private property is the source of subjection, that it imagines it can correct the ills it seeks to efface, on the basis of that which makes them bear those ills. It asks for votes on the basis of property. It is just this feature that has called forth the opposition of certain sections of the Labour Movement who denounce the demand as reactionary i.e. that it would prolong the existence of capitalism. There might be something in that claim if the mere admission of women of the propertied class to the franchise, would at once secure their freedom. No doubt many of those propertied women imagine that would be the result. They would speedily be disillusioned, and so far from being anxious to prevent any further extension of the franchise to other women, they would discover that any effective use of the power they possessed would only result from promoting extension. As a matter of fact the movement has not had to wait to realize this essential. It has already felt in the course of its propaganda that its limited basis was too narrow to be effective. To-day, the most militant of the Suffrage organizations—the W.S.P.U.—has declared itself for adult suffrage. As a consequence of this development, what originated as a movement of middle class women, becomes more and more proletarianized. So far from the Labour Movement either opposing this development or ignoring it, its highest interests lie in actively encouraging it. Nothing can be more absurd—for those who believe in political action—than the attitude

taken up by those who will have nothing to do with the Suffrage agitation because it is in the hands of middle-class women. It is quite as absurd as the position occupied by the man who refuses to have anything to do with a trade union because it is captured by the leaders. In the course of a very interesting discussion running through the pages of the Socialist, (the organ of the S.L.P.) as to whether or not the S.L.P. should actively support this Woman's Movement, Mr. J. Carstairs Matheson, in reply to a critic who apparently values generalizations more than votes, make the following excellent point:—

Just to the extent that the Socialist Movement is composed of men who are voteless and divorced from the political electoral struggles of the working class and who refuse to agitate for the vote, just to that extent it is a collection of irresponsible theory spinning doctrinaires without influence in the working class and absorbed in everlasting internal squabbles and discussions. No party has suffered more from the doctrinaire chinwagger than the S.L.P. That is why it is so necessary for us, as a political party, to get rid of him; and electoral work is the surest corrective. If the Socialist Movement is to be a debating club "which particularly appeals to and attracts young men who are voteless" and *who acquiesce in their disfranchisement*, Heaven help the Socialist Movement.

A favourite argument which comes from the anti-political quarter against supporting Votes for Women is the one based on the analogy of the use of voting by the working man. The men have gained nothing by the vote—which is untrue—and therefore the women can gain nothing through the same agency. It would be just as logical to argue that because two men cannot separately achieve a certain task, therefore two men acting together cannot achieve it. Of the same species of fallacy is the argument that just as the workers were betrayed under the Reform Act of 1832 by the middle class, in the same way the middle class will sell the working woman when it comes to a question of the granting of the franchise. That might be true, if the social conditions of 1913 were the same as those of 1832. According to that type of argument, the Labour Movement had as well give up the ghost. But the analogy, between the wage labouring males and capitalist manufacturers of the fourth and fifth decades of the last century, and the working women and middle class women of the modern Woman's Movement, is quite false. Women as a whole suffer as a class. That is not true of wage labourers and capitalists. The wife of a capitalist is not exempt from the subjugating effects of private property any more than is the wife of the wage-labourer. Every step taken by women of whatever social strata along the road of emancipation is in opposition to private property. The best proof of what we are here stating is to be found in the attitude of a capitalist government towards the Votes for Women movement. And yet in the face of that attitude there are still people to be found who can see only in this movement, a putting back of the clock, a prolonging of the existence of private property.

If the Labour Movement is convinced that the emancipation of society, involves the emancipation of women, if it realizes that this requires the co-operation of both sexes, then it will not hesitate to help to place her on the plane of political activity. To-day the industrial organization of women wage-earners is weak and unstable. In that degree it weakens the industrial power of men. Nothing will do more to strengthen women as fighters on the industrial battlefield than participation in political activity. Nothing will strengthen the cause of both men and women more than the growth of their co-operation, in combating the present social system, which is the source of the Labour Question and of the Woman Question. Extension of the Franchise to adult Women and Men is a necessary step for this wider co-operation.

We had hoped to find space to discuss the militant tactics of the W.S.P.U. but this must stand over till a later number.

W.W.C.

A New C.L.C. Venture

THE work of the Central Labour College has, until recently, been carried on through three departments :

- 1.—Training of Students in Residence.
- 2.—Training of Students by Correspondence.
- 3.—Training of Students through Provincial Classes.

Quite recently a demand has arisen which can only be met by a system of training intermediary between the Correspondence Department and the Provincial Classes. Many people find that the mere study of the text-book does not provide them with sufficient clearness of detail, for essay-writing. Above all, in the absence of independent text-books, we are compelled to select from the more or less capitalistic material at hand, notably in Industrial History. As a consequence the text-book, instead of clarifying, too frequently confuses the understanding. We have to rely upon our comments on the essay of the corresponding student for a rectification of the shortcomings of the text-book. The provincial classes very largely overcome those limitations, but as this system is financially practicable only where a number of classes are situated within a short distance of each other, single and isolated classes, because they cannot bear the expense involved in direct personal tuition, fall outside its scope. The College has therefore sought to surmount those difficulties and obstacles by organizing a new department of class tuition. This department is designated

Lectures-by-Post Department

Procedure.—A course of lectures is prepared at the College by the lecturer in residence, and who has charge of that particular subject. The lectures are type-written and despatched once a fortnight, or once a month, as may be arranged, to the secretary of the class. The lecture is then delivered by some member appointed for that purpose by the class. After the lecture, discussion follows, and questions are submitted. The questions must be sent immediately after the adjournment of the class, and those form the subject matter for study at their next meeting. If the class therefore decides to meet fortnightly, this will mean one lecture per month. All lectures must be returned to the College Secretary within four days after the class meeting which deals with the answers to questions arising out of that lecture. Answers to questions can be retained by the class.

