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The
PLEBS
MAGAZINE



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MONTHLY

TWOPENCE

The "Plebs" League

Object

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

Methods

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

Membership

Open to all who endorse the object of the League.


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

Management

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

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

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

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

G. SIMS, Secretary-Treasurer

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

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

THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

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

Vol. VII

May, 1915

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EDITORIAL

THIS month's bulletin concerning the College must read—"Progress satisfactory; not yet out of danger." The South Wales

The S.W.M.F. to the rescue Miners' Federation has once more come to the rescue, and by a special grant of £150 has done a good deal to relieve the urgency of the situation.

But the active interest and assistance of every supporter of the College is still needed if it is to come safely through these critical times. Assistance—of a refreshingly tangible kind—has already been forthcoming from various quarters. Here, for instance, is the sort of letter warranted to cheer the souls of the Staff Committee; we recommend it as a model to any of our readers who are uncertain as to the form their communications with the College Secretary should take just now:—

Dear Comrade,—I enclose cheque for £1 6s. 0d., as a contribution to the College funds. I shall be sending more later on, as I get the money paid in. We very much appreciate the courage of the College Staff in holding the fort when they could hardly have been blamed had they given up the fight. We sincerely hope that the N.U.R. annual meeting will provide the solution of all difficulties, and enable the Staff to devote their undivided energies to the task of true education for the working-class. That task is formidable enough in all conscience without adding financial worries to it. I append the names of our subscribers:—

	£	s.	d.
William Morris	10	0	
C. Fletcher	2	0	
W. V. Morris	5	0	
A. Hicks	2	6	
W. H. Smith	2	0	
E. York	2	6	
W. L. Wintle	2	0	
	<hr/>		
	£1	6	0

With kind regards to all at the College, Yours fraternally,

Arthur Hicks,

(Sec. Dean Forest Branch, B.S.P.)

Can't you make it possible for the Secretary of *your* branch—B.S.P. or otherwise—to write a similar letter? If the cheque is smaller than Dean Forest's it will nevertheless be welcome; if it's larger—well, the Staff Committee won't mind.

* * * *

FOR Comrade Hicks is perfectly right—the Staff's own particular business, the business of working-class education, is quite big enough to occupy all its time and energy without the added task of facing and overcoming financial worries. If Staff and students are to devote themselves whole heartedly to the problems of political economy, then they ought to be relieved of the thousand and one little difficulties of domestic economy. In plain words, the workers can hardly expect to get full value out of the College if they are content to leave it in such a situation that the Staff Committee, instead of devoting itself to the devising of new plans of campaign and new methods of usefulness, is obliged to spend two-thirds of its time worrying out a plan to meet the milk-bill. The flag *has* been kept flying. But it is surely obvious that if all our energies are to be concentrated simply and solely on keeping it flying, then it would be more sensible to cease worrying about it and go home and do something useful. A flag—be it never so red—is not of itself going to save the workers. We want to be able to leave the flag on the roof to take care of itself, and get on with the real business of education—with classes, lectures, correspondence courses and all the other practical details of our own particular business. And if every subscriber to the *Plebs* would get into the very good habit of putting aside a penny a week for the C.L.C., we could get on with that business—now.

THAT business is urgent. If the war has taught us anything, it has surely rubbed in the need for working-class education. A Council for the Study of International Relations **Educate!** —actively supported, we believe, by the W.E.A.— has already been inaugurated by sundry eminent persons, and is appealing for the co-operation of the organized Labour movement. The Council means well, we doubt not; and —so far as it will go—the work it is likely to accomplish will most probably be all to the good. But we of the C.L.C. have our own educational organization ready to hand; and we are tolerably certain, moreover, that we are more likely to discover, and discuss, “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” about International Relations than is the new Council. It would be both futile and stupid to pretend that we, any more than any other section of the international working-class movement, have devoted as much time and care to the study of international relations and the development of other nations as events have proved that we ought to have done. We have all erred and strayed from the right way, and our first care now must be to see that it never happens again. That, however, only makes it the more essential that our education is of the right kind. One hears words of wisdom, at times, in unexpected places; and some words which Mr. Clifford Allen is reported to have spoken recently (in a lecture on “The Universities and the Labour Movement”) are worth recording here. The need of the Socialist movement at the present time, he declared, was for “new forces, new ideas, and new kinds of specialization.” *Specialization*, observe; not that “broad,” detached outlook, that attempt to “see life whole,” for which Mr. F. J. Adkins pleaded in his defence of “The W.E.A. Way” in last month’s *Plebs*. True, Mr. Allen looks into the “Universities” to supply the much-needed ideas and the specialized training; and he is likely to be disappointed. Unintentionally however (one assumes) he has supplied one more “unsolicited testimonial” to the Central Labour College, and to the necessity for independent working-class education.

* * * *

THERE is nothing like looking ahead. The Plebs Meet may, at the moment, seem a good way off, but it is none too early to begin considering arrangements. We are glad therefore to publish the following excellent suggestion by Mr. W.

**The Plebs Meet
A Suggestion**

H. Mainwaring :—

Up to the present the Plebs Meet has been anything but a meeting where business was seriously discussed or the position and policy of the League given the consideration it ought to receive. As a rule, those present were either already tired out after discussing the College’s difficulties or were anxious to be set free for less strenuous ways of

spending a holiday. The proceedings, as a result, usually resolved themselves into a race between the Chairman's ability to get through the business and the complete exhaustion of the company's patience and interest.

This year it is more than ever necessary that we have a really well-attended Meet, in order to discuss not only our present position but also the future of the League. A "tag end" meeting is not satisfactory. I suggest therefore that, if practicable, the Meet should be held *on the Sunday afternoon preceding the Bank Holiday*. There should be little difficulty about this, as most of the delegates usually arrive either on the Saturday or early on the Sunday; and we should certainly be repaid by having a much more interesting and profitable meeting than has often been the case in the past.

We cordially endorse Mr. Mainwaring's suggestion, and invite Plebs Leaguers to let us know—the sooner the better—how this arrangement would suit them.

J.F.H.

CORRECTION.—The last sentence of Mr. Adkins' article on "The W.E.A. Way" in last month's issue should have read, "But I have endeavoured to show that it is at least *F.J.A.'s way*."

