

THE  
"Plebs" Magazine

---

Vol. I.

April, 1909.

No. 3.

---

## EDITORIAL

**T**HERE is perhaps no individual more despised and detested by working-men than the leader who betrays them and sells their cause for the proverbial thirty pieces of silver. The connotation of

**Working-class  
Betrayers.**

the word "traitor," it is true, is to most men a sentimental connotation, but it is none the less intense for all that. As a matter of fact, the feeling of revulsion arising from pure sentiment is stronger, and expresses itself more passionately than a similar feeling aroused from a less sentimental and more reasoning attitude. But the strands in the rope of sentiment soon wear out. As in most cases, the betrayer, by the very act of betrayal, raises himself above the betrayed, the inability to reach him accentuates the tendency to forget. When the actions of Maddison and Burns were first disclosed, feelings of indignation ran high. To-day they are only remembered as incidents with the majority of men. The causes and associations underlying these acts have never, it would seem, been clearly understood. And what was then perceived is soon forgotten, and only recalled when some other individual repeats the process. But then the damage is done and the recollection comes too late. There are valuable lessons to be learned from these regrettable occurrences, lessons which if taken to mind, ought at least to minimize the danger of recurrences.



WHY do working-class leaders go wrong? What has led them to sell their cause and their conscience to the enemy? Is it due to

malice aforethought? Have they set out with the deliberate intention of perpetrating the act? We think not, at least in the main. There is every reason to believe that these men started out straight, that they began their mission with honesty of purpose.

**The Cause  
of the  
Betrayals.**

But coupled to honesty of purpose was limitation of vision. They were unable to recognize the real nature of the task to the accomplishment of which they had been appointed; added to that fact the people who appointed these leaders also failed to perceive the conditions which obtained upon the field of battle. Were it otherwise they would have been able to detect the danger and prevent it maturing ere it was too late. But only instinctively did they apprehend the conflict, only instinctively did they choose some one to lead them; and as instinctively were they led. The duty of the leader took *him* along a way over which *they* did not pass. Leadership brought him into conditions which he had hitherto not encountered. Difficulties presented themselves to him of which he had not previously conceived. In the camp of those whom he had gone out against he was hospitably received, he may have been complimented upon being a "practical" man, "capable of seeing two sides to a question," and impressed with tempting offers, and, perhaps, depressed with a sense of the helplessness of the class that he represented, he succumbed. Not all at once was the fatal web spun. Not in an instant was the reactionary step taken, but by easy, and perhaps, at the first, imperceptible gradations. He may, even at the beginning, have sunk a principle in the earnest belief that it would be to the advantage of his organization. Its failure to do so may have led him deeper and deeper into the mire, further and further away from his original starting point, until he began to recognize that his interests lay in perpetuating the very system whose existence was responsible for his leadership, and against which he had been sent out. It is in some way like this that men go astray.



SOME one may here say: "This is due to the weakness of human nature. We have no protection against such, and therefore we must trust to the integrity of the individual." Whatever human nature

**The  
Human Nature  
Argument.**

may be (and it certainly is not something fixed), man is a creature of circumstances. What he is depends largely upon his surroundings, and upon what he has been taught, upon what he knows regarding the real nature of those conditions in which he is environed. It is to the lack of this knowledge, both by leaders and by those led, and, following from it, to lack of control of the leader by the led, that is at the root of the evil in question. Not that we believe that a man can be made honest by either knowledge or control. But we do claim that the presence of these two qualities will stand us in better stead than their opposites, and will have better results.

Generally speaking, the working class leave too much to their leaders. They are looked upon in some instances as nothing less than oracles, from whom the last word is regarded as all that can be said on the matter. Lack of confidence, we agree, is certainly undesirable, but blind confidence is very much more so, especially when it is reposed in an individual who suffers from the same complaint as the confident. This kind of leadership invariably ends up in the ditch with the led below and the leader above. As a matter of fact the workers cannot be led. If they could be led in they could be led out. Nothing can be done *for* them. Everything of any value must be done *by* them.



THE true function of a leader is to point out the way. But to explain how a thing can be done, and to do it, are two different things, and involve two different processes. And upon the accuracy of the explanation will, of course, depend to a

**The Function  
of a  
Leader.**

large extent the success attending its application. *The leader can do no more than point the way. To reach the goal the rank and file must walk in the way. Every inch of the ground must be covered by them. And both he who points the way, and they who walk therein, must know where they are going, must know where the road leads to.*



KNOWLEDGE, then, is the only safeguard against disaster, and the only compass by which we can steer to success. But knowledge of what? That is the all-important question. Is it to consist in

**Knowledge  
is Power.**

mastering a few dead languages? in becoming proficient in the study of Law and Order, which are only respectable names for "Take" and "Keep"? or in assimilating a species of economics which belongs to a higher world than ours? If this is the knowledge essential for "those who are likely to lead their fellows," then Oxford is the dispensary, and the medicine men are reputed to be especially "humane" and "sympathetic" in their treatment of working-class patients. Their prescription stands unequalled. Beside the "open mind" cure the "open air" cure pales its ineffectual fires. Everything that can be done will be done to ensure "fitness."



PROLETARIAN logic, however, is in perpetual antagonism with the logic of our rulers. It insists upon substituting the contradictory of the predicate for the predicate, "unfitness" for "fitness." There

**Fitness  
or  
Unfitness.**

was more truth than poetry in an interrogating remark from a speaker at the recent Oxford Union debate. Speaking of a prominent member of the Workers' Educational Association and an Oxford don, he asked, "Is he playing a double game, and under the guise of fitting them for Labour Leaders, unfitting them?"

No working-class student can undergo a University education and come through it untainted. Before he enters, he may swear by bell, book, and candlestick, to preserve his allegiance to the cause of those whom he represents, but once inside the cultured atmosphere, he will quickly find himself compelled to adapt himself to the prevailing temperature. We know that this is the actual experience of certain students who have become members of the University. So democratic have they been, that they at first refused to wear their gowns, but they very soon found out how hard it was "to kick against the pricks" of custom and tradition. We know of one individual in particular, whose revolutionary ardour led him to say some hard things about capitalist governments, who even went so far as pronouncing the Liberal Party to be defunct. He has lately been employed by that "defunct" organization, now in power, on a "little" matter in India.