How Formed.—Classes may be formed under the auspices of a Trade Union, Co-operative, or Socialist branch, or by a Trades Council, or by a group of individuals, independent of any of the aforementioned bodies.

Cost.—The total cost of a course of twelve lectures, including answers to questions, is £6. In no case can the course be undertaken on the basis of lectures only. Fees are payable in advance either for the whole course, or for a single lecture.

Classes Formed.—The classes already organized under this department are Wolverhampton N.U.R., Shrewsbury N.U.R. and Wellington N.U.R. Other classes are under process of formation.

Industrial History Course.—So far only one course has been prepared. It is hoped that other courses may be arranged shortly. The course of twelve lectures now in operation deals with

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

LECTURE I. *Introduction to the Study of Industrial History* :—This lecture deals in the first place with the nature of theory in general, and then takes up the various theories that have been and are held, with regard to what constitutes the prime moving force of historical development :—the Theistic theory ; the Great Man theory ; the Political, Juridical, Ethical, and Religious-idealist-theories. Finally, the scientific theory of Historical Materialism is stated and its superiority over the other methods is shown.

LECTURE II. *Introduction to the Study of the Industrial History of England* :—The factors of the Labour process in general are here considered, and thereafter the primitive forms of that process, and of the human associations engaged therein ; References are made to

the sciences which help us to understand the conditions of peoples living in savagery and barbarism. The lecture closes with an examination of the prehistoric period in England.

LECTURE III. *Anglo-Saxon Feudalism* :—The lecture opens with a consideration of the effects of the Roman occupancy upon the Britons, the causes of the Roman withdrawal from the island, and the coming of the Angles and Saxons. The agrarian system of the invaders is then examined, and its transformation from the communal into the feudal form of organization sketched in broad outline. This is followed by a brief survey of the rise and development of the Church and of its place and power in the feudal system.

LECTURE IV. *Norman Feudalism* :—The migrations of the Northmen are first dealt with and their influence upon Western European development shown. The lecture deals in the second instance with the coming of William and his Normans to England in 1066, and with the changes that were taking place in feudal relations during the following two centuries. Those changes are traced to the rise of commerce, and the growth of towns.

LECTURE V. *The Passing of Feudalism* :—In this lecture, the dissolving effects of trade and money upon feudalism, is further discussed. The Black Death and the Peasants Revolt are dealt with, as is also the attempt to over-ride the effect of the scarcity of labour through the fixing of wages by Statute. The effect of the opening up of the Western hemisphere, and the discovery of a new sea passage to the Indies, is noted in relation to the growth of commerce and the mercantile class. The lecture concludes with an examination of the functions of the craft guilds and their relation to Trade Union organization.

LECTURE VI. *Economic Conditions of the sixteenth century*.—The lecture opens with a survey of the changes taking place at the close of the fifteenth century, of the new needs that had arisen, and of the hopelessness of the old institutions to promote their satisfaction. Attention is paid to the growing inadequacy of the old method of production and to the end of the guild's sphere of usefulness. The chase after the newly discovered lands by the nations of Western Europe is described and the commercial character of the consequent European wars shown. Lastly, the source of the accumulations which were latterly converted into industrial capital is investigated, as well as the forcible processes which laid the foundation of the Labour market.

LECTURE VII. *The Rise of the Capitalist mode of Production* :—Here is shown the general way in which Capitalism began and how it led the way to the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century,

through the development of the division of labour in the workshop. The growth of Trade Union Organization at the close of this first phase of capitalist production is briefly sketched. Finally, the political and religious, as well as moral changes are noted in relation to the rise of the new economic system.

LECTURE VIII. *The Industrial Revolution* :—This lecture deals with the introduction of machinery into one branch of production after another and with the uprooting of all the old methods of production. The conditions of the working class as a result of this revolution are discussed at length.

LECTURE IX. *Trade Unionism in the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century* :—The conditions under which Trade Unions arise are first of all considered. The difference between the craft guilds and trade unions emphasized. The development of legislation against combination, and the causes of the same, are here outlined. The forces that made for the repeal of the Combination Laws, examined.

LECTURE X. *The Struggles of the Capitalist class for Political power* :—This lecture shows in the first place, how the needs of the rising capitalist class made necessary the removal of the old political and legal forms of the feudal order, how it fought and compromised with the old aristocracy, and how it had to appeal to the working class in order to carry through its programme. The Anti-Corn Law and Chartist Movements are considered. Finally, the reasons for the failure of Chartism are dealt with.

