

ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
LABOUR COLLEGES

THE PEEBS

v. 21

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JANUARY, 1929

THE MACHINE —& YOUR JOB

*See Special Articles this month
on the Mechanisation of Industry*

N. C. L. C., SWINTON HOUSE, 324 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1

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THE LONDON COLLEGE

ACCORDING to the *Daily Herald*, the Executive of the South Wales Miners' Federation is recommending to its Conference that the Federation withdraw from the residential Labour College, London. The College is owned not by the N.C.L.C. but by the N.U.R. and the S.W.M.F. The reason given for the decision is the Federation's own financial difficulties—the College costs the Federation about £3000 a year, states the *Herald*. We believe that the cost is now substantially less than that, but in any case we hope that the Federation will think twice before it takes a step which is almost certain to close the only Trade Union residential college in this country—a college which it has done so much to create.

We appreciate the financial difficulties of the Federation. Like other Unions, however, it no doubt does not look with favour on the ex-Trade Unionist's plea that because of lower wages he cannot afford to pay his contribution to the Union. We suggest that it is equally valid to argue that the fact that a Union's income is reduced is no justification for cutting out its educational work—a policy which it condemns Capitalist Governments for following. If it is impossible for the Federation in its present financial position to continue to pay on the existing scale, it is certainly possible to work out a scheme which would enable the College to keep running and yet afford a substantial reduction in costs. We hope that no final decision will be taken until that suggestion is explored to the bottom. It is a dangerously easy matter to close down an institution and thus destroy at a blow the laborious work of years of up-building.

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A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The Workers and the Coming of the Machine

By W. T. COLYER

We publish this month a group of special articles dealing with the Mechanisation of Industry. Below, Comrade W. T. Colyer contributes a historical sketch of the early days of the machine in Britain.

KARL MARX, in the first volume of *Capital*, defined a machine as "a mechanism that, after being set in motion, performs with its tools the same operations that were formerly done by the workman with similar tools." This definition, simple though it be, is worth bearing in mind because of its emphasis upon the fact that machinery is in its essence a device for displacing human labour. Subsequent developments obscured that aspect of the machine for many years, the stress being transferred to the increased productivity which the machine rendered possible. During the period of the expansion of British capitalism the attitude of the working-class movement towards the machine underwent a fundamental change, and it is only in our day that the British workers, as a class, have again found themselves in sharp conflict with the machine as a destroyer of their means of livelihood.

When one turns back to the records of the earliest days of the machine age one finds them abounding in interesting and instructive parallels and contrasts with the conditions prevailing at the present time. Then the textile industry occupied the darkest spot in the tragic scene; now it is the coal miners and the iron and steel workers whose plight is the most agonising. Then, as now, the problem of migration was well to the fore, but in those days there were big areas to be filled in Northern England and negligible restrictions upon overseas travel for those who could raise the money to go to the United States or the Colonies. The difficulty of our ancestors was, for many years, to find ways and means of satisfying the poor law authorities of the English parish to which they wished to remove, that they would not become chargeable as

paupers and could be safely received. Birth control was not a live issue; the absence of restrictions upon child labour even made it advantageous to sweated parents to produce young who would so soon be contributing to the family budget.

The most vital of all the contrasts between the days of the Industrial Revolution, and what some of us are ready to call the New Industrial Revolution of our own time, is to be found in the fact that while the earlier Revolution took unorganised workers and herded them together under conditions which, in due time, compelled them to organise themselves, the later changes are coming upon a relatively well-organised body of workers and threatening to render their organisations impotent unless they bestir themselves very vigorously and intelligently to meet the employers' challenge. Obviously, however, no comparison between the two periods can be worked out in detail within the compass of a single short article. The purpose of drawing attention to a few of the outstanding points of likeness and contrast is simply to suggest that a more careful study of the childhood of British industrialism may throw a good deal of light upon the problems presented by its efforts at rejuvenation.

Early Capitalism.

It is often assumed that capitalist production and large-scale machine production are identical. Such is not, of course, the fact. For practical purposes we may date the emergence of the machine as the dominating factor in industry from the application of steam power to cotton manufacture in 1785; but, long prior to this, capitalist production had existed in the textile and some other trades. Yarn had

been spun and carded in cottage homes by workers who did not own the yarn, but who toiled for wages; the handloom weavers, to whom the yarn was passed on, might own their looms but they neither bought the yarn nor owned the cloth they wove; the hosiery knitters frequently owned neither the raw material nor the frames on which they worked.

We may also observe that the disastrous effects of the introduction of machinery were not immediately felt by the old-style handworkers. After the invention of the spinning-jenny in 1770, the mule in 1779, and other mechanical improvements, the expansion of the cotton trade was so tremendous that the wages of both spinners and weavers went up. More yarn and finer yarn was available than ever before, with the result that between 1788 and 1803 the trade trebled itself. It was Cartwright's power-loom, patented in 1785 but not generally introduced for a number of years, that settled the fate of the hand-loom weavers.

Just how desolating was the competition of the power-loom is hard for us to imagine nowadays. Something of what it meant is brought out in one of the graphs shown by G. D. H. Cole in his *Short History of the British Working-Class Movement*. In 1800 the weaver had been receiving nearly 20/- a week—a rate of pay which ranked him as a skilled artisan. After 1800, in common with other workers, he slightly improved his money wages, but before 1810 he was already on the slippery slope which, despite a temporary recovery in the decade between 1810 and 1820, carried him with fearful rapidity down to the beggarly 6/- or 7/-, on which life was impossible any longer in the thirties and forties. From that time on we hear no more of him, as he had ceased to be a factor in the workers' struggle. During the earlier period of his decline he was undoubtedly a menace to his fellows in other callings, for whom also bad times set in after 1810 and continued until, with the turn of the half-century, a long steady advance began.

A Tomb of Handicraft.

Perhaps the best way of picturing the misery created in this particular craft by

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the progress of science and invention is to consider what happened in India when the factory products of Lancashire were unloaded on a market which had hitherto been served by native hand industries. Between 1818 and 1837 the population of Dacca, which had been the centre of the Indian handicrafts, decreased from 150,000 to 20,000.* There were no growing factories to absorb the displaced Indian craftsmen; they were simply forced to abandon city life and to go back to the land. Because their sufferings could not so easily be concealed as was the case in rapidly changing Britain, we have the story told in the ruins of a depopulated city—a more permanent and striking form of record than British conditions allowed.

Other people besides the cotton operatives were naturally involved in the new methods, and some of them, at any rate, were more energetic in their resentment. Especially noteworthy in this connection were the machine-breakers of the Midland Counties, who in 1811 had established a secret organisation for breaking up frames of a new type which reduced the numbers of the employees in the hosiery trade. To this day no one knows who the leaders of the Luddite Movement were—a fact which speaks volumes for the loyalty of the rank and file.

**Modern India*. By R. P. Dutt. P. 42.

So strong was their hold over the knitters that they were able to terrorise the masters into making important concessions.

Only sporadic attempts to wreck machines were made in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and these were subject to the decisive handicap of having to attack premises owned and guarded by the employers. In the hosiery district the wreckers had started with the advantage of having at least the benevolent neutrality of the workers in whose homes the frames were installed. The Luddite Movement is one of the tragedies of British working-class history, but it paved the way for the view that the workers' policy must be not to smash the machine but to control it.

Inevitably the textile industry has pride of place in any brief account of the coming of the machine. It was in the textile field that there were large numbers of wage-workers already, and it was on the export of textiles that the subsequent industrial "prosperity" was based. It was in the textile towns of the North that the ghastly structures known as back-to-back houses were developed to house the hordes of workers whose only escape from starvation lay in slavery in the textile mills.

However, as we have already mentioned, without the steam engine there could have been no great development of textile machine production. The steam engine presupposes coal, iron and steel. All these had already received attention. A steam pump had been installed in connection with a Cornish tin mine in 1699, and a few years later such pumps were introduced into collieries. Iron smelting was an old-established process, and in 1740 steel production had been made a commercial possibility by the use of the crucible method.

"Puffing Billy."

After the machine in factory production came the machine in transport. The new scale of production necessitated an improvement of communications. The internal combustion engine had not then been thought of, and the possibilities of road development were therefore strictly limited. An alternative presented itself in the iron road and "Puffing Billy." Accompanied by a great deal of speculation and wastefulness the solid

work of building the railways went forward.

Thus the coming of the machine brought into being a vast accumulation of new wealth, most of which was not used to make the people who worked in the factories either happier, healthier or wiser. In the hands of a small group of exploiters it was invested in new factories served by new slum workers; in enterprises abroad, for the protection of which dark-skinned men and women had to be slaughtered and brought into subjection; in developing an Empire upon which the sun never sets.

