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THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

“The working-class and the employing class have nothing in common.” And employing-class education is not good enough for the workers.

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THE LABOUR COLLEGE

13 Penywern Road, Earl's Court, S.W.5

THE PLEBS

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



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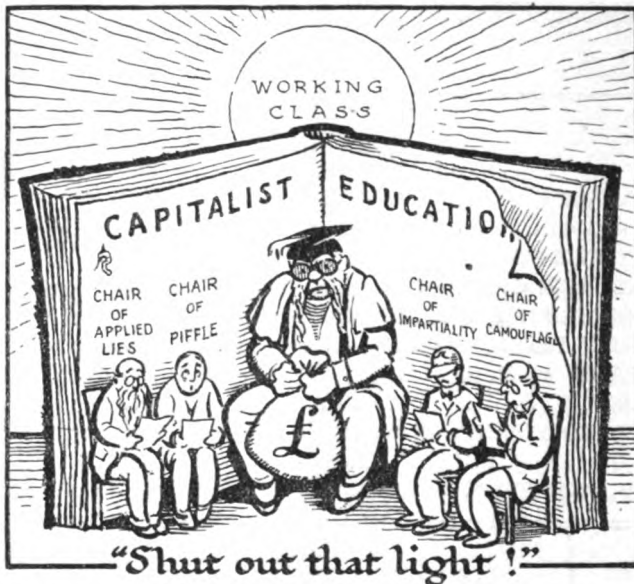
OUR POINT OF VIEW

IN a recent number of The PLEBS we urged on all our friends the present need for concentrating on the old, old issue—Independence or Co-Partnership in Working-Class Education. We cannot do better than begin this first number of our new series by saying again that we are out with "the same old slogan." Eleven years ago, when the Plebs League was founded, it needed more courage than it does to-day to make that Declaration of Independence. It was a fight then against big odds, though it must be set down to the credit of the enemy that they were wide awake enough to realise the seriousness of the Plebs' challenge. To-day, things have changed. The odds are on our side now, and we are fighting a winning battle. The other side has been forced to withdraw from position after position. But a good many victories have been weakened, if not lost altogether, for lack of the final decisive blow. It is our job to see that there is no slackening until the Co-Partners and the Impartialists have been driven right out of the field.

* * *

They don't fight now as they did in the early days. Having felt the force of our artillery—or should we say, our snipers?—they have discovered the saving virtues of Camouflage. Their present strategy is to fake their position to look as much as possible like ours, and to steal our watchwords. They are shouting loud, for instance, for "Workers' Control" of Education. They still, indeed, mumble "Non-Political," yet more and more they are driven to rely on the power of the Labour Party to realise certain of their ambitions. And no longer do they

brand as "mere propaganda, not education at all," an education which, like that we insist upon, has definite, practical ends. On the contrary, they nowadays preach the "danger" of mere "revelling amidst the things of the mind," and the need for a "social purpose"; and their latest aim is to be "the educational expression of the working-class movement desirous of *controlling its own destiny*."*



With grateful acknowledgements to Art Young, in "The Liberator," July, 1920.

"Prave words as you shall see in a summer's day"—as a Welshman of other days once remarked! Let us make it our task to see that no one is taken in by them.

* * *

For what is the point of "workers' control," if, as the *W.E.A. Recommendations on Adult Education* declare, it "does not imply the giving of any particular complexion of teaching in the classes"? "Workers' control" of the hour at which a class meets, one supposes, or of the colour of the lecturer's eyes! (Green is doubtless the desirable colour for the students'.) "Adult working-class education can only succeed," declares this Report, "if the workers feel full confidence in the education provided." They realise, you see, that the worker has grounds for distrust. Also, that education has "particular complexions." The problem is to calm the worker's fears, while yet administering to him, suitably sugared, "dope" of the "particular complexion" you consider fittest for him. And you tell him that *he* is "controlling" his own education! . . . Whitleyism as carried into practice by the W.E.A.!

* * *

No, the workers have still the old choice in front of them—Independence or Co-Partnership (and note that the co-partnership means a very junior partnership!) Their lack of confidence in a certain sort of education may be more instinctive than reasoned. But there is a reasonable ground for it, and it

* Open Letter from the General Secretary to the Members of the W.E.A. (*Highbury*, September, 1920).

is up to us to make that ground clear to them. Working-class control of education is an empty phrase unless it means full recognition of the Working-Class Point of View in education. The PLEBS stands for that Working-Class Point of View—for *real* Independence, in short. And until Ruskin College and the W.E.A.* stand for that same thing, unconditionally and without modifications, one essential part of our work must continue to be destructive criticism. . . . Let 'em have it!

WORKING-CLASS CULTURE

By A. LUNACHARSKY (Moscow, 1918)

Translated for THE PLEBS by E. BERNSTEIN

IT is usual to contrast the culture of humanity as a whole with the culture peculiar to each nation. The apparent contradiction between these two conceptions is known and understood by everybody. It is a weary business arguing with those patriots of the Chinese variety who would fain wall in their own culture and keep it separate from that common to the whole of mankind. And the war, which has torn mankind not so much into national divisions as into sections of a Military-Police Imperial character, has, indeed, helped to encourage those who preached a fervent love for everything which was one's own, and a hate and scorn of everything foreign.

But humanity is irresistibly marching towards the internationalisation of culture. To be sure the national foundations will last for a very long while. Maybe they will last for ever. But surely internationalisation does not mean that in a symphony of humanity, national impulses should be destroyed. On the contrary, it implies their abundant and free harmony. National boundaries are passed, epochs left behind, as universal history scales the great ascent. It was possible, right up to recent times, to find educated people, refined people, to whom contemporary European culture was the only one of real merit, and all the treasures of the past and the creative work of other peoples simply lumber, of interest merely to the antiquary and ethnologist. There were a still greater number who made their personal taste, or the taste of their coterie, the objective standard by which to measure the wealth of mind and art of former epochs. One lauded Byzantium another-anathematised it; a third adored the Renaissance. One could listen to the disputes of the Revivalists and hear those who were carried away by the religious seriousness and simple depth of the Early Renaissance, pronounce anathemas on the hollow and pompous XVIth century; or those others who hailed the full conquest of Humanism and the blossoming of Pure Beauty under the brush of Raphael or of Titian, and shrugged their shoulders in the presence of the "green" creative work of the XIVth and XVth centuries. And so on. No epoch but has its defenders. How long has the opinion prevailed that Baroque affords clear evidence of decline from the pure style of the Renaissance period? But more recently we have heard that the Baroquists were the great futurists of the XVIIth century. In a word, from the bits of wood of the Botocudos to the symphonies of Whistler, from the primitive dance-rhythms to Debussy, individuals and communities have fashioned their idols and cried out: "This is God, and there is no other!"

*"A permanent Joint Committee has been formed, which, it is hoped, will be a means of co-ordinating the work of Ruskin College and the W.E.A. at every possible point." (W.E.A. Annual Report, 1920.)

It seems to me that here is the turning point to a true appreciation of the worth of general culture in all its manifestations. People are coming to see that they should not immediately reject anything which may seem to them incomprehensible and absurd. Slowly they have been taught to heed one another's points of view, and the number is growing of those who take a pride in *all* the artistic acquisitions of Mankind, of those who value *all* its past, who prize the creative work of *all* nations and of *all* ages, in any of those masterpieces in which some phase of life, some emotion, found precise and powerful expression.

This, then, is the position in respect of the contrast between the conception of national and periodic cultures, and the conception of a culture belonging to the whole of humanity. But to state the problem of the relation of this culture of humanity to a *Class Culture* is a new thing, and one which has been very little discussed. Hitherto, only the Marxists have drawn such a contrast, and it has had either a cold or a bitterly hostile reception. Any talk of a *proletarian* culture



—said to have begun already to develop and to be sharply distinct from bourgeois culture in many points—has been particularly fiercely criticised. "What! Drag the class conflict even into the realm of culture? Where will it all end? We shall soon be talking not only of proletarian music, but of Bolshevik sculpture and Menshevik architecture! Those party people want to cut up everything into the squares of their horrible class measure, reduce everything to the fractional columns of book-keeping! . . ." And so forth, and so on.

How easily may one become angry and eloquent with a theme like this! How easy to batter the "fanatics of schism," from the standpoint of "one common Ideal"! But this is the old kind of phraseology. Partly it serves as a shield for mental laziness, partly it hides the feeling that for the devotees of an old and gloomy culture, night—in which all cats are black—serves as the best background. Scientific socialism, which among other principles has established that most important one, the principle of *the class character of every culture* (with the exception of the most primitive one and the future socialist one) cannot remain standing outside the temple of Art, on the gates whereof eclectics have written—TABOO.

There is a widespread idea that it is personality which really creates the value of culture. Yet it is only in the purely mystical view of personality that it can be considered a first source of creativeness. The supposition that the individual

spirit lies outside analysis has been so resolutely set aside by science, and the results of such analysis have so markedly enriched human thought, that it is impossible to doubt the necessity of asking "Whence did personality *arise*, and *whereby* is its nature *determined*?" Assuming that we reduce to simplicity, for the sake of physiology, the force of faculties, the evident talents of any given personality, suppose we explain it by heredity or variability, even so, the province which belongs to social-psychological investigation is in no sense lessened. We may trace certain ideas and emotions, we connect them and explain them with more or less clearness and order, but still it is a problem for sociology as to *what kind* these ideas and emotions are, and why they have precisely shown themselves in a given connection.

Man from his infant days—as a *tabula rasa*—begins to be covered with the writings of life. Hence on the kind of impressions the environment first makes, on the first acts of kindred, on the first efforts to communicate with those removed from the home, the school, the social surroundings in which he happens to live, the whole content of the soul of a given personality will depend. A man acquires his ideas from some school or tendency of thought, and his sentiments from some sect or party. They will form a particular blend which corresponds with the local and social circumstance that falls to the lot of a given personality. The first stratum will project into and transform those which follow; and so gradually there will be built up a man's personality in all the phases of its individuality, while its physiological characteristics will determine the greater or lesser brightness of its experience, its tone of reactions, its fertility of creative work—but only these, and not the content of the experiences and of the creative work. It is unlikely that in a complex society there should be an exact agreement in the vital surroundings of two or more persons. But the thing which matters most in this case is the *relative* agreement of the surroundings, which makes people akin to each other spiritual kinsmen, using one and the same language, both in the direct and metaphorical sense.

The experiences and impressions, the forces which play their part in a spiritual economy, are not all of the same strength. Some of them are dominant and durable. They have a way of making all the others conscious. They force their imprint on to everything casual and secondary. Everybody knows that the emotions are more directly bound up with the will, and are usually more powerful than an idea. Everybody admits that those emotions most closely connected with the basal necessities of life are marked by a particular potency, and very readily assume the character of "dominants." Now the proposition that Hunger and Love exercise sway over a human being should be extended. A human being does not seek merely the gratification of the primary appetites. He has long since learned to appreciate the importance of "surplus" wealth—especially if he happens to belong to the ruling classes of society. Yet this never leads to satisfaction. For with every increase of it there is a corresponding increase of the individual's power over his surroundings, over other people, and so on.

But it is not only wealth which bestows prerogatives on an individual, and lifts him above the common level. Fame, noble descent, immediate and actual political power, all do this. An individual tends to fight for all these things if once the appetite has been stimulated. But especially those who have once tasted the delicious wine of privilege and power will use all their power to defend and to extend their social conquests.