LECTURE XI. *The Rise of Scientific Socialism* :—The starting point of this theory is dealt with and found in Hegelian philosophy on the theoretical side, and the French Revolution on the social side. The contradictions in the Hegelian philosophy explained through a description of the intellectual development of Marx and Engels. Attention is paid to some of the Socialist critics of Marx. A brief sketch of the practical work accomplished by Marx and Engels, is made in this lecture which closes with a summary of the main points of Historical Materialism.

LECTURE XII. *The Logic of the Machine* :—This concluding lecture of the course deals chiefly with the development of manufacture on a large scale, its effects upon capital and upon wage-labour. Special reference is made to the crisis in Craft Unionism and the development of new principles of organization and tactics. The lecture concludes with an epitome of the general development of Society from the breakdown of primitive communism to the breakdown of modern capitalism.

All enquiries respecting this work should be made to the Secretary of the College, 13, Penywern Road, Earls Court, London, S.W.

W.W.C.

The Materialist Conception of History

(Continued from last Month)

[*Foreword.*—We have "lifted" the following article from the *New York Weekly People*. We have no scruples in doing so because the aim of that journal is not commercial but educational. They, like we, desire to popularize the only really explanatory social science of the age. The article has been translated by C. H. Seaholm from the Scandinavian of Gustav Bang.]

II—The Problem to be Solved

AMONG the factors which at any given period determine man's actions, there are two that are constant: Man and Nature. Man has hardly, in historic times, changed in any special degree; modern man surely possesses, in all essentials, the same mental qualities, the same propensities and inclinations, the same capacity to conceive and reason as did his ancestors of thousands of years back. It is not man himself that has changed but the quintessence of life he has received from without, though not what he has received directly from nature. The environments which are of nature, among which man lives, have of themselves changed but imperceptibly in the course of thousands of years, at least in most quarters of the globe. Climate and the fertility of the soil are, on the whole, of the same quality as in the earliest historic times, and the changes which have taken place have nearly all flown from man's intervention and are thus not of nature but of a social character. These two forces in concert are capable of making plain why there is a difference in thought and action among people of different races or among people living under dissimilar conditions of nature, for instance, among Danes and Italians; but they do not explain why people in Denmark to-day think and deport themselves quite differently than they did at the time of Holberg, or differently in Italy to-day than they did at the time when Christ was born. In order to explain these historic mutations—and that is the problem to be solved—there is required a third factor, a transitional, in itself changing force.

We have employed the expression "the social conditions" in speaking of the source from which flow the modes of thought and action belonging particularly to different ages and different classes, and from which, as a matter of course, all historic changes also originate. But, naturally, such an expression gives no answer to the question which is to be solved. How did these social conditions themselves arrive and what is the force that constantly changes, reconstructs and evolves them and with that gives the impulse to all revolutions in the social and the historical life? Contemplating that

the working class now organizes itself for the purpose of bringing into being a Socialist system of society, that the bourgeoisie a hundred and fifty years ago demanded a series of reforms and that these were enacted by the aid of an enlightened absolutism, that the bourgeoisie and peasantry four hundred years ago overthrew the Catholic and substituted the Lutheran Church, that the colonial wars of to-day are of another nature than those of two or three hundred years back, that medieval scholasticism concerned itself with problems quite different from those with which modern science occupies itself,—contemplating these phenomena, one easily understands them all by taking into consideration the particular conditions pertaining to different ages, but, one is compelled to ask himself what force it is that continually reconstructs the entirety of the social conditions under which men live. Here one stands before the big, unknown factor, which, in the last instance, determines the process of historical evolution, a factor the ascertainment of which is essential.

Here as elsewhere outside of the exact, strictly mathematical sciences, one cannot beforehand attain an absolutely incontestable knowledge of the same kind as the certainty that two plus two equal four. One must rest content with a hypothesis, a scientific supposition which at first is only more or less plausible but whose soundness can gradually be established by putting it to proof on existing facts, and it then is shown that throughout it gives a satisfactory explanation of the problems that arise, and that the premises from which it proceeds are found to hold good in every part.

The materialist conception of history, as first set forth by Karl Marx, is such a hypothesis, the reliability of which year by year has become ever more indisputable because it gives the only natural, the only, to the human mind, fully satisfactory explanation of the relation between things and events in historical evolution.

It regards the material conditions of production as the fountain-head of all changes in the social life. The way in which men carry on the production of the necessaries of life constitutes the groundwork on which arise the dominant social conditions of any given period. In conformity with the stage of development of the technique of production, the distribution of property and the entire economic order fashion themselves; by it are determined the class antagonisms, the dissensions between society's different strata, the political institutions, the canons of jurisprudence; hereby, in turn, man's thought is prevailed upon in certain definite directions, his mental life is given new contents, man embraces new ideas. The sum total of these circumstances makes up the social conditions prevailing in any particular age. And as the mode of production constantly changes, in the same proportion that man struggles ahead towards new methods, better adapted to serve his purposes, all these social conditions are affected. There arises a relationship of antagonism between the institutions and ways of thinking that have been inherited from an

earlier time, on the one hand, and the new forces which the subsequent technique of production has brought into being, on the other; this antagonism grows uninterrupted till it reaches such a tension that a revolutionary catastrophe takes place which tears up by the roots the old social relations and brings into existence a new social order, adapted to the new forces that have been evolved.

