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EDITORIAL

THE domain of politics is the most superficial of all ruling-class activity. It is here that the veil is the thinnest and consequently the paint and powder most lavish. Every General Election

**The Political
Players —**

has all the essentials of a first class farce. The same characters, the same incidental music, the same composition of audience, with slightly rearranged properties and re-painted scenery, the whole played upon the same stage, is a fitting apotheosis of the grotesque in capitalism. But at the opposite pole to the comic there stands the tragic. The “pit and gallery” section of the audience whose applause the actors most assiduously seek, are not aware that what they applaud is a farce, that they are the victims of a burlesque. And this sort of show has been touring now for years. True the speaking parts are from time to time revised and brought up to date but the plot remains substantially the same. Both the principal figures in this political comedy claim with great gusto and with the uplifted eye to be “hero,” and each with equally great vehemence and appropriate gesture denounces the other as the double-dyed villain that he is. To the spectator who is conscious of the comic character of the spectacle, *both*, in the latter instance, *speak the truth*. But before the curtain finally falls the audience decides and that decision holds good until the next performance when the Comedy of the Sacred Sec-Saw begins once more.

"WITH how little logic" the pit and gallery arrive at their political decision is evidenced in the latest General Election. Blown about by every wind and caught by every chaff the great majority of the

workers have once again displayed a lack of that knowledge which is essential to the assertion of their self-sufficiency as a class. While something might be said in extenuation of the attitude of the unorganized section, it is difficult to find any grounds for apology on behalf of those who are organized against the masters on the industrial field. In that quarter, an irrepressible antagonism is the order of the day. The employing class are ever seeking to secure more and more of the product of labour; the working class are continually pressing for more and more of what they produce. If the former is to succeed, labour must be cheapened, the wages bill must be reduced. If the latter is to gain anything, profits must diminish. The relation of labour to capital is not that of Chang to Eng, the notable Siamese twins. The capitalist class is not brother to the wage-earning class. If such was the case the workers would very naturally expect something from their brother. But they get nothing by expecting, unless it is the "sack." And they get that whether they expect it or otherwise. It certainly is not the experience of the labourer to have the capitalist come to him and say, "Now look here, my dear fellow, you cannot possibly live on 20/- per week let me pay you 30/-." But we venture to say that it *is* the general experience, when any section of the workers ask for an increase in their wages, that the employer never fails to point out, how, if those who make the demand are not satisfied he can hire an abundance of labour more cheaply elsewhere. It is an indisputable fact that any advance gained by the working class is due to their independent organized efforts, and the extent of that advance is determined by their degree of preparedness for battle. When the Miners' Eight Hours' Bill was before the Lords, St. Aldwyn warned that assembly not to reject the measure on the ground that the miners were sufficiently well organized, to compel the colliery owners to concede it. It is organized might that tells. And yet despite these facts of the common experience the workers continue to listen to the brag and bluster of their master's politicians, in their master's factory yard, and in some cases even in their master's time, are driven to the polling booth in their master's motor car and vote for the perpetuation of that mastery which denies them the right to live as free beings. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." Perhaps it is because the workers see so little of their employers in the workshop, enjoy so little of their company, that they are so ready on the high-days of political activity to fraternize with those masters, and to support the "chosen ones" for whom their masters take the chair and find the cash. What would a body of organized workmen think if their General Secretary was to claim that he stood for advancing both the interests of the employees, i.e. more wages, and the interests

of the employers, i.e. more profits? They would, if they had the least knowledge of why they paid a man to represent them, think that a new General Secretary, a shade less subtle, would be a distinct improvement. They would recognize, although perhaps only instinctively, that in the economic world, he who would represent Labour cannot represent Capital. Nevertheless these same workmen will return to Parliament an individual who claims to represent both.