In this struggle, on the one hand for wealth and power, and on the other in self-defence against exploitation by the ruling classes, are created all those natural associations and fraternities of people, having almost identical interests, which are called *classes*, and from those unions arise parties, sects, schools and so forth. We must not imagine that this interest is at all times *conscious*, or even that he who realises it devotes to it all his conscience and all his fidelity. But in the depths of sub-consciousness, interest, in conjunction with all the other habits produced by circumstances, affects the entire soul of an individual and shapes it into forms proper and fitting to it. Hence an individual who fashions a world-conception or finds it ready and accepts it, believes perfectly sincerely that he is pursuing "the objective" standard only of "Goodness, Truth and Beauty." Anyone who is detached, who stands back a little, who plays the part of an investigator, can discern the great social formations which clearly reveal themselves amid all that is accidental and exceptional. When he has classified world-conceptions, works of art, etc., he will find that the basis of similar forms are similar interests which may be conscious or unconscious.

The fabric of culture may be approached with a pedant's or an idler's unmannerliness, simply to pry for motives "of gain" in every form of activity. To do this, however, is not to apply to the study of culture a socially-analytical, *class* method. Our business is the individual's unconscious and fatal subjection to his primary interests, and particularly to the interests of his group. Take, for example, any aristocrat, any representative of the great bourgeoisie. Each has a tradition created by his ancestors. His kindred and friends hold the same convictions as he does with regard to the saving virtue of strong conservatism, and of the foundations of society hallowed by antiquity; or the need of "energetic, experienced, capable people" in the management of commerce. These people are quite sincere, and it is with alarm that they speak of the ruin of all culture which will be brought about by the triumph of their class-foes. Things really look like that to them. They are quite sincere when they clench their fists and set their teeth and prepare to fight to the utmost to save mankind from "anarchy." Ask them, however, what it is that led them to such judgements—and if you are at all given to analysing things, you will find that, in spite of all they might say to the contrary, sentiment founded on interest will utter its word of authority. While a class—even an exploiting class—is healthy and strong and has a future before it, its individual members will often be daring and self-sacrificing for the sake of its common interests. But if a cynical, baldly-egoistic interest begins to assert itself in any class, then we may take that as a clear sign of its decay and swift destruction.

And so, on the soil of the interest of one or other powerful group of society there grow up particular cultures, inwardly connected, unique. Ideas of the world and of God, of justice and of morality, of society and the laws of its development; the conception of economics; the organisation of the means of life; and all the aspects of Art—all these must have coherence, in order that the culture should be compact and durable. One and the same spirit must direct every part of it as far as possible. For if there should be contradictions within the culture of any class, then that class is weakened and there follows needless expenditure of force. But the main thing is this. It is essential that there should be no collision between the ideas, feelings, and forms which the culture has organised and the *root principle*—*i.e.*, the primary interests of a given group, those indispensable to its very life, its growth, its power, and its dominion in

society. To be sure both history and present-day facts show that there are societies in which control does not belong to a single group, but to several. So, in our time, in Germany, or England, there exist side by side the culture of later feudalism and the culture of the great bourgeoisie, in many respects far removed from each other. But their class antagonisms and cultural differences become more and more obscure. Landlords are more and more frequently becoming managers of business, while the magnates of the bourgeoisie look on themselves ever more definitely as an aristocratic caste of rulers.

The ruling classes determine the culture of a nation and of a state, but they do not directly create it. The workers create the materials of culture, while the intelligentsia—the specialists in intellectual and artistic work—create the forms of its spirit. The intelligentsia, holding a peculiar position, a class having no direct power, being as a rule dependent, its individual members holding very different positions on the social ladder, professes, as regards culture, to be somewhat removed from the immediate conflict. But it cannot impart any definite influence to the fundamental lines of the prevailing culture. There is only one way in which a member of the intelligentsia can obtain unusual power—when he joins the lower classes who are lifting their heads. This can only happen when there is a real spiritual affinity between him and the masses of the people. Apart from that, only demagogism can result, and that is a negative and worthless thing.

The classes in subjection have some share, indeed, in the culture of their lords. Crumbs from the master's table fall to the people. But the crumbs are rare, and their very nature is often misunderstood or despised by the class which suffers oppression. So long as it is so crushed down as to be able to bother itself only about daily bread, about the bare necessities of existence, its culture will be poor. If here and there we chance upon forms of amazing freshness, we must not imagine that such treasures are the outcome of oppression. No, they are memorials of a time when life was comparatively free and of a primitively democratic type. The subjection to which the peasantry of different countries and periods were exposed reflected itself in the domain of culture as a shocking decline of national creative activity. But the condition of the proletariat was still worse. Torn from nature, bound to soulless machines, deprived of leisure, doomed to an existence of monotony and poverty, the mill-worker and the factory-worker for the first time in his life began to grow savage. From the writings of those who have investigated the first stages in the development of big capitalism there blows on us the blast of a chilling dread when we read of the lives of the workers.

The fact is that the proletariat is the other side of the capitalist medal; that it is connected with the manufacturing town, the world market, and technical science; that it possesses unity and discipline (in the first instance not voluntary) which are bound to be the cause of its further and vaster development. Like preceding classes, the proletariat, growing in numbers and influence, makes cultural demands which are ever more multiform, and reveals an ever more multiform creative activity. The workers have already begun to forge a culture of their own in the gloomy basement of the palace of capitalism. This culture is to begin with, of the fighting order—a culture necessary in the combat with oppressors—but afterwards it will become a culture of the thinking order, a culture which will strive to realise working-class ideals of Truth and Beauty.

Let us now glance at the views most widely held concerning the problem of the culture of humanity as a whole, and that of the proletariat in particular.

You have probably come across people of culture who in criticism of our remarks upon the proletariat and its tasks, speak of the "yokel of the future." To them the rise of the worker is the rise of the benighted mob—a mob which rates boots above Shakespeare, and the Venus of Milo less than a pot of tea. To them it is a kingdom of the street, impudent, noisy, having no place for any kind of art. Or, worse than that, perhaps, something which demands an art of its own, an art of Rag, Tag and Bobtail, the terrible tawdriness of market mountebanks. Horror and panic! That is what these people feel when they think of the progress of the worker's movement. They think not at all of the horrors of death connected with "production for the market," of the terror on which the worship of "the gold-bedecked belly" is based. They think not of the budding genuises who have perished, nor of those many others who, while cursing themselves, chose instead of the true muse a prostituted and fashionable art which brought in money.

Another section of cultured people become missionaries of culture. Is it impossible to go half way to welcome the oncoming proletarian wave? Should not the "children of light" go down into the holes of "the blind moles"? There is a good deal of sincerity among such well-disposed missionaries. To a certain extent their work is of value. In the material which they bring to the people there is certainly much treasure which is essential as a basis of any culture whatsoever. Yet these treasure-bearers are somehow quite oblivious to the fact that the proletariat comes towards them with treasure of its own. They do not realise that it is not only a question of what they should teach, but of what they might learn from the workers. Proletarian culture, without doubt, is still in its infancy. So far it has manifested itself in forms of organisation and struggle against oppression. But there is a saying of Marx's—"Yes, these are an infant's shoes, but if you compare them with the worn-out boots of the bourgeoisie you will see that they are those of a baby giant!"

(To be continued.)

A FABLE

"SIXPENCE," said a Worker who called himself Class-Conscious, "is a lot of money for a Mere Magazine." And he went to the Movies.

And he paid one-and-threepence for a seat—Without a Murmur. And all he brought away with him was a Headache.

Think it over.

Q. IMPORTANT: Will you let us have your orders each month by the 15th at latest? We want a record circulation for our New Series, and we can do it *easily* if our friends will all shove together.

EDUCATION TOWARDS COMMUNISM

THE advent of the Communist Party ought to be of great assistance in the educational work of the PLEBS and the Labour College. I have been giving some thought to the projected activities of the Party for the coming winter, particularly with reference to the matter of educational classes, which rank as of first importance in the revolutionary movement. We intend to appeal to all our branches and members to give this matter the attention it deserves, and to see that every single member at all capable of coaching others in economics, history, or any subject of revolutionary import is found something to do in this direction. We have already decided at a recent meeting of the Executive to urge and advise the linking up with the Plebs League of all branches engaged in the running of these classes, thus assisting to place the whole matter of working-class education into one definite department, under the guidance and direction of those specialising in that particular field.

This it is advisable to do, and at once. If we are to give the true significance to the trend of world events, then it must be recognised that to have our education organised is a first essential of the working-class movement. The struggle in Germany and the conquest of power by the Italian workers definitely indicates that the forces let loose in Russia and consummated in the revolution in that country are not sporadic and cannot be isolated, but that they are social forces of world-wide moment. Any ferment manifesting itself in any country must sooner or later assume that character, and cannot be prevented from orienting in the direction of social revolution. This applies equally to this country, and means that some of these days what *appears* to be simply a *strike* outbreak will in reality be the beginning of an insurrection and possibly a revolution itself.

It is imperative, therefore, that we should in the meantime profit from the experiences of the movement in other countries, particularly with regard to education. Education itself is transient, though the laws that govern it may be permanent, and the economics we teach will on the morrow of the revolution have to give way to the teaching of socially constructive economics of a new order. This makes it more essential than ever that our machinery should be organised in a special department, and I think all students, as well as tutors, should make a point of having their class linked up with the College. If that is done and the PLEBS supported whole-heartedly by the classes the results should be more than gratifying.

ARTHUR McMANUS

DENNIS HIRD MEMORIAL

The Governors of the Labour College appeal for subscriptions to a fund in memory of Dennis Hird, and are asking the two unions controlling the college to subscribe £200 from the college funds. The whole of the money raised will be handed to the widow and family of the late Mr. Hird. All subscriptions should be sent to W. W. Craik, Principal, the Labour College, 13 Penywern Road, Earl's Court, S.W.5

THE GENERAL PLAN OF OUR STUDIES

E DUCATION is, and must always be, a means to an end. To some it is a means to personal satisfaction, to others a means to a living; to us it is a means to the Great End—the Social Revolution, which will free labour from the constraints of capitalism, and provide the pre-conditions for a “new heaven and a new earth.” What, above everything, we need to know is the nature and source of the social forces pointing towards that end, and the quantity and quality of the obstacles likely to arise. Thus Social Forces, their nature, origin, and end, constitute the general subject of our inquiries.

But what are “social” forces? To answer this question we must know just what we mean by the term “Society”—what it is, what it has been, and (therefore) what it is likely to become. We must be possessed of an accurate working knowledge of (1) social structure and the mode of its maintenance; (2) social changes and the secret of their permanence or otherwise.

On every ground the record of the past—history in the widest sense—provides us with our starting-point and subject matter. A happily-invented myth credits Galileo with having opened the whole movement of modern science with a manifesto in a sentence, “and still it moves.” Hegel (the Lenin of the professors) completed, closed and sealed the cycle of metaphysical speculation with the still more revolutionary aphorism, “Nothing is—all is becoming!” Our work is to study in detail these sayings, and the anticipation of these, Heraclitus’ “All things flow.” They indicate the general plan of our studies. What flows?—that system of inter-relations and interdependencies which in their totality we call Human Society. Whence does it flow?—from the general universe in which human beings and their relations arise as special details of a general flux. Whither does it flow?—to the inevitable end dictated by its nature, the conscious co-operation of all for the commonweal. And if any doubt the inevitability, we refer him to the science of History.

History at first glance presents us with an aggregation of apparently haphazard events. The record of these events in their bare time sequence is properly called the annals of mankind. We are concerned with the past—not theoretically, but practically—as a means of estimating the potentialities of the present and the probabilities of the future. History is to the political and social scientist what the laboratory is to the chemist and physicist; what the record of the rocks is to the palæontologists. It is the record of the race’s experiments in social organisation, and the problem is—to extract from the annals of mankind a working concept (hypothesis or law) of social causation.

At first glance it would appear that these annals of mankind provide no more than a record of innumerable displays of mere individual wilfulness. Acts are committed and deeds performed apparently in defiance of all known standards of reason and common sense. If this were all, a science or philosophy of history would be impossible. But amid much that appears inconsequent and irrational there is also much that continues and endures. Languages grow. Literatures accumulate and develop. Religions consolidate—their priesthoods are established and persist, even though the religion become transformed out of all recognition. Customs become laws, and moral codes are elaborated and enforced. And although empires and creeds pass, decay, and are disrupted,

institutions persist, with modifications, even into our own time. Knowledge, in particular, "grows from more to more." It is this persistent element in the annals of mankind which provides the possibility and the theme of History.