The Need for a Policy

THERE can be no manner of doubt that the C.L.C. is about to commence a new chapter in its history. The South Wales Miners have already decided to take an official share in its control, and the E.C. of the N.U.R. are themselves recommending to a special delegate meeting that their rules be altered to enable them to join in its ownership and control. There has never been any cause for doubt as to the response of the N.U.R. branches of whom—I should like to say in passing—their sympathy with and enthusiasm for the C.L.C. has even exceeded that shown by the S. Wales Miners. When this happens there will of necessity certain changes take place, both in the structure and perhaps to some extent in the methods now obtaining at the Central Labour College. These changes will arise because while at present the C.L.C. is merely an incident in the work of the N.U.R. and concerns only a few districts of the S. Wales Miners, the College will then become an important part of the work of all the branches and lodges of both organizations. This consideration raises questions vital to the existence of the "Plebs League." The change will raise more questions than can be dealt with in this article and my excuse for inflicting it—apart from the fact that I have not troubled you for a long time—is that on two of the most important of those questions it is urgently necessary that every "Plebeian" who belongs to or can in any way influence the opinions of the Unions in question should not only have his mind made up and his arguments prepared,

but should "deliver the goods" before the inevitable meetings concerning the change takes place. Those two questions are:—

The relation of the "Plebs League" to the College; and
The basis of the curriculum.

The first is a question of structure, and the second one of policy.

THE "PLEBS LEAGUE"

When the Unions take control (at present the intention is to use the Trade Union Congress to induce as many of the unions as possible to join in the movement) one of the first questions that will be raised will be the position of the "Plebs League." The Trade Union leader who does not know the history of the C.L.C. (and the exceptions are lamentably few) will probably look askance at an organization which, while propagating for, or criticising the conduct of, the C.L.C., is not controlled by that body, and may want either to abolish or control the League. The idea of such a League is foreign to his experience and contrary to his inclinations. He must be told that it is the propaganda of the League which created the College, and has maintained it ever since. Without the organization which has kept together those active and ardent spirits in all parts of Britain; without the *Plebs Magazine*, which has introduced new ideas to, and increased the usefulness of, thousands of trade union students; without these the College would have crumbled to pieces long since. The "Plebs League" is not only self supporting, in that its finances come from its individual members, but it has been a great financial and intellectual asset to the C.L.C. The time may come when the League can be dispensed with, as the scaffolding is dispensed with when the building has been erected, but before that day arrives we must be quite certain that the College is accomplishing the work it was originally intended to do—disseminating clear working-class education without taint or admixture. And in the time to come, which we hope is near, when union after union joins in the movement, and the College becomes an increasingly important factor in the new development of trade unionism that is now taking place, the dangers which attach to all large organizations must be guarded against. The trade union movement to-day is composed (we are compelled to admit) of a large number of men who, while capable of response to clear working class ideas, do not in the majority of cases take the trouble to work them out and are consequently easily misled on theoretical questions. Consequently the League is now more required than ever; its vigilance should be increased; and I should think that it would be well that in every area covered by the Unions now concerned, meetings should be called, the position thoroughly discussed, and everything put in readiness for measures that may become necessary.

THE CURRICULUM.

Trade Union leaders are busy men, and in the main take what is called a severely practical view of things. In other words their calling has habituated them to deal with questions as they come up on their merits, which generally reduces itself to seeing what has already been done and trying to do something similar. This may be very well for a going concern but quite other methods will have to be used in considering the policy of an educational system such as the C.L.C. The C.L.C. came into existence because the "Plebs League" saw what was being done by other alleged working class educational organizations, and made haste to do something quite different. They changed the curriculum. I am not here going into detail into all of the changes but the greatest ground of controversy has been on economics and kindred subjects. The controversy has ranged round the interpretations, known on the one hand as the orthodox, progressive, &c., and on the other as the Marxian. No one can now possibly doubt that the whole outlook, point of view, temperament, atmosphere, or other term you choose, of the C.L.C., is thoroughly Marxian. Not for *Plebs* readers but for others who may chance to read, I must here emphasize that "Marxian" is *not* used in the sense, say of the British Socialist Party, or in any political, or "industrialist," i.e., propaganda of industrial unionism, &c., but in the purely scientific sense, just as though one might use the word Darwinian without reference to the R.P.A. In other words the C.L.C. accepts the Marxian system of economics as the latest, most up to date, reliable and accurate. Well what has been the result? The C.L.C. has captured the S. W. Miners and the N.U.R. from all rivals, and now holds exclusive sway. How has it been done? By a purely rank and file movement leading up to conferences. Of course we must not omit that several leaders have given valuable assistance (names would be invidious). Now that is, I consider, a powerful argument to the Trade Unions concerned that whatever changes may be contemplated, it would not only be unfair, but would be undemocratic to interfere with the Marxian basis of the curriculum. I hope no such suggestion will be made. If it is, the "Plebs League" will and must oppose it by every means in their power. What we have won and maintained after many years of hard fighting, we can not lightly give up. I would almost, for my part, give up the C.L.C. and I use the word "almost" only with the idea that lost ground may be recovered. The C.L.C. may become the most useful asset the Labour movement has ever created, but without its Marxian basis, I am convinced it will dwindle into a shabby contemporary of quack reform societies with an intellectual level not exceeding that of the C.O.S. I hope these preliminary remarks will help to make every Plebeian realize the possible gravity of the situation. Pessimism is not necessary in the situation but vigilance is essential.

NOAH ABLETT.

A Defence of Historical Materialism

(Continued from last month)

WE have tried to show the general way, by which the material conditions of life, in declining antique civilization, lead to the rise and spread of those beliefs which characterize Christianity in the early centuries of our era. Only when this ideological formation is taken on the basis of these specific material conditions, does it become possible to understand the actions of the early Christians and the beliefs which influenced these actions. But the improvements which Messrs. Hyndman and Bax wish to introduce, by way of overcoming the "one-sidedness" of Historical Materialism, not only fail to explain but shut and bolt the door that leads to historical understanding. It does not of course prevent them from piling up assertions. With those they are quite liberal. When it comes however to backing up those assertions, one looks in vain even for any attempt at proof. We would never be done were we to take up all those alleged cases where the ideological factor is supposed to initiate historical development, where economic antagonisms find their genesis in religious antagonisms. The early movements of Mohammedanism are no more intelligible than the early movements of Christianity, unless we apply to them the method of Historical Materialism, the method which studies history objectively and rises from the concrete to the abstract.

Historical Materialism appears to be just about as big a mystery to the critics, as the belief in the Second Advent. It is very difficult to believe however that their easily exchange of economic *conditions* and economic *interests* is purely due to lack of knowledge. Reference has already been made to the fact, that on several occasions it has been pointed out to Bax that these terms *are not synonymous*. A movement may not be in the direction of economic interest but yet find its source in economic conditions. While obviously the early Christians acted as they did against their economic interest, that is not to say that their thought and action was independent of the economic conditions of the life of their time. While they turned away from this world, *the source of that attitude can alone be found in the world from which they turned away*.