This is the kernel of the materialist conception of history whose reach and theoretical soundness we shall next put to test.

III—The Reformation

The transition from the Middle Ages to modern times is marked by a series of momentous political and spiritual changes which in their ramifications reach deep into all social life, upset the conditions, usages and concepts inherited from preceding generations, create an entirely new system of reasoning and make that period one of the most interesting in all European history.

Prior to and side by side with these political and spiritual changes in the social life occurred a series of inventions and discoveries which in their respective fields led to thorough-going changes in the purely material production. The mariner's compass, gunpowder, and the art of printing were invented; the technique of ship-building and mining was intensely developed; the sea passage to India was found, America emerged from out the mists of the great deep; from the Arabs was acquired a mass of knowledge of mathematics, mechanics and chemistry, of which great practical use was made.

In reference to all these steps forward the rule holds good that they did not come about accidentally; they materialized because there was a social want of them, a want that had gradually become so urgent that it required to be satisfied. It is characteristic of these improvements that either they cannot be traced back to any individual or else the individual person who perfected them but took advantage of and brought to a close the efforts of his predecessors. No one can with certainty say who invented gunpowder or the mariner's compass; the art of printing did not of a sudden spring forth from the intellect of a man of genius: it developed slowly and was finally perfected through Gutenberg's invention of movable types; even the merest glance at the history of the discoveries in the realm of geography shows what a slow process had been gone through and how many men's attempts were necessary before the turning point was reached near about the end of the fifteenth century. The problems "were floating in the air"; a social need demanded that they be solved and stimulated man's interest and efforts till the result was obtained. In all probability a good deal of the intelligent grasp of things that mankind acquired toward the close of the Middle Ages, individual men way back in earlier periods had a prescience of, but the conditions at that time were not mature for its application.

It is a known fact that Northern Vikings already in the early part of the Middle Ages reached the coast of North America, but their knowledge of the existence of this new continent, at that period, perforce had to remain unfruitful. Such is also the case in regard to the ideas at bottom of a number of the greatest, most epoch-making inventions of modern times, the steam engine, for instance. There was no use for it in remote times, consequently the idea was never carried into execution. Only when the technique of production has advanced to the stage where it can take a new invention into its system and service for the furtherance of evolution itself does such an invention or discovery leave the laboratory or study-chamber and step into real life.

In such manner each specific advance in the material technique of production is determined by the stage of development at which that very technique, as a whole, is found. It will be accepted and acknowledged only on condition that it steps forth as a natural and necessary addition to the technique actually in existence at the time.

But when such an advance occurs it leads sooner or later to far-reaching revolutions in diverse social domains. And especially do the events that mark the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times constitute a striking example of these effects.

The technics of navigation developed through progress in the art of shipbuilding, through accelerating advances in mathematical and astronomical knowledge, the employment of the mariner's compass, for instance. New discoveries of precious metals and improved methods of mining had increased the bulk of the medium of exchange at society's disposal. Communication with the Orient which, following the Crusades, had made considerable headway, had created the facilities for and made possible a growing exchange of the products of the Orient and the Occident. Commerce developed under the influence of all these factors at a constantly growing ratio, from the start particularly in the cities of Northern Italy which were natural intermediaries between Europe and the Asiatic Mediterranean port, later also in the cities of southern Germany, the seaports of the German Baltic provinces and elsewhere, where the main arteries of international exchange extended from country to country. The rise of commerce compelled a development of industrial production; it developed not only the old handicrafts which served merely small circles of customers, it developed also export industries; in order to procure commodities to be exchanged for spices, pigments and similar costly products, fetched from Asia, it became incumbent upon the Europeans to produce goods that could be disposed of in the foreign markets. It was markedly the manufacturing of cloth that thus grew up, first in northern Italy, then in Holland and England, at first as a domestic industry, later in the great shops used in common, the forerunners of the capitalist factories of our days.

The new commercial and industrial life concentrated in the cities. These grew in population and repute and soon attained a social importance the equivalent of which had not been seen since the days of the Roman Empire. The bourgeoisie now inhabiting the cities assumed a character entirely different from that of the oppressed merchantmen and craftsmen of the earlier part of the Middle Ages, who originally had been nothing but appendages to the court of some worldly ecclesiastical potentate. They were free, prosperous, self-conscious men, with a comparatively wide mental horizon, people who had seen and read a good deal and who had become accustomed to rely upon themselves. As an upward striving class in society they represented a school of thought in conflict with all that had been inherited through generations; they were critical before the religious dogmas proclaimed by the Medieval Church and paid no respect to the idea set up by the sovereign medieval nobility. They created their own ideals, formed their own concepts of Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, from the peculiar social conditions under which they lived; their mental sphere was taken up with matters of new interest, widely divergent from those which had occupied the medieval mind, but in true harmony with the busy, practical life they themselves led. Their conception of beauty developed in strict agreement with the class psychology that sprouted from the peculiar social position of the bourgeoisie.

The Renaissance—the rebirth of art, letters and sciences—which first broke through and gained a secure foothold in the cities of northern Italy and which later, even if in a weakened form, was transplanted to the great commercial cities north of the Alps, was a direct manifestation of the new concept of life unfolding itself with the young, revolutionary bourgeoisie. The reformatory movements received here the nourishment that made possible their growth and consequent strength. In this new situation we find the explanation of the great political dissensions between the cities and the nobility towards the close of the Middle Ages.