Even the wilfulnesses of men—their irrationalities—so far as they are activities of like-natured beings, must be capable of classification and ultimately reducible to some law or generalisation. Here history is served by the scientific study of man as an organism, by Biology and Psychology, which also provide generalisations of man's deliberate and reasoned acts: generalisations of the nature and development of the brain and its capacity.

But history deals, not with individual men living in independent isolation, but with men in groups, masses and crowds—with man as forever dependent upon his fellow-man; and all men upon institutions and things. Over and above the study of man as a thinking, feeling, and willing organism (Psychology), is the study of man in his associations. Furthermore, just as in the human body cells die and the body persists, so the mass combinations of men endure while generations of individuals perish. It is the law of this persistence of social aggregates that constitutes the subject matter of the Science of Sociology in general and history in particular. Sociology is the general science of man's group combinations. History is the particular descriptive science of the process whereby any society or group of societies has come into being. It is a systematic grouping of the materials for complete sociological generalisations.

If we are to reduce the chaotic aggregate of the annals of mankind to an intelligible history, we must find some thing or things which persist all through the record of man's activities. Two such things stand out, plain and obvious—Man and the Earth upon which he moves. Each of these has changed, is changing, and must ever change—but as man is inconceivable apart from the earth upon which he depends for subsistence—the earth from which he arose, and of whose total nature he forms a part—man's dependence upon and distinction from the rest of nature gives the permanent element in all history.

The Earth versus Man

History is the record of a process, a growth, a transformation, a flux. If man is always dependent upon the earth (which is, in itself and speaking in general, to-day what it was when man first appeared) why has there been historical development at all? That which remains can hardly be the cause of that which no longer is. What is the cause of change in man's mass activities?

Man always depends upon the earth; but the earth by no means always presents the same face to man. He needs food—she offers him here fruits in abundance; there, thorns and poison-berries; here, edible game; there, carrion birds and beasts of prey. He asks for bread, and she, on occasion, replies with stones and sand. He needs water; she gives him to-day a deluge, to-morrow a drought. He needs a shelter and a home; she presents him with here a Sahara, there a Mississippi swamp—here a bleak upland swept by icy blasts, there a luxuriant valley rendered a plague pit by malarial swamps. In times of stress induced by her moods, he is driven wandering in search of food; she bars his way with inaccessible mountain ranges, foodless wastes, trackless bogs and beast-haunted jungles. Anon she lavishes upon him a soil which yields abundance in return for little or no effort. Elsewhere she inflicts upon him the extremes of relentless hostility. She is mother, step-mother, and mother-in-law all in a breath!

Where man can live, and at what cost in toil, trouble and effort, depends in the first instance upon soils, sites, climates, and general geographical conditions; where he may go, upon geographical restraints.

But this is only the beginning. Geographical conditions, we may grant, decide, within limits, which parts of the earth can be inhabited, by what types of men, and by what intensity of population. The drying-up of waters, the volcanic and seismic dislocation of the relations between land and sea—all these have induced mass movements of men in space. Can geography alone account for history—man's mass movements in time? The climate and geographical conditions of Greece remain the same to-day as in the days of Pericles; what accounts for the history of Greece prior to, and since, the Periclean age?

Man versus the Earth

The limits of variation of the earth considered in itself are, relatively, narrow. But the importance of a given area or location to man depends not alone upon its natural potentialities. The important thing is his power to realise these, and on occasion to modify them. Mountain ranges which bar a people from wandering out may equally bar an enemy from raiding in. The sea which ends all advance to a savage provides a world's highway to the people skilled in the use of ships. The prairie which offers a waste of ill-digestible grass to a primitive savage offers abundance to barbarians who have attained the arts of pasturing domesticated beasts. The periodical overflow of the Nile, which was, no doubt, an unmitigated nuisance to the Palæolithic savage, is the life-saving gift of kindly gods to men who have acquired a plough and learned to till. The barren hillsides of the South Yorkshire moors, classed as *waste* in the "Domesday Book," become Sheffield and all that Sheffield implies to people who have learned the possibilities of coal, iron, and steel.

The significance of the earth to man depends upon his knowledge of how to realise its possibilities. The significance of geography is economic. History arises as an outcome of the interaction between geographical facts and the achievements of human understanding.

The Historical Conditions of Understanding

Upon what does this human understanding depend? There must obviously be brains to think (located in the appropriate part of living bodies), and experience to provide alike objects and materials of thought.

The annals of mankind are filled with accounts of conflicts of *opinion*. Differing beliefs in religion, morals, law, and politics have all provided, within the limits of the same race and society, excuses for struggle and slaughter. Being conflicts of "opinion" they could only have been determined by the growth of knowledge in a negative sense. It is when men do not know that they are left free to guess, and squabble about their guesses; ignorance, in this sense, is an historical factor of great importance. But why should men, being ignorant, be so in such unequal and irregular fashions? And why be in their opinions "so exceeding stiff and strong?" Why should men of approximately average mental capacity be so sharply divided into ignorant and knowing? Have the men of the greater brain capacity always been of one opinion, and the men of lesser capacity all on the other side?

The facts are notoriously contrariwise. Plato would seem to have possessed a far finer brain than George Stephenson—but he built no "Rocket." The

learned Fathers of Salamanca were equipped with far more learning than Christopher Columbus—but he got to the West Indies while they were proving the feat impossible. Constantine, who made Christianity a State religion, was mentally and morally inferior to the Pagans Marcus Aurelius (who preceded) and Julian (who succeeded) him. None the less Christianity became established. Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx differed enormously less from each other in quality of brain development than their common average did from the normal of their contemporaries, yet their opinions of Socialism were as opposite as the poles.

Again, if races develop at a rate proportionate to their variation in brain-power, those of the highest capacity will first emerge from savagery into civilisation, and, by virtue of their greater capacity, progressively widen the difference between themselves and the rest of mankind. The hierarchy of nations will express exactly their varying averages of brain-power. But if this is so, how can we account for extinct civilisations, for Crete and Yucatan? And how account for the varying status of Assyria, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome? If lateness of development argues inferior capacity, how account for the rise of Britain, Germany and Japan? There is, be it noted, no evidence available to show that the abstract average brain capacity of the modern Egyptian is any less than that of his ancestors of the 18th Dynasty, or that the bourgeoisie of Pendleton are more naturally gifted than their ancestors of the days of Penda. Why, then, has there been history? And why *this* sort of history?

T. A. JACKSON

(*To be continued.*)

THE NEED FOR SCIENCE TEXTBOOKS

THE list of new textbooks now under consideration by the Plebs E.C. invites comment on the fact that the subjects to be treated extend considerably beyond what has hitherto been the scope of independent working-class education in this country. If up to now history and economics have occupied the field almost, if not quite, exclusively, it is not because we have accepted the line of demarcation laid down between ourselves and other organisations by G. D. H. Cole, nor because we regard these as the only topics on which there is a specifically proletarian point of view. It is owing to the limitation of our resources, and the paramount need for counteracting the danger of the approved sources of misinformation in matters most nearly affecting our interests, that emphasis has been laid on teaching of this kind.

The difference between the educational policies at present in vogue in some Labour circles and that which we advocate is two-fold. The former aim at removing "misunderstanding between class and class," etc., by giving the worker the misunderstanding of the governing class; we are concerned with removing class antagonism by absorbing the parasite class into a proletariat to which knowledge has shown the way to power. They are concerned primarily with extending the facilities of a bad educational system to greater numbers; whereas we aim at bringing into being a new educational machine. Immediately, our object is education as a means to a realisation that the proletariat is destined to be the governing class; ultimately it must be a preparation for the

time when, as the governing class, the proletariat will have it in their power to refashion one of the most pivotal institutions in a civilised community.

Our choice lies between a working-class culture and the cast-off clothes of the shopkeeping class. Industrialism has necessitated elementary schooling; more schooling has necessitated cheap teachers; the need for cheap teachers has opened the doors of the universities, which, once sheltered in academic seclusion, the preserve of the plutocracy, have become increasingly subordinated to the task of ordaining new chaplains for the pirate ship. Forty years ago Huxley fondly dreamed that science would soon destroy the parasitic culture of his time. But Christianity has survived Darwin; and the history teaching of the universities only convinces its votaries that "nothing is true, nothing is new, and nothing is worth while." If history were probed, like the physical world, to estimate the forces which make for change! . . . But it is the business of the historian to see that they do not change. Or else how comes it that while the seats of learning have trained great investigators in the physical sciences, they have failed to produce any single contribution towards a correlation of social changes comparable in any way to what the Evolution theory achieved for biology?

Meanwhile the thinking worker naturally looks at history from the standpoint of the ever-present realities of his life—production and the class antagonisms related thereto. He finds that from this angle historical events assume a new significance; that one common factor operates through all. In doing so, he offers the only coherent attempt to interpret social development yet made. That is why we claim that the proletariat has already made a specific contribution to human knowledge; for it was because Marx could look at history through the eyes of a worker that he saw at work the forces in terms of which a general interpretation of civilisation is possible. It is also for this reason that we maintain that the point of view of the class conscious worker is *scientific communism* (Engels). For science aims not merely at *collecting* facts, like the orthodox historians, but at *correlating* them; and in science we are bound to accept a hypothesis which can correlate a large body of facts, until a more embracing generalisation is forthcoming. It is for the critics of scientific communism to find one.

Modern science is essentially a product of the machine age; its progress has been dependent on the tool—on exact measurement made possible only with machine-made instruments. It has been an interpretation of experience in terms of the machine; the conception of the living organism as a machine of chemical and physical processes is accepted as a working hypothesis to-day by all physiologists in practice. When Marx was writing, evolution was in its birth throes and the mechanistic conception of life had not been enunciated. It was necessary then for Dietzgen to rise and vindicate scientific knowledge as opposed to the theosophistries of the metaphysicians; the attempt to give a mechanistic interpretation of human affairs was beyond the vision of contemporary science. The position has changed in some respects. To-day, Prof. Karl Pearson writes in *The Grammar of Science*:—"The field of science is unlimited, its material is endless, every group of natural phenomena, every phase of social life, every stage past or present in development, is material for science. . . . Metaphysics are built either on air or on quicksands. . . ." And this expresses the generally current opinion in the scientific world.

All this may seem scarcely germane to the ostensible purpose of this article. In reality this is not so, because the feature which it is hoped to incorporate in Plebs teaching is pre-eminently a keener appreciation of the interdependence of the social and physical sciences, in aim and method. That is part of the task of a working-class culture, if it is to be a live, growing body of thought. Mere repetition of Dietzgen's phrases will not bring us any nearer to the goal which Dietzgen foreshadowed.

A general elementary acquaintance with the present outlook and past history of the physical sciences, the conception of the living being as a factory of chemical and physical operations, will lay the foundations of those habits of mind in which the study of history as a field for scientific generalisation can be approached. That is the scope of the textbook on *The Mechanism of Life*.

Some knowledge of the evolution of Man and of the process of heredity by which it has been brought about, is doubly important to social science. Thanks to Herbert Spencer's inept excursions into social theory, organic evolution and social development have been confused, and around this scaffolding of now discredited biological teaching, "Evolutionary Socialists" have—with a pseudo-scientific sanction—built a body of doctrine inimical to revolutionary ardour. Other issues are raised by the bearing of applied social genetics (eugenics) on the problem of the economic organisation of the family. Such questions collectively may be dealt with in a volume on *The Mechanism of Inheritance*.

Lastly, and most important of all, not only in revealing Man as the product of natural forces, but in the actual work of propaganda and education, some account must be taken of what the new school of psychologists has done to relate human action and the ideas associated with it to fundamental animal instincts reacting to the impact of economic circumstance. This textbook on the *Mechanism of Action* is already completed in manuscript.