It is in the third section of their article that Messrs. Hyndman and Bax apply their superior method of historical explanation to the present crisis. They apparently felt it necessary to modify Marx's method so as to justify their attitude towards the European war. They seem to have thought that as Socialists they could not consistently support the prosecution of the War while at the same time affirming the economic basis of the War. Only some

wars have arisen from economic sources, they tell us, e.g., "the wars in China, Burmah, South Africa, &c." But there are other wars, e.g., "the wars of emancipation . . . those of Italy and Hungary and the Balkan Principalities, which cannot be brought under this head." Without the slightest attempt at enlightening us as to the origin of these "wars of emancipation," they proceed to show finally that the present war "is likewise not a capitalist war in origin."

By this they appear to mean that because the majority of capitalists did not "desire" the war, because the War has not been undertaken by them designedly for the realizing of some economic interest, that therefore the economic relations of capitalist production cannot account for the appearance of the War. Here we see very plainly the subjective standard of the critics. Because capitalists do not "desire" war therefore the war cannot be a consequence of capitalism. Which is like saying that because a man did not "desire" a bad head in the morning when engaged in the drinking bout of the previous evening, therefore the headache was not a consequence of his heavy drinking; or that because the capitalists do not "desire" the Socialist movement, on the ground of course that it is against their economic interest, therefore the origin of the Socialist movement must be looked for elsewhere than in capitalism. "Desire" may be a very well intentioned lady but she has not been very fortunate in history despite the many attentions that have been paid to her by "active mentality." And however much the comrades Hyndman and Bax may "desire" to criticize and correct the "shortcomings of Marx," the *results* rather bear witness to the shortcomings of the critics themselves. In the attempt to prove the psychological origin of the present War, they fare no better than when they try to show the same thing for the early Christian beliefs and actions.

"The only party in Germany which was deeply interested in making war was this same Junker party and its militarist friends." But in what consisted the motive of this interest? "Fear and ambition!" Fear of what? Ambition for what? Messrs. Hyndman and Bax proceed to inform us and in so doing, prove just the opposite of what they "desire" to prove. This is what they have to say:—

"They (the militarist caste) were being threatened on two sides. On the one hand, the great capitalists with whom the Kaiser was more friendly than he was towards the Junkers, were gaining influence and power, aided by the State, in every direction. Fiscal Protection against agricultural imports and control over the army did not compensate them for being supplanted at Court and in political influence. Every year that passed made their position, as they thought, more insecure. . . . Militarist policy only waited its opportunity to push ahead with vigour, and, in its desire to obtain for itself in the name of Germany the leadership and domination of Europe, nothing was omitted from the necessary preparations which science could suggest or which material organization could provide."

So much for the one side—the side of growing capital—which moved the military caste to the pursuit of war. But capital is an economic “factor,” not an ideological “factor,” and hence Messrs. Hyndman and Bax prove too much. But they prove still more, against themselves.

“War became the more necessary from the Junker point of view on account of that astounding growth of German Social Democracy to which we have already made reference. For German Social Democracy, though in direct antagonism to German Capitalism, was even more menacing, or so it was thought, to German militarism, and for that reason could rely to some extent upon support from the German lower middle class and even from the great German capitalists.”

Some months ago I dealt at length with what I considered to be the ultimate grounds of the European Crisis. I will therefore not go into that matter again at this time. This question is before us at the moment only in so far as it concerns Messrs. Hyndman and Bax's criticism of Marx's historical method, and more specifically with their attempt to apply and make good their criticism with respect to the causes of the War. And it is sufficient for my purpose to accept their own arguments as to the two threatening sides of German Capitalism and German Social Democracy, and to show that thereby, the origin of the War is not, as they assert, psychological, but is rooted in the economic circumstances and relations of the capitalist world. It is to these grounds we must penetrate in order to appreciate the more external relations and peculiarities of the national frameworks and to rise above all that confused thought which flounders about upon the surface and which mistakes the form for the essence, the shell for the kernel, the appearance for the reality. And for this task, Historical Materialism is the only reliable and methodical guide.

W.W.C.

THE WAR

Its Effects on the Railway Workers

“THE modern State is but an executive committee for administering the affairs of the whole capitalist class.” That generalization by Marx and Engels was made sixty-seven years ago and it may still be recommended as an effective antidote to much of the piffle at present in circulation regarding recent developments of the State's activities for the purpose of meeting a grave national emergency.

Judging by some of the recent utterances of certain Labour Leaders and psuedo-Socialists the movement which has set in toward

State control of industry endorses and justifies practically all that Socialists have contended for these many years. A little reflection however on the part of the intelligent worker should be sufficient to convince him of the wide difference between the capitalistic collectivism embodied in State ownership which is now gaining popularity, and a system of social ownership which will guarantee wealth and freedom to the whole body of social producers. In spite of anything our social quidnuncs may say to the contrary, and allowing for the correctness of their prognostications that what is now being done to meet a temporary emergency is likely to remain a permanent arrangement of our industrial system, the workers will be well-advised if they retain all the weapons they now have in their armoury and improvise whatever new ones they may for the great struggle that lies ahead. For while state ownership may simplify the issue for the workers, and precipitate the struggle it will by no means solve the problem which is vital to working class interests and development.

Leaving, however, for a while this aspect of the question, let us deal briefly with some of the developments which have already taken place, especially as they affect railwaymen. First of all, it is necessary to remove a few misconceptions regarding the nature and effect of the Governmental control of the railways which was brought into operation immediately the war broke out. Some time ago, Mr. J. H. Thomas, M.P., gave, in the *Daily Citizen*, a somewhat exaggerated impression of the results secured and promised by this new extension of the State's functions. As a matter of fact the Government's control of the railways has, up to now, been more figurative than real, and there has not been that co-ordination and organization of railway facilities which uninformed enthusiasts of the change seem to imagine. This need occasion no surprise when it is remembered that the new arrangement is only a temporary expedient, and that the administration of the railways is in the hands of an executive committee composed of the managers of the principal railways who expect, as soon as the present temporary arrangement comes to an end, to again have charge of their own Company's affairs on the lines of separate and competing interests. It is likely that under such an arrangement these Company managers will favour a policy calculated to identify and merge their competing interests? And without such a policy how can they be expected to bring about that co-ordination and systematization of the railway facilities essential to economical and expeditious working?

Then there are other numerous and powerful interests to be considered and dealt with before the administration and operation of the railways can be systematized and made efficient. The most prolific cause of congestion, delay, and muddle on our railways is due to the innumerable private wagons belonging to manufacturing

and trading concerns. About fifteen years ago these were estimated by a writer on *Railway Nationalization* to number 700,000 at least; to-day probably they number two or three times that number. Under a truly national system all rolling stock would be standardized and utilised for any purpose required to the fullest extent, and this would mean the removal from the railways of all superfluous wagons and the increasing of the earning capacity of all that were needed to a degree probably ten times greater than it is now.