University life is the breeding ground of re-action. It incites by its very nature toward breaking away from working-class aspirations and cleaving unto the ideals of the class above. The knowledge that is to be of any service to the Labour Movement is not to be gained in that quarter. The problem of the workshop, the mine, and the factory, is not to be solved in the University. All that the latter can do for the Labour leader is to intellectually enslave him, and through his enslavement to clog and confuse the working-class movement. So long as we have the present economic system just so long will it reflect itself in an educational institution like Oxford University. It is the place where men are taught to govern, it is the governing class who control it, it is they who decide what shall be taught and how it shall be taught, and as the interest of those people are in direct antagonism to the interests of the workers, it is sheer folly for the latter to think that any good can come by sending any of their number there. History is against it. Economics is against it. And we are optimistic enough to think that the latest device patronizingly put forward, to put back the day of reckoning, will not succeed. And the success, which has in the short space of three months, attended the efforts of the "Plebs"

**Cymru** strengthens and confirms our optimism. We have  
**ar y blaen.** the most satisfactory information to hand, that a proposal has been set on foot by the South Wales Wing, to establish a "Plebs" College in South Wales, and there is every prospect that the proposal will become an actual accomplishment. The idea is being permeated among the Trade Unionists in that part of the country, and a Conference will be held shortly, to which all Plebeian eyes will be turned. We take this opportunity of congratulating our Welsh members upon their splendid work, and hope that our Northern Lights will burn all the brighter as a result of this shining example of applied enthusiasm.

THE establishment of working-class Colleges throughout the country, owned and controlled by the workers themselves, will do more to hasten the hour of economic deliverance than anything else we know of. We have seen sufficient of Ruskin College to be able to appreciate this fact. It is also gratifying to know that efforts are being made to secure representation upon the Executive Council of Ruskin College. If those, to whom our mission is directed, are satisfied that it is undesirable to send working men to the University, then they must agree it is equally undesirable that Ruskin College should in any way become connected with the University. The mass of opinion prevailing among those now controlling the College is in favour of the policy of the Workers' Educational Association. And that is a serious matter which only reveals still more clearly the critical condition of Ruskin College. We cannot, then, too strongly urge upon the Labour Movement the immediate necessity of taking action to prevent such a catastrophe taking place. Our Welsh friends have led the way, and by the two-fold policy of establishing other Colleges, and at the same time taking steps to gain control of the one now in existence, the road ahead assumes definite direction and the end is no longer out of sight



ORGANIZE! Organize! Organize! has been the battle-cry in the world of Labour for more years now than we care to count. But how to organize and for what purpose are questions that have not yet been clearly considered. These questions involve **Educate to Organize.** a vital principle that lies beneath organization,—the principle of education. To the end that organization may proceed, to the end that men may come together with a definite aim and a conscious purpose, the slogan of the "Plebs" is sounding,

EDUCATE! EDUCATE! EDUCATE!

An education which will not "compromise with truth to make a friend, or withhold a blow from error lest it make an enemy," but which shall prepare the worker for the responsibilities of the function that the evolution of the ages has assigned to him.

---

"Christ censured and shunned priests; endowed priests now chant fashionable litanies to a soft accompaniment and give the blessings of Christ to class customs."

There is no compliment so sincere as the silent homage of a looking-glass.—*As Ye Have Sown*, Dolf Wyllarde,

[We have pleasure in announcing that at our special request, Mr. Ablett has consented to contribute a series of articles on Economics. Below is the first of the series.]

## Easy Outlines of Economic Science

### No. 1.—Economics and Evolution

#### FOREWORD

In the Twentieth Century every system of thought which makes any pretence at being scientific must have an evolutionary basis. Hence this first article shows the part Marxian economics play in the whole general study of evolution.

**T**HE evidence collected by the sciences with regard to the origin and development of our planet, examined from a very general standpoint, shows three great epochs distinctly marked which sums up the whole of knowledge. These three epochs are :

- (1) from the nebulous period to the commencement of life :
- (2) from the commencement of life to the commencement of society ;
- (3) from the beginning of society until the present time.

They are respectively, the inorganic, the biologic, and the economic or social evolutionary periods. The first and by far the longest, the inorganic, has to do with the transformation of matter from its nebulous condition to the forms of vegetable and animal life, whence it is clearly perceivable that the form which life ( a mode of matter ) takes, is determined by the material environment which creates it. This gives rise to the first biologic fact we need notice, viz. that the form of organic life is shaped (by adaptation) by material surroundings. This takes place through contact. Life is differentiated, or modified matter, but has no independent existence apart from it. The degree of differentiation or modification is the true measure of what we call progress.

The second period has to do with the process of this modification. From the simple cell to the evolved human being represents a series of steps of increased differentiation from inorganic matter. Thus the stomach of the simple, amœba is in direct contact with the outside world, while in the higher animals the stomach is a differentiated organism which never has such direct contact. The physiological differences between species of animals are accounted for by the modes in which they come into contact with nature in the struggle for existence. This is the pre-eminent feature which stamps the biologic period with an unmistakable impress.

In the third period the indirection of contact with nature receives a line of demarcation at once clear, distinct, and striking. This is the introduction of tools. The best definition of man ever yet

given is that he is a tool-using (tool-making and tool-owning) animal. The tool prevents direct contact with nature and as a result subordinates the biologic law of physiological alterations. Alterations in the physiology of man now practically ceases, and *mind* becomes the most prominent responding medium. The changes in the indirect contact with nature now are determined by the changes in the tools of production and we have arrived at the economic and social period.

*Society is not biologic—it is economic.* Failure to notice this simple and striking fact, and its influence on systems of thought is responsible for as much error in social science as ever phlogiston was in chemistry.†

Let us now quote, in substance, Untermann on this point. The division of labour among bees is responsible for the physiological structure of queen bees, workers, and drones. Each of these three types are clearly marked and cannot be confused. But the division of labour among men fails to produce the same effect in, say, miners, weavers, and woodworkers. A king may be effectually disguised as a beggar, but a queen-bee cannot be disguised as a drone. A weaver, miner, or woodworker may, with a little practice, change occupations without the change being detected, but it is impossible for a drone to change occupations with a worker bee. The reason for this is that whereas bees are modified by actual contact with nature, men interpose tools and are not so modified. Having drawn attention to this important matter we shall now leave the first and second period and confine our attention to the third period, i.e. the economic and social. Let us however not forget that just as the changes in the forms of matter in the inorganic period are caused by the conflict of the chemical elements which composed it; and just as the changes in the animal species are caused by the struggle for subsistence, and the consequent survival of the fittest; so the changes in the forms of society are caused by the struggles of social classes.