To our critics all this will be so much more "deadening fatalism." To which we reply that to think about anything it is necessary to assume its existence in determinate relations for the purpose of thinking at all. Looking back on the Utopias of the past, the thinking worker will need some reasonable justification for believing that he is not destined to the same sort of fate as his predecessors who have immolated themselves on the altar of the "Will to Crusade."

P. L. E. B.

THE MECHANISM BEHIND THE MIND

(*Psychology of the Normal and Sub-normal*. By HENRY H. GODDARD. Kegan Paul, 1919. 25s. net.)

THE importance of a knowledge of modern determinist psychology as a necessary part of the intellectual equipment of educated proletarians has not hitherto been sufficiently recognised. Eden and Cedar Paul deserve our gratitude for the stress they lay in *Creative Revolution* on the bearing of the new psychology on the human problems which to-day confront socialists. They point out the way in which the conclusions of modern psychology on the one hand explode and render untenable the theory on which "democracy," as preached by the elders of the I.L.P., is based; and on the other hand furnish us with the materials for a constructive theory of education and propaganda, a standard by which the suitability of particular subjects of study, or methods of presentation of those subjects, can be judged, a clear conception of the mental mechanism underlying

class-consciousness, and an hypothesis of the nature of the individual machines the collective responses of which to their environment we call Economic Determinism.

The new psychology satisfies the Marxian student by extending the conception of universal causation—determinism—to the whole realm of human thought and human action. The greatest advances in our knowledge of human nature are due to the work of Freud and his followers (including under the latter certain schools which have broken away from the Freudian position in matters of more or less importance, notably Jung and Adler). The work of this school is likely to have an effect, in human affairs, only comparable to that which has followed the work of Darwin and his followers. It would be out of place to attempt here a summary, however brief, of the methods and results of its work; suffice it to say that it is the study of the relations between the inborn instinctive animal tendencies, chiefly unconscious, which are the ultimate prime movers of all action, thought, behaviour and conduct, on the one hand, and the experiences acquired during life, by the action upon man of his environment, on the other; these acquired experiences altering, intensifying, combining or inhibiting the peculiar actions natural to the inborn tendencies; the behaviour and thoughts being as rigidly determined by these factors as are happenings in the inorganic world.

The work of the Freudian school teaches us that human thought and human action are largely determined by mental "complexes"; that is to say, by unconscious associations of instinctive tendencies and emotional feelings grouped or organised around ideas or experiences acquired through the action on us of our environments. The "nature" or "character" of a person is largely the expression of the particular complexes which most influence his thoughts and actions. The degree to which a person is reasonable, or rational, on any subject—given the inborn capacity to reason—depends on the extent to which organised experience, knowledge, science, is embodied in or associated with the relevant complex, and is capable of altering the direction of the blind instinctive animal tendencies.

A man's personality is made up of a number of complexes. An ardent tory, liberal, or bolshevik will each have a political complex, of which he is usually quite unconscious (fondly believing that his political convictions are the result of his reasoning); a complex different in each, and, except in so far as it is secondarily "rationalised" with scientific arguments, quite irrational and impervious to reason. Other complexes are built up around a man's pursuits or hobbies—cricket, stamp-collecting, betting, boozing—anything having for him emotional significance; others around his intimate personal affairs, family, sexual relations, etc.; others around his method of earning his living, and so forth. These complexes may again be associated to form parts of greater complexes, some of which, universally present, embody the great and powerful animal instincts of maintenance, self-preservation and sex.

Prominent among such master complexes is the Ego-complex.* It is an association of the above instincts and their accompanying emotions, and of others such as the family instinct, constructiveness, acquisitiveness, self-assertion, around the experiences derived from the conditions under which the individual lives and gets his living. It embodies the idea of his daily occupation,

* For a detailed idea of the ego-complex the reader is referred to A. G. Tansley, *The New Psychology*. (Allen and Unwin, 1920; Chapter xviii.)

his desire for fullness of life, his relation to the commodities he himself produces or which, though produced by others, he enjoys; his hopes or fears, sense of security or of insecurity, ambitions, relations to his superiors or inferiors in the economic or social system—these and a host of other ideas associated with his everyday life and linked up with his deepest desires and strongest emotions constitute his ego-complex.

It is the collective resultant of the ego-complexes of a number of people all engaged in getting their living under the same or similar circumstances that constitutes the psychological basis of the class-consciousness of the proletariat. This class-consciousness is more than the sum of the individual complexes; it is reinforced by the herd or social instinct, which impels the members of a group or social unit to think and act alike, and which tends to level the thoughts and actions of the less intelligent up to the standard of the leaders. And the practical effectiveness of such a class-consciousness depends in the degree to which, in the leaders, and to a less degree in the rank and file, the instinctive emotional tendencies are reinforced and rationalised by scientific knowledge as to the nature of the environment, and the course of action most appropriate to secure the alteration of that environment in the desired direction.

Numerous recent books are available for the student who wishes to study this side of the new psychology,* though its application to the dynamic of the Class Struggle is practically a virgin field for the sociological student. This modern psychology concerns itself with the manifestations of mind; it is not concerned with the nature of the material mechanism on the existence and activity of which these phenomena of behaviour, thought, and consciousness depend. It is absolutely essential to the scientific sociologist. But most Marxian students have the healthy scepticism of the realist towards theories which cannot be brought into a relation—it may be only a hypothetical relation—with the material world of matter and energy. A great scientist, we think it was Kelvin, said that he never really considered he had explained a principle till he could make a working model that would illustrate it in action. This want is supplied by the book under review. It is throughout healthily mechanistic; it starts with a description of the known facts concerning the nervous machine, with its great integrating and associating organ, the brain; and it amplifies what we know about the relation between the working of nervous mechanisms and the behaviour that ensues by introducing hypotheses such as the conception of the "neurone pattern" which give us a useful idea of the probable machine underlying instincts, acquired habits, complexes and memories, a pattern of nerve paths along which particular nervous impulses meet with little resistance to their flow. Such hypotheses are justified, as enabling us to express the more complex phenomena of the nervous system in terms of the more simple so long as they fit the known facts of the case, enable us to refer to their place in the system new facts, and are not inconsistent with other known facts. They are not put forward as "truths," for truth is as yet unattainable. They are, like all the images conceived by the human mind, merely diagrams or working plans representing bits of our environment, the purpose of which is to enable us to act upon that bit of our environment in a way

* Among these we may mention:—Bernard Hart, *The Psychology of Insanity*; W. Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*; S. Freud, *Selected Papers on Hysteria and Psychoneurosis*, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, and *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*; Ernest Jones, *Psychoanalysis*; A. Adler, *The Neurotic Constitution*; C. Jung, *Analytical Psychology*; W. McDougall, *Social Psychology*; A. G. Tansley, *The New Psychology*.

useful to ourselves or the race. As we have no means of knowing what objective reality is like, we need not concern ourselves whether these mental diagrams are or are not exact pictures of objective reality. They satisfy the pragmatist test—they work.

The first two chapters of Goddard's book are the best general presentation known to the writer of that minimum of knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the nervous mechanism which is necessary to give stability to the study of the working of the machine (behaviour and thought). The remainder of the first part of the book is an examination of the mental processes—instinct, association, emotion, thought, reasoning, "will," etc.—an examination which never loses touch with the idea of the dependence of these processes on the working of the underlying chemico-physical mechanism of nerve cells or neurones, and the patterns or paths followed by nervous impulses in different kinds of behaviour. There is another point which makes this work of unusual value. It is this. Goddard is especially a student of the mind of the mentally defective, the feeble-minded. Now the mentally defective, including idiots, imbeciles and those individuals (morons) whose mental dullness is such that they cannot earn their living or get on in ordinary life, are individuals whose mental development is arrested at the level of that of a child, it may be a child of 2, or 7, or 11 years, according to the degree of deficiency. The mental level of a defective probably corresponds, in a sense, to that of a stage in the evolution of the animal or sub-human ancestors of man. And, just as the study of the minds of the abnormal—lunatics, hystericals, etc.—has done more than anything else to convince psychologists of the fundamentally irrational nature of normal human thought and behaviour—which man's self-esteem would never allow him to see or admit so long as psychology consisted in the introspective study of his own mind and motives—so the study of the minds of idiots and imbeciles, coupled with the study of the behaviour of the lower animals, has helped us to analyse and express in simple terms many of the bewilderingly complex processes of reasoning and "volition" which characterise the highest types of human mind.

The second part of the book deals with practical applications, more particularly to the care and management of the feeble-minded. But Chapter I of Part II, dealing largely with the question of mental levels, is of immense interest to those of us who are now challenging the whole liberal theory of Democracy, and the political and social institutions based upon it. The opening statement of the American Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal, is sufficiently disingenuous to rank alongside the most unctuous utterance of Woodrow Wilson. Men are "created," or born, *unequal*. And, just as men are born unlike and unequal in the amount of coloured pigment in the skin, hair and eyes, and in the capacity to grow tall, and in the tendency to grow stout in middle age, so men are born unlike and unequal in the capacity to earn a living, to be of service to the community, to make money, to reason, to adapt their behaviour to future ends, to stick to a distasteful job, to decide what course of action is best for themselves or for others, and so forth.

The nature of man is made up of his hereditary stock-in-trade, that is to say, his reflexes, instincts, capacity for forming associations (sagacity), comparative sensibility to feelings, emotions, etc., on the one hand, and his acquired associations between neurone patterns, memories, habits, complexes, ideas, on the

other. The hereditary mental characters are subject to the same laws of heredity and variation as those which govern hereditary bodily characters such as tallness, colour of hair, etc., characters in which individuals differ by inborn nature, and which are inherited, that is to say, tend to reappear in the descendants of the individual possessing them. The acquired characters are the result of the action upon the individual of his environment during life, and of the reactions of his nervous mechanism to that environment. Such are habits of action and habits of thought, education (acquired knowledge, learning), memories, ideals of conduct, theories, or philosophy of life. These are acquired during the life of the individual, and cannot be transmitted by heredity to the offspring.

The first great point in which men's minds differ from one another by inborn nature is sagacity, or intelligence, the capacity to reason, to form that complex kind of association which is called association by similarity; in Dietzgen's words, "abstracting the common elements out of concrete things." Intelligence is probably inherited according to the same laws as govern the inheritance of stature, colour of hair, etc. It is probably reducible to factors the presence or absence of which, in different combination, go to make up the differences between different types of thinkers. Geniuses differ from ordinary minds by an unusual development of this faculty of abstraction, of association by similarity. Creative imagination, which underlies invention, ingenuity, artistic capacity, and all the highest mental processes, depends largely on the capacity for forming associations by similarity. Where these are consciously formed we have the logical thinker; where the association occurs in the subconscious, and the result appears to issue by "intuition" or "inspiration," we have the poet, the artist, and, perhaps, also a certain class of great inventors and discoverers.

As these associations depend on neurone patterns, it is the person with a well-developed associative mechanism (sagacity), organised in useful associations or complexes by experience relevant to the subject on which he is to reason (learning), who is the good reasoner, who can think out a problem, and whose actions will be determined to the greatest extent by organised experience, and to the least extent by blind animal impulse. Given the inborn mechanism, the value of his reasoning will be determined by the profundity of his knowledge of the subject to which he applies his mechanism. A learned mathematician or scientist whose reasoning in his own subject is unchallengable may be as irrational as a hysterical girl when "reasoning" on political or economic questions on which his knowledge is limited. The opposite of intelligence is stupidity or dullness. When a group of sensations is experienced by a dull man only such images are called up associatively as have been connected on a previous occasion with the whole stimulating group; in the intelligent man other images are produced associatively, which are connected with separate elements of the stimulating group. The dull unimaginative person, who is deficient in sagacity, is often thoroughly sound and reliable in routine work—all the more so because he is impervious to new ideas. He makes the good rule-of-thumb workman or, as he calls himself, the "practical man." The erratic unpractical type of genius has probably an overdose of the capacity to form associations by similarity between the most remotely separated objects.