Whether this more economical and efficient working of the railways would be to the advantage or disadvantage of the railway workers would depend not so much on whether it was secured on the basis of Private or State Ownership as on the power and efficiency of the workers' organizations. In regard to this aspect of the question, it has been asserted that railwaymen have already experienced the beneficial results of State control by the success which has attended the recent negotiations for increased remuneration. Those who make this claim must not only think that railwaymen are extraordinarily thankful for small mercies, but have also very short memories. It is surely only necessary to recall the State's attitude toward railwaymen's claims in recent years to prove that it would be foolish to take its assurance of benevolence on trust. Let it not be forgotten that it was the Government—largely composed as it is now—which was responsible for the settlement of 1907. In that year railwaymen had worked up a very formidable movement in favour of recognition and improved conditions, and through the instrumentality of Mr. Lloyd George they got a Conciliation Scheme which disintegrated that movement and gave the Companies the whip-hand, which they used so ruthlessly that it produced the railwaymen's upheaval in 1911. The strike of 1911 was a protest against increasing tyranny and injustice, and was a drastic means of demanding immediate consideration of the railway workers' long-deferred claims. This time a paternal and benevolent Government gave us a Railway Commission to revise and patch up its badly-damaged scheme of 1907 which had been warranted to ensure a railway truce for seven years at least. But let us turn to the settlement of 1915 and the granting of "war bonuses," which Mr. Thomas assures us represents the most substantial wage-increase ever procured in the history of Trade Unionism. On this occasion railwaymen had some excuse for raising their expectations rather high. Immediately preceding the negotiations we were informed by inspired reports in the Press that both the railway companies and the Government were in favour of a generous recognition of our claims. Some of the papers stated that in fixing the amount of the increase due consideration would be given to the extra strain imposed upon railwaymen as a result of military exigencies, as well as to the increase in the cost of living. Seeing that this latter item alone represented several shillings a week, railwaymen certainly had every reason to expect

the most substantial increase in the history of their Union's efforts. If their expectations were really very high they were doomed to double disappointment both at the amount granted and at the form of the so-called concessions. Considered from the only standard of importance to the workers—the degree of their exploitation—the increases of two and three shillings a week leave them still in a much worse position than they were before the war. The principle of a supplementary allowance, moreover, in the form of a bonus, establishes a vicious and dangerous precedent which may prove inimical to railwaymen's interests both now and in the future. The men's position was exceptionally strong in the recent negotiations; yet, apparently, the most our officials could do was to obtain only about fifty per cent. of what was originally asked for, and to have this conceded in such a form as makes it extremely easy for the Companies to take it away again as soon as the workers position is weakened by an influx of returned army men to their ranks. Furthermore, given as a supplementary bonus, the increased allowance is not calculated with the wages in fixing overtime and Sunday rates of pay, and consequently lessens the value and importance of these concessions gained by past efforts.

Enough, I hope, has been said to prove that both from the point of view of economical working and of improved conditions of the railway workers, the recent innovation of State control of the railways has not had that effect which has been imagined in many quarters. In making this point clear no attempt has been made to deny that State control, if made effective and efficient, could be made the means of bringing about a much more systematic and economical method of working the transport facilities as well as of equalising the conditions and establishing the basis for a great improvement both in wages and hours of railwaymen. This latter contingency however will depend as much as ever on the power of the workers' organization and the determination of the men in their struggle for improvement.

What railwaymen will do well to realise is that there will be no reversion to the old order of things. Either the State, after the war, will retain control of the railways or the Companies themselves will establish a Trust or some other kind of private monopoly to obviate the expenditure which is due to an unnecessary and senseless system of competition. From the workers' point of view, the main difference in these two forms of control is that under the State the railways will be managed by an administration representative of the whole organized capitalist class, whereas under the companies' Trust the administration will be in the hands of that section of the capitalist class which has its capital invested in railways. As between these two forms of administration and exploitation there is very little for the workers to grow specially enthusiastic about.

While the State certainly offers the negative advantage of making the issue clearer and impressing the workers with the necessity and importance of the conquest of political power, it at the same time presents the disadvantage from the workers' point of view that it has at its direct disposal all the legislative and judicial forces of society, as well as the armed forces for the execution of its arbitrary will. The mission of the working-class is to organize and train itself that it may render itself capable of taking into its own control the administration and organization of industry; and, by giving every healthy capable member of the community a free access to the means of production and an equal right in the participation of the social product, render unnecessary and obsolete the coercive machinery of a ruling-class State, which, nationally and internationally, has become such a curse and evil to mankind.

C. WATKINS.

The Coming Recoil

(The following extracts are from a notable article by Mr. George Russell ("A.E.") the Irish poet and publicist, in *The Times* of April 14th. *Plebs* readers will recall the same writer's vigorous open letter to the Dublin employers, reprinted in the magazine in December, 1913.)

WHEN a gun is fired it recoils with almost as much force as urges forward the projectile. It is the triumph of the military engineer that he anticipates and provides for this recoil when designing the weapon.

Nations prepare for war, but do not, as the military engineer in his sphere does, provide for the recoil on society. It is difficult to foresee clearly what will happen. Possible changes in territory, economic results, the effect on a social order receive consideration while war is being waged. But how war may affect our intellectual and spiritual life is not always apparent. Material victories are often spiritual defeats. History has record of nationalities which were destroyed and causes whose followers were overborne, yet they left their ideas behind them as a glory in the air, and these incarnated anew in the minds of the conquerors. . . .

A little over a century ago all the needles of being pointed to France. A peculiar manifestation of the democratic idea had become the most powerful thing in the world of moral forces. It went on multiplying images of itself in men's minds through after generations; and, because thought, like matter, is subject to the laws of action and reaction, which indeed is the only safe basis for prophecy, this idea inevitably found itself opposed by a contrary idea in the world. To-day all the needles of being point to Germany, where the apparition of the organized State is manifest with every factor,

force, and entity co-ordinated, so that the State might move myriads and yet have the swift freedom of the athletic individual. The idea that the State exists for the people is countered by the idea that the individual exists for the State. France in a violent reaction found itself dominated by a Caesar. Germany may find itself without a Caesar, but with a social democracy.