But also the other classes in society were drawn along in this transmutative process. The noblemen regarded the rise of the bourgeoisie with envy and bitterness, and their feelings were in no way assuaged by the fact that, time and again, they had to turn to the wealthy townsmen to get loans, were compelled to pledge their landed property and other worldly possessions as security for repayment and pay a usurious rate of interest on the money loaned. But under the pressure of the process of social evolution in its entirety the nobility also began to adapt itself to the new order of things. In the same proportion that the world trade grew the ancient system of *Natura* housekeeping died out. Corn, pork, beef and other agricultural products which hitherto had not been salable but only subject to direct consumption, began to acquire an exchange value, became commodities that could be turned into money, with which in turn

new products could be bought. Herewith the social position of the nobleman became a different one from that of old; his relation to the peasants changed from a relationship in which he occupied the position of patriarchal supremacy to an essentially reciprocal trade relation. If formerly the tenancy fees and other charges which the peasants had to pay to the nobleman only had served for the upkeep of the latter's family and domestic servants, and if formerly there had been no temptation for him to squeeze more out of the peasants than was needed for his household, the situation now became different when every bushel of corn, every quarter of beef had acquired commercial value. The insatiable craving for money now became the leading motive. The more that could be squeezed out of the peasants the better. The fees were raised, the upkeep of the nobleman's court required more attention and larger expenditure, manors were abandoned so that the land might be laid under the feudal estate, serfdom was introduced, and—a thing that had a devastating effect on the entire peasant husbandry system—the peasants were forbidden to pasture their cattle in the forests, their fishing rights were taken away, they were no longer allowed to fetch their supply of fuel or lumber from the forests. This period saw the peasantry in the deepest slavery and degradation of its history. But the peasants still had so much strength that they did not without resistance surrender before this steadily growing exploitation; they rose to defend themselves. A series of mighty peasants rebellions broke out in nearly all European countries during the later centuries of the Middle Ages.

Thus the nobility, from having been a military caste, became a class of proprietors of landed estates whose only purpose in life was to press the highest possible amount of labour out of the subjected peasants. But the nobility's political position in society did also change in conformity herewith. Hereto a technic advance—the **discovery of gunpowder**—contributed in the highest degree. As long as the bow and arrow, the sword and the lance were the principal weapons in warfare the noblemen's heavily armoured horsemen remained the most important portion of the body of troops. But with the discovery of gunpowder the mercenary soldiers took their place. Thus the nobility were rendered superfluous as a military caste, and the retention of the great political advantages which it gradually had acquired was therefore no longer justifiable. Against the political dominion of the nobility rose the **monarchical power**, supported by the members of the bourgeoisie who had no higher wishes than to smash the power of the feudal lords and arrange the state after such fashion that it would give the freest possible course and fullest possible play to their own commercial and industrial pursuits. A figure like Christian II.* typifies the political rupture

* Christian II. (1481-1559) King of Denmark and Norway, 1513-1523, and for a brief period also King of Sweden.—Tr.

that thus developed. In this conflict the monarchial power necessarily was victorious, and the very discovery that had made the nobility superfluous in the military sense also created the material conditions for its political overthrow. Against an attack with bow and lance the strongly fortified feudal castles had most frequently been impregnable, but assailed by a military force that was armed with muskets and the more so if that force was equipped with canons, they soon had to capitulate. Throughout Europe these struggles ended, sooner or later, after more or less violent encounters, with the victory of the monarchial power over the rule of the mediæval nobility.

These political struggles sometimes were waged under peculiar, more complicated conditions, as for instance in the Scandinavian countries, where foreign merchants, from the Hanse towns, little by little had acquired absolute control over commerce. And it was of decided importance to the domestic bourgeoisie, who were growing in power and influence, to break up this foreign trading monopoly.

The ecclesiastical potentates fared as did the nobility. From all quarters a violent assault was made on the Catholic Church. All participated: the city bourgeoisie, who—if they were not through business connexions directly interested in the maintenance of the Church,—nursed the bitterest feelings against the lazy, often ignorant monks, and against the entire chain of institutions which the Mediæval Church had developed; the peasantry, because the Church was the biggest owner of landed property in Europe and used its power and authority for the most inhuman exploitation of the peasants; the nobility, who hoped to regain the estates which their forefathers had donated to the Church that masses be read for the salvation of their souls; the monarchs, who were eager to be in possession of the wealth owned by the bishoprics and cloisters.

Thus the Reformation was the involuntary result of the social conditions which had come into existence, and which in the last analysis preceded from the advanced material technique of production. It should be noted that long before the triumph of the Reformation there had existed, in various European countries, reformatory movements related to those which later arose with Luther and Zwingli, even if they were unsuccessful because the time was premature. Only with the beginning of the sixteenth century was the process of social transmutation so far advanced that the rupture with the Catholic Church became a social necessity. The peculiar conditions under which the Reformation was established in different countries—differently in England than in Northern Germany and Scandinavia, and in these countries, in turn, differently than in Holland and Switzerland—are a reflex of the stage of economic development reached by each country, and of the manner of thought that had arisen among the various classes of the population. But the Reformation surely would not have become the popular movement that it

did when the turning-point was reaching if it had not had behind it an invention of purely material character : **the art of printing**, by the aid of which the spiritual movement was democratized to a degree that never before had been seen.