At the lower end of the scale we have the feeble-minded. The line between the "normal" and the feeble-minded is usually drawn on the basis of the individual's ability to live an independent existence, to make a living. Those with

insufficient power of adaptation to do this are made the care of the community, and called defective. The intelligence or inborn capacity for thought of human beings ranges in an unbroken series from that of the idiot who has the mentality of a child of one or two years old, up to that of a Socrates, a Newton, an Einstein, a Lenin. In the normal child it develops progressively up to a certain age, after which intelligence has reached its full stature, and can only be applied (education), not augmented. It has been suggested that the brain goes on developing in the more intelligent (by heredity) till the age of 20 or more years, but that the average age of arrest is about 16. The feeble-minded are cases where it is arrested previous to maturity;* they are of all grades from the idiot, to those dull persons, regarded as normal because they can maintain themselves, but incapable of any thought outside the routine habits of their life and the gratification of their appetites.

The "dull" people form the great mass of mankind (at least in Western Europe and America). We are awakening to the fact that "vast numbers of people are of less intelligence than was supposed," which fact, according to Goddard, provides "an explanation of the careers of those whose conduct has long been a problem, those whose inability to get along in the world has been attributed to ignorance, lack of education, accident or misfortune." This conclusion "surprising as it is, and difficult to believe in some cases, on the whole explains the facts of modern civilisation more clearly than anything that has been proposed" (p. 234).

It is probable that, when we have perfected our methods and standards for measuring intelligence, † intelligence like so many other characters will be found to vary symmetrically about a mean or average. In any large enough group, then, there would be occasional geniuses and idiots, a small minority of seriously defective people and also of unusually clever people, a considerable number of very dull people, and of people of moderate ability, and a vast group of mediocrities who represent the "average man," the average voter in the democratic state. We have not yet measured the intelligence of the "average man." It has been suggested that it is that of the normal mind of the 16-year-old child. But there are many indications that it is lower than we have supposed. Goddard (p. 236) suggests that it may correspond to the stage reached at the age of 13 years. As he says: "If it is ultimately found that the intelligence of the *average man* is thirteen—instead of sixteen—it will only confirm what some are beginning to suspect; viz., that the average man can manage his affairs with only a moderate degree of prudence, can earn only a very modest living, and is vastly better off when following directions than when trying to plan for himself."

No class-conscious revolutionary who has talked on social and economic topics in the workshop, no employer of labour or intelligent foreman who has tried to introduce changes in methods of doing things the advantage of which is obvious to him, nobody who has taken part in the education of adults, whether proletarian or bourgeois, nobody in short who has observed his fellow-men will be disposed to dispute this. The Northcliffes and Bottomleys and the political demagogues who flourish under "democracy" have got the measure of this

* The feeble-minded are classified according to the age of the normal child to which their level of intelligence corresponds. Thus we speak of "an imbecile age 20, mental age seven," and so on.

† Those who wish to acquaint themselves with the practical tests on which these ideas of the native dullness of the average men are founded should read Goddard, Part ii, Chapter iv, and the papers by Binet referred to therein.

great mass of the population, and, by appealing to their "belly needs," exploit them in their own interests and those of the Capitalist system.

Education cannot remedy this natural inequality. It is an acquired character. It can only make use of the hereditary stock-in-trade of intelligence with which the individual is endowed by nature; it cannot add to it. The idiot and the imbecile can be taught to be *useful*, in a degree dependent on their "mental level"; they can acquire habits by education—*e.g.*, learn to make beds, scrub floors and, in the case of higher grade defectives, learn a simple handicraft, or to act as labourer to a skilled craftsman. But they cannot be taught to think, to reason. That depends on an inborn condition of the nervous mechanism possessed in a high degree only by a few. Education can bring out and render useful *what is in a person*, it cannot augment that. Among the bourgeois and professional classes are to be found many who, though of a low level of intelligence, have been equipped by a costly education to perform the routine processes of a learned profession. They are not uncommon even in such a skilled occupation as medicine. But they have not been taught to think, for the mechanism is not there. And, in the same class we can recognise not a few who, but for the shelter afforded by hereditary wealth, and the education it can purchase, would probably be among the most helpless and hopeless denizens of slum-land.

It is important to emphasise the hereditary factor because our sentimental comrades of the "Democracy" school would have us believe that Education could be made to remedy the natural inequalities in man's inborn mental capacity. There is no ground for supposing this. It is probable that even under a Communist regime, many of those who, in capitalist society, inhabit the "slums" would still remain the most helpless and hopeless section of the community, the tendency being for the persons of low intelligence and efficiency to gravitate to the bottom.*

As this fact of the natural inequality of man, and of the low degree of the average man's intelligence becomes more widely realised, "Democracy" will be more and more openly questioned in theory, as it is already being more and more completely ignored in practice. Sentimental semi-socialists and camouflaged liberals will continue to shut their eyes to biological fact and to talk democratic catchwords and platitudes, while the governing class will continue, as long as it can, to exploit† the great dull and indifferent majority, repeating the same democratic catchwords, tongue in cheek. But already both

"Can scarce dissemble
The lies in their own hearts."

It is for the scientific socialist to brush aside sentimental considerations and plan how, in the new society, the interests of these dull people shall be safeguarded, while at the same time their reactionary and deadening influence on creative policy, and in all matters involving a long view and the acceptance of new ideas, is eliminated.

NORDICUS

‡* It must of course be recognised, on the other hand, that certain types which have sunk into the underworld through innate inability to accommodate themselves to the conditions of capitalist society—which inability does not at all imply inferior intelligence, but often the very opposite—and others who have come down through drink to which they were driven as the only escape from the horrors of reality in present society, would rise to their proper level in a better organised community.

† The formula adopted by capitalist politicians, demagogues and Press to exploit the great army of Henry Dubbs is the same as that given by Goddard for maintaining discipline in an institution for the feeble-minded, *viz.*, "Treat them as children. . . constantly encourage and praise, never discourage or scold, and keep them happy."

SOCIAL

Q.—“Our class-members have been discussing the Prohibition Movement. How do you think Prohibition would affect the working class?”

A.—Possible adverse effects would be a reduction of wages and of the standard of life through increased competition between workers more regular in their attendance at work. Men living frugal, abstemious lives, perhaps owning their own homes or having a greater amount of savings, submit to conditions and rates of pay which more happy-go-lucky, less efficient workers would reject. For this reason, doubtless, some capitalists support the Prohibition movement. Those, on the other hand, who reap a direct benefit from the “Trade,” and others who fear the consequences of the discontent such a step would provoke, are opposed to it. One must take into account also the persistence of that outlook on life analysed by Meilly in his *Puritanism*, which would neglect the provision of some means of social intercourse in place of the “pub.” The modern firm’s “welfare work” is an illustration of Puritanism brought up to date.

It is not necessary here to elaborate the point that overindulgence in alcohol by *individuals* does not cause *class* poverty, or that teetotalism would not free us from wage-slavery.

Against these possible adverse effects may be placed the following considerations:—

(1) Organisation would prevent the lowering of the worker’s standard of life and if one form of expenditure were removed, other forms—better food, clothes and houses, more and longer holidays and such like—would take its place.

(2) Even granting that to a certain extent the abstemious worker is harder to move, such a worker, once persuaded to act, would be a far more reliable fighter.

(3) Overindulgence in drinking reconciles many a potential rebel to his lot. Independence is sapped. Capitalism owes a lot to the beer-obscured brains of its victims. Not a few of our propagandists have been lost or their usefulness lessened through the same cause. The fact that at the present time the clubs and the pubs are usually centres of reactionary intrigue, and the standing example of Russia’s action in the matter, are enough to convince most people that in any revolutionary crisis virtual Prohibition would be a necessary first step.

ECONOMICS

(1) Q.—Should the present demands of the miners have the support of Marxists?

A.—No Marxist can stand idly by while any body of workers are endeavouring to get a higher price for their labour-power or to increase its value by raising their standard of life. Those who refuse to support an agitation because it will take only a portion of the surplus value of the mining industry, instead of taking over the tools and ending the appropriation of surplus value altogether, should remember that—(1) We have to take our place alongside our fellows where

we find them, and not withhold our assistance because they are not revolutionary enough for us. (2) While justifying any inroad on S.V. we can explain its cause and make possible its abolition. (3) A higher standard of life and a consciousness of power are necessary stepping stones.

With regard to the proposed interference with prices, this, too, is an indication of the growing rebellion of the wage-slave against capitalist control—a rebellion certainly foretold by Marx. To think of it! By all the laws and customs of capitalism, what right have people who have sold their labour power to have any say regarding the price of the commodity in the production of which they are engaged? Monstrous—but not to Marxians!

In pre-State-Capitalism days competition determined prices in the national and international market. And, rejecting the Vicious Circle fallacy that an advance in wages could be recovered by an advance in prices, Marxians urged the workers to organise for the purpose of maintaining and improving their standard of life by increasing the value of their labour-power. But they had a larger objective than merely to make a “corner” in labour-power, and in countless ways trade unions come into conflict with the capitalist’s right of consuming under any conditions the commodity for which he has paid.

Monopoly conditions in the mining industry made possible the transference of increased wage costs to the price of coal and gave apparent backing to the Vicious Circle Theory. This was used by our opponents to such good effect in the invariable press barrage provoked by a working-class demand, that even many workers argued that nothing was gained by advancing wages. The double-edged demand of the M.F.G.B. is a tactic based on these circumstances. It effectively counters the divide-and-conquer tactics of our opponents who want to play off one section of workers against the other. It rallies support of other unions and reveals a sense of solidarity between the more strongly-organised workers and their fellows. It makes the Vicious Circle Theory look sick by showing that wages can go up and prices go down, by commandeering profits (which would otherwise be used to reduce the taxation of the master-class).

(2) Q.—What is the application of the Marxian Theory of Value to non-manual labour “socially-necessary” to the production of a commodity—i.e., managerial and clerical labour? Both of these are indispensable under capitalist production. Do they enter into the value of the commodity? If so, what of “directive ability” on the part of “captains of industry,” etc.?

A.—Yes; socially necessary managerial and clerical labour does enter into the value of a commodity. But it is the exception nowadays for the capitalist to perform this labour. The value of such labour-power is determined, like others, by the amount of S.N.L.T. needed to reproduce it, and, needless to say, it includes cost of training manager and clerk.

When one finds modern "captains of industry" with directorships in as many as sixty companies, ranging over coal, steel, shipping, newspaper, banking, cinematograph and quack medicine concerns, one becomes sceptical about "directive ability." They are merely figure-heads, points of attraction for money capital, over which—through their banking alliances—they have command. For the rest, they can buy the brains

of the technical experts, surveyors, engineers, managers and such-like. Among the controlling few there are undoubtedly men and women who can think in a big way, foresee developments and who possess a certain amount of organising genius. Society, properly organised, would find scope and congenial work for such. They would then benefit the whole community and not merely absentee shareholders. Krassin is a prototype.

M. S.

CORRESPONDENCE

EXPLANATIONS REQUESTED

DEAR COMRADE,—Is it not surprising that some even of the more intelligent Labour "leaders"—ten years after the foundation of the Plebs League and the Central Labour College—are still apparently unable to grasp the meaning of Independent Working-Class Education, or to realise its importance? Doubtless you will have seen that at the W.E.A. Annual Demonstration, to be held in Sheffield on October 22, Ernest Bevin is to be one of the chief speakers; Bevin, who—if anybody alive should have realised it—ought to have grasped the fact that there is an Employing-Class point of view in direct antagonism to the Working-Class point of view in the subjects with which working-class students are primarily concerned! A director of an Independent Labour newspaper, speaking from a Co-Partnership educational platform!