We shall now examine the economic period in a more detailed way. If we examined any system of society, since the introduction of private property, we should find it stratified into certain orders or social classes. And if we contrasted any two different systems of society we should find this stratification had undergone a change, and the social classes would be different. Why does one order of society give way to a new order? What causes the change? These questions if they could be answered would lay bare the law of motion in society. Economics is the science whose work it is to discover this law. Let us, however, explain more precisely what we mean by social classes and their change. Every one is aware of the systems of slavery and serfdom, and that these belong to different periods of time and forms of society. Wherein does the difference between

† J. R. Macdonald's book *Socialism and Society* (which we shall criticize in a future article) is a glaring example.

these two consist and why did they change, the one for the other? When we speak of slavery or slaves we also infer the existence of another order or class, viz. slave-owners. Similarly serfs suggest overlords, &c. These orders evidently then have reference to the mode of wealth production. As economics deal with the production of wealth the answers to these questions belong to that science! Another way to examine a system of society is to look at its superstructural institutions, e.g. science, government, religion, art, law, politics, &c. Now all these superstructures are *relations*, not *things*. If we were asked wherein does primitive savagery differ from civilization, we should at once say in the number and character of these superstructural institutions. But if we sought the cause of these we should arrive at last at a difference of tools of production, and the changes of form of these superstructures would be definitely connected with the change of tools. Thus Feudal literature, Greek art, Roman law, and modern science are different in proportion, and in strict relation to the different economic systems. But what would surprise us most would be that the only *material* difference between savagery and civilization that we could find would be differences of the tools and their products. That is to say that the only real and *material* things that mark us off from savagery are—commodities.

We have described superstructures as relations, but relations cannot exist except on a basis of reality. Commodities are the only realities. Hence science, politics, art, &c., are related to commodities. How are they related? They are all different methods of assisting in the production of commodities. But there is a closer relation than that. Whenever a society changes from one system, e.g. slavery, to another, e.g. serfdom, the change that takes place is primarily an economic one. But this causes changes in all the superstructures. Government, art, literature, ethics, &c., have to change and adapt themselves to the new order. The changes are gradual or sudden according to necessity, the pace being regulated by the resistance offered by an institution to the new mode of production. In proportion to the resistance will the revolutionary forces be strong or otherwise. Thus the Reformation was quick and decisive because of the impossibility of the holidays of Catholicism, and the development of the growing and powerful capitalist class existing together. Enough has been said to show in general outline the theory of the movement of society. To its more detailed inner workings we shall proceed when dealing definitely with economics. One word more on differences of social systems, and then we proceed to the object of these articles. If we examined a geological stratum and wanted to identify it we would examine its fossils. Those that belonged peculiarly to it, and to no other, would determine its name and location. So also in society the various orders such as slavery, &c., show just as exactly and precisely the particular economic system to which it belongs.



Hence we see that although society looks rather chaotic, it is in reality governed by law. These laws of social growth and change, which the genius of Karl Marx formulated, provide the open sesame, of this otherwise chaotic mixture, to the earnest and diligent student of economics.

*Next Month :—“ Evolution in Economics.”*

NOAH ABLETT.

## Foreign Investments and English Labour

### A Sidelight upon Fiscal Controversy

**W**HAT is known as the Fiscal controversy has not been altogether without some good results. The cleavages between capitalist political parties as witnessed in our generation do not strike deep. When fundamental issues are touched the ranks of both close up into one solid phalanx in obedience to the first law of nature. Party doctrines, party principles, party cries, these are the deliberate manufacture of our “statesmen,” and their coadjutors, and are sold to the people by their political cheap jacks. This political chemistry has to be learned. The metaphysical alchemists of the universities shape the crucible for the reception of the metal, and amongst the various products of this education (which means drawing out), we find “brilliant statesmen.” These, having been subjected to the rigour of a classical education, accept, as their guiding principle of government, the old Roman adage, “Divide and Conquer.” In following out the application of this maxim to modern necessities, we reach the fundamental principles of our polity, whether their character be ecclesiastical, political, or juridical. Thus the problem always before British statesmen is to satisfy the discontent of the poor, without, in any way, endangering the supremacy of the rich. When we recollect that the poor cannot be made richer without the impoverishment of the rich, it will be seen to what fertility of sophistry the minds of our statesmen have been cultivated. The attempt to effect a union between antagonistic principles is the fertile soil from which our “men of ability” spring, and its effect in politics completely justifies John Stuart Mill’s dictum: “Wherever there is an ascendant class a large portion of the morality emanates from its class interests, and its feelings of class supremacy”

## INDUSTRIAL QUESTIONS.

In dealing with questions affecting the working classes, our rulers of the capitalist parties are not concerned so much with two sides of a question, as with two sides of an office; the inside and the outside. In regard to unemployment, for instance, they have been lavish of promises, but weak and cumbrous in execution. Of late years this matter has received much attention; and the amount of data to hand is more than enough to justify drastic legislation. The Government have been considering the question for three years; yet Mr. Asquith, the flower of Balliol culture, pleads for still more time. He deprecates "panic legislation." He has sympathy, of course, and his intentions are worthy of the Archangel Gabriel. Indeed, the way to the Treasury Bench is paved with good intentions, and cemented with generous professions. The true test of Balliol statesmanship does not, however, rest upon the solution of such problems. Let us be just to the Oxford cradle of English greatness. It may be that on such questions as unemployment our rulers do not show any great disposition to move, except backwards. Caution, we know, is often commendable. It should not be forgotten, however, that they have often shown a celerity in legislation comparable only to greased lightning. They have passed Coercion Acts for Ireland in twenty-four hours. They passed more than seven hundred Enclosure Acts in less than fourteen years. Thus do they meet the occasion when the hour calls. Thus do her children remember Oxford.