Just as the new social, political, æsthetic and religious institutions were determined by the economic transformations, so was likewise the world picture portrayed to man's mental vision transformed, a new image was created through the great geographical discoveries. That the use of the mariner's compass and the technical progress in the art of shipbuilding and in navigation were conditions necessary to make possible the expeditions of the Portuguese along the western coast of Africa and Columbus's voyage across the Atlantic is self-evident, but also the spirit which animated the discoverer was a direct expression of the economic and social transmutation process society went through. The purpose was to find freer access to the costly products of the Orient, which played such an important part in the entire commercial life, and not the least was the purpose that of finding gold, the medium of exchange, the amount of which had to be increased in order to satisfy the demand of the commercial and industrial life.

As we have here sought to indicate that the social changes of which we have hitherto spoken—and which changes were of such great significance to the period following—were the result of a series of changes in the material arts, we shall next endeavour to explain in what manner the social events of our time—of the age of capitalism—are a manifestation of the revolution on which the capitalist mode of production has arisen.

To be continued.

District Organization

WE are now on the threshold of another year in the life of the College, and although we can count the number of years of its life on one hand, each of these years has brought with them new adherents, and also their many inquiries. Information that is in constant demand is in respect to the Provincial Classes; the formation of branches and districts of the same, and also the best methods to adopt in organizing them.

As one who has had some experience in this work and still carrying out a particular function of the same, I should consider it a favour to be allowed to place before these many inquirers the method adopted by the district of which I am a member.

IN those places where a number of persons are desirous of becoming students under the auspices of the C.L.C. and wish to form a branch they will find a great advantage in adopting the following method, *viz.*,

Formation of Branches

by forming a Provisional Committee of all those persons interested. This provisional committee appoint a secretary, who shall immediately circularize all the different bodies in the district that are eligible to affiliate with the Labour Party. These will consist of the Trade Unions, Socialist Societies, Co-operative Societies, Trades Councils and Labour Party, inviting them to attend a conference, on a date decided upon, with the object of drawing up a constitution. The Provisional Committee must use all their influence in those particular institutions of which they are members, and are eligible to affiliate, to induce them to be represented at the conference.

THE name of the organization to be the Branch of the Central Labour College. The organization is founded to train men and women for the industrial, political, and social work of the organized Labour movement. The following organizations

Constitution

are eligible to affiliate:—Trade Unions, Socialist Societies, Co-operative Societies, Trades Councils and Labour Party. The management of the organization shall be vested in a council consisting of one delegate from each society. Organizations may become affiliated upon the payment of a minimum annual subscription of

Each class promoted by the Council is entitled to one representative on the Council for every ten students or part thereof. The Council shall meet at such times as they deem desirable.

The annual general meeting shall take place at

The above constitution was formulated at a delegate meeting of Trade Unions, &c., and the students of the Central Labour College classes held in on (*date*). (*Secretary's name*).

It is necessary to point out that no person or persons should be allowed to take part in the management of the branch by paying an affiliation fee on his own behalf. All persons carrying out the management must either be students or delegates of affiliated societies. If private individuals were allowed

Dangers to be met

to assume control it would make it possible for a number of persons to act in such a manner as to be inimical to the interests of the branch. Should any person wish to show his sympathy towards the branch in a concrete form, say by giving a donation towards the expenses or by contributing a number of reference books to the branch library, these can be accepted with all sincerity.

REFERENCE books for the students is a matter that demands serious attention. Many a promising student may be lost to the branch,

owing to his inability to purchase books of reference, i.e., such books that do not appear on the list of the municipal library. I consider that the best method to obviate this difficulty is for each student to pay a penny a week towards a branch library; if some students wish to make a higher contribution than a penny so much the better.

Library

THE fees of the lecturer should be met by the students' fees if possible; should there be a deficit this may be met by a small levy or the surplus proceeds of a social function. If it is possible to meet that particular demand in relation to the lecturer in the manner suggested, then it would allow the affiliation fees to meet the expenses of rooms for classes, stamps and stationery, and other sundry expenses to carry on the work of the branch. In those instances where a branch is what we may call isolated, owing to its geographical position in the industrial world, and is unfortunate enough not to have an approved lecturer in their midst, it may now use to advantage the new method of Lectures-by-Post. On the other hand where two or more branches have sprung up within a radius of eight miles from the most central branch, then a district may be formed.

**Fees,
Organization
and
Administration**

To carry out the work of administration for the district it is necessary that a District Committee should be formed, composed of two delegates from each branch.

The function of this committee is :—To secure a lecturer for the district; secure suitable accommodation for him during his stay; see that he receives his fees regularly. Also to get syllabus printed and distributed amongst all the students of the district and arrange for the most convenient class night for each branch. Should any trouble arise in respect to allocation of class nights, i.e., two branches desiring the lecturer for the same nights, the best method is to decide in favour of those nights for each branch that will give the largest number of students for the whole district.