Whatever advantages the workers were in the long run able to derive from the introduction of machinery had to be forced from their exploiters, bit by bit. Something was yielded to fear, for the capitalists woke up to the fact that solid comfort, plenty to eat, adequate holidays, proper clothing, etc., are not a reliable safeguard against epidemics in a country populated largely by dwellers in filth and disease-ridden slums; that there are levels of degradation which make people unsatisfactory even as factory "hands." A knowledge that cannon-fodder was needed to maintain their Empire also predisposed the employers to regard favourably some of the very modest demands put forward by the organisations of the skilled workers. By throwing to their employees a few crumbs from the rich feast which they derived from the development of machine production, they expected—and were justified later in their expectations—to secure the loyalty of the workers to an Empire which was being used to plunge distant races into the same sort of industrial hell as that from which the parriotic British trade unionists were just beginning to lift themselves.



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WHAT TO READ.

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THE MACHINE —AND YOUR JOB

By J. P. M. MILLAR

WE are apt to imagine that the Industrial Revolution is a thing of the past, and of no very considerable interest to us to-day. No mistake could be greater—it is going on now!

The Industrial Revolution began with the arrival of the machine, which seized on job after job previously done by hand and turned the workers on to the streets or into machine-minders.

That process is going on to-day with great intensity. An examination of British commercial papers shows that not a week passes without some new machine or process being utilised to "save Labour"—or, in other words, to unemploy workers. In a night, perhaps, a worker may find his years of accumulated skill as valueless as the previous day's newspaper.

Everyone knows, for instance, that the invention of more powerful brakes increases the speed of omnibuses, and thus reduces the number of vehicles required, and in consequence the number of drivers and conductors. There is trouble, for instance, amongst the London 'bus-workers at the present time because of similar developments. The invention of more powerful locomotives and electric signalling apparatus means that fewer railwaymen are required to handle the same or a greater amount of traffic.

Machinery versus Men.

In the United States in July, 1927, there were 1,823,335 railwaymen as compared with 1,728,690 in July, 1928, a *decrease* of 94,645 or about 5·2%. The smaller number of railwaymen, however, handled 44,592 million ton-miles of traffic as compared with 44,472 million, an increase of 20 million-ton miles.* Similar experiences are falling to the lot of British railwaymen.

In one 20-mile length of track in Michigan, signalmen are no longer required—no more do guards jump down to drift the points. The movements of all the trains in the section are controlled by a "train director," who handles all the signals and switches from a board on his desk. The locomotives glide in and out of sidings at the will of the director miles away. The driver and firemen leave it all to him, except when something unusual happens, when all they do is to 'phone him from the rail side. The introduction of a similar system on another American railroad increased train speeds by nearly one half.

In consequence of such developments the American Railway Trade Unions are asking the question: "What are we going to do with our jobless?" and so far echo has answered "What?" The N.U.R., on this side of the Atlantic, finds itself in the same position, as the British railways are leaving no stone unturned to find machinery which will make it worth while to displace men.

It seems a far cry from the railway to the laundry, but the same process goes on there too. There are now washing machines that can wash 60 to 300 shirts at once and ironing machines weighing one to two tons that have an output of 10,000 pieces of ironing a day.*

There is the steam navy that will dig as much soil in a few minutes as a flesh and blood navy will dig in a day. The City clerk, no matter how spotless his collar, finds himself up against the same ever-improving competitor—the machine. Typewriter, duplicator, counting-machine, dictaphone, electric book-keeping machine follow each other into the office and enable twice or three times the volume of work to be done by a smaller staff.

The process under which the machine seizes on the worker's job is not limited to a sprinkling of industries—note the tale the

*American *Locomotive Engineers' Journal*, November, 1928.

**Manchester Guardian Commercial*, 30th Mar., 1922.

following figures tell. They apply to the leading capitalist state—the United States :

	Number of workers (expressed in thousands) employed.*		
	1919	1925	1926
Agriculture,	11,300	10,500	10,350
Big Industries,	10,689	9,772	9,850
Mining,	1,065	1,065	860
Transport (Railways),	1,915	1,744	1,782

Between 1919 and 1926, therefore, the number of workers productively employed by industrial capital decreased by over 2,000,000, a reduction of 8%, despite the fact that during that period the working population of the United States had increased by fully 4½ million according to the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Technological Unemployment.

What happened to the two million workers whose jobs were taken by improved machinery and method not only in industry, mining and transport, but also in agriculture? They were not absorbed into the building industry, commerce or any other group. The few that were simply displaced other workers. The result is that technical improvements added 2,000,000 to the permanently unemployed army of the United States.

The consequence is that the American Trade Union journals talk a lot about technological unemployment (unemployment due to improved technique) to distinguish it from cyclical unemployment (unemployment due to the ups and downs of production—booms and slumps).

In this country the same process is, of course, going on. Only a week or two ago a well-known cocoa firm obtained great publicity because, in installing new machinery that would displace labour, it made the unprecedented announcement that it was prepared to subsidise the wages of the displaced workers for a period if some other employer would put them on his pay roll.

The chief aspects of the technical revolution through which industry is going we can only attempt to summarise roughly.

Electricity is more and more displacing steam as a direct driving force. In Marx's time the steam engine was directly harnessed to the machinery. To-day it is now more and more being used to generate electrical power for factories which may be ten, twenty, fifty or more miles away. In this connection it is worth observing that 50% of German factories are driven by electricity and 75% of American.*

Industry is becoming less and less tied to the coalfields and one result of that in Britain is the very obvious industrial march south. The retreat from Moscow is being followed by the retreat from Lancashire. The industrial North, with its idle factories and pits, will soon have to talk of the industrial South. Industry in the States is also moving southwards.

So far as fuel is concerned, coal is being used more and more economically. Coal dust, for instance, has now considerable value as a fuel in consequence of improved engines. Electricity is being generated from water power on a rapidly increasing scale, and of course there is the advent of oil and the utilisation of waste gases from blast furnaces.

The mechanisation of industry has developed by leaps and bounds, perhaps its most striking feature being the conveyor system. The conveyor is, of course, a moving belt which takes materials from worker to worker and on that belt the product often grows from a thousand parts to the completed machine. Moreover, the conveyor itself frequently sets the pace for production. Ford's plant is a well-known example, but the same process has been introduced into newspaper offices, for instance.

The wonderful development of the chemical industry—note in this connection the development of the Mond Trust—now makes it possible to manufacture by chemical action materials which previously had to be obtained direct from Nature. Example—artificial silk and synthetic rubber. Nitrogen is now being extracted from the air; and one cannot pass over the tremendous increase in the use of manufactured concrete in place of nature-produced stone and timber.

* The *Analyst*, 9th March, 1928.

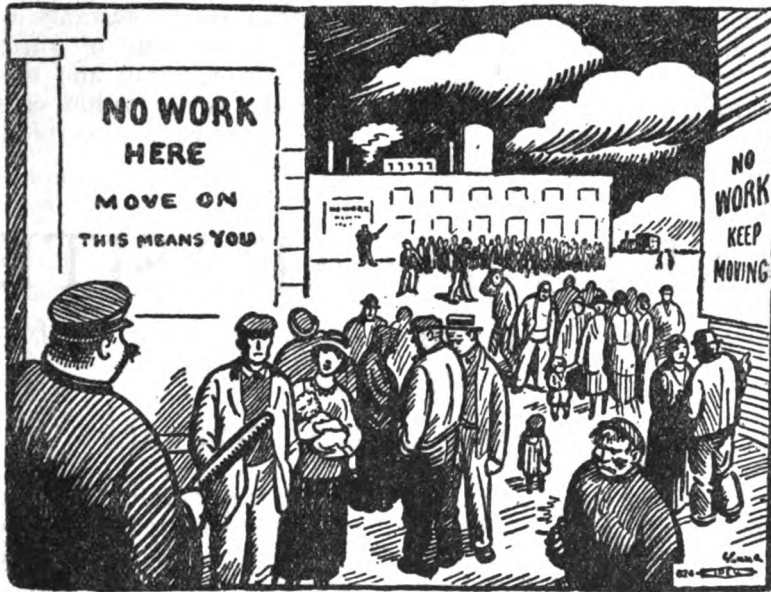
* *International Press Correspondence*, June, 1928.

We have already seen that the effects of the continuous progress in the mechanisation of industry is that the number of workers required grows less and less. In the earlier stages of capitalism, when it had practically the whole world in a position to absorb its products, the displaced workers (after suffering the miseries of unemployment) were in most cases absorbed into developing or new industries. That is no longer happening either in this country or in the States, and the permanent army of unemployed grows larger and larger.

groups are capable of working, the economic waste is enormous.