WE are fully convinced of this fact, that in spite of the working-class organization in the economic field, the organized have not yet intelligently apprehended the real nature of the system out of which their very organization is born and against which it is directed. Lack of correct information means failure when the fortifications of the enemy are attacked. It is this lack that

**"One Thing
thou Lackest."**

lies at the bottom of our comedy conduct and its tragic consequences. "Taxation," "Free Trade," "Tariff Reform," "the House of Lords," what are all these but issues between the landed and manufacturing sections of the ruling class? The wage earners are no more concerned with these alleged working-class issues than the spectators at a football match are participants in the actual play. It is true that at an exciting game, a spectator may in the excitement imagine himself for a moment "on the ball" and as a result kick his neighbour in the ankle. But the victim with a few pointed remarks will soon bring the offender back to a consciousness of his true position, "outside the ropes." Just so it is in the orthodox political game. A comprehensive knowledge of the topography of the social field and of that economic process which determines the features of the field, can alone convey to the working class a consciousness of its real position in society and a comprehension of the real issue.



SUCH knowledge is not to be gained from bourgeois educational institutions. The economic cleavage extends right throughout society. It does not end when the workman leaves the workshop. The

**Educate
to Organize.**

political and educational areas are alike subject to its dominion. It is at once the privilege and purpose of the "Plebs" to point this fact out in the department of education. And having pointed out the fact we proceed to construct in accordance with it. The Central Labour College is an established part of that constructive policy. But just as it draws its strength from the Labour Movement so must its results reach out and stimulate that movement throughout the industrial centres of the country. At the beginning of this month this stimulation takes on concrete expression at Rochdale,

In that home of pioneer movements, what has been called the Rochdale Labour College classes have been established. The courses of instruction which extend over a period of twelve weeks, consist in twenty-four lectures on Industrial History, twenty-four on Economics, and twelve on Logic. The lecturer appointed is a student of the Central Labour College, Oxford, who will be engaged five evenings per week in carrying on the work of these classes. The management is vested in a Committee of twelve representatives drawn from the various organized labour bodies in Rochdale, which include the A.S.E., A.S.R.S., A.S.C.T. All communications are to be made to the Secretary, Mr. Harold Kershaw, 7 Boundary Lane, Rochdale, who by the way is an ex-student of Ruskin College. The object of this provincial scheme of working-class education, like that of the Central College itself, is simply the training ground of men and women for the industrial, political and social work of the Labour Movement. What has been done at Rochdale, we anticipate will be taken up in the industrial towns by the beginning of next winter and we commend all Plebs, wherever they may be situated, to set to work and prepare the ground for the sowing of the seed of scientific knowledge. Like all new movements that embody new ideas, we have to face and to fight the apathy and indifference of our own class and the deception and misrepresentations of our enemies. Those latter are hoping that we will fail in our object. If we are true to ourselves, if we are possessed of that courage which is born of a belief in the integrity of our cause, we will undeceive those gentlemen. We will give them to understand that we are animated by motives too high for them in their shallowness and sordidness to comprehend. Let us then to the field in this the seed-time of a new social system, so that when the golden grain of the revolutionary thought which we now may sow shall have ripened, the reapers may go forth in the undimmed day of the harvest to execute the decree of history and to put all economic subjection under their feet.



As we go to press the good news arrives that the Rhondda District, S.W.M.F. have decided to send one student to Central Labour College for the year 1910. It appears that at their last meeting, three weeks ago, the question of sending two students to either Ruskin College or Central Labour College was decided. On the vote being taken it was found that fourteen delegates were in favour of supporting Central Labour College, and eleven delegates in favour of Ruskin College. The vote was challenged, and, on what is equivalent to a card vote, it was found that the eleven delegates who voted in favour of Ruskin College represented Lodges who were numerically stronger than the fourteen Lodges whose delegates were in favour of

**South Wales
Miners Again**

Central Labour College. Thus the meeting ended in an apparent victory for Ruskin College. But before the next district meeting two of the eleven Lodges desired to withdraw their support from Ruskin College as it appears that their delegates, through some misunderstanding, had voted contrary to their mandates from the Lodges in question. These changes again gave the Central Labour College the lead. However, as the year is already somewhat advanced, and as arrangements had been entered into with Ruskin College, it was decided to send one student each to the both Colleges. So that the Central Labour College will only have one student from the Rhondda. We are however consoled for this by the fact that the Rhondda miners will now have a practical test of the real value of both institutions, and further corroboration of our case against Ruskin College. We congratulate the Rhondda miners on their wise decision: we congratulate the Central Labour College on their actual gain of one student: and we congratulate the stalwart "Plebeians" of the Rhondda on the result of their labours which is, in addition to immediate success, an excellent promise of still greater success in the future. Good luck to all the earnest men and their sympathizers in the Rhondda, and elsewhere, who are working so well for the Central Labour College, and the still greater movement of laying the foundations of the great educational department of the Labour Movement.