## THE ANCIENT MANŒUVRE.

The fiscal controversy is, of course, a manœuvre on the same old plan. Mr. Gladstone preferred Bulgarian atrocities as a ladder to power. He had the true Conservative passion for justice in remote places. Mr. Chamberlain tried another tack. He set forth to galvanize Englishmen with columns of figures, accompanying them with lurid pictures of villainous foreigners stealing away our industries one by one. When he was fairly launched upon this campaign he made a series of surprising discoveries. He first noticed our cotton trade preparing to fly; then disappearing tendencies began to manifest themselves in engineering and shipbuilding. The atrocious foreigner was not yet content. He actually came back and marked down our hat trade, and then, as he was going away, Mr. Chamberlain descried all our pearl buttons following in his wake. Stupefying discovery! It seemed as though the immortal piper of Hamelin was whistling away our industries across the seas! What was to be done? Let it be said that the stout heart of him of many causes did not quail. He invited the public to put their trust in the great Unionist Party, and to send them back to power to inaugurate a holy tariff war against the foreigner. However, the public have not yet acceded to this modest request. The last war seems to have satisfied them for the time being.

## THE PATRIOTIC PARTY.

The Unionists, we gather, form the only patriotic party in the State. Their only concern is for the welfare of the great British Empire. Second only to their affection for the Empire, is their great love for the working classes. This is shown by their determination to raise their wages. They are going to make the foreigner settle this. They are also very heart-broken over the starving millions of this country. It is, indeed, touching in the extreme to see the tears roll down the puffy cheeks of corpulent financiers and Napoleons of commerce as they dilate upon the sorrows of the "twelve millions." By some inexplicable oversight they overlooked their existence during their long tenure of office. Office has a soporific effect on all our politicians. It has a wonderful power of inducing optimism. However, "great statesmen" cannot solve everything, even if they have held office for twenty years. When Mr. Chamberlain made his alarming discoveries they suddenly remembered the tragic lives of the slum and gutter, and as David honoured Uriah, so honoured they them: they placed them in the forefront of the fight. They dragged them from their hovels to put them in their speeches. From their rags they made perorations. From their bones they built a cenotaph of statistics. The cry of the starving children they translated into a demand for the taxation of foodstuffs. Suspicious housewives were reassured when they were informed that the extra cost of food would be more than made up by increase in the wages kindly granted (without asking) by patriotic employers. For the ever-increasing army of unemployed they had one golden word; a word that made the heart leap with wild desire, whose music was of itself almost sufficient to still the pangs of hunger and give rest to wearied bodies. The blessed word was WORK! Said Mr. Chamberlain: "All ye that are weary and heavy laden, come unto me, and I will give you work." They were out of work, it seems, because they had not produced sufficient. The markets were glutted, it was true. The warehouses and granaries were bulging with produce in abundance. Yet the keen eye of Mr. Chamberlain went to the root of the evil, and the message he flashed over all the land was "Work! Work!! Tariff Reform means Work for All." This was the legend emblazoned upon their banners. The "dignity of labour" was the burden of the speeches of these aristocratic altruists. Sweet melodies on the blessings of work were ground from gramophones when oratorical fervour failed of impression on a sceptical populace. Peer and commoner, landowner and capitalist, Primrose dame and squire, all hastened to assure the unemployed workers of their anxiety to provide them with that which they denied to themselves. As from the fellowship of the twelve disciples was formed the Christian Church, so from this community of altruists was formed the Tariff Reform League.

## THE SORROWS OF STATESMEN.

Of the exploits of this body we are all acquainted. They are not without their troubles. After three years of silent meditation Mr. Balfour has come to the conclusion that the legend upon their banner must be erased. In other words Tariff Reform will not provide work for all. This pronouncement is extremely embarrassing, for to Tariff Reformers it amounts to eating their own words. It is not surprising therefore, that such a diet of preserved oratory, as is offered them by their leader, they are inclined to reject. It is neither appetising nor strengthening. Moreover, it is a reflection upon that purity of political character which Tariff Reformers value as their chief glory. The sensitive gorge of Mr. Austin Chamberlain rises at the mere thought of such an unedifying repast, though the influence of heredity should make the task extremely light. He is highly enamoured of Tariff Reform, and would cry, with Shakespeare :

When my love swears that she is made of truth,  
I do believe her, though I know she lies.

So this great manœuvre, conducted according to English party tradition, is not altogether a success. Yet the great work goes on. Rustic audiences are still thrilled by the tale of the Exports and Imports : how, once upon a time, Exports had it all their own way, but now, alas, they lie crushed beneath the enormous weight of Imports. Here British Industry lies buried. "I appeal to you," continues the story-teller, "to put your trust in the great Unionist Party, to rid our country of the curse of Free Trade, and, by means of Tariff Reform, give work to every one." (Loud cheers).

## THE LIE THAT FAILED.

We sometimes wonder what our governing oligarchy really think, in their heart of hearts, of their enthusiastic proletarian audiences. Yet it is evident they are fast losing their power. The English dearly love a lord, says the proverb, and the truth of this is a tribute to the cunning of their ruling qualities. The division of the people into opposing camps by their great sham fight between Liberal and Tory, is a key to their political ascendancy. But this is waning. The glamour of the ancient fight is gone. The thin veil of political artifice used by Liberal and Tory alike to obscure fundamental issues is now so tattered and torn by working-class criticism, that it requires some talent for ingenuity to divert attention from serious matters. We can trust to the insincerity of our Balliol rulers to exercise this gift of theirs to the uttermost. In order to inspire confidence it is often necessary for a Ministry to assume all the virtues, except, of course, resignation. This cynical game is capable of further development. We think that Tariff Reform is best described as the lie that failed. As a solution of the unemployeed problem it is childishly absurd. None but the insincere advocates of interest and ignorance would commit themselves to such crude falsities. If Unemployment could be abolished by a re-adjusted Customs tariff, that great Oxford

economist, Senior, need never have journeyed to Lancashire to be taught political economy by the cotton masters. It is a slightly more complex problem than learning Greek.

The Fiscal controversy has, however, demonstrated the intellectual bankruptcy of the Conservative party; and also at the same time, of that wing of the same party which (for some peculiar reason) goes by the name of Liberal. These organizations, as we have seen, exist not for truth, but for power. We look upon both with amused contempt. There have emerged from their wranglings a few figures of which neither side seem to observe the importance. They are eloquent figures, and they throw a flood of light upon the cruel irony of our civilization. They relate chiefly to Foreign Investments. In another article we will proceed to a detailed examination of these remarkable figures. Meantime, it is enough to have cleared the ground of some of the ridiculous pretensions of our all-wise governing class.