Another result of mechanisation is that the market for young workers at low wages tends to grow at the expense of the adult workers and there is a general tendency for adult rates to decrease in consequence of this competition.

The tremendous amount of capital required to run a mechanised industry is a powerful impetus towards trustification. Workers' organisations therefore tend to find themselves up against a few gigantic



Result of Mechanization

(A cartoon by Art. Young in the "Labor Age.")

The Two Unemployed Armies.

Mechanisation also means that the governing class is forced to provide in some way for the unemployed. In this country it does so partly by means of unemployment insurance. In the States it looks as if the American governing class will be forced into the same expedient, but that, in point of fact, means that those workers who are working have to provide not merely a luxurious living for the capitalist class itself, but have also to provide a very miserable living for the unemployed section of the working class. As both these unemployed

trusts instead of hundreds or thousands of separate competing concerns.

Under modern conditions the pace is more and more set by the machine, work becomes more and more simplified and consequently more and more monotonous. One type of worker in a motor factory for example does nothing more than slip a piece of metal into a slot from the beginning to the end of his working day. Pride of craftsmanship disappears accordingly and the Robotical worker appears. Out of every hundred workers employed in a mass-production factory only ten require any skill. These ten are the workers who keep the machines in running

order—the mechanics and the toolmakers whose skill is not used in making the product of the factory, but only in making the machines that make the product. The others are employed fetching and carrying for the machine, taking the product off one machine and fitting it to the product of another, doing their little job with the mechanical efficiency which comes from endless repetition. In consequence, thinks Mr. H. G. Adam in *An Australian looks at America*, 90% of the employees have the status of spare parts in the industrial machine. Anyone of them can be replaced at a moment's notice by another drawn from the great pool of untrained workers always looking for a job, "a situation which makes for docility on the part of Labour."

In the household the introduction of a labour-saving device opens the gateway to

leisure. In the factory a labour-saving device turns into a Labour Starving device. The machine provides millions of workers with cheap luxuries and at the same time deprives millions of others of necessities because it takes their jobs. The machine itself, however, cannot be blamed for that; the responsibility falls on society. If a labour-saving device can be a boon or a blessing in a home it can also be a boon or a blessing in the home of the working-class—the world. The worker must either domesticate the machine or the machine will destroy the worker. Already thousands of American shop assistants will find themselves pushed out of their jobs by the automatic salesman and the limit of such inventions is not within sight; in fact one writer says that mass production is only just beginning!

MAKING PARASITES

Stimulating Consumption to keep pace with the Machine

By A TRADE UNION OFFICIAL

EVERYBODY has seen the rapid mechanisation of transport. Forty-five years ago the railway train, the old penny-farthing bicycle and a few very elementary steam traction-engines were the only competitors which the horse had to meet, if we except that still earlier form of locomotion — shanks' pony. To-day, mechanically-propelled vehicles have almost driven the horse off the road, and are now themselves leaving the road and taking to the air.

But have we realised that the machine has made and is making the same inroad into our lives in every other direction? Forty years ago it took twenty horses and ten or a dozen men to move a Lancashire steam boiler from Galloway's, and the speed was three miles an hour. To-day a similar boiler is handled by a man and his mate, with the assistance of an internal combustion engine, at twelve miles per hour; but that

change is as nothing when you compare the girl who made cigarettes by hand twenty years ago with the girl who controls a cigarette machine to-day. Compare the toffee boiler of your childhood's days and his primitive appliances with the "Mackintosh," "Cadbury," or "Rowntree" factory of to-day, and you will realise that while mechanical haulage has largely supplanted horses in forty-five years, machinery has almost supplanted men and women in the domestic industries in about half that time, and to-day mechanisation is working an even speedier revolution in the clerical and commercial world.

The Office Robot.

It seems a very short time since the typewriter was half a toy and half a luxury, and already the National Cash Register and the Burroughs Adding Machines are being followed by invoicing and indexing

machines by means of which a young girl fresh from school is turning out four to five times the quantity of work that her father could turn out after he had had two decades of experience; and, what is more, while father was always more or less fallible, his school-girl daughter and her machine are almost incapable of making a mistake.

These changes have brought about in some cases a complete reversal of the relative numbers of actual producers and non-producers. When blacking was mixed in buckets stirred with a stick and finally wrapped by hand in oiled paper, it took a great many workers to produce enough blacking to keep one clerk and one traveller fully employed in accountancy and salesmanship. But I think it would be true to say (Mr. Hargreaves will correct me if I am wrong) that under modern industrial conditions, the cost of making blacking is almost infinitesimal compared with the cost of selling it. We are worried because the number of unemployed workers in this country keeps touching 1,500,000; but had it not been for the enormous growth in the

number of persons engaged in non-productive operations, the number of persons unemployed in industry to-day would have probably been about half the available workers, and our roll of unemployed have approximated more nearly to 4,000,000 than 1,500,000.

Non-Productive Labour.

Production presents no problem to-day. The problem which faces the manufacturer to-day is so to stimulate consumption as to make it keep pace with production, and yet to keep his costs of production so low that he can find an ever-expanding market. His method of stimulating consumption has been to develop more and more the selling side of his business—special travellers to push special lines, bonus schemes, guessing competitions, world-wide advertising, artists, billposters, and newspapers; all harnessed to his sales stimulation campaign, all conspiring to levy a tax on the profits of the industry. To meet these quasi-parasitic demands he turns again to his constantly diminishing number of actual

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producers, forcing them to speed up their machines, forcing his technicians still to further improve those machines, and only too often cutting down the earnings of his factory workers.

The problem of surplus labour was kept in the background until comparatively recently because the relatively few industrial nations were constantly extending the circle of their exploitations to cover other and less developed countries. But the time is coming when industrial capital will weep tears because there are no more worlds to conquer, and finance-capital by its development of other countries and units of production is rapidly hastening that black dawn for the captains of industry. The fact we have to face is that every invention which increases output must inevitably—so long as capitalism endures—force more and more producers out of productive employment and make them parasites or quasi-parasites.

“Rationalisation.”

If improved methods of production are to go on developing under a capitalist regime, it seems to me that we must have a regular and frequent stock-taking. The increase in the sum total of productivity over and above the increased consumption will have to be accurately measured; and by a constantly increasing school-leaving age and a constantly-decreasing pension age (with adequate pension and prohibition of acceptance of further paid employment) sufficient people must be kept out, or taken out, of industry to hold the balance even. So, and only so, can mankind at large ever hope, under capitalist conditions, to receive the benefit which should accrue to them from the march of progress. If we must have Rationalisation, this is the kind of Rationalisation we must insist on.

BUILDING WORKERS

and the New Industrial Revolution

By GEORGE HICKS

(General Secretary, A.U.B.T.W.)

THE Building Industry is almost as old as the hills. It might well be imagined, therefore, that everything had been discovered about the art of building a long time ago. Yet a revolutionary transformation has taken place in the building industry, certainly as far as Britain is concerned, practically within the past ten years.

The Building Industry is very complex. It comprises, in addition to the actual design and construction of buildings and bridges, the laying of highways and byways; in short, the erection of villages, towns and cities, the quarrying of stone, and the manufacture of building materials, such as bricks, tiles, terra cotta, cements, limes, paint, glass, composition boarding and walling materials, like breeze slabs, and metal work of various kinds.

In almost every one of its many phases there have been changes and innovations

to an extent which, when totalled, appears almost incredible.

The Age of Concrete.

In the manufacture of building materials, new methods, labour-saving devices and new machinery have been extensively introduced. Indeed, many new materials have been applied to building, such as rubber flooring tiles and plastic compositions. Concrete is now largely taking the place of bricks and stone. By a peculiar irony it was Joseph Aspdin, a bricklayer of Leeds, who a little more than a century ago, first discovered the process of making artificial cement from a mixture which consisted principally of lime and clay. This mixture he named “Portland Cement” because of its close resemblance to Portland stone. This cement when set resembles the natural quarried product not only in colour, but in strength

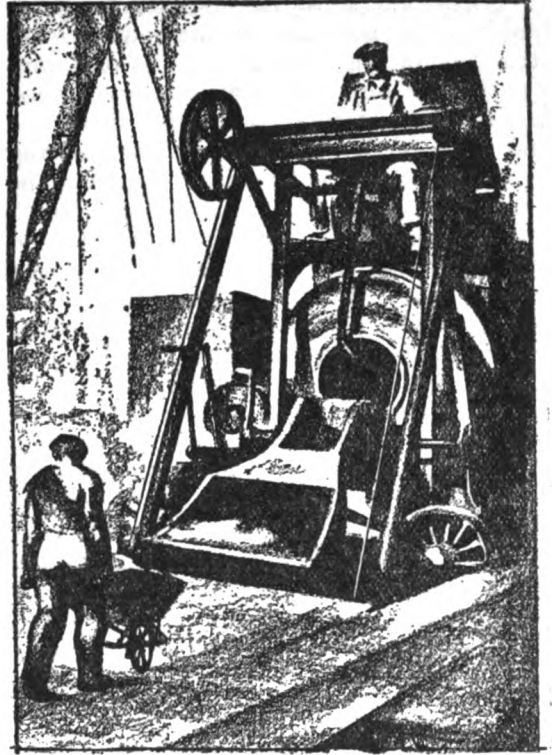
and hardness. The cement of his discovery, however, was a primitive composition compared with the Standard Specification cement of to-day. The present product is the result of a highly scientific process. In the up-to-date cement works the manufacture is controlled at every stage, from the time the raw materials are put into the crushers until the cement is sacked ready for use. It was Joseph Aspdin's discovery which marked the beginning of those developments in building, which have named this the "Age of Concrete" and which have had such a serious effect on the status and employment of bricklayers and walling masons.