But, if it does, will the idea Europe is fighting be conquered? Was the French idea conquered either by the European confederation without or by Napoleon within? It invaded men's minds everywhere; and in few countries did the democratic ideas operate more powerfully than in these islands, where the State was a most determined antagonist of their material manifestations in France. The German idea has sufficient power to unite the free minds of half the world against it. But is it not already invading, and will it not still more invade, the minds of rulers? All Governments are august kinsmen of each other, and discreetly imitate each other in policy where it may conduce to power or efficiency. The efficiency of the highly organized State as a vehicle for the manifestation of power must to-day be sinking into the minds of those who guide the destinies of races. The State in these islands, before a year of war has passed, has already assumed control over myriads of industrial enterprises. The backwash of great wars, their reaction within the national being after prolonged external effort, is social disturbance; and it seems clear that the State will be unable easily, after this war, to relax its autocratic power. There may come a time when it would be possible for it to do so; but the habit of overlordship will have grown, there will be many who will wish it to grow still more, and a thousand reasons can be found why the mastery over national organizations should be relaxed but little. The recoil on society after the war will be almost as powerful as the energy expended in the conflict; and our political engineers will have to provide for the recoil. By the analogy of the French Revolution, by what we see taking place to-day, it seems safe to prophesy that the State will become more dominant over the lives of men than ever before.

In a quarter of a century there will hardly be anybody so obscure, so isolated in his employment, that he will not, by the development of the organized State, be turned round to face it and to recognize it as the most potent factor in his life. From that it follows of necessity that literature will be concerned more and more with the shaping of the character of this Great Being. In free democracies, where the State interferes little with the lives of men, the mood in literature tends to become personal and subjective; the poets sing a solitary song about nature, love, twilight and the stars; the novelists deal with the lives of private persons, enlarging individual liberties of action and thought. Few concern themselves with the character of the State. But when it strides in, an omni-

present overlord, organizing and directing life and industry, then the individual imagination must be directed to that collective life and power. For one writer to-day concerned with high politics we may expect to find hundreds engaged in passionate attempt to create the new god in their own image.

The discipline which the highly organized State imposes on its subjects connects them continuously in thought to something greater than themselves, and so ennobles the average man. The freedom which the policy of other nations permits quickens intelligence and will. Each policy has its own defects; with one a loss in individual initiative; with the other self-absorption and a lower standard of citizenship or interest in national affairs. The oscillations in society provide the corrective.

We are going to have our free individualism tempered by a more autocratic action by the State. There are signs that in Germany the moral power which attracts the free to the source of their liberty is being appreciated, and the policy which retained for Britain its Colonies and secures their support in an hour of peril is contrasted with the policy of the iron hand in Poland. Neither Germany nor Britain can escape being impressed by the characteristics of the other in the shock of conflict. It may seem a paradoxical outcome of the spiritual conflict Mr. Asquith announced. But history is quick with such ironies.

A.E.

The Hamsters and the Mice

A FABLE

(This fable appeared a few weeks ago in a Socialist paper published in Gotha (Germany) and as a result the journal was permanently suppressed, and the editor sentenced to three months' imprisonment. It will not be without interest to 'mice' on this side of the 'brook.' A 'hamster,' it should be noted, is an animal of the rodent family, very common in certain districts of Germany, which hibernates during the winter and lives upon its store of roots, grains, and fruits. It is a foot in length, and has very large cheek-pouches.)

FIELD-MICE and hamsters are both rodents originally descended from the same family. So the science of the origin of species teaches us. Once there were only field-mice, who nourished themselves as best they could from the fruits of the fields. Having satisfied themselves, and there being still some food left, they would call other mice to come and eat. Now this, which may perhaps appear to us as quite noble of them, was really nothing but carelessness; at least, that is what a certain class of mice said. This particular class not only hid what food they had left over, but accumulated

these hoards in their homes, and moreover ran about all day hunting for more. They got so much into the habit of appropriating everything lying about that cheek-pouches formed on their heads. As they had always abundant food in bad times, as well as good, they grew big and strong, and became quite distinct from the modest mouse family; they grew proud, and adopted a new name, calling themselves 'hamsters.' Their food-stores, which they had gathered from the common fields, they now called 'property,' and they told the hungry mice that 'property' was sacred. If any little mouse forgot this, whether because of distress or because it believed in its simplicity that God had created the food for all, it was heavily punished.

In the course of years a generation of mice grew up who revolted against the hamsters. The wise ones amongst the hamsters said to themselves that the hamster's glorious rule would soon come to an end if the mice once became united. (It must be borne in mind that the mice were much more numerous—there were perhaps a hundred of them to every single hamster). So every means was taken to satisfy the mice without filling their stomachs; but all to no purpose.

Suddenly, one day, the hamsters were unexpectedly helped. At the border of their field there was a brook and beyond it a field which also yielded much fruit, and was also inhabited by hamsters and mice. Now these foreign hamsters often jumped over the brook and stole some food and our hamsters did the same. (A long time ago this used to be called robbery, but later on law and morals were so arranged that this was permissible). The hamsters of the two fields looked with envy upon each other, whilst the mice on both sides exchanged grievances. Then the hamsters realised with horror that these common sufferings were creating a friendship which was endangering their rule. They decided that it was time for action.

In each separate field they invited the mice to a great gathering. In our field an old hamster who was known to be very cunning stepped on a stone and said:—"Look here, you mice, if you are suffering from hunger, it is the fault of the hamsters beyond the brook. If we were also allowed to fetch food from over there, we could all fill our stomachs. But as it is, they fetch food from us for themselves." He was going on to promise all sorts of good things for the future (as to keeping a promise he had his own views), but he was interrupted by such loud applause from the mice that he quickly finished his speech. He made, therefore, an appeal to their fighting spirit against the robbers and criminals beyond the brook, and ended with these words: "There is no difference between mice and hamsters; we are all Rodents!"

The mice promptly forgot their anger against the hamsters, and became quite changed. Their comrades beyond the brook were

now enemies, without any "culture." Those mice who had hitherto most vehemently blamed the hamsters now embraced them ten times a day. The hamsters opened their stores a little and gave a crumb or two to the mice, and the latter marched off to the battle field. There were, however, some mice who could not be enthusiastic; try as they might, they always saw the great difference between themselves and the hamsters. These misled mice were despised, however, by every honest mouse as traitors to the Great Family of Rodents.

When the war was over, one of the Rodent peoples had gained much. If many a mouse, and even many a hamster, had been killed, all the richer were the captured stores! Yet, when the time came to collect these, oh horror! the mice had no cheek pouches in which to collect their share. And this was such an unmistakable sign from heaven that the Rodents had again to be divided into hamsters and mice.

(Translated by Miss T. Gernsheimer.)

Letters on Logic

ECONOMICS

NINTH LETTER OF THE SECOND SERIES

THE moon is separated from the earth but she is nevertheless inseparably connected with it; she is fixed at a certain distance and moves around it. Similar to the relation between moon and earth is that of price to value, the former continually moving round the latter.

Whether commodities are exchanged above or below their value does not increase or decrease that value in the least. Only labour, living labour, which costs less than it creates, can increase value, can create surplus value. Only productive labour can accumulate labour.