Men are often capable of greater things than they perform. They are sent into the world with bills of credit and seldom draw to their full extent.—*Walpole.*

To Our Readers

The present number commences the second volume of the Magazine. We have decided to procure a literary article each month, also an article in lighter vein. Mr. John Owen of Manchester, a student at the Central Labour College is taking charge of the latter. We again invite contributions on any subject of educational interest from our readers. Articles should be written on one side of the paper only, and not more than 1,500 words in length. Articles not considered suitable will be returned if a 1d. stamp is enclosed when sent.

Will members and readers please note that Subscriptions for League Membership and Magazine are now due.

Henrik Ibsen, the Iconoclast

HENRIK IBSEN is a man whose work can not be neglected by Socialists. His philosophy, if it bears reducing to any formula, is nearer that of an anarchist. He has no solution to offer for the modern social problem. Why then must his work be considered by Socialists? Because he attempted and partly achieved a revolution in men's thoughts and when that has been done, we have gone many steps towards the larger social revolution. He cleared away many snags in the path of thought. He set forth the ideals and standards which men have guarded so carefully, and by making us first question and then mock at those standards, he has torn down one bogey that has stood in the way of progress and won for himself the title of Iconoclast.

Ibsen was not a constructive philosopher. He said of himself that his mission was to ask and not to answer. Thus he went through all his life asking of society those disconcerting and haunting questions which can not be answered by an old proverb or a line from a creed. His questions are the questions of the modern world, and all of us who think are asking them every day and struggling for the answers. Ibsen performed a great service in clarifying these questions for those who think and by forcing them upon those who do not thus indulge if they can help it.

Ibsen was a modernist of modernists, a true child of the age, who was blown about by every wind of thought. He changed his mind continually and struggled with his own terrible questions as honestly as the rest of us. He possessed that wonderful modern inconsistency which gives such a convincing note to a man's work.

Perhaps no man has come closer to the spirit of the times than Ibsen. Yet he read little or nothing and he knew and talked with few people. His sensitiveness to the ebb and flow of modern thought seemed almost the result of some mystical relation to the forces of progress.

The circumstances of his life, his early embitterment and youthful rebellion and his continuous wandering over Europe, in some measure explain his constant questioning of the form and ideals of society.

He was born into one of the middle class Norwegian families he loved so well to paint. His family were of appalling respectability and there is no doubt he was early immersed in the standards and self-satisfied ideals of the little Norwegian coast town of Skien. He was born in 1820 and was just reaching manhood at the time of the revolution of '48 and '49. He could not help but be affected by this great movement which swept over Europe at a critical age in his life. His early years were a struggle with a peculiarly humiliating form of

poverty and family misunderstandings. The loneliness of his childhood and the resentment at lack of social recognition after his father's business failure undoubtedly did much to clear his vision and give him a chance to see the realities of life. While still but a boy he went to work in an apothecary's shop in Grimstad, and here began his own life and his own work. He began writing at once and this early work is all of the historical and romantic school. Some very lovely lyric poems and poetic plays, full of the idealism and romanticism on which he had been fed, are found among these early writings. This was the period of half formed ideas and little thinking. He gradually began to receive some recognition in Norway, and while he was still a young man was made Director of the National Theatre in Belgium and later in Christiania. This experience was invaluable for in that position he had not only to select and stage foreign plays, but to write and produce a certain number of his own each year. All the plays of this period are idealistic and romantic, sometimes striking a clear note always full of the symbolism of which he was master. Out of this experience he gained that complete technical knowledge of stage craft which is seen in the workmanship of his later plays.

Eventually he left Norway, embittered at the failure of his countrymen to attain the ideal which he and they had stood for—that of helping the Danes in their struggle for independence.

For many years he was a voluntary exile and during this period he wrote the plays which have the widest significance for us. Undoubtedly his life in Rome and Germany rid him of much of his provincialism and put him in touch with the spirit of the times which he grasped with a master hand, and interpreted for us in dramatic form.