The Mechanical Carpenter.

If concrete is one of the principal factors in the revolution in the building industry, another is the development of wood-working machinery. An infinite amount of wood-work is now done by machines—planing, turning, mortising, cutting—that was formerly done by carpenters and joiners. Doors, window frames, and many other essential parts in buildings are now turned out to standardised measure and with lightning speed, by machinery. Then, in the matter of brick-making, there has been considerable machine development, as also is the case with new walling materials, like slab blocks for partitioning.

Stone masonry has been revolutionised by new saw frames, which cut the stone in a fifth of the time taken previously by the old ones. Stone is cut to sizes now which were impossible twenty years ago. Moulding machines have done much to eliminate craftsmanship, and, while larger quantities of stone are used for building purposes to-day in London, for instance, many fewer masons are employed.

It used to be a common sight to see four lusty navvies at work on the road, one holding a strong steel chisel or point with long pincers, while the other three struck at the head of the chisel with mighty sledge hammers, in a ringing rhythm. In this way a hole would be made in the hard road surface, providing a vantage point from which to prize up the roadway. That sight is seen no more. It has faded from human



THE CONCRETE-MIXER.

*A fine study of machinery by Louis Lozowick
(from "The New Masses.")*

ken, like the hansom cab and the muffin man. Now along comes a man with a formidable tool, connected to an engine. This tool is heavy and awkward to wield, and throbs and pants with demoniac energy and power. It is the pneumatic drill. With this drill the man can make a score of holes in the hardest road in the time that it took those four lusty navvies to make one. Road surfaces can be broken up to an extent and with a speed previously undreamt of. But one often wonders what has become of those navvies, so proud of their strength and so strenuous in their service to their employer, who was usually some unscrupulous road contractor. In what grim way are they living to-day—in what squalid slum or lazaretto. . . . ?

There are machine haulers and "mechanical navvies" which have displaced the human ones. There are crushing machines. There are mortar-mixing machines, where previously the mixing was done by hand.

Perhaps the most remarkable change in building has been in the methods of construction of big buildings. Where previously the building went up by degrees, to-day a huge steel skeleton is first thrust up, and much of the work is done from the top by means of electric hoists and cranes. The skeleton is filled in floor by floor, which involves the most precise organisation of men and materials. This method has been copied from America, and American influence looms large in the new industrial revolution generally. There is no waiting for the shell of the building to be finished before putting in the service necessities. The apparatus for water supply, vacuum cleaning, telephone, heating and electricity go up with the steel frame. In place of the old-style wooden scaffolding there is swinging tubular and ratchet scaffolding, eliminating much of what was costly and cumbersome in the past. How remote do those gangs of hod carriers seem, who used to laboriously swarm up the ladders with their heavy loads of bricks? And what has become of them? In their place have arisen a new body of skilled workmen—the structural iron workers. The pneumatic drill is used also on big buildings. And painting is done, wholesale as it were, by patent paint sprayers. It is no wonder that, according to the latest Ministry of Labour figures, 23·6 per cent. of the painters are suffering from unemployment and all its consequent evils.

The rate at which new inventions, new devices, and new methods are being introduced into the building industry is at the present time almost bewildering. They have far-reaching effects in the daily work of the building operatives. The position of the craftsmen and labourers is being gradually undermined. Unemployment, despite the pressing demands for building, particularly house building, is increasing amongst them. There are, at the time of writing, 120,463 building operatives unemployed, or over 14 per cent. And their prospects in the immediate future are none too bright. There is a slight tendency in the direction of rationalisation amongst the leading employers, which, no doubt will grow. "The end of the new industrial revolution," to quote Mr. Baldwin, "no man can foretell."

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In the book which he has written for N.C.L.C. students and classes, "J. F. H." has aimed at giving a plain account of the way the British Empire grew; a very necessary historical introduction to the study of present-day 'Empire' problems, which forms an important part of our classes in Modern Imperialism.

His chapter-headings are as follows:—

- I. *The Adventurers* (1400-1600).
- II. *Traders and Colonists* (1600-1680).
- III. *Expansion by Conquest* (1680-1788).
- IV. *Consolidation* (1788-1880).
- V. *The New Imperialism* (1880-1928).

As will be seen from this list, the book is so arranged as to form the basis for a series of lectures. But it is by no means a dry-as-dust text-book; it has been written to be read—and chuckled over. There are, of course, serious-minded people who object to

humour, or irony, in a book on history. *A Short History of the British Empire* is not for them. Its aim is serious enough; but, as will be clear from the book itself, its author is of the opinion that he is more likely to drive his lesson home by treating his readers as men and brothers than by preaching to them in the Big Bow-wow style.

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THE BOOKSHELF

By J. F. HORRABIN

I HAVE discovered another piece of real proletarian literature—a book with the genuine 'of-the-earth-earthy' flavour to it: *The Legend of Tyl Ulenspiegel*, by Charles de Coster. The best (because completest) edition of it is a translation by F. M. Atkinson (published by Heinemann, at 7/6). There are other editions—some of them illustrated; but these, I believe, are abridged versions. And even though you may not want to read every page of Tyl's adventures, it is more satisfactory to do your skipping for yourself.

Tyl Ulenspiegel was a legendary figure of the late Middle Ages, a sort of popular peasant hero on whom all sorts of exploits and stories were fathered. De Coster, who has immortalised him, was a 19th century Belgian writer who had steeped himself in the folk-tales of his native Flanders. He was a 'one book' man—and surely this book is big enough to earn undying fame for any author. He takes as his period the time when Spain was trampling on the Netherlands; using fire and sword to subdue the

stubborn nationalism, and the equally stubborn Protestantism of the Flemings. Tyl is a peasant lad, a happy-go-lucky ne'er-do-well, who has to fly from home because of some youthful escapade, and seek his fortune by his wits in the towns and villages, and on the roads, of Germany and Italy. Returning to his native land he finds his old father, a charcoal burner, imprisoned as a heretic. The old man is burnt at the stake and his small property confiscated by the Spaniards.

"And the King inherited."

That is the bitter refrain that runs all through the book. Behind all the burnings and gaolings and torturings looms the sinister figure of Philip of Spain, growing richer and richer as his butchers kill heretics "for the glory of God." Tyl devotes himself to the rebel cause, and lives an outlaw life; murdering Spainards, plundering the rich, and giving to the poor—a sort of Flemish Robin Hood.

It is hard to quote from so rich and varied a mine of treasure as this book undoubtedly is; but here is a speech by one of Tyl's comrades which will serve to shew the spirit of it:—

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"I know better than you. I say that we are mad—I, you, and Ulenspiegel—to wear out our eyes for all these princes and great ones of the earth, who would laugh loudly at us if they saw us dying of weariness, losing our sleep to furbish up arms and cast bullets for their service, while they drink French wine and eat German capons from golden tankards and dishes of English pewter; they will never ask whether, while we are seeking in the open wild the God by whose grace they have the power, their enemies are cutting off our limbs with their scythes and casting us into the well of death. They, in the meantime, who are neither Reformed, nor Calvinists, nor Lutherans, nor Catholics, but sceptics and doubters entirely, will buy or conquer principalities, will devour the wealth of the monks, abbays, and convents, and will have all—virgins, wives, women and *bona robas*—and will drink from their gold cups to their perpetual jollity, and to our everlasting foolishness, simplicity, stupidity, and to the seven deadly sins which they commit, O Wasteele, under the starveling nose of thy enthusiasm. Look upon the fields, the meads; look upon the harvest, the orchards, the kine, the gold rising out of the earth; look at the wild things in the woods, the birds of the skies, delicious ortolans, delicate thrushes, wild boar's heads, haunches of buck venison; all is theirs, hunting, fishing; earth, sea, everything. And you, you live on bread and water, and we are killing ourselves here for them, without sleep, without eating, without drinking. And when we shall be dead, they will fetch our carrion a kick and say to our mother: 'Make us more of these; these ones can do us no service now.'"