But what does this labour power cost—what is *its* value?

Everywhere and at all times, besides effort and sweat, it costs *food*; and civilized labour cannot live on the sort of food which nature provides for nothing, but needs food which itself contains accumulated labour. Barbarians, it is true, can work with "natural" means of production and food, but civilized workers depend on civilized means of production; *i.e.*, cost-free "natural" labour and costly accumulated labour mingled together—and the more labour and the more value is contained therein, the more civilized is society. A modern mechanical cotton-loom is a civilized instrument, in which much more labour is accumulated than in a primitive one. And as with the loom so it is with eating, drinking, clothing and lodging. Modern labour power needs al

these in a civilized form—the means of production and the food of the labour power must possess value. The modern worker cannot produce without food nor without expenditure.

Now what is the value, the cost value, of this living labour ?

When we consider it as a commodity (and that is exactly what this wicked world does) then the value of civilized living labour (*i.e.*, labour power) is determined by the cost of its production, education and sustenance. Labour power is a commodity, and is therefore subject to the laws of commodities in general, which have a price and a value. Price is a comparatively accidental affair, and does not concern us at this point. The value of the labour power is fluctuating in so far as the value of food is fluctuating ; and this again depends on the labour contained in the food. The value of labour is equal to that of the food necessary for the sustenance and regeneration of the worker. If the wage, that is the *price* of labour power, is below the value, then the workers must starve until supply and demand are on the same level. If the price of labour power is above the value, then the birth rate rises, and the labour market is overflowed. But in practice things work out not quite so ruthlessly ; a higher or lower price attracts or drives away labour power from one trade to another.

Speculators who buy commodities cheaply and sell them at high figures have no importance in political economy as increasers or creators of value. Manufacturers who deal in the commodity of labour power, in living human flesh, are the true “creators of riches.” In this category you cannot include the small peasant or the handicraftsman, who “works for himself,” and perhaps imagines that he too is a creator ; he does not create surplus value, he creates at most just so much as he can put into his own mouth. Peasant and handicraftsman played their part in the economy of mediaeval times, but to-day the significant figures are the dealers in the labour of others—those who create surplus value by exploiting labour power which produces more than it costs.

Really, I hear you asking, are people not worth as much as they produce ? As use value, certainly, but not as exchange value. We want to solve the problem why poverty is so widespread and wages so low in our rich world. The methods of production have been revolutionized by inventions and discoveries, so that to-day a labour hour yields tenfold what it once did. The product of a day's labour is to-day incalculably greater in use value than in the past ; but the exchange value of a day's labour is not affected thereby. At present as always, products which have been created in the same socially necessary time are equal in value. Henry George makes a fatal mistake in confounding wages with the product of labour. As he does not understand the nature of wage labour, on which the world-economy of to-day is based, he is un-

able to solve the riddle why wages are so low whilst at the same time the product of labour is so rich. In distinguishing between wage and product of labour I must warn you not to commit a common error, the understanding of which will make it clear to you that political economy is something quite different, something more organic, than the mere total of a number of private economies. Suppose that you, as a worker, demand the product of your labour instead of wages; you will discover that that product can never be individually distinct in a civilized country. You can cut a cane in your leisure time, or plant a cabbage after your labour day, and you may enjoy such "products" of your labour. But you cannot spend your whole labour time in such a way unless you are a hermit. Men to-day have to *sell* either their labour power or the product of it. What they get in exchange, whether wage or profit, is not their individual product, but money, *i.e.*, a share of the total products of bourgeois society. If the working class therefore demand the product of their labour instead of wages, they ask for a *socially justified* share of social products in exchange for their labour.

(Translated for *The Plebs Magazine* from the German of Joseph Dietzgen by Miss Bertha Braunthal.

Correspondence

THE WAR: WHERE DO WE STAND?

Sir,—In nearly all the discussions which I have heard or read between Socialist son this matter, the real point at issue seems to be missed.

I take it that we agree that the economic factor is the real cause of the war; that we are Socialists first and Britons afterwards, but are we forgetting that we are men and women first and Socialists afterwards?

We are now in the thick of war; the war is now against US in the truest sense of the word, however it may have been caused. When the Germans shell Hartlepool, or shower Zeppelin bombs, the odds are that 99 per cent, of the victims are of our class. As a healthy-minded materialist I ask what can be our reply to the German proletariat who argue with us in this summary fashion? Shall we sally forth with a megaphone and make a class-conscious speech to the foe, or shall we pray in the Tolstoyan way?

As Mr. Craik recently said, "The times demand practicality," and if we are going to shirk the hard facts, if we intend simply to shelter ourselves behind the bodies of our comrades of the working class, surrounding ourselves with the sanctity of a "peculiar people" and airing our superior wisdom amid the wrecked homes and broken bodies of our fellow-workers, then we are well on the way to earn the scorn and derision of those who believe that every effort is still needed to prevent a repetition of the horrors of Belgium in this country.

Few *Plebs* readers, I think, need much enlightenment as to the underlying causes of modern wars, and if the P.S.A. lecturers of Norwich fame had in the past devoted less of their time to supporting Temperance Bills, Insurance

Acts, and similar nostrums; and devoted more of their energy to fighting Capitalism as such, it would not have been necessary to have used so much wind to so little purpose. Under existing circumstances, it seems to me, a discussion on "How to dodge a 10 inch shell" would be more to the point.

Sheffield.

C. T. CRAMP.

SOCIALISM—UTOPIAN OR SCIENTIFIC?

Sir,—As a regular reader of the *Plebs*, I am always a keen observer of its so-called "revolutionary" outlook, which, I confess, has generally appeared to me to be somewhat fanciful, romantic, and highly utopian—wholly lacking in the elements of practicability.

The "revolutionary" essay by H. Wynn-Cuthbert in the December issue which has just reached me, and on which you invite criticism, is quite in keeping with the revolutionary ardour of the *Communist Manifesto*, and has almost as ancient and fishlike a smell. It is perfectly evident, after reading Mr. Wynn-Cuthbert's effusion that the greatest obstacle to the realization of Socialism is a want of a knowledge of what Socialism is. Is it Reformist, a movement, that is, following the lines of social evolution, like all other permanent changes in nature; or is it to be looked upon as something coming upon us as "a thief in the night," and in respect of which we are to accept Mr. Wynn-Cuthbert's statement that "on the morrow of the Social Revolution there will be no State"? The writers of the *Plebs Magazine* often seemed to me to waver between these two extremes, and this I put down to the inexperience of youth, always concluding within my own mind that when the youthful student left the seemingly utopian environment of the C.L.C., he would see through the absurdity of the gospel of the coming Social Earthquake.