A. W. DAVIDSON.

---

## Our Critics

Our first critic thus: ". . . the 'Plebs' Magazine. Unless drastic alterations are made as regards the matter set forth I shall be glad to hear of its passage to a nether world. Ruskin College and the Labour Movement are too precious to the community to be irritated by the ideas of a few individualists who think more of seeing their names in type than in doing well that which lays to their hands. If progressive thought and scientific investigation are worth anything, then the words of Herbert Spencer are of some value:—'As between infancy and maturity there is no short-cut by which there may be avoided the tedious process of growth and development through insensible increments; so there is no way from the lower forms of social life to the higher, but one passing through small successive modifications.' Accept this criticism in the spirit in which it is sent, that of brotherhood."

The second correspondent says: "Isn't it one of the constitutional principles of Ruskin College that it is *absolutely non-partisan*—theologically and politically? Indeed, isn't this principle essential to its mission?" From this he further argues that the object of the League is impossible of attainment.

Reduced to their abstract form our correspondents' criticisms amount to this: (a) Society is a biological organism; (b) education is not a question of party or class; (c) that the "Plebs" not recognizing this miss the work nearest to hand. Let us consider these statements. Is Society a biological organism? We do not think so. An organism, in this sense, is a complete form made up of different parts with specialized functions, which collectively work in the interests of the whole; each for all and all for each. Each plays its particular part because it is peculiarly constructed for that act, and that act alone. Does Society answer to this description? *No*. No one, not even an Oxford professor, would expect the brain to perform the functions of the stomach; that would be a physical impossibility. Not so in Society. Unaware of their social rank,

not one of us would be surprised to see the King, the Duke of Westminster, or Sir Thomas Lipton, digging trenches, or cleansing the streets; except that we might think the ganger a bit "slow" for employing such indifferent workmen. In principle a scavenger differs less from a capitalist than a mastiff does from a greyhound. It is the division of labour that has placed an abyss between the two, making one the "stomach" of Society, and the other the "hand." And this division of labour is the result of economic, not biologic, differences.

Now although community of interests is an essential condition for a biological organism, we should be the last to assert that a biological organism is an essential condition for community of interests; nevertheless, no community of interests exist in Society—educational or otherwise. Society is divided into two classes, those who are willing to work, and those who are anxious to let them—when their work produces a profit. And "if scientific investigations are worth anything" it teaches us that they advance in *inverse ratio*: the stronger one grows, the weaker the other; the more one gets, the less the other. As the *Star* said some years ago: "The wit of man can devise no scheme by which the poor can become less poor without the rich becoming less rich."

What common interest, for example, exists between the Employers' Associations and the various Trade Unions? Are the latter organized to prevent the employers overworking themselves to safeguard the interests of the workers? Or are they organized because they know that their interests and their employers interests are diametrically opposed, and that unless they oppose organization to organization they will be hopelessly crushed? Again, why are the workers so anxious that their officials shall have a sound knowledge of technical matters in connexion with their particular industries? Is it not that they recognize that whether the employer is Christian or Atheist, his material interests, and the ethics of Capitalism, justify him in fleecing them on every conceivable occasion? The workers organize industrially and control these organizations, because they know that any gain of the employer is at the expense of the worker. And yet many of these workers will readily place the control of the education of their promising young members in the charge of the representatives of the employing-class. "Education is not a class question" they say. Is this true? To a large extent it may be true of the physical sciences, but it is *not* true of social science, i.e., history and economics. To the working-class the present form of Society is a temporary stage, and a painful one at that, in social evolution; one whose exit must be hastened as speedily as possible. To the other class on the contrary, it is the natural form of Society, just and eternal: "everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds." Needless to state these different views result in different interpretations of history and economics. In history, progress will be due to the activities of the ruled or the rulers: in economics, the owners or employers will be either benefactors or parasites. In short, *in the world of education there is reproduced the antagonism which prevails in the world of production.* That all workers do not recognize this no more disposes of the fact, than is the value of industrial organization discounted because so many workers remain unorganized. Indeed, there is a curious resemblance between unorganized labour and uncontrolled education, and in both cases the capitalist class stand to benefit.

It is to discover the cause of this antagonism of interests which presents itself in Society that we seek for education. We want to know how it comes about that those who do not work have enough, and to spare, and those who do work have so little. It cannot be that the idleness of the first mentioned accounts for the difference, as we often have enforced

idleness among the latter, which, far from increasing their wealth, only adds to their poverty. The cause is further to seek. And we claim that if "scientific investigation is worth anything" it shows us that the cause lies in the ownership of the means of production, which make the results of social labour private property. If this is true, is there any alternative to the present methods of controlling production and the goods produced? These are the questions which history and economics have to solve for us. To be solved truly, our education must be controlled by the organized workers. Ruskin College, it is held, can be used on these lines as one of the means of "modification." It does not permit of that under its present management, it cannot under any management whose interests consciously, or unconsciously are opposed to the view point of labour. *Its* interests lie elsewhere, "the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots." Therefore the "Plebs" agitate for the control to be placed in the hands of organized labour, it must be for us like Cæsar's wife—"above suspicion."

The "Plebs" object is practical, and it is the means nearest to hand. History has taught us lessons which we do not intend to disregard. Any work that a movement wants done they must do *themselves*, otherwise we shall repeat the mistakes which other working-class movements have made, who, like

A young lady of Niger,  
Went out for a ride on a tiger;  
They returned from the ride, with the lady *inside*,  
And a smile on the face of the tiger.

From the above remarks it will be seen that we do not hold the view that either history or economics can be *non-partizan*. It will also be seen that they are held to be the most important *primary* educational needs of the workers. Our correspondents are answered in their main criticisms. The question of the impossibility of obtaining the object of the League has its solution in the womb of the future. We are not particularly keen on prophecy, but if hard work can accomplish our object the question is already answered. We recognize that the Society in which we live is governed by

The simple rule, the good old plan,  
That he shall take who has the might,  
And he shall keep who can.

And we work accordingly.