**Advantages
of
Districts**

THE advantages to be derived from the district formation of classes are numerous. It allows those branches with a large number of students to assist those branches with a smaller number, in the same district. It also allows, on occasions, the students of the different branches to enter into social intercourse with each other, such occasions are when the District Committee promotes social functions or rambles with the object of raising funds either for the district or the College. At the end of each session a conference of the whole of the students of the district should be held to decide upon the subject or subjects for the district for the forthcoming session, and also to discuss the best methods to adopt for obtaining new students. Whilst dealing with this matter of securing

new students, our district through experience have come to the conclusion that advertising is useless, and that better work can be done and better results be obtained by the students coming in contact with their fellow workers and using their personal influence.

In conclusion, I hope that I have rendered a service to those individuals who are seeking information in respect to the formation of branches and districts, and that the points I have placed before them will enable them to carry out the object.

Should any fellow student have any suggestion to put forward that will improve those set down in this article, we shall only be too glad to receive them, as no doubt the pages of our *Magazine* will be thrown open to them for this purpose.

Rochdale.

FRANK JACKSON.

Mr. Galsworthy's Latest

MISS REBECCA WEST once wrote that authors and other people might be divided into two classes, Melancholy Blokes and Cheerful Coves. Mr. Galsworthy, for instance, was a Melancholy Bloke, Mr. Wells a Cheerful Cove; while Mr. Belloc was a Melancholy Bloke trying to be a Cheerful Cove, and was therefore damned.

It is a handy classification, and Mr. Galsworthy, at any rate, fits into it beautifully. No-one coming out from the theatre after seeing *The Fugitive*, his latest play, would protest against its author being dubbed melancholy. One has heard often, from hostile critics of modern drama, of "gloomy plays." *The Fugitive*, in Dr. Johnson's well-worn phrase, is "inspissated gloom," vying almost with *Justice* itself. Acted as it was at the Prince of Wales' Theatre (and North Country readers of *The Plebs* will know that, with Irene Rooke and Milton Rosmer in the principal parts, the acting was worthy of the author) the play "gripped" with a vengeance!

The theme was simple enough. To readers of *The Man of Property*, that most satisfying of all Mr. Galsworthy's novels or plays, it was already familiar, despite many differences in detail. A beautiful, sensitive woman, "well" educated as Society understands education, is married to a perfectly upright, unimaginative husband. She has rebelled—not against any cruelty or infidelity on his part, but simply against his absolute and hopeless incapacity to look at life from her point of view. "Incompatibility of temperament," in the correct catalogue phrase. The man insists on his "rights"; the woman is revolted at being forced to surrender what she cannot

give gladly and freely. A certain friend of hers—a literary gentleman, with (it must be confessed) a somewhat conventional "artistic temperament"—counsels her to "spread her wings." She takes his advice, and leaves her husband. The literary man, more in love, one feels, with the dramatic situation than with the lady, asks her to live with him. She refuses, since she looks upon him only as a good friend, and becomes a shop girl. Three months later she returns to him, this time to stay. She has not been trained to work; and, moreover, her husband's agents have tracked down her place of employment. The hue and cry soon follows her; and the husband, quite wrongly yet quite naturally (since he knows himself "blameless") believing his wife's desertion of him to have been due to the literary man's influence, brings an action for divorce, and claims damages sufficient to bankrupt and ruin his rival. The latter, faced by disaster—his employers, the proprietors of a high-toned weekly review, will "ask for his resignation" if his name gets into the papers—is as unheroic, as un-melodramatic, in the crisis as most men would be. The woman, since her husband has declared his intention of stopping the action if she leaves her "lover," vanishes once more. In the last act we find her in a "gay" restaurant, determined to ply the only trade at which her upbringing has fitted her to earn a livelihood. To her first companion, a man of some sympathy and refinement, she tells something of her story. Then, approached by another man of a very different stamp, and with the blatant laughter of another more experienced member of her new profession ringing in her ears, she throws up the struggle; puts poison into her wine glass, and sinks back lifeless. All Mr. Galsworthy's telling irony is concentrated in the words put into the mouth of her first male companion as the curtain falls—"She was a lady."

A 'lady'—in her helplessness when thrown on her own resources, in the refinement which unfitted her to face the facts of a world built up on a cash basis. And her companions were 'gentlemen.' The only man among them, so far as one could gather, who earned his own living was the journalist; and he therefore appreciated the importance of the economic factor—thereby incurring the wrath of the romantically-minded dramatic critics, who dubbed him a "weakling."

But to point out the moral of a Galsworthy play is superfluous. The author of *The Silver Box*, of *Justice*, and of *The Fugitive*, though he may disappoint the people who like "happy endings," leaves no-one in any doubt as to what he is driving at!

J. F. HORRABIN

Book Review

Men and Rails, by ROWLAND KENNEY.

Published by T. FISHER UNWIN, 6/- net.

MR. KENNEY is known to some of us personally, and to most of the readers of this magazine through his articles on the rise of working-class education, which appeared in the *English Review*, and other magazines and newspapers, during the Spring of 1912. In the April number of the *Plebs* for that year, his article on the "Brains behind the Strike" was produced. How well Mr. Kenney depicted the growth and effects of the new working-class spirit in those articles, showed to us how deeply he breathed that spirit. For if Mr. Kenney is a journalist by profession, he is a revolutionist by conviction. There is no doubt whatever that his journalism is too much impregnated with his convictions, to find favour in those circles that make journalism a paying line.