Here in Australia we have a handful of I.W.W. men who spend most of their time denouncing the "craft-unions," that is, of course, the whole Australian trade-union movement. They equally denounce the Labour Party, State Socialism they describe as State Capitalism, and they strongly—that is so far as strong or gutter language is concerned—sing the praises of Direct Action and Sabotage. Truly, the greatest task the International Socialist movement can set itself is to find out where it stands, and determine what Socialism really is. To me, an old Socialist and trade unionist, believing in getting all industry out of the hands of private enterprise and transferred to the organized community, all this talk about Sabotage, Direct Action and Revolution (with a capital R) is just so much wasted energy.

Adelaide, South Australia.

W. MARTIN GORMLIE.

MINERS AND OTHERS, PLEASE NOTE.

Sir,—I think the *Plebs* is always good, but I would like to see in it more articles dealing with the problems organized Labour has to confront to-day; not altogether as to its relations with Parliament, but questions affecting the development of the Unions, and the relations of different classes of men in one Union.

For instance, there are certain conditions in the mining industry which must be changed before the miners can become the revolutionary body we would like to see. Different customs, different price-rates, different day-rates, all in one district, make unity difficult to attain. Then, again, some men naturally work harder than others and produce more coal under precisely similar conditions. The boss describes the conditions as similar, because he does not desire to take into account the differences in men. From poor methods of production they expect big profits, from (relatively) weak men they want strong work.

There are problems such as these affecting every industry, and I would like to see them discussed in the *Plebs*.

Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancs.

MATTHEW NORMAN JONES.

(We are only too glad to publish articles such as our correspondent suggests. But we would point out to intending contributors that the *Plebs* does not circulate among the members of any one trade alone; and that articles dealing with the more or less technical details of a particular trade should be so written as to be comprehensible to readers following different trades. This is the more important since some sort of understanding of one another's difficulties is essential to working-class solidarity.—Ed.)

Sir.—As one who has read the *Plebs* religiously even when its pages have literally reeled under abstract scientific problems, sometimes so abstruse as to be unintelligible to any other genius but the one who wrote the articles, and characterized by polysyllabic words and a paucity of full stops, I venture to make a suggestion to assist in the delightful process of rejuvenating the *Plebs*. It is encouraging to discover that at last the *Plebs* is open to reason—and advertisements.

The mission of the C.L.C. and its literary expression, the *Plebs*, has a two-fold character, i.e., to expound Marxian economics and to provide a training for trade unionist students. The latter has sometimes suffered at the expense of the former. Being a firm adherent of the Materialist Conception of History—if the mandarins will pardon such a claim from one who has not read *all* three volumes of *Capital*--I recognize its value and tremendous importance to the working class. What would increase the value of the *Plebs*, in my opinion, would be the consideration by trade unionist students in its pages of the particular problems of their industries from a Marxian point of view; but in their own language please, and without deluging inoffensive pages with whole paragraphs taken from Marx, Engels, or Dietzgen.

Wimbledon. S.W.

J.S.C.

(J.S.C., we assume, has to work for his living—or he would never have remained so touchingly loyal to the *Plebs*. Will he therefore start the ball rolling by an article dealing with the problems of his particular industry?—Ed.)

Reports

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE DIVISIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CENTRAL LABOUR COLLEGE: BLACKPOOL CONFERENCE.

The first annual conference of the above was held on Good Friday, April 2nd, at Blackpool. Delegates were present from the different classes, and the Staff and Students of the College were also represented. Unfortunately many of those desirous of attending were kept away owing to the suspension of the cheap travelling rates by the railway companies.

Mr. Harold Kershaw (Rochdale District) presided. After the reports of the different classes had been submitted, certain points were noted for discussion, in order that the functions of this Council might be decided upon. After an animated discussion it was resolved that the Council should act as an intermediary between the College in London and the various 'Districts' within the area. Its objects are to be the increasing of the number of Classes, the readjusting of districts in accordance with any increase in the number of such classes, and the provision of lecturers.

The question of lecturers for the provincial classes has been one of the greatest problems the College has had to solve, and has been the greatest difficulty in the way of any extension of our work. A successful method has been adopted within the Rochdale District during this last winter's session, viz., the College has provided the students with outlines of the lectures of the course to be studied, and the students have appointed one of their number to act as lecturer, whose duty it is to elaborate the outline and answer

any questions. In case further explanation was required, the College lecturer who had drawn up the outline has been requested to deal at greater length with the particular point.

It was also decided that an effort should be made to promote a scholarship for the division to be competed for by the students attending the classes, on the understanding that the successful student, on the termination of his or her scholarship, shall return to the division and act as lecturer.

The election of a corresponding secretary terminated the whole of the business. I may say that during the discussion a spirit of earnestness, confidence and enthusiasm prevailed with regard to the utility of this new-born organism and its future work. I may also refer those who desire information with regard to the formation of districts to *Plebs Magazine* for November, 1913.

In conclusion I offer sincere thanks (on behalf of those delegates who attended) to the Blackpool students for providing us with a suitable and comfortable room for the occasion.

FRANK JACKSON (Corresponding Secretary).

ASHINGTON AND DISTRICT C.L.C. CLASS.

Our second and most successful session has just concluded. We have had 13 lectures on Industrial History, and 3 lectures dealing particularly with Marx's method. We commenced well with 24 members, and all attended regularly until a few departed to render first aid to their comrades at the Front.

It is a stiff and uphill struggle here, as all the prosperous institutions and popular personalities support the W.E.A. method. Yet we live in hopes knowing that by perseverance the claims of our cause will win the support they deserve.

Our best thanks are due to Comrade Ebby Edwards who has given his services as lecturer free. He must have put in a very large amount of time and labour to have carried out the duties of friend and tutor for two sessions in such a splendid manner.

G. CARRUTHERS, (Sec.)

BIRMINGHAM SOCIAL SCIENCE CLASS.

Am glad to say we have had a successful season. The Class has been held at the Bristol Street Council School which is the most central Council School in Birmingham. Attendances have been very good during the whole of the term. Since Christmas an average of 24 has been maintained. 36 students have paid fees.

Comrade William Paul has again been our conductor and his expositions of the class text-books *Wage-labour and Capital* and *Value, Price and Profit* have been masterly. He has also given a series of five lectures on History. In addition to this invaluable work he has lectured on behalf of the Class at local Labour Churches, and at two meetings of railwaymen—at Birmingham and Stourbridge. Fees derived from some of these lectures have enabled us to charge the low fee of 1s. for the whole of the term—i.e., from the end of October to the end of March.

We have also held two socials at the Bristol Street School—one on January 20th and the other on March 17th. Both functions were well attended and heartily enjoyed. We have instituted a book club, and have also sold a large number of pamphlets and about 2 dozen "Plebs" each month.