As a *Times* reviewer recently remarked, Tyl ranks with "the heroes—Don Quixote, Hamlet, Pickwick"; but Plebs will note that whereas, of these three, one was a knight, another a Prince, and the third a bourgeois, Tyl is a proletarian to the very marrow of his bones. And being a proletarian, he and his adventures are by no means always quite polite. So see that a copy of this book is on the shelves of your local library before Sir William Joynson-Hicks or Mr. James Douglas discover that it might cause any little ones to offend.

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A DEVASTATED AREA

Conditions on Tyneside

By S. R.

THE present industrial depression, with its consequent widespread poverty, has been felt as intensely on Tyneside as in any part of the country. The facts regarding the conditions of the people on both banks of the Tyne have been collected and reported upon by the Survey Committee of the Bureau of Social Research for the Tyneside.* It would be well if similar details could be obtained for other important industrial centres.

Figures, averages, percentages and diagrams may give us some idea of social conditions, but a better impression is certainly received when we come into direct contact with the subject matter of the investigation—the lives of men, women and children. In very few respects do social conditions on the Tyneside compare favourably with other parts of the country. A casual glance will reveal the fearful overcrowding conditions. The percentages are startling. There are 9·6% of the population of England and Wales as a whole living overcrowded, but the figure for the Tyneside reaches 34·9%. Is it to be wondered at that such an area has a very bad record in the matter of tuberculosis, or that a pneumonia patient stands a very poor chance in these congested homes? The power of resistance to disease is further broken down by the worry and the poor feeding which comes with such low wages and such unemployment as the Tyneside is experiencing.

The conditions of the miners in the area can be well imagined from the fact that Burt Hall is at present being used as a clearing house for boots and clothing collected by the Miners' Relief Committee.

The ship-building industry, which has been so subject to violent fluctuations in

* *Industrial Tyneside*, by Henry A. Mess (Benn, 10/6).

trade, employs between one-sixth and one-seventh of all persons employed on Tyneside. Even before the war the number of trade unionists unemployed fluctuated between 2.5% and 23.2%. From these fluctuations can be conjured up the chances of employment in the industry at present.

The survey covers many aspects of industrial Tyneside, but many things do not seem to have been considered which must have influenced working-class conditions greatly. One would at least have thought that some influence would have been felt by a population so dependent upon shipbuilding by the clause in the Peace Treaty relating to the handing over of ships. A consideration of the problem of unemployment on the Tyneside can hardly be severed from a consideration of such manipulations of capital as Reyrolles' increasing their capital six-fold; or Irvine's, shipbuilders, giving twenty shares for one; or Grayson and Sons, who gave four pounds' worth of share-script for every shilling originally invested. Can we think of unemployment on the Tyneside without thinking at the same time of the number of mechanical labour-saving devices which have been introduced into the shipbuilding industry?

Perhaps the poverty on Tyneside may be pictured by taking the increase in the expenditure in the Poor Law Rate per head of population. The increase in expenditure in this respect in 1923-25 over 1912-14 is in Newcastle-on-Tyne 469%, South Shields 342%, Wallsend 271%, Jarrow 366%, as compared with 188% of all the County Boroughs in England and Wales.

Conditions on the Tyneside present a very sombre picture. Remedies are not contained in the suggested easing of the pressure of population by more emigration, slowing down the birthrate, or the vain cry for the revival and expansion of industries and the creation of new industries. The forces which have created the Tyneside conditions are still operating. It may be an area suffering more than the majority of industrial areas in the country, but in common with them it is suffering from the evils of Capitalism. Its destiny is inextricably bound up with the destiny of Britain—indeed, with the destiny of the whole industrial world.

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AN AMERICAN LABOUR COLLEGE

By MARK STARR

Mark Starr, late Organiser of No. 3 Division, N.C.L.C., has recently taken up residence at the Brookwood Workers' College, near New York. His many friends will be glad to read these descriptive notes received from him a week or two ago.

BROOKWOOD stands on its own estate amongst the hills and woods of Katonah, some 45 miles from New York City. To the main building—a large house in colonial style—there have been added a large women's dormitory, houses for the teaching staff and men students. The 30 students come from 16 trades, with their homes as far apart as New York and Montana, South Carolina and Canada. There are 17 men and 13 women, including 2 coloured girls, and the average age works out at 28 years. A union pays about £90 to keep a student in board and tuition for the school year of eight months and this is reduced to about £40 for a student paying his own way. The full course covers two years. Students help with inside and outside work up to seven hours weekly to keep down costs. The College is assisted by grants from sympathetic individuals and certain endowment funds to the extent of more than half its income. Complete control, however, is vested in its directors, which include James Maurer and others of the few progressive trade union leaders in U.S.A., with representatives of the staff and students.

This is the current schedule (pronounced *skedule* here by the way). Classes begin at 8.15 a.m., because everyone has been aroused at 6.30 a.m. to prepare for breakfast at 7 a.m. On Mondays the first-year students take English from 8.15 to 9.45. This is followed by Public Speaking for the second year students at 10 a.m. In the afternoon, from 2 to 3.30, there is first year Economics, and from 3.45 to 5.15 Labour Organisation and Its Problems is discussed. On Tuesdays in the same lesson periods, History of Civilisation, Economics, Current Events and Foreign Labour Movements form the topics and recur in the following days, with the

addition of Labour Journalism on Wednesday and Fridays. It will be seen that every student has two class periods each day.

For each lesson a full precis is prepared for the students which contains all the important dates and statistics and references for further reading. There is an assignment of questions to be treated in writing and discussed in private conferences. The teacher sits at the head of the class-room tables and sums up the previous lessons and deals with points of interrogation provoked by the precis and invites student opinion upon problems in the lesson. In some classes the students have much more to say than the teacher who, however, has to guard against letting discussion wander too widely in the hands of the class members, most of whom actively participate.

Brookwood prides itself upon its "factual approach." What that means is, for example, that Arthur W. Calhoun is now talking over the economics of the farmer problem and the present mining crisis to the first-year Economic Class, and the interference by modern trusts with supply and demand to the second-year class. Calhoun sprouts ideas and radiates queries in a devastating manner to all who have ready-made solutions and panaceas for social problems or who have borrowed a standard suit to clothe their mental nakedness. If the students desire a class in Marxian Economics, it is formed, but it is not the indispensable starting point. The theory is the file for classifying the facts, but it is not the first thing in the investigation. Calhoun's method is clearly seen in his *The Worker Looks at Government*, which also gives a clear analysis of the powers of the Supreme Court, of the President of Congress and the State Legislatives in U.S.A.

In the class on Labour Organisation, D. J. Saposs, as he has done in his *Left Wing Unionism* and *Readings in Trade Unionism*, is discussing with the students the various present forms of union formation and control rather than starting with a set theory concerning trades unionism and its development. A. J. Muste, the Principal, treats history on similar lines. Although the Workers' Education Bureau has begun to issue text books, most of those used in the classes are by orthodox university professors whose ideas are criticised and corrected where necessary.

The English classes are a real necessity to the foreign-born workers who wish to speak and write for Labour. The Journalism course is really applied English,

dancing, students' forum and parties fill up the programme. The student body is a microcosm of the progressive elements in the U.S.A.

Just now a serious crisis has been created by the recommendation of the A.F. of L. to its constituent bodies not to send any of their members to Brookwood. Matthew Woll—who is president of the National Civic Federation, an enlarged and active Red-baiting edition of the British Alliance of Employers and Employed—has led the attack. Prominent educationists and publicists and the American Federation of Teachers have protested, but the result is doubtful. Charges of pro-Soviet and Communist demonstrations and teachings, based

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although a great deal of useful information and practice is given on reporting meetings and writing of feature news stories and editorials. In the Current Events and Public Speaking classes the students are responsible for raising and treating their own topics, subject to supervision and criticism of "A.J." who remains in charge. There is a very alive and effective Library for the students' use and files are kept of all important Labour and other papers and magazines.

It should not be imagined that Brookwood is a monastery of exclusively serious-minded high-brows. With the junior members of the faculty families it makes a varied, happy and somewhat noisy circle. Games, "hikes,"

on complaints of a disgruntled student, have been made and accepted without even giving Brookwood a chance of reply. While its connection with organised Labour is being menaced, the College is also being attacked by the Communists for its alleged "class collaboration." Whatever decision the A.F. of L. makes, Brookwood will continue its work, because some of the supporting unions will ignore the A.F. of L. recommendation. Like the N.C.L.C., Brookwood refuses to discriminate against Communist teachers and students or to abandon its right to analyse and discuss any official or unofficial policy.