---

## Reports

---

### A "PLEBS" COLLEGE FOR SOUTH WALES.

On Sunday, March 14th, the Rhondda "Plebs" met in the Aberystwyth Restaurant, Tonypany, for an afternoon tea and talk together. The tea was fine, but the talk was more—it was important; for it foreshadowed a scheme of labour education which, to the Rhondda men, at least, seems to be as practicable as it is ambitious. It turned upon the question of establishing a "Plebs" College in South Wales, and it was decided to immediately submit the following recommendations to all the members of the district;

1. That the Conference of the "South Wales Wing of the "Plebs" which is to be held at Cardiff on Saturday before Easter, shall be only preliminary to a Grand Conference which shall, if possible, be representative, not only of the "Plebs," but also of all the Trade Union bodies in South Wales.
2. That the Secretary be instructed to invite to the Easter Conference, certain of the Welsh Labour Leaders who are believed to be sympathetic, and whose co-operation, therefore, should be highly serviceable.
3. That the outstanding matters for discussion at Easter shall be (a) The representation of South Wales and Monmouthshire on the Executive Council of Ruskin College; (b) The possibility of instituting a "Plebs" College in South Wales.

#### WIGAN BRANCH.

The above Branch has been holding weekly meetings, and in addition to discussing ways and means of furthering the object of the "Plebs" League are having some capital literary classes. During the last month the following papers have been given. "Greek and Roman Authors" by Mr. Bennett, and "Some Famous Plebs" by Mr. Graves. During the coming months Mr. Faulkner will give a series of Ruskin College Essays, commencing with one on the "Origin and Decay of the Drama." Our friends at Wigan are doing well in getting a report of their meetings inserted in the local press: other Branches please note.

---

## By the Way

Mr. E. Brand has been appointed Editor *pro tem*. The work has been found to be too much for Mr. Pratley and his assistants, so that, pending the August Meet, the present arrangement will stand. Owing to the growth of our Movement we shall have to seriously consider at the Meet the question of appointing a permanent Editor, and also an organizer to assist in the formation of Branches and with the Magazine.

Encouraging reports are to hand from the following places, Porth, Tonypany, Blaenavon, Blaenclydach, Hull, Aberdare, Notts, Northumberland, Durham, Crewe, and various parts of Scotland, &c. Secretaries are requested to send details of classes held in connexion with branches, at the same time we ask them to be brief. Our friends who have already sent to us we ask to be patient with us, as they must recollect that we are working under some difficulties at present as to space and time—the appointment of an Editor will help us somewhat in the latter, but the activity of our Branches and members in pushing the circulation of the magazine can *alone* help us with the former.

We have a few copies of the first two Numbers of the magazine on hand and shall be pleased to supply our members with them for the purpose of opening up new ground—Trade Union Branches &c.

We shall be pleased to send a speaker to explain "Plebs" object to any workers, organization on payment of railway fare, and board where necessary.

All communications for magazine must reach us, at the latest, on the 20th of each month.

An interesting letter from Mr. J. S. Whitehead bearing on Mr. Ablett's article in the February number is unavoidably held over.



[Copyright by the *New York Labour News*, 1904.]

# THE GOLD SICKLE,

OR

## Hena, the Virgin of the Isle of Sen.

---

### A TALE OF DRUID GAUL

By EUGENE SUE,

Translated from the Original French by DANIEL DE LEON.

---

(Continued).

#### CHAPTER II.—A GALLIC HOMESTEAD.

**L**IKE all other rural homes, Joel's was spacious and round of shape. The walls consisted of two rows of hurdles, the space between which was filled with a mixture of beaten clay and straw; the inside and outside of the thick wall was plastered over with a layer of fine and fattish earth, which, when dry, was hard as sandstone. The roofing was large and projecting. It consisted of oaken joists joined together and covered with a layer of seaweed laid so thick that it was proof against water.

On either side of the house stood the barns destined for the storage of the harvest, and also for the stables, the sheepfolds, the kennels, the storerooms and the washrooms.

These several structures formed an oblong square that surrounded a large yard, closed up at night with a massive gate. On the outside, a strong palisade, raised on the brow of a deep ditch, enclosed the system of buildings, leaving between it and them an alley about four feet wide. Two large and ferocious war mastiffs were let loose during the night in the vacant space. The palisade had an exterior door that corresponded with an interior one. All were locked at night.

The number of men, women and children—all more or less near relatives of Joel—who cultivated fields in common with him, was considerable. These lodged in the houses attached to the principal building, where they met at noon and in the evening to take their joint meals.

Other homesteads, similarly constructed and occupied by numerous families who cultivated lands in common, lay scattered here and there over the landscape and composed the *ligniez*, or tribe of Karnak, of which Joel was chosen chief,

Upon his entrance in the yard of his homestead, Joel was received with the caresses of his old war dog Deber-Trud, an animal of an iron grey colour streaked with black, an enormous head, blood-shot eyes, and of such a high stature that in standing up to caress his master he placed his front paws upon Joel's shoulders. He was a dog of such boldness that he once fought a monstrous bear of the mountains of Arres, and killed him. As to his war qualities, Deber-Trud would have been worthy of figuring with the war pack of Bithert, the Gallic chieftain who at sight of a small hostile troop said disdainfully: "They are not enough for a meal for my dogs."

As Deber-Trud looked over and smelled the traveller with a doubtful air, Joel said to the animal: "Do you not see he is a guest whom I bring home?"

As if he understood the words, Deber-Trud ceased showing any uneasiness about the stranger, and gamboled clumsily ahead of his master into the house. The house was partitioned into three sections of unequal size. The two smaller ones, separated from each other and from the main hall by oaken panels, were destined, one for Joel and his wife, the other for Hena, their daughter, when she came to visit the family. The vast hall between the two served as a dining-room, and in it were performed the noon and evening in-door labours.

When the stranger entered the hall, a large fire of beech wood' enlivened with dry brush wood and seaweed burned in the hearth' and with its brilliancy rendered superfluous the light of a handsome lamp of burnised copper that hung from three chains of the same metal. The lamp was a present from Mikael the armourer.

Two whole sheep, impaled in long iron spits broiled before the hearth, while salmon and other sea fish boiled in a large pewter pot filled with water, seasoned with vinegar, salt and caraway.