Even more surprising—if "surprising" is the right word in this case—is it to find the name of C. T. Cramp heading the list of speakers at the Convention (held at Sheffield University) which is to follow the Demonstration. I had always understood that Cramp was at one time one of the fighters within the N.U.R. on behalf of the Central Labour College, and a contributor to (or at any rate a correspondent of) the PLEBS. He at least must be conscious of what Independent

Working-Class Education means, and of the record of the W.E.A. Further than this, he is now a leading official of a Union which jointly owns and controls the Labour College, and which is, therefore, pledged to the College's educational aims and policy. What have the Railwaymen, let alone Plebeians, to say to his appearance on the W.E.A. platform? And what do you suggest is the explanation?

Yours fraternally,

J. H. BURNS

[We would prefer to leave the explanation to Bro. Cramp himself. Our columns are open, and we certainly agree with our correspondent that an explanation seems desirable.—Ed. PLEBS.]

HEADACHES

DEAR COMRADE,—About that little Fable you print this month. I, as well as you, can promise to be candid. And I'm bound to say I *have* paid 3d. for a PLEBS and "brought away only a headache"! Don't forget we're not all advanced students.

Yours fraternally,

ONE OF THE DUBBS

[Sorry. We do our best to suit all tastes. But it's hard. And our correspondent must remember that some headaches may lead to salvation, while others are just headaches and nothing more.—Ed. PLEBS.]

NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

BRANCH DIRECTORY

ANY Plebs League member willing to form a branch in his or her locality should write to the Secretary at once, and get his address added to this list.

LONDON.—**HACKNEY.**—G. Vandome (*protem.*), 32 Queensdown Road, E.5. **STRATFORD.**—A. E. Dennington, 518 Romford Road, Forest Gate, E.7. **HAMPSTEAD.**—Miss Ivy Collins, 6 Brookside Road, Golders Green, N. **WALTHAMSTOW.**—G. W. Brain, 51 Cleveland Park Avenue, E.17. **WOOLWICH.**—L. Barnard, 84 Granby Road, Eltham, **BARKING.**—R. F. Martin, 47 Clarkson Road, Barking.

LIVERPOOL.—D. O'Hagan, 74B Limekiln Lane.

CHESTERFIELD.—F. Rogers, Rock Side, Brimington Road, Tapton.

HALIFAX.—Miss A. Crabtree, 1 Tyson Street, Parkinson Lane.

WORTHING.—H. H. Hellier, Claremont, Browning Road.

BURY.—J. Ainsworth, 24 Openshaw Street.

TREDEGAR.—F. W. Francis, 132 Charles Street, Tredegar.

LEIGH.—T. Brookes, 41 Tunnicliffe's Old Row, Firs Lane.

BRADFORD.—Mrs. A. Coates, 141 Girlington Road.

MANSFIELD.—G. J. Williams, 48 St. Andrews Terrace, Littleworth.

DERBY.—W. Ellison, 184 Brighton Road.

COVENTRY.—H. Hinksman, 11 George Eliot Road.

MANCHESTER.—J. McGee, Woodlands Lodge, Crescent Road, Crumpsall.

NORWICH.—A. Segon, 41 Stafford Street.

WORKINGTON.—M. Campbell, Rose Cottage, Staiburn.

SHEFFIELD.—J. Madin, 109 Devonshire Street.

UPPER RHONDDA.—D. W. Thomas, 29 Clark Street, Treorchy.
 PONTNEWNYDD.—W. G. Davies, Myrtle House, Pontrepiod.
 GARNANT.—D. R. Owen, Stepany Villas.

We could fill a good deal more space than is allotted to us if we printed all the encouraging letters we have received about the 6d. PLEBS. Quite a lot of optimists are taking a dozen instead of one, and nearly everybody who hasn't booked an increase has booked at least their usual order. The people who think 6d. too much for a magazine are in the minority.

Cash sent *regularly* every month is the best sort of help we can have. Unfortunately, we have had to write off a few bad debts lately, and if this catches the eye of anyone who gets the PLEBS without paying for it, he (or she) is hereby informed that a bed of thorns is the mildest thing I wish 'em. (That will do.—ED.) (I haven't started!—Sec.) (Well, let it rest at that.—ED.)

Along with the money (in some cases) have come a few candid criticisms lately; among them the suggestion that more News of the Movement would be a good thing. But may I be permitted to express the opinion that ordinary reports of the routine work of the districts are very dry reading to other districts. For instance, the fact that Mr. Binks took the chair at Little Bytham does not exactly thrill the larger industrial centres, though Mr. Binks' lady love may think Henry will be First President of the English Republic! What we want to print, and what other districts want to hear about, is some account of the progress made, and particulars of the syllabus—especially if it contains anything new. I heard, accidentally, that a class in S. Wales has lately had an interesting course of lectures on "Sex and Society," but we've had no report of it. And that's the sort of thing we want to get hold of, and which is useful to other people. We can soon make News of the Movement a valuable feature if it is forthcoming. And we want to give figures which will encourage a friendly rivalry in the sale and distribution of the magazine.

Another critic complains that the Magazine has no "general" appeal. We know it hasn't. It is a magazine for working-class *students*. And we want every *student* to take it. We do feel a bit sore that in a district like—[For goodness sake be careful!—ED.]—there are 600 students and less than 100 PLEBS sold. If you know one student who doesn't take the PLEBS, sit on his

doorstep till he does. There are more than 10,000 social science students in England and we've got to have 'em!

LIVERPOOL is contributing a large number of the 10,000 students just referred to. Their indefatigable secretary has just sent on a foolscap sheet covered with particulars of 27 classes running in the district—Economics, Industrial History, Public Speaking and Grammar. All comrades should get in touch with J. Hamilton at once, and all organisations should link up with the Liverpool Council for Independent Working-Class Education, which is running on the same lines as the new London Council. Hamilton reports 48 organisations already linked up. C. Stevenson is giving six lectures on "International and Diplomatic History," a subject decidedly in the Marxian tradition, and one which should prove as useful as the titles sound interesting. Sunday, October 10, at 8 p.m. (and thence fortnightly), "The Mexican War, 1860-67," "Life and Times of Napoleon," "The Louisiana Purchase," "The Eastern Question," "European History, 1870-1913," "The Dreyfus Affair." At Walton College, 2 Stuart Road, Walton, Liverpool.

BIRMINGHAM class, which meets on Monday evenings—particulars from B. J. Rowland, 120 Winson Street—have been delighted with two lectures from A. D. M. Taylor, a student at the Labour College. The class not only congratulated him, but expressed appreciation in material form—as a contribution towards enabling him to have another year at the College. Other lectures are—October 4, W. Hill, "Ancient Slavery"; following Mondays, T. D. Smith, "Ancient Civilisations"; W. Blain, "Inorganic and Organic Evolution"; F. Silvester, "Industrial History."

Will PONTYPOOL and district comrades link up to Plebs League branch—secretary, our old friend W. G. Davies, Myrtle House, Pontrepiod. Also A. W. Lovey will be glad to hear from Plebeians in his district either for PLEBS or to form a branch; 29 Station Road, TAUNTON.

The Labour College, North-Eastern Area (sec., Will Coxon, 5 Byron Street, Shieldfield, Newcastle-on-Tyne), send us their Prospectus for the coming session. Their subjects are Economics, Industrial History, Economic Geography, Philosophy, and Esperanto. *Industrial History is recommended as the beginners' course in all cases.* T. A. Jackson is still organiser for the district, and the old stalwarts of the neighbourhood are still putting their backs into it.

NATIONAL GUILDS LEAGUE

A Course of Five Fortnightly Lectures on "What I Think of National Guilds" in the South Place Institute, Moorgate Street, E.C., Wednesdays at 8 p.m. Speakers:—Oct. 13th, Capt. Walter Elliott, M.P.; Oct. 27th, Prof. Soddy, F.R.S., M.A.; Nov. 10th, W. Gallacher; Nov. 24th, Bishop Gore, D.D.; Dec. 8th, R. H. Tawney, B.A.

Course Tickets, 7s. 6d. and 4s. Single Tickets, 2s. and 1s. From N.G.L., 39, Cursitor Street, E.C.4

The LONDON Council has done well in securing the services of Robert Holder as whole-time lecturer in the various districts. It is exactly twelve months since we wrote in these columns on Holder's transference to Liverpool, "Our loss is Liverpool's gain." We have now to reverse that sentence. J. H. Burns, the Council Secretary, is to be congratulated on his energy in getting vigorous articles on the need for Independent Working-Class Education printed in the *Herald*, the *Communist*, and the *Dreadnought*. . . . Will those interested in the formation of a Plebs Branch in FINSBURY PARK district write to Organiser, Plebs Branch, Liberty Club, 318 Green Lanes, N.4.

* * *

We have to thank Comrade W. S. Bowden, of Twickenham, for his generous donation of £20 to "Our Mag.," and for his gift of books and bonds to the League. Comrade Bowden is a veteran worker for Socialism, and we are proud that the work of the PLEBS should appeal to him as worthy of all the support Socialists can give it.

Up to the time of going to Press (September 18) we have not received any report of the Conference at Cardiff on the 4th, so are unable to give particulars. STOP PRESS.—Report just to hand. Sorry. Will be published next month.—Sec.

* * *

This is the sort of letter we like to get, so we print it in full:—

DEAR COMRADE,—As a Plebs Leaguer and out-and-out Communist, I held an open-air meeting in South Bank, Middlesbrough, under the auspices of the Plebs League. A good crowd assembled, and I delivered the message of the Third International. Literature sold out—collection, 8s. I am sending this amount to you, hoping it will be used for Special Publication Fund, or any other way you think best. Yours, F. D.

W. H.

REVIEWS

H. G. WELLS ON IRELAND

The Outline of History. Part 22. (Newnes. 1s. 3d.)

Had I been one of those privileged to tag footnotes to his columns, Mr. Wells would have had to choose between a small-type supplement or re-writing a portion of Part 22. Here are a few complaints about his digression on Ireland:—

The persistence of the Gaelic clan system until it was destroyed by successive English invasions involved the persistence of a communal ownership of the tribal territory and a communal-democratic relation between the clansmen and their chiefs. The English invasion, therefore, was not merely a "clash" of nations and languages, it was a clash of two opposed social systems, and the "race" and "language" impulses thenceforward supplied an outer "form" to a content of economic antagonism. Failure to note this enables H. G. W. to adopt the pose of a Civilised Person resisted in his good intentions by the wilfulness of ignorant barbarians—a travesty of the facts worthy of Winston Churchill.

H. G. W. has no other standard for the valuation of Irish Catholicism than the pure and very simple secularist one of Reason *v.* Priestcraft. Hence his presentation is grotesquely misleading. He seems to attribute the Catholicism of the Irish to "race temperament," though his own description shows that their racial admixture is pretty much the same as the English, and "the English were naturally a non-sacerdotal people." "The Irish found the priest congenial, and resisted the Reformation obstinately and bitterly." To which we reply: that the Irish resisted no more obstinately than they had been resisting every imposition of the English Crown Authority for centuries, and that the difference made by the Reformation was that they were joined in their resistance by the English of the Pale. The Reformation was by no means a

"popular" movement even in England. It was not a movement "against the priest" so much as for a new sort of priest—witness the persecutions of Anabaptists, Separatists, Socinians, and Atheists, which were its outcome. And finally the cream of the joke is—that Ireland was originally invaded by Catholic English († non-sacerdotal) with a commission from the Pope to "extend the bounds of Christendom"—*i.e.*, bring the Irish into submission to the Papacy! The Irish became Catholic under English compulsion. The antagonisms of the conquests and the Tudor spoliations were sufficient to keep them so when England saw fit to change its official religion.