MODERN BIOLOGY

By B. W.

TO the student of Marxism, the history of science presents a fascinating field for reflection. The status of science and of its practitioners, the sort of problem that is considered important, the general philosophic approach and the technical means employed by the scientific worker, all these are, at any period, intimately bound up with the prevailing social structure and ideology. But this social structure itself depends, in the last resort, on the technical advances based upon the scientific knowledge of the time. Science thus presents, in its triumphs and its vicissitudes, a sort of X-ray moving picture of the society in which it is developed. And to complete the complexity of the picture, there must be added the fact that science has a self-consistent "pure" history, in which advance follows advance with logical inevitability, and social and economic considerations have no place. It is this last story alone that figures in the orthodox scientific history; probably we shall have to wait for the full interweaving of the various "pure" and social factors until the successful Revolution has endowed the worker-student with leisure and tranquility.

Darwin's Achievement.

Meanwhile we can pause to get an idea of where modern science is going. The five books under review* help to supply an answer so far as biology is concerned. Professor Julian Huxley supplies a simple account of some aspects of the science of life, which is admirable on the whole. The main impression he gives is of the tremendous importance and effect of the theory of evolution. To realise how great this effect has been, one has only to try to put oneself mentally

**The Stream of Life*, by Prof. Julian S. Huxley (7d or 1/-, Watts); *Emergent Evolution and the Social*, by Prof. W. M. Wheeler; *Man a Machine*, by Joseph Needham; *Selene, or Sex and the Moon*, by Prof. H. Munro Fox; *The Alchemy of Light and Colour*, by Oliver L. Reiser (2/6 each, Kegan Paul).

in the position of a pre-Darwinian thinker, and to divest oneself of all ideas of progressive change in animals or in man. It is almost impossible for a modern to enter into this old mental world, or to appreciate the sophisms and torturings necessary to reconcile the idea of special creation with the similarity between species, and the all-wise and beneficent creator with some of the obviously amateurish, stupid and cruel things he had done. Darwinism abolished the supernatural and magic from the very foundations of biology, and enabled it to make its bow as a science.

It would therefore be an interesting exercise in Marxism to appraise the exact place of Darwin in the history of Victorian England and of the world it so complacently patronised. We can only offer here a few rather obvious considerations. To take first the purely scientific antecedents, the idea of evolution could not arise until the world was fully explored, for any unknown tract with unknown plants and animals would prevent men from generalising about life; nor could the science of geology have

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advanced in a largely unknown world sufficiently to have been able to present Darwin with the vast periods of time he required for his cosmic drama. There was also necessary a well developed descriptive and classificatory natural history—this presupposes a leisure class with a taste for intellectual pastimes; and a firm conviction of the reign of scientific law in inanimate nature—this presupposes Newton, Dalton, Lavoisier, and all the practical triumphs of scientific principles that made up the mechanical side of the industrial revolution. It is therefore easy to see why Darwinism came when it did.

Social Aspects of Darwinism.

But when one considers the more purely social and economic aspects of Darwinism, its mid-Victorian inevitability becomes even more apparent. As Julian Huxley makes quite clear, Darwinism implies the continuity of life and the struggle for existence—the scientific shadows of the rights of man and free competition. Darwin himself tells us that he first got his great idea by reading Malthus. It would be unthinkable for such a theory to arise when men prayed to be “kept in their proper stations”; nor does it appeal to-day to the civilised fundamentalist of the Southern States of the U.S.A., mainly, one suspects, because it puts him on an ancestral par with the despised nigger. Darwinism is the projection of the ideas of a vigorous and expanding machine-using capitalist class, who see the world from their own outlook, and find that they themselves are the “fittest” in the world creation.

But it is now nearly seventy years since Darwin published his book, and what is the position to-day? On the social side, the mid-Victorian Liberal manufacturer has lost his old unbounded self-confidence and optimism, and has degenerated into the bankers’ puppet, clamouring for rate-relief and protection; while the scientific research worker is becoming proletarian in status, but with just enough scarcity-value to put him in the professional grade, and give him a Fabian political outlook. This is reflected with crystal clearness in Julian Huxley’s book. After detailing the magnificent triumph of Darwinism, he proceeds to the

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question of Mendelism, the generally accepted view of the mechanism of heredity, and concludes, in effect, that although the fittest may survive, yet the question of who is the fittest is decided by forces entirely outside the individual’s own control—just as it is on the economic plane. He finally considers social questions explicitly instead of unconsciously and implicitly, and underlines the lesson of pessimism tempered by the possibility of a very slow amelioration if the community only becomes conscious and suffers a change of heart. Of the Marxian view of society he knows nothing.

But purely biological considerations do not hold in social communities, and Professor Wheeler realises this. His studies of the social insects have shown him a new co-operative mode of behaviour arising again and again in purely individualist species of ants and bees. Unfortunately, however, Professor Wheeler is not a Marxist either, and, in looking for the origin of the social group in the individual, as abstract individual without a particular concrete environment, he falls an easy prey to the pro-

pagandists of "Emergent Evolution," one of the latest attempts to smuggle God back into biology. He also muses on human societies, and becomes unbearably painful.

Of the other three books little need be said. Dr. Needham's is an interesting, if somewhat pedantic, modern restatement of the mechanistic view of the individual organism—until an astonishing last chapter, where the whole case is recanted. Professor Fox has written a charming essay, combining folk-lore with some of the most romantic pieces of pure scientific research, and garnished it with an unsolved mystery or two. Mr. Reiser's book seems to be just pure nonsense.

LETTERS

RATIONALISATION

DEAR Comrade,—The article by S. B. M. Potter in your November-December issue is, I believe, calculated to obscure the issue of Rationalisation.

In the last paragraph, opposition to Rationalisation is defined as opposition to the scientific organisation of industry. But surely scientific organisation of industry in a class society can only mean better organisation in the interests of the ruling class. In capitalist society it means, among other things, reducing labour costs as part of the costs of production. It also means reducing friction in the industrial machine, by binding the Unions more closely to Capitalism, and by preventing independent action on the part of the working class. This, if successful, would not be the road to Socialism but to a vastly more powerful Capitalism.

It is indeed news to learn that rationalisation means less unemployment. Not only does capitalist rationalisation imply the restriction of output in relation to the limited markets of the world, but the facts of rationalisation in Germany and America tell quite a different story.

The correct attitude of workers must be to fight rationalisation wherever it can be shown to threaten their standards of living and working. Wherever increased surplus value accrues the workers must struggle to obtain the largest possible share, and finally the workers' class organisations must be thoroughly overhauled to meet the attacks of the more concentrated and better organised capitalism resulting from rationalisation.

Yours fraternally,

WM. S. PERCIVAL.

QUEENSLAND W.E.A.

SIR,—In the September-October, 1928, number of the Plebs Magazine, under the caption "I.W.C.E. in Queensland," you published the following statement concerning the Workers' Educational Association of Queensland:—

"In 1925, however, one of the tutors was rash enough to speak in support of a railway strike, and

following upon that the W.E.A. (of Queensland) took steps to purge itself from that sort of wickedness."

That statement, sir, has no foundation in fact and is a gross perversion of the truth. My Association gives it an unqualified denial and asks in the interests of fair play, assuming of course that you believe in fair play, that you will give this denial the same publicity as that accorded the statement in question.

Yours faithfully,

W. I. SCOTT,
Gen. Secretary, W.E.A. of Queensland.

[It is now up to our Australian Correspondent.—Ed.]

THAT "INNER URGE."

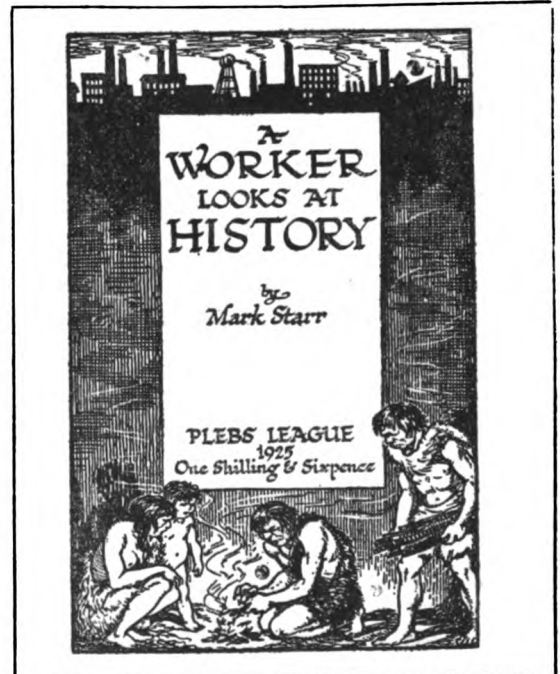
Dear Comrade,—In the December *Plebs*, Comrade L. J. Humberstone takes me to task for ignoring the "inner urge" as a factor in history. "We will (he says) leave out the 'mysterious' for the time being."