The panels were ornamented with heads of wolves, boars, serfs and of two wild bulls called *urok*, an animal that began to be rare in the region; beside them hung hunting weapons, such as bows, arrows and slings, and weapons of war, such as the *sparr* and the *matag*, axes, sabres of copper, bucklers of wood covered with the tough skin of seals, and long lances with iron heads, sharpened and barbed and provided with little brass bells, intended to notify the enemy from afar that the Gallic warrior approached, seeing that the latter disdains ambuscades, and loves to fight in the open. There were also fishing nets and harpoons to harpoon the salmon in the shallows when the tide goes out.

To the right of the main door stood a kind of altar, consisting of a block of granite, surmounted and covered by large oak branches freshly cut. A little copper bowl lay on the stone in which seven twigs of mistletoe stood. From above, on the wall, the following inscription looked down;

## Mr. Hird's Resignation.

Just as we had gone to Press the information reached us that Mr. Dennis Hird, the Principal of Ruskin College, was being compelled to resign. In order that the circumstances may be placed before our members and the Labour Movement generally, we have been obliged to supplement the current number of the Magazine.

So that our readers may thoroughly grasp the situation and all that it involves, it is essential that we should briefly outline the historical development that has led up to the present crisis. Three years ago an attempt was made during Mr. Hird's absence from the College to alter the curriculum by substituting Literature and Temperance for Sociology, Evolution, and Logic. These latter are the subjects taught by Mr. Hird. The prime mover in this attempted change was Professor Lees-Smith. Between these two men there is nothing in common. The former has always set his face against the University, its tradition, and its teaching. The latter has in all possible ways endeavoured to wed Ruskin College to the University.

This first attempt to make Ruskin College teaching more acceptable to the University ended in failure. *It failed because the Students then in residence declared that if this proposed alteration took place they would immediately take their departure.* Although the scheme had fallen through, the ideas nursed by the Professor and his supporters neither slumbered nor slept. He has been below the mines ever since. All sorts of devices have been resorted to, in order that the Students might become impressed with the culture and traditions of Oxford University, and that the University might become impressed with the Ruskin College Students. The latter have been entertained by the headmen of the University, public receptions have been given, the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor have honoured the humble halls of the lowly with their presence and precept, while negotiations have been entered into for the purpose of establishing closer relations between these two institutions. All these things have never been misunderstood by the mass of the Students, and realizing the imminent danger the "Plebs" League came into existence. And that existence has been fully justified by what has been taking place for the last four months. The latest move conclusively proves that we have entered the field none too soon. The attempt of 1907 failed to remove the subjects not acceptable to the peculiar palate of Oxford. Now they are removing the man. Once he is gone, the subjects will go, and the wishes of the plotters will be speedily realized.

A fortnight ago the Executive Council unanimously decided, with the exception of one member, to demand the resignation of Mr. Hird.

*Among those who voted accordingly were the Labour men (?) Shackleton, Bowerman, and Taylor. It is interesting to know in this connexion that these men are prominent advocates of the W.E.A. policy. Mr. Hird is to be paid six months' salary in lieu of notice; he is to receive a pension, and, if you please, a magnificent testimonial! Their case is evidently an urgent one. Not only must Mr. Hird be put out of the way, but it must be done quickly and deceptively.*

What is the ground upon which Mr. Hird's resignation has been demanded? It is this: *that he has failed to maintain order and discipline among the Students.* That this charge is utterly false is proved not only by the actual experience of the Students but also by the decision of the Executive itself. Recommendations made by Mr. Hird quite recently to this body relating to the curriculum, and to representation of the Students upon the Council, have been accepted. In other words these suggestions have been regarded by the Executive as being of advantage to the order and interests of the institution. And yet in the face of this Mr. Hird has been asked to resign because of his inability to secure order! Is it because of his failure that they are to so magnificently testify to his good works? We are not deceived by such thin devices. The pension and the testimonial are simply brought forward in order to conceal the real motive that has prompted their action. As a matter of fact the Principal of Ruskin College is the only individual in the institution capable of maintaining order. Only he does not carry about with him a pocket edition of the Czar of Russia. He realizes that he has to deal with men, and not undergraduates or schoolboys, and therefore he acts accordingly. It is the people with schoolboy minds that want schoolboy order. Some of the accusations brought against Mr. Hird are of the same schoolboy character, e.g. "that of calling for the singing of the Red Flag at a social," and of "allowing his own writings to be sold by Students." And one of his childish accusers has told the Executive that if Mr. Hird does not leave, he will leave. The Students unanimously agree that the latter alternative would be "a consummation devoutly to be wished." For Ruskin College without Mr. Hird, the magnitude and value of whose work will never be known or estimated, would be worthless and of no service to workingmen. He is as far removed from the other members of the lecturing staff as a mountain is from a mole hill. And they know it, and that is why they are so feverishly urgent in their efforts to depose him.

The Council meets shortly to confirm the decision of the Executive, which simply means that the Executive will confirm their own

resolution. *They are the working majority of the Council.* The whole affair has been engineered in the most unscrupulous fashion, and that men calling themselves representatives of Labour should be found supporting such actions only confirms what we have already said in another part of the Magazine.

Now what is the attitude of the Students at this stage? On this, the morning, the historic morning shall we say, of the 27th March, they are in unanimous rebellion against the authorities. No other attitude can be justified at a moment like this. A working committee has been appointed and all arrangements have been made. No official lectures are to be attended, no individual Student will allow himself to be interviewed, no communications will take place between the Students and the Staff, until the whole matter is put in order. *And the only man who can secure order is he who has been compelled to resign, because he is said to have failed to maintain order.* A curriculum has been prepared, certain Students have been appointed to the position of lecturers, and we venture to say that as a result of this plan, the Students will derive more benefit than they have lately been in the habit of deriving from the official lecturers, (Mr. Hird, of course, excepted). Circulars explaining the position have been dispatched to Trade Union Branches and other Labour organizations requesting them to express their opinion upon the matter per resolution. No time is to be lost in getting to work. The Students stand united to a man, and they look for the same united support from the Labour Movement. Resolutions from all Labour organizations will be most effective at this stage, and copies should be sent to the Executive Council, and Editor "Plebs" Magazine, Kemp Hall, Oxford.