Mr. Kenney brings to his latest work his own experience as a railway man in different branches of the railway industry, and this lends him an effectiveness in dealing with the railway man's problems that is lacking in the writings of that type of scribe who spends a week in Japan and then writes a book about it. Whether the author is dealing with the historical or the economic sides of the subject, with the tricks of railway companies or with the tactics of organized railwaymen, he is never content to skim the surface but penetrates with considerable power beneath the illusive appearances, to the real though hidden groundwork upon which the problems that confront the railway workers have developed.

No doubt the damned will discredit the work on all sorts of "lawyer's" pretexts. We can especially hear some, denouncing the analysis and conclusions as unsound on the ground that the author paints the railway companies in colours too lurid. We have to face that objection frequently ourselves. It has always seemed to us that it is the objectors that do the painting in order to hide their real features, and who scream out whenever and wherever some one comes along and scrapes away the enamel.

The injection of genuine working-class feeling in no way militates against the soundness of Mr. Kenney's book. Certainly there is none of that snivelling sentimentalism in it which we too often find in so many of the official apologetics.

The treatment of the subject is historical and analytic. The early days of the railway industry are first of all considered. The dawn of the age of rails is shown to have been golden as well as iron. The colossal swindling

of bogus company promoters, the extortions of landowners, the Fortunatus fees of lawyers, and the wholesale bribery of Members of Parliament are described as the chief momenta in the process of building up our English railways. That the State is no neutral institution watching impartially and vigilantly over the general interests, is clearly shown, by the author, from its attitude throughout the history of railway legislation. As it was in the beginning and is now, the State institutions, and notably the supposed non-partizan Board of Trade, have invariably bowed the knee to Baal. And our author seems suspicious that it always shall be, that this perversity is in the nature of the State. Hence he does not sound too optimistic a note about the conditions of railwaymen under the dispensation of State ownership.

Mr. Kenney gives a good account of the concentration and centralization of railway capital, and shows how this process brings to the railway companies superior methods of exploiting the men who run the railways. That it is the latter who furnish the increasing dividends, is amply evidenced by their increased toil. Improved engines and stock constitute so many improved mechanisms for pumping out a greater quantity of unpaid labour. The weakness of the railway companies for under-staffing in the working department and over-staffing in the idling department, the long established vice of giving much to those who do little and little to those who do much, are all dealt with at length. The relation of overwork and inadequate safety appliances to accidents, causing injury to both the public and railwaymen, is ably handled. In the sacred language of official political economy, profits are defined as a reward for risk.

That is the professional way of stating that the risks of money are more important than the risks of human life. More than that—life must be sacrificed to the making of money. In that sense accidents are no accidents, they are inevitable necessities under our present system. Literally, the money of railway companies is blood-money.

Mr. Kenney devotes considerable space to the rise and development of trade union organization among railwaymen, and particularly to the career of the old A.S.R.S. The All Grades Movement of 1907, the setting up of the Conciliation Boards and Arbitration awards, the famous strike of August, 1911, the part played by the Government therein and the proceedings of the Royal Commission which brought to a close the "quick victory," are graphically presented and dissected.

The most valuable part of the book is that which deals with the Conciliation Machinery. Mr. Kenney's analysis is distinguished from some of the apologies made on behalf of conciliation in certain quarters, in that he views the machinery *in motion* and draws his conclusions from

results. Our apologists are obliged to admit that the results are inadequate. But say they, the principle is good, conciliation in itself is sound, as if this principle was some metaphysical quality which existed independent of results. If the results are bad, then the principle of conciliation is unsound. Undoubtedly the acceptance of those boards sprang from lack of organization. The railwaymen themselves proved that, through the discarding of sectional organization and the formation of the N.U.R. on the principle of one union for all men employed in or about the railways of this country. We are in entire agreement with the author when he very pointedly says :—

If this unification leads to a more general tendency to fight the companies it will be of lasting benefit, but if the men develop their conciliation schemes as well as unite into one big union, they are simply beating themselves. For note this : The national union is out to abolish sectionalism, but conciliation schemes develop sectionalism. They develop sectionalism by dividing the workers up first by railways and then by departments ; further, they weaken the men by leaving many sections out altogether. By this means the companies are still able to fight them in detail and play off one set of men against another, just as they did with the sectional unions.

That paragraph will appeal readily to railwaymen because it sums up their actual experience. Since this book has been written, the N.U.R. have given notice to terminate the present scheme of conciliation. Some amended form of conciliation will be put forward and we await with interest to learn what is to be "put in the place" of the old arrangement. Whatever divides workmen is bad. Whatever unites them is progressive. And until the eve of social reconstruction the irresistible question must be :— How to bring about a greater unity?

The style in which this book is written is simple, and easily readable. The branches of the N.U.R. who have initiated the excellent practice of instituting a library should not be without a few copies of *Men and Rails*. And those who have not yet acquired a library could not make a better beginning than by obtaining this book—the first attempt, from a scientific Labour standpoint, to survey the field on which the railwaymen of this country are called upon to do battle.

W.W.C.

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