But in leaving out my 'mysterious,' he leaves out my point!

Yours fraternally,

T. A. JACKSON.

The T.U.C. Calendar (3/6 from Transport House) is a new venture for the Trade Union Movement and a welcome one. It contains a number of useful statistics relating to wages, prices, unemployment and trade and in addition gives lists of the various forthcoming Conferences. Trade Union offices which want a desk calendar cannot do better than obtain that published by the T.U.C. We should like to see the T.U.C. issue similar particulars in an office diary.



THE "DIFFUSION" CONTROVERSY

By V. GORDON CHILDE

Culture: The Diffusion Controversy. By Prof. G. Elliot Smith, Prof. M. B. Malinowski, Dr. J. Spinden and Dr. A. Goldenwiser. (Kegan Paul, 2/6).

EVERY human community or people adjusts its way of living and thinking to its present environment and its own traditions—ancestral adjustments to often very different environments, as when the English ruling class takes its top hats and frock coats to a semi-tropical country like Queensland. The sum total of these adjustments—houses, clothes, ways of getting food and myths to account for droughts or diseases—constitutes what archaeologists and anthropologists term a 'culture.' The book before us is nominally devoted to the question whether such adjustments grew up spontaneously among the multitudinous peoples inhabiting the globe or whether the essential outlines at least were worked out once and by one group and then 'diffused,' to be adopted and modified by the remainder. The several essayists moreover adopt a different attitude towards the culture.

To Elliot Smith a culture is a historical document. He believes that the main adjustments that emancipated man from complete dependence in his environment—agriculture, the calendar and the social institutions bound up therewith—were elaborated in Egypt alone and thereafter merely copied. To him, therefore, a culture is interesting in so far as it betrays its Nilotic origin. Malinowski, on the contrary, wants to see a culture as a working whole that makes life liveable for a Papuan head-hunter or a London professor. The historical view seems to irritate him as a distraction from this task and he denies the possibility of tracing relations between cultures with the assertion that "culture is not contagious"—a doctrine patently false as thus baldly expressed, but shown by the context to mean merely that the adoption by one people of ideas or inventions of another is ultimately only possible if the said ideas fit into the recipient culture and respond to its needs, at a given historical moment.

Dr. Spinden sets out to prove that the aboriginal cultures of America, that his European ancestors did their best to eradicate, grew up without any stimulus from the Old World, modern American culture being all too obvious an instance of Elliot Smith's principles of diffusion and degeneration. Finally, Dr. Goldenwiser, another American, attempts a reconciliation of the two theses, admitting both independent invention and cross fertilisation.

The short essays in such a collection are not likely to convince an intelligent layman one way or the other, but they serve as a convenient introduction to the many-sided problem. That the problem is not merely an academic one must be obvious to those acquainted with the other writings of Elliot Smith's school. It is an integral part of their position that war and oppression and other vices of culture are the results of a more or less thick veneer of Egyptian influence on the innate peaceableness and kindness of "natural man." To some sentimentalists this account offers encouragement, while others might prefer to trace progress in the gradual amelioration, suppression or transcendence of such vices. Elliot Smith's school stand in fact nearer to Kropotkin and Tolstoy than to Marx or Lenin.

AMONG THE BOOKS

By

"PLEBS" REVIEWERS

MR. JAMES WELSH chose a very difficult subject for his novel, *Norman Dale, M.P.* (Herbert Jenkins, 3/6). How can one write a really good novel whilst under all the restraints that such a subject must put on such an author? And the difficulties are reflected in the book. The hero does not thrill one as he, and James Welsh, should.

There are difficulties, too, for the reviewer. Does one's throat hurt in reading of the sacrifice and courage of those Scottish miners because of the writing, or because one has known its counterpart in other districts? Whether that is so or not, this is a novel that should be read by all workers. L.T.

When Siegfried Sassoon, with a poet's telescopic vision, saw through the hollow patriotic talk of the exploiting classes during the war, he "let it rip" and told them what he thought. So because he was an officer and a gentleman they had to pretend he was mad and put him in a home. They could not escape his poems, which he hurled like so many Mills bombs into the hypocritical mess of their "patriotism"; so they called it "shell shock" and very probably hoped he'd die of it.

But he didn't. He came back from Hell, very quiet, but with his eyesight unimpaired. And having told them what he thought about War, he is now telling them,* this time very quietly and in a manner more like creeping poison gas—invisible, but none the less deadly and penetrating—what he thinks about Peace and the pursuits they indulge in during Peace.

This time they will not put him away, because they won't know what he is talking about. They will liken his story of a fox-hunting young man to other stories of fox-hunting men. They will compare him to Surtees! How he will laugh in his sleeve, for this book is less about fox-hunting than anything else, though it describes the life of a young man brought up to do nothing else.

It is a wonderful piece of writing. Quiet and deep as a mill race, it sweeps away the false pretensions of a futile system of society. The hero, a young man trained only to fox hunt, is left dazed and bewildered to tackle an officer's job in the war to end war. It is all told quietly, almost unemotionally. Only now and then does the barb of irony obviously show itself, as when we read of a brother-officer who had been a Somerset House clerk, but was a first-class platoon commander.

I need hardly say that he had never hunted. He could swim like a fish, but no social status was attached to that.

The exploiting classes hated Sassoon's Mills-bomb poems, but this subtle invisible poison they will not recognise. They will put him among their great writers (where he belongs of course) and the *Times* will boom "a most delightful picture of English country life, by no means of its sporting life only." By no means, indeed! W.H.

**Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, by Siegfried Sassoon (Faber & Gwyer, 7/6).

Common Clay, by H. Hessel Tiltman (E. Benn, 7/6) is the story of a slum boy's determination to make a place for himself. He accomplishes this by militant activity in the trade union, the newly-formed Labour Party, the T.U.C. and Parliament. The story covers the period of the formation of the Labour Party, the War, the General Strike, and the present. (Labour in office in 1924 is omitted).

This militancy becomes progressively modified, and ceases with the General Strike. He accepts a government post at the moment he is compelled to resign the general secretaryship of his union. As a government official he is consulted by the Tory Cabinet, which is nervous about the industrial trouble in the North, where "soviets" had been proclaimed, and upon his advice the army is ruthlessly employed, suppressing the armed bands of workers. He finishes as a £5000 director of the Steel Trust, asserting to the last his service in the cause of Labour. G.

According to Sir E. Benn, in *The Return to Laissez-Faire* (Benn Ltd., 6/-), America is the Promised Land. No poverty exists in that land of the blest. An ideally competitive system of Education trains the "Goslings" and the "Goose Steppers" in the ways of truth. The Chicago Meat Trust is the "most wonderful example of Individualism in the world." Has Benn ever read *The Jungle*?

He maintains that £3 per week per family is spent in Britain from the public purse and contradicts his own figures after a span of 30 pages! He doesn't want much State Enterprise, but refuses to say just how much is acceptable to him. On unemployment he ceases to be a joke and becomes objectionable. He defines unemployment not as "an absence of work" but "qualification for benefit" and "proves" that there is really not a problem at all, stating that employment, good or bad, is better to-day than ever before.

According to Benn the people flocked eagerly from the land to the industrial centres during the 18th-19th centuries.

So full is this book of false evidence that another five times its size, would be required fully to reply to it. It is not worth any serious student's while. JOBANE.

The Battle of Behaviorism, an Exposition and an Exposure, by John B. Watson and William McDougall. (Kegan Paul, London, 1928, two shillings and sixpence).

Readers of the Plebs *Outline of Psychology* are familiar with the names both of Watson and of McDougall. The Plebs *Outline* tells us that "the study of behaviour is called psychology." But the extreme behaviourists, those belonging to the American school of which Watson is the acknowledged leader, declare that we can, nay that we must, study the behaviour of the creature man, describe the creature's response to stimuli, without concerning ourselves about its "mind," about what it "thinks." For them, psychology is the science of behaviour in that narrow sense; it is not the science of the mind. For them, consciousness, will, purpose, are "spooks," and cannot be the subject of scientific study. Science, they say, must be objective; introspection, they declare, cannot possibly be the foundation of a science. This little book contains the report of a debate at Washington between Watson and McDougall. The scales are unfairly weighted in favour of the latter, for he is a much better expositor. Besides, most of us regard consciousness as a primary datum of experience; and most of us are convinced that conscious purpose is a real determinant of human action. Purpose seems to us part of the very essence of the labour movement.