H. G. W. represents the rising of 1641 as a "Catholic massacre." In point of fact it was only incidentally Catholic and no massacre at all. It was a raid of the clansmen of Ulster into the farm-lands from which they had been dispossessed by fire and sword, and although certainly the planted colonists came in for rough usage, to call it a massacre is merely to repeat the "scare stories" of English Protestants greedy for excuses for spoliation and extermination. A careful examination of the evidence reduces the number of the "massacred" from the "300,000" of contemporary English Puritan imagination to nearer 1,000. But if the O'Neils had slaughtered the lot—man, woman and child—they would only have repeated the conduct of the English invaders in Leinster, Munster, and Ulster—which, however, H. G. W. fails to mention.

At the Union (1801) he notes that "Ireland had become a land of peasants, blankly ignorant, and helplessly priest-ridden." He says no word of the Penal Code (1691–1779) which was expressly designed to complete—what five centuries of conquest had left unfinished—the conversion of Irish Catholics into peasants or proletarians. The Code, too, making it penal for a Catholic to open a school or teach in one, was deliberately

aimed at making them as ignorant as poor. While as to the priest, he, by the operation of the same Code, which expressly forbade the practice of law or medicine as well as the public professions to all Catholics, was the only man with any pretension to learning to whom the peasant could go for advice or encouragement. If the peasant grew to have an enlarged respect for the priest that was the likeliest thing to happen under the circumstances. In the light of these things the epithets "ignorant" and "priest-ridden" are thoroughly unjustifiable.

H. G. W. speaks patronisingly of the Union as a "natural coalescence," but omits the notorious fact that of the majority in the Irish Parliament who carried it seven only were unbribed. "Natural coalescence," too, seems strange in the light of the Legislative Independence granted to the Irish Parliament in 1782. But had this incident been noted it would have been necessary to note the episode of the Volunteers, the Free Trade, and the Conventions of Dungannon and Dublin. In the light of these alone H. G. W.'s assertion that "the upward struggle of the English 'democracy' has no Irish counterpart" would have been too ridiculous. He notes Emmett's insurrection (1803), but says nothing at all of the United Irishmen, nor of the bloody and brutal terrorism with which they were suppressed, nor of the Wexford peasant rising which this suppression provoked in turn. Omitting to note the United Irishmen, he does not observe that their demands anticipated clause by clause the "Five Points" of the Charter, and that their agitation for a democratic Republic in sympathy with French Jacobinism has left a permanent impression upon Irish politics.

He lumps together Steel-Boys and Peep-of-day-Boys, as akin to "Ulster terrorists." This is like lumping together Trotsky and Wrangel as "Russian military commanders." The "Steel-Boys" revolted against Protestant landlords and parsons. The "Peep-of-day-Boys" were a species of Protestant "Black Hundred" whose practice (since adopted by Dublin Castle) was to raid Catholic farm-houses during the night on the pretext of searching for arms. They provided the nucleus for the "Orange" secret society, organised expressly to check the success of the United Irishmen in uniting Catholic and Protestant petty-bourgeois and proletarians on a programme of Revolutionary Democratic Republicanism—the "Steel-Boys" being the staunchest and last-conquered of the United men.

These are only samples. Many more points

might be cited; but after all H. G. W. has never been trained in the Marxian school of history, and may, therefore, be "dismissed with a caution."

T. A. J.

THE FLOWING TIDE OF MARKISM

The Outline of History. By H. G. WELLS.
(Newnes: Parts 18 to 21; 1s. 3d. each.)

These four parts contain chapters on those mysterious entities, the Great Powers; on the rise of the American and French Republics; Napoleon Bonaparte; and the 19th Century, with the revolution in Industry and an equally great revolution in thought. The matter is so interesting that one feels indisposed to criticise but rather to admire and to draw attention to some of the more striking paragraphs.

The "patriot" will find little in these chapters on which to feed his vanity. Mr. Wells makes no bones about stating that, though Europe may be theoretically Christian, in practice she has given herself up to the worship of a strange State mythology, the worship of Great Powers.

In describing the growth of the worship of the State, which is after all very little superior to the worship of the Emperors in Roman times, Mr. Wells tells us that in the 19th century "Nationalism was taught in schools, emphasised by newspapers, preached and mocked and sung unto men. Men were brought to feel that they were improper without a nationality, as without their clothes in a crowded market place. Oriental peoples who had never heard of Nationality before, took to it as they took to the cigarettes and bowler hats of the west." And to drive home this crushing attack on nationalism, the reader is provided with a picture of Britannia, Germania, France, etc., headed "Tribal Gods—national symbols for which men would die—of the 19th century." Mr. Wells believes that nationalism means war and, in advocating the doctrine of Internationalism, spares no one, even arguing—not without reason—that Socialists have still much to do before they replace cloudy generalities by clear ideas.

It is interesting to observe that the author sees the French Revolution as but the "opening outbreak of a great cycle of political and social storms that still continues, that will, perhaps, continue until every vestige of nationalistic monarchy has been swept from the world and the skies clear again for the great peace of the federation of mankind." He is not deceived by stories of the Terror, and doesn't hesitate to

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suggest that the reason so much has been said about its martyrs is because they were notable and well-connected people and because their misfortunes have been much used for anti-democratic propaganda. To keep our passions cool, we are told that the British generals wasted more lives on the first day of the Somme offensive than were lost in the whole of the French Revolution. Besides, we are not to forget that, in Britain and America, at the time of the Terror in France, "far more people were slaughtered for offences—very often very trivial offences—against property, than were condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal for treason against the State." Of course, adds Mr. Wells, with biting sarcasm, "they were very common people, indeed, but in their rough way they suffered."

In discussing the problem of property, which faces mankind to-day, the author declares that there is no more nonsensical expression in sociology than the term "primitive communism." He apparently believes that in early times man simply struggled against man; in other words individualism was rampant. One fears that some of his readers will take a good deal of convincing on this point. They will want to have explained to them much more clearly and definitely how a relatively defenceless being like primitive man could struggle without the assistance of others against a very hard and hostile environment.

Days are, indeed, changed when one finds in a popular history such as this page after page devoted to sympathetic discussion of Marx and his theories and international socialism. The Marxian generalisation of the class struggle "becomes now more and more acceptable." Today "a sense of solidarity between all sorts of poor men, as against the profit amassing and wealth concentrating class, is growing more and more evident in our world. Old differences fade away, the difference between craftsman and open-air worker, between black-coat and overall, between poor clergyman and elementary schoolmaster, between policeman and bus driver. They must all buy the same cheap furnishings and live in similar cheap houses; their sons and daughters will all mingle and marry; success at the upper levels becomes more and more hopeless for the rank and file."

It will come as a shock to some of us, who have sometimes been bored almost to tears by Marx's hyper-carefulness in choice of words, to find Mr. Wells complaining that "Marx used many of his terms carelessly."

Although space is running out, one can hardly refrain from a protest against the classing of Robert Owen's New Lanark Colony, and the great vision behind it, with Lord Leverhulme's Port Sunlight and the Cadbury's Bournville—mere attempts to make profits humanely and comfortably.

In the section devoted to a criticism of Socialism, the author quite rightly points out that many of the necessary plans for a future communist society are still merely generalities, and here the student will find many points worth consideration. The three riddles which the new Order has to solve are Property, Currency, and

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International affairs, says Mr. Wells. It will interest Plebeians to read that in his opinion Marxian Socialism has carried the day against all other Socialism, from Fabianism upwards. There is no question that these last few numbers of the *Outline* afford a clear indication of how quickly the flowing tide of Marxism is sapping the intellectual supports of the existing order.

J. P. M. M.

THE STUFF TO GIVE 'EM

Half-past Twelve: Dinner-Hour Studies for the Odd Half-hours. By G. W. GOUGH. (Sells, Ltd., 168 Fleet Street, E.C. 4. 1s.)

This little book is a very emphatic challenge to the PLEBS to be up and doing in the matter of that Economics textbook. Not that, as regards paper, printing and general get-up, we shall be able to compete with it. In these days you can't, unless you're pretty heavily subsidised, offer 84 pages of well-printed matter on good paper, each page with ample margins within red borders, with a two-colour cover design and a half-tone frontispiece, for a shilling. Somebody's gold has been put behind this little venture. Somebody, after looking through the manuscript, exclaimed: "THIS IS THE stuff to give 'em; this must be distributed far and wide." And that somebody wasn't a Bolshevik.

Its author—sometime Exhibitioner of Balliol College, Oxford—wrote those "Ten-Minute Talks with Workers," with their haunting refrain of Increased Output, which have been appearing

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in the *Times Trade Supplement*. There is the same burden to his song here, emphasised by decoratively displayed quotations from perorations by the Prime Minister and the Right Hon. J. R. Clynes, M.P. But Mr. Gough has realised that you don't impress present-day workers if you adopt the "I'm not arguing with you—I'm telling you" method. Accordingly he has set out to write a little textbook on Political Economy, a "series of papers to help our readers to study economics for themselves."

It isn't necessary, and we haven't the space, to discuss at great length the kind of economics towards the study of which he is anxious to lead the workers. It is sufficient to remark that it is precisely the stuff which the boss would like to give 'em. As the Foreword puts it, "These short talks are as human in their touch as they are broad in their views." So broad, indeed, that there should be a big demand for them in W. E. A. circles. There are 26 of them, beginning with *What is Political Economy?* ("Goods, Markets, Incomes and Taxes—these form the chief topics with which Political Economy concerns itself") and *Problems and Methods of Political Economy* ("The economy of a modern country like England rests on two ultimate bases: (1) private property and (2) competition. . . . Any proposed reform, to be worth looking at, must assume their continued existence and importance"); and proceeding to discuss *Important Facts about Commodities*

(the marginal pound of tea); *The Production of Goods* (four factors of production: Land, Labour, Capital, Organisation); *The Division of Labour* ("work is becoming more mechanical and the worker consequently a mere automaton . . . the remedy is to train the younger generation to enjoy a fuller and nobler life *outside* the factory");* *Capital, What It Is and What It Does* (earliest known man and his bone fish-hooks—"you cannot have capital without the capitalist to save it"); *The Industrial Revolution*; *Prevailing Type of Industrial Organisation*; *Rent of Land*; *Wages of Labour* (the marginal worker decides wages of any given grade); *Wages in Relation to Output*; *The Profits of the Boss* ("the source of profits is the possession of special advantages for production"); and so on to *Mechanism of Exchange, Money, Bank-notes and Cheques*; *the Commercial Commonwealth*; *the Principles of Taxation*; and *The Final Issue* ("Society is not divided into two mutually exclusive and antagonistic classes, exploiters and exploited. . . . For by far the largest employers of the working-classes are the working-classes themselves, the capitalist being only an intermediary.")

I have already remarked that this book is a challenge to the PLEBS. It is a challenge in more ways than one. Not only is it up to us to issue a counterblast, but we have got to do it in terms and in a style as effective, as simple, and as inter-

* The W.E.A. position justified!

esting as those of this book. For, matter apart, it is a model elementary textbook. It is written for the Man in the Shop, and it talks to him in a language he can understand. It does not hurl definitions at him; it leads him by easy stages up to the thing or term to be defined, so that almost before he has realised it he is himself using the term, quite naturally, himself. And for an example of its readability take this, from the "talk" on the Industrial Revolution:—

Hargreaves made his "spinning jenny," Arkwright his roller frame, Crompton combined them in the "mule"; this outclassed the weavers, and Cartwright equated matters with his power loom. The mills crowded out every possible yard of riverside power, and Watts put that right by driving them by his steam-engines. The goods choked the roads, and Brindley made his canal; the canal got hopelessly inadequate, and Stephenson made his railway. A little later on an antiquated fiscal system once more blocked Lancashire's further expansion, and Peel and Gladstone came to her aid and gave her Free Trade.

Writing such as that puts life into the dry bones of industrial history, and gives them dramatic interest.