The class will recommence probably early in October. In the meantime it is proposed to hold monthly meetings for the purposes of discussion, for the sale of books and pamphlets, and the development of a scheme for lending books on Social Science to members. We are determined to make greater efforts to promote the usefulness of our class next term, as we are firmly convinced that the Central Labour College and such classes as our own are providing a long felt want amongst the workers.

FRED SILVESTER (Hon. Sec.)

Reviews

" Q.E.D."

The New Faith, by Fred Henderson (Jarrold, 1/- net).

Mr. G. K. Chesterton once described Mr. Fred Henderson as a sort of Robespierre—a fanatic whose life-blood was Reason. It was a happy observation; for Mr. Henderson is undoubtedly an eighteenth-century French Rationalist, born a century too late. With remorseless logic, and a literary style as clear-cut and direct as any pamphleteer's who ever wrote, he convicts the Capitalist Industrial system of utter failure to serve the national needs in the present crisis; proceeding then to define the vital principle of "the new vision and new faith" of which the world has just caught a glimpse. It is, of course, a matter of Reason. Reduce Capitalism to a logical absurdity, and it will, one supposes, abolish itself. A "change in national thought" is all that is necessary; and since "the present condition of politics in Great Britain is not a mere mechanical suspension of party rivalries, but a *vital and organic change in national thought*," then the Millenium must surely be at hand.

If there is anyone alive—amenable to Reason—who still remains unconvinced of the need for Socialism, then Mr. Henderson's book ought to lead him to the light. But, unfortunately, the biggest obstacles Socialism has to overcome are not amenable to Reason. One can't *argue* with a Dividend or a Fall in Real Wages !.

J.F.H.

Ibsen's Brand, trans. by F. E. Garrett (Everyman's Library, Dent, 1/- net.)

This is the fourth Ibsen volume in the Everyman series, and it is, if we are not mistaken, the first cheap edition of *Brand* in English. It should certainly find a place on every *Plebs* reader's bookshelf. "It is in *Brand*," says Shaw, "that Ibsen definitely, if not yet quite consciously, takes the field against idealism and, like another Luther, nails his thesis to the door of the Temple of Morality." One or two other sentences from Shaw's analysis of the play (in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*) will perhaps best serve to tempt those who do not already know *Brand* to buy it and read it. "Observe that neither Ibsen nor Cervantes is incredulous, in the Philistine way, as to the power of ideals over men. Don Quixote, Brand, and Peer Gynt are all three men of action seeking to realise their ideals in deeds. However ridiculous Don Quixote makes himself, you cannot dislike or dispise him, much less think that it would have been better for him to have been a Philistine like Sancho . . . and Brand, made terrible by the consequences of his idealism to others, is heroic. Their castles in the air are more beautiful than castles of brick and mortar; but one cannot live in them."

The British Empire, by Sir Charles P. Lucas (Macmillan, 2/- net).

This is an exceedingly well-written and useful little book—particularly useful just now when most of us who have troubled to think about the world crisis have realised our need of more exact historical knowledge of what the British Empire actually is, and how it has come to be what it is. The writer's professed aim is "to state as shortly, as simply, and as honestly as he can, how this Empire came into being, and what it means; to explain that it is not a mere creation of force and fraud; and to try to prove that it is at once the interest and the duty of all Englishmen, poor as well as rich, to maintain it." Successive chapters deal with England in the making; The Seventeenth Century—Trade and Settlement; The Eighteenth Century—the Century of War; 1815-1915; The Empire at the Present Day (with much useful information as to the constitutions and methods of government and adminis-

tration of the various Dominions, Crown Colonies, and Protectorates); and The Meaning and Use of the Empire, which raises—and discusses with a considerable amount of good sense—many questions of interest to those subjects of the Empire who happen also to be Socialists. After studying the historical chapters of this book the Socialist reader will be all the better able to decide for himself how nearly the British Empire approximates to one of those Federations of Commonwealths which, as Mr. Shaw has put it, "are now the only permanently practicable form of Empire."

How the War Came (I.L.P. Labour and War Pamphlets, No. 1.—1d.)

The less said about this unfortunate production the better. Its historical "facts" are on a par with its grammar and its style—and that is saying a good deal. Its alleged purpose is to "restore some balance and accuracy to popular criticism." Accuracy—in this connexion—strikes one as funny; and its idea of restoring balance seems to consist in exaggerating and perverting as frantically as possible in the opposite direction to that taken by the bulk of "popular criticism" at the present time. One shrinks appalled from any attempt to criticise its muddled chaos of half-truths, misunderstandings, and (apparently) deliberate mis-statements. It is all the more regrettable because—heaven knows!—there was abundant need to "restore some balance" to popular criticism. But, quite obviously, the war has knocked the anonymous author of the pamphlet off his balance, also; so that confusion only becomes worse confounded. The latter part—the "Chronicle of Events compiled from the Official Papers published by the European Governments"—is certainly better done than the earlier historical summary; but one expects something more from a Socialist party's pamphlet on the causes of a European war than a resumé of the diplomatic squabbles which immediately preceded it.

After the War, by G. Lowes Dickinson (Fifield. 6d. net).

"The ideal of the future," writes Mr. Dickinson, "is federation; and to that ideal all the significant facts of the present point. It is idle for States to resist the current. Their trade, their manufactures, their arts, their sciences, all contradict their political assumptions." He accordingly proceeds to outline a scheme for a "League of Peace"—an alliance of Great Powers "based on a treaty binding them to refer their disputes to peaceable settlement before taking any military measures." But there are two points of view which appear to contradict Mr. Dickinson's assumptions, both of them illustrated, moreover, by quotations he himself gives in the early pages of this pamphlet. There is the Commercial point of view:—

"If Germany were extinguished to-morrow, the day after to-morrow there is not an Englishman in the world who would not be the richer. Nations have fought for years over a city or a right of succession; must they not fight for 250 million pounds of yearly commerce?"—*Saturday Review*, Sept. 11th, 1897.

And there is the Militarist point of view (based on the Commercial one):—

"Germany strikes when Germany's hour has struck. That is the time-honoured policy of her Foreign Office. . . . And, gentlemen, it is an excellent policy. It is, or should be, the policy of every nation prepared to play a great part in history."—Lord Roberts, at Manchester, 1912.

Lord Roberts, observe—not General Bernhardt; and the *Saturday Review*—not the *Lokal-Anzeiger*.
J.F.H.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

German Philosophy in Relation to the War, by Prof. J. H. Muirhead (John Murray, 2/6 net.)

The Russian Problem, by Prof. Paul Vinogradoff (Constable, 1/- net).

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