We can hardly over-estimate the influence over Ibsen of the Franco-German war, and the revolutionary thought which accompanied it. His whole conception of the meaning of life and history seemed to change during that period. He began to see that "the old order changeth," that the forces of society were making for a universal revolution. With the tenseness of the poet and the mystic, he chafed under the petty local revolutions which he felt held back and hindered the great revolution in the spirit of man. Ibsen wrote to George Brande, his friend and critic, thus,—“Up till now we have been living on nothing but the crumbs from the table of last century's revolution, a food out of which all nutriment has long been chewed. Our terms stand in need of a new connotation, a new interpretation. Liberty, equality and fraternity are no longer the things they were in the days of the late lamented guillotines. This is what politicians will not understand, and therefore I hate them. What they want is special revolutions, revolutions in externals, in the political sphere. But all this is mere trifling. What is really wanted is a revolution of the spirit of man.”

His disappointment over the failure of the Paris Commune was keen and with his hope gone for the immediate realization of the dreams of "free choice and spiritual kinship" as a basis of union, he set himself to study and point out the symptoms of the breaking up of the social order. He saw the change and the revolution as inevitable. He looked upon society as suffering from a fatal disease and with the painstaking accuracy of a scientist he described the symptoms and put them before the world. Ibsen certainly never expressed and probably never saw the deep underlying economic cause of that disease which is pushing the world on to revolution, but with unmatched skill he pointed out signs of its ravages—the struggle of the economic classes, the revolt of women, the hypocrisy of respectability, the restlessness of the age, the agony of the death pangs of the old order and the birth throes of the new. Few men see the cause first and Ibsen has done us a real service in analyzing conditions and forcing us to search for the cause.

With this period in his life begins his new form of literary expression. He dropped his verse forms and plays of romantic idealism and he consciously set himself to depict real human beings facing real issues in quite the natural and ordinary way. His poetic gift enabled him to do this without being dull or narrow. His social plays deal with the most commonplace folk in every day situations and yet the poet's skill has made the persons represent types, and the every day happening, great modern issues fraught with tragedy and significance.

It is the plays of this period after 1870 that have most interest for us, and from these we must discuss the meaning of Ibsen to our generation. Most critics include in the social dramas, "The Pillars of Society," "A Doll's House," "Ghosts," "An Enemy of the People," "The Wild Duck," "Rosmersholm" and "The Lady from the Sea," "Hedda Gabler," "The Master Builder," "Little Eyolf," "John Gabriel, Workman," "When the Dead Awaken," although all dashed with the social questions are nevertheless somewhat different in form and many critics have chosen to call this later group socio-psychological dramas.

Some of the most beautiful imaginative writing and some of the most striking symbolism of modern literature are found in those very plays which we have chosen to ignore in this discussion. This is justifiable if we are trying to get at the true relation of Ibsen's work to the age, for he consciously abandoned his lyric gifts and his idealism and romanticism when he saw these were not in accord with reality. And he abandoned them, too, before he had discovered the beauty of reality. As he grew older he blended the poet with the realist and in some of his later plays such as "The Master Builder" we have that wonderful symbolic realism if we may so call it.

Marx on Capitalist Credit

Being part of Chapter XXVII, Vol. III, *Capital*, recently published by Messrs. Kerr & Co., Chicago. Written in 1865, it is evidence of Marx's remarkably keen insight into the nature of capitalist society.

IN the stock companies the *function* is separated from the *ownership* of capital This result of the highest development of capitalist production is a necessary transition to the reconversion of capital into the property of the producers, no longer as the private property of individual producers, but as the common property of associates, as social property outright. On the other hand it is a transition to the conversion of all functions in the process of reproduction, which still remain connected with capitalist private property, into mere functions of the associated producers, into social functions.

* * * * *

This is the abolition of the capitalist mode of production within capitalist production itself, a self-destructive contradiction, which represents on its face a mere phase of transition to a new form of production. It manifests its contradictory nature by its effects. It establishes a monopoly in certain spheres and thereby challenges the interference of the state. It reproduces a new aristocracy of finance, a new sort of parasites in the shape of (company) promoters, speculators, and merely nominal directors; a whole system of swindling and cheating by means of corporation juggling, stock speculation. It is private production without the control of private property.

Aside from the stock company business, which represents an abolition of capitalist private industry on the basis of the capitalist system itself and destroys private industry