We cannot advise readers of the Plebs to spend half-a-crown on this little book; but if they have a chance of borrowing it, they will find it worth reading.

E. & C. P.

In his latest book, *The Genius* (Constable, 10/-), Theodore Dreiser once again takes for his chief character one possessing the philandering instinct to an abnormal degree. The story concerns the adventures and vagaries of a young artist—the "genius"—of Illinois during the latter part of the last century. After making allowance for the author's use of the ancient Don Juanism theme, the reader will find this very long novel quite entertaining. The hero's conflict with convention and current ethics during his wayward career is well told in Dreiser's usual interesting style and with his true-to-life delineation of character. Dreiser is one of the best of the modern American novelists whose books circulate in Great Britain.

S.W.

We have received from Brookwood Labour College, Katonah, N.Y., U.S.A., *Adult Education versus Workers' Education* and *The Place of Workers' Education in the Labour Movement* (50 cents). Both are reports of Conferences held on the subjects mentioned and are of interest to worker-educationalists.

J.P.M.

Much publicity has been given recently to the question of the Indian States, and the ruling Maharajahs have placed their case before the Butler Committee; the sittings were held in "camera." Meanwhile the representatives of the Indian States People's Conference—the mass of the oppressed workers and peasants—were refused admission to lay the case of the downtrodden before the Butler Committee. There is a reason attached thereto and that reason is given in the booklet by B. S. Pathik, *What are Indian States?* (Henderson's, Charing Cross Rd.). It describes in simple terms the terrible existence suffered by the workers and peasants in those states, the Slavery Laws, life in the harems, and the extortionate sums extracted by the Princes.

A.G.E.

Darwinism and What It Implies (by Prof. Sir Arthur Keith; Watts & Co., 1/-) is a very convincing treatise on Darwinism. For the expert it contains very little that is new; but for the layman it is simple, lucid forceful and unchallengeable.

In the opening pages a few minor errors may be observed, and one feels sorry that pages 19 and 20 have been so absurdly penned by such a keen laboratory student. Sir A. Keith is another example of one who fully and clearly appreciates Darwin's theory, but lamentably fails to appreciate the similar conception of Karl Marx as applied to society. However, as its Darwinism is good, I commend the book to Plebs readers.

J.G.M.

The world owes a debt to Dr. Marie Stopes for her determination to throw light on the problems of marriage and parenthood, despite the Mrs. Grundies of both sexes. Her work is all the more acceptable because her books deal with the normal case, which is often ignored. In *Radiant Motherhood* (Pitman, 6/-) she has provided a book that will be of considerable value to parents, while in *Enduring Passion* (Putnam, 6/-) the problems discussed are those of middle age.

C.D.M.

WHAT THE N.C.L.C. IS DOING

AS the second Session commences with the second week in January, all classes should be running by the time this issue appears. Every class secretary will have an enrolment register and the necessary enrolment slips, as well as a note of the organisations which provide free access to classes. By going over the class registers it will be possible to see at a glance whether there are any members of Unions, or other bodies, who have to pay the class fee because their organisations are not affiliated. Steps should, of course, be taken to get these students to raise the matter of affiliation in their organisations and a letter should be sent to the organisations in order that the question may come up officially. Arrangements will no doubt have been made to see that all classes have an opportunity of purchasing N.C.L.C. literature and text-books as well as the *Plebs*.

REPORT FORM.—Report Form 25 is now in the hands of all College secretaries and should be returned to the N.C.L.C. office as quickly as possible in order that a statement may be made up showing class, etc., figures for the three months ending December.

DIVISIONAL MINUTES.—In the case of quite a number of divisions, the Minutes give no indication of a regular quarterly examination being made of the work done in the division as compared with the previous quarter. This is a very important part of the work of a Divisional Council and unless it is properly done it will be difficult to check any setbacks or to make the necessary progress.

LOCAL AFFILIATIONS (New, not Renewal).—Glasgow (Western Area Council) 16, Liverpool 3. Is your College in this list? If not, why not? Congratulations to the new Glasgow Committee on their excellent affiliation list.

DIVISION 1.

The Tutors' Council Meeting in December had a very stimulating discussion on Teaching Methods, opened by A. Cohen. The Dietzgen Centenary Celebration, arranged at the Labour College, Earls Court, was a very successful affair. The hall was filled largely with students who had attended classes on Dietzgen in the London area. The three lectures given by Comrades Jones, Dorricott and Ashcroft, the Labour College staff, were well received.

A Students' Association Conference and Social was held, the hall being filled. J.F.H. addressed the gathering and urged comrades to join the Plebs and N.C.L.C. Students' Association. A good enrolment followed. Have you sent your bob? Jack Clancy led the community singing—and the dancing—in a way which led a number of comparative strangers to wager that he was a professional conductor. The interesting suggestion was made at the meeting that a number of these functions could be arranged to commemorate the historical landmarks of I.W.C.E. F. J. Adkins has agreed to conduct a Public Speakers' Class at Stepney. There is splendid material in this area, and we are expecting great results from this class. Miss M. Birkinshaw is conducting a class on Psychology

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at Leyton. Mile End class is now having a six-lecture course on Rationalisation conducted by Dan Thomas, to be followed by another six-lecture course on Economic Geography by Comrade Millbank.

DIVISION 4.

Newport College has had a successful first winter session. Two classes have been run and the Organiser has done a good number of branch meetings and lantern lectures. The new session will be inaugurated by a Social Evening, on the initiative of the Liswarry Class under the tutorship of Comrade Richards. The Monmouth D.L.P. is running a special Public Speaking Class, training its local party leaders for the General Election. West Wales L.C. completes the first session with six classes and a number of branch lectures to A.U.B.T.W., A.E.U., and Plasterers, together with a series of lantern lectures by Nun Nicholas at Clydach and Ammanford. Aberavon Class did not make its first class concert a success. We hope Swansea will have better luck. Maesteg L.C. reports a successful session, the Cwmdw class having the record attendance of 68. Arrangements are made to fill the coffers with the aid of the local Glee Party. Rhondda L.C. is still suffering from the lack of tutors, but the splendid co-operation of Comrade David and his band of voluntary tutors has enabled the College to maintain eight classes and arrange nine in the new session. In addition, Comrade David has put in some lantern lecture work, both in the Rhondda and at Pontypridd. Cardiff L.C. is still limping along—the organisation is not yet what we would like. With the aid of Comrades David, Ward, Fenton and the Organiser, four classes have been run during the past session, and arrangements are made for at least three in the new year. Joe Ward has rallied a splendid band of students who are putting some life into this old aristocratic town. At Merthyr, Comrade Williams is plodding on midst great difficulties. Aberdare N.U.R. are now holding a class, Treharris is arranging one; Merthyr will probably have two or three going in the new year. Under the auspices of the College, a public lantern lecture on "War Against War" is to be held, with Mrs. S. O. Davies in the chair. Thanks to the splendid co-operation of Comrade Chivers, the Esperanto classes at Abergavenny and Abersychan are very successful. At Abertillery, Len Roberts has succeeded in maintaining a splendid class upon the application of Marxism to Modern

Problems. In general, despite our local difficulties, which are financial and tutorial, we are able to report a fairly successful first winter session, with about 42 classes. With an additional push we can do better in the new year.

DIVISION 5.

Bath L.C. co-operated with the local Labour Party in running a meeting with A. A. Purcell, M.P., as speaker. The attendance was not as good as it should have been. Following an address from the Organiser, the local branch of the Plumbers decided to affiliate and ten members decided to enrol for the class next session. Cheltenham has had a very successful session and is holding its Annual Whist Drive on 22nd January. Our best thanks are due to Comrade Quelch, the local secretary. Efforts are again being made to revive the classes in Yeovil and Barnstaple. The Organiser has addressed meetings of trade union branches in both places during the month, and local comrades have promised to assist in organising classes. Will all those who wish to help forward the work in these areas please get in touch with the Organiser.

DIVISION 8.

SOUTH EAST LANCS.—The Jan.-March list of twenty-one classes is out. We have also three tutors' training classes. Thanks to our Bolton supporters, we have two classes in the district. Our Manchester Students' Association ran a successful Dietzgen Centenary event on December 9th, with Fred Casey as lecturer. Ninety attended. Fred Shaw will lecture to the Students' Association on Sunday, January 13th, at 7 p.m., in the Ritz Cafe, Oldham Street, Manchester.

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