Economics classes might do far worse, at all events until our own textbook is available, than study this book carefully and set themselves to discover and to reply to its fallacies. It would be admirable training for workshop propaganda.

J. F. H.

REVOLUTION IN WHITE SPATS

Principles of Revolution: A Study in Ideals. By C. DELISLE BURNS. (Allen and Unwin. 5s. net.)

This book aims at "an exposition of certain historic (revolutionary) ideals, and their application to the circumstances of our own time." There are chapters on Rousseau and the New Social Order, Marx and Revolution, Mazzini and the New Nationalism, William Morris and Industry, and Tolstoi and Christianity; and three concluding chapters discuss What Is Revolution? For and Against Revolution, and Religion and Revolution.

These chapter headings would suffice, even if one knew nothing previously of Mr. Delisle Burns, to indicate his point of view pretty accurately. He is a glutton for Ideals. He collects them eagerly, and he hasn't the heart to turn out of his collection any really interesting-looking specimen, however difficult it may be to fit it in with the others. This can be done, or at any rate attempted, by ignoring those aspects of any particular Ideal which are uninteresting, or disagreeable, to yourself; and by focussing your rapt gaze on those vaguer aspirations towards something Higher and Nobler which are pretty sure to be common to all the specimens. This is how Mr. Burns contrives to harmonise into one Grand Sweet Song of Revolutionary Idealism, Marx and Mazzini, Morris and Tolstoi. And just as composite portraits tend to be somewhat blurred in outline, so his own ideals, so far as one

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can get at them at all, are not exactly characterised by precision or vigour.

PLEBS readers will test Mr. Burns' quality by his treatment of Marx. This chapter, let me say at once, is certainly not without humour or sympathy. "Marx is presented by some as a proletarian deity, by others as the devil incarnate, and even those educated at our older universities have heard of him." "This dead German (whose economic materialism lies buried at Highgate) has set the world ablaze: he rules in Russia and in Germany (*sic*), and there is elsewhere the whisper of his coming."

Here is Mr. Burns' estimate of Marx's work and influence:—

No one who reads *Capital* without prejudice can fail to be impressed with the earnest humanity of the writer and with his irrefutable evidence against the industrial system. *It may be said that his economic and historical interpretation of the evidence is wrong; but no one else has yet offered a better interpretation, partly, no doubt, because no one has yet dared to face such evidence.* Secondly, the power of Marx lies in his ability to envisage an alternative to the system he describes. *Suppose that the alternative is unrealisable: yet the many economists who have "refuted" Marx have not contrived to imagine a better, partly because they have no imagination at all.* Thirdly, the power of Marx is due to the keenness of his reasoning. . . . *Suppose, however, that his argument is as confusing as Wm.*

interested to note that "the dictatorship of the proletariat, stripped of its Latin, scientific and historico-philosophic dress, and stated in simple language, means that only a certain class—the industrial workers, especially the workers in large factories—is able to lead the general body of the exploited masses in their fight to end capitalist exploitation. . . . For the capacity to do this comes not of itself, but grows out of the material conditions of large capitalist production." He should also observe (*cf.* reference to his recent

lecture in last month's PLEBS Bookshelf) that Lenin quite unashamedly declares "We are not Utopians"; and says further, "We also know that after the overthrow of a system of society many evidences of the old order will remain for a certain time. . . . Those who are engaged in the formidable task of overcoming capitalism must be prepared to try method after method until they find the one which answers their purpose best." The modesty of the Realist as compared with the easy confidence of the Utopian!

THE PLEBS BOOKSHELF

WELL, what do you think of us? We await your verdict. And, favourable or otherwise, we shall be very pleased to hear it. By all means send your criticisms along. But let them be helpful ones. Don't, for instance, ask us to provide a coloured supplement, or another 24 pages, because we're doing the utmost that can be done for 6d.; nor suggest that we alter our entire get-up, or sack the lot of our present contributors, because such things are not always quite so easy as they sound. And, by the way, *don't*, please don't, say you dislike the colour of the cover. We're not over-enthusiastic about it ourselves, but it happens to be a "bargain line," and you can take our word for it that it's nicer than some. So for the time being, at all events, whatever the People's Flag may be—
"The People's PLEBS is beetroot red."

And perhaps you'll learn to love it quite a lot as time goes on.

* * *

Turning over the catalogue of the London Library the other day, I made a discovery:—that, although we are the one and only PLEBS, there was once a *Plebeian* in periodical literature—just two centuries ago, in 1718–19. Steele had something to do with it, after his break with Addison. And, except that it seems to have been to some extent "agin the Government," that's all I am able to report about it.

* * *

Wm. Paul is now on his way to Russia—if, by the time these words are printed, he has not already arrived. His mission is to investigate Proletarian Education in the Soviet Republic, and to report upon its methods and working to the Governors of the Labour College. He has, by the way, just completed a new book on Communism which may shortly be issued by a well-known publishing house. T. A. Jackson also, I am glad to hear, has been busy on a book—on Irish history. Plebeians will watch with interest for further announcements concerning both volumes.

* * *

Since our performances of *Blanco Posnet* and *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* at the College last spring, a good many correspondents have asked us to publish information as to good propaganda plays, performable by amateurs. We have not space now to go fully into the subject, but hope to return to it in future issues; and we invite readers with any practical experience in this matter to

send along suggestions. Meantime, any group which is bursting to make a start on a performance might try their luck with *Blanco Posnet*. It makes no impossible demands on intelligent amateurs; it needs no elaborate staging; and it is doubly worth doing inasmuch as our beneficent Censorship prohibits its public production (which necessitates, of course, a "private" performance to an *invited* audience, and a collection or sale of programmes instead of the usual charge for admission at the doors)

* * *

The announcement of a series of "Plays for a People's Theatre" (C. W. Daniels, Ltd.) aroused one's hopes. So far I have only read one of the three or four plays published, *Touch and Go*, by D. H. Lawrence, and I have to record a disappointment. Mr. Lawrence is a fine novelist, a poet, and—judging by his *Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd*—a dramatist of power. But *Touch and Go*. . . . I confess I don't quite know how to express my feelings about it. It strikes me as being as ineffectual dramatically as it is from any propagandist point of view. There is a very staccato Preface, all jerky phrases about "Plebs, the proletariat," "A People, not *The* People," "People, oh God! Not mannequins. Not lords nor proletariats nor bishops nor husbands nor co-respondents nor virgins nor adulteresses nor uncles nor noses. Not even white rabbits nor presidents. People." "This Sodom of Industrialism" sounds promising; it leads up to a consideration of "the Strike Situation" as a "tragic possibility" (for drama)—"Bully v. Plebs"—"Drop it," cries Plebs. 'Hands off!' growls Bully," etc., etc. And, so far as I can make out, Mr. Lawrence's opinion is that Plebs and Bully between them are going to "destroy the whole material substance of life, and so perish by accident, no better than a frog under the wheel of destiny." Then we get to the play—a strike play; and after lots of talk we arrive at the conclusion that what we need is "a new way of life, a better way all round." Which isn't particularly helpful. Perhaps it will appeal to Bully. Plebs—this Pleb at any rate—thinks it thin; and suggests that neither Mr. Lawrence nor any other artist is strong enough to cut himself off from the realities of his age and wave shocked white hands at life from some æsthetically-satisfying hermitage.

* * *

After the drama, oratory. I have been reading the twelve lessons of Geo. Belt's Home Study

Course in Public Speaking (Herald League, 2 Carmelite Street, E.C.4), and—speaking as a 'prentice hand and by no means as an adept in that art—I should say it is packed full of useful suggestions and valuable "tips." The most important factor in effective public speaking is obviously to have something to say, but I assume that PLEBS readers are not hampered in that respect. What they, in common with many other people, might learn from this Course is how to say that something effectively. The existence of this simple series of lessons leaves no excuse for those one- or two-year students who aggravate the Class Tutor problem by pleading inability to pass on the knowledge they have themselves acquired. Geo. Belt has saved us the job of adding one textbook to our forthcoming series.

I have left till last consideration of another textbook—*First Principles of Working-Class Education*, by James Clunie (S.L. Press, 8s. 6d. net), the publication of which I, in common, I suppose, with many Plebeians, awaited with considerable interest. I must choose my words carefully in setting down my opinion of it, because I am anxious above all else to avoid the suggestion that we of the PLEBS are not ready to welcome contributions from others beside "our own" men to that much-needed library of Proletarian Educational handbooks. We should, on the contrary, be only too glad to have the task ahead of us lightened. But I don't think it is lightened by Clunie's book. Let me say, point for point, why that is my opinion.

First, the price at which it is published is—well, all wrong! The problem we have to face is the production of textbooks which really cover the ground, at half-a-crown a volume (or as near half-a-crown as possible). It is dodging the hardest part of the job to issue a book at 8s. 6d. I presume that one main item in the cost of production here was the reproduction of the numerous diagrams with which the book is illustrated. Blocks are expensive. But nearly all these diagrams would have been as effective if reproduced half their present size, and some of them could well have been reduced even more. Had that been done, not only would the cost of blocks have been considerably lowered, but the diagrams, or most of them, could have been printed in the text instead of on specially inset folding pages. . . . The diagrams themselves are my second point. I am particularly interested in diagrams, but not in "diagrams for diagrams' sake," so to speak. A diagram should elucidate the text; too many of these, far from doing that, need themselves to be elucidated by the text—and at considerable length. Merely to write various words in large capitals, and then put circles or squares round them, is not, it seems to me, to make a successful or helpful diagram. Some of Clunie's are, I feel, additional obstacles rather than aids to the reader. One other minor item before I come to the main point in my criticism. *First Principles of Working-Class Education* has no index, and not even a list of chapter headings,

which is really almost unforgivable. How about the author's insistence on "a logical tabulation of the parts to understand the relativity and unity of the whole"?

But, most important of all, the style in which the book is written, and its general construction, seem to me badly suited to its purpose. I feel—and other writers in PLEBS have many times recently expressed the same view—that one of our most important tasks is that of *simplifying* the phraseology of economics and other subjects. Comrade Clunie would appear to sympathise with this aim, for in his Introduction, he says he has endeavoured to make his book "simple, comprehensive and natural," and the lessons "as elementary as possible." "We must make the problems of working-class education an everyday study," he declares, "and that can only be done by dealing with them in terms of working-class life." Good. But only a paragraph or two farther on he is casually observing that "By natural-average principles relative creations are explained." Is that sentence expressed in "terms of working-class life"? And are you ever likely to succeed in making working-class education "an everyday study" if you're going to clothe it entirely in phraseology of that sort—if you publish textbooks written throughout in that kind of language? Clunie's first chapter is headed "Historico-Sociological"—in itself an appetising mouthful for a beginner! In its opening paragraph he is talking about "the work of describing the relativity of historico-sociological factors as they affect the composite growth of human relationship." I've just thought out about half-a-dozen different ways of saying that in "simple, comprehensive and natural" terms. I won't write them down here, because I don't want to imply that Clunie ought to have got me to write his book for him. But I do assert that he has not carried out his own expressed aim (quoted above) and that therefore his book is a failure from this exceedingly important point of view. It is quite true, for instance, to say that "Bourgeois uniformity in historico-sociological knowledge is to limit its educational status to suit its particular mode of production and class exploitation." But I doubt whether the ordinary man in the workshop would understand what you were driving at if you said so to him. And if he ever did succeed in struggling through this book, and reached the peroration—. . . "Until within its evolutionary universal form Capitalism is confronted with the magnitude of its own negation, wherein the inherent contradiction is solved by revolutionary universal change"—I can imagine him very emphatically insisting on a "revolutionary change" in the style and method of working-class educational textbooks if he were expected to buy or read any more of them!

I hope Clunie will believe that it gives me no pleasure to write about a gallant effort in this way. But the subject is too important to mince one's words about it; I have tried to convey my honest opinion of his book, and to give my reasons for that opinion.

J. F. H.

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