Most of our readers will know the financial position of the Students at Ruskin College. They have sacrificed much to get there; and they have to incur financial expenditure while residing there. None of them, therefore, are overburdened with the current coin of the realm. Expenses of printing, postage, &c., will have to be met, and we take this opportunity of appealing to our members and sympathizers for any little assistance they can give us in this direction. All such contributions to be sent to Mr. G. Sims, "Plebs" Magazine, Kemp Hall, Oxford.

The clock has struck the hour for finality of action, and every man is at his post filled with a chronic enthusiasm which goes up as a sheet of flame. Fellow-workers, we are looking to you! Do not fail us! The next few days will be of moment and of memory. Let it be a memory of triumph.

# Then — and Now!

---

## Unveiling of a Bust of the Principal,

At Ruskin College, on Friday, October 26th, 1906.

---


### **Mr. H. B. Lees-Smith was the Chairman and said :—**

Now Mr. Dennis Hird is, as you perhaps know, partly an Irishman—that means 'he has a way with him', and it is this way, this good fellowship and geniality, which has had the greatest possible influence in creating the spirit which makes our living here what it is . . . . There is one thing, however, which I have to say, and that is that these calm placid features, which are soon to be disclosed to your view, represent the Principal in his happier moments—that is, they do not represent, they could not represent, the difficulties and the uncertainties, the dislike and the contempt through which the Principal and the College had to pass, long before the Bust was modelled.

### **Mr. Ball said :—**

It is with the greatest possible pleasure that on behalf of the Council I accept the Bust, and in doing so I can only repeat, I am afraid, what has already been said. Mr. Hird, as has been shown to you—if it needed any demonstration—has played an eventful part in an eventful history as a member of this College. **He has piloted it through an uncertain and even problematical period to a position which is 'at once certain and assured.** That he has laid hold of the hearts as well as the minds of the students is abundantly evident by this demonstration—a demonstration which I should like to say is as gratifying to the Council as it must be to Mr. Hird himself, for it gives the Council an opportunity of endorsing the Students' testimony to the energy and single-minded devotion with which Mr. Hird has served the interests of Ruskin College . . . . **In its brief but honourable history Mr. Hird's name will always be cherished as one of those who deserve best of the College, and this bust will always remind successive students of the deep debt of obligation which the College owes to him.**

---

 *Mr. Ball and Prof. Lees-Smith are members of the present Executive Council.*

Abundance and Heaven  
 Are for the Just and the Pure.  
 He is Pure and Holy  
 Who Performs Celestial Works and Pure.

When Joel stepped into the house, he approached the copper basin in which stood the seven branches of mistletoe and reverently put his lips to each. His guest followed his example, and then both walked towards the hearth.

At the hearth was Mamm' Margarid, Joel's wife, with a distaff. She was tall of stature, and wore a short, sleeveless tunic of brown wool over a long robe of grey with narrow sleeves, both tunic and robe being fastened around her waist with her apron string. A white cap, cut square, left exposed her grey hair, that parted over her forehead. Like many other women of her kin, she wore a coral necklace round her neck, bracelets inwrought with garnets and other trinkets of gold and silver fashioned at Autun.

Around Mamm Margarid played the children of Guilhern and several other of her kin, while their young mothers busied themselves preparing supper.

"Margarid," said Joel to his wife, "I bring a guest to you."

"He is welcome," answered the woman without stopping to spin. "The gods send us a guest, our hearth is his own. The eve of my daughter's birth is propitious."

"May your children when they travel, be received as I am by you," answered the stranger respectfully.

"But you do not yet know what kind of a guest the gods have sent us, Margarid," rejoined Joel; "such a guest as one would request of Ogmí for the long autumn and winter nights; a guest who in the course of his travels has seen so many curious things and wonderful that a hundred evenings would not be too many to listen to his marvelous stories."

Hardly had Joel pronounced these words when, from Mamm' Margarid and the young mothers down to the little boys and girls, all looked at the stranger with the greed of curiosity, expectant of the marvelous stories he was to tell.

"Are we to have supper soon, Margarid?" asked Joel. "Our guest is probably as hungry as myself; I am hungry as a wolf."

"The folk have just gone out to fill the racks of the cattle," answered Margarid; "they will be back shortly. If our guest is willing we shall be pleased of his company at supper."

"I thank the wife of Joel, and shall wait," said the unknown.

"And while waiting," remarked Joel, "you can tell us a story—"

But the traveller interrupted his host and said smiling :

"Friend, as one cup serves for all, so does the same story serve for all . . . The cup will shortly circulate from lip to lip, and the story from ear to ear . . . But now tell me, what is that brass belt for that I see hanging yonder?"

"Have you not also in your country the belt of agility?"

"Explain yourself, Joel."

"Here, with us, at every new moon, the lads of each tribe come to the chief and try on the belt, in order to prove that their girth has not broadened with self-indulgence, and that they have preserved themselves agile and nimble. Those who cannot hitch the belt around themselves, are hissed, are pointed at with derision, and must pay a fine. Accordingly, all see to their stomachs lest they come to look like a leathern bottle on two skittles."

"A good custom. I regret it fell into disuse in my province. And what is the purpose of that big old trunk? It is a precious wood and seems to have seen many years."

"Very many. That is the family trunk of triumph," answered Joel opening the trunk, in which the stranger saw many whitened skulls. One of them, sawn in two, was mounted on a brass foot like a cup.

"These are, no doubt, the heads of enemies who have been killed by your fathers, friend Joel? With us this sort of family charnel houses has long been abandoned."

"With us also. I preserve these heads only out of respect for my ancestors. Since more than two hundred years, the prisoners of war are no longer mutilated. The habit existed in the days of the kings whom Ritha-Gair shaved of their hair, as you mentioned before, to make himself a blouse out of their beards. Those were gay days of barbarism, were those days of royalty. I heard my grandfather Kirio say that even as late as in the days of his father, Tiras, the men who went to war returned to their tribes carrying the heads of their enemies stuck to the points of their lances, or trailed by the hair from the breast-plates of their horses. They were then nailed to the doors of the houses for trophies, just as you see yonder on the wall the heads of wild animals."

"With us, in olden days, friend Joel, these trophies were also preserved, but preserved in cedar oil when they were the heads of a hostile chieftain."

*To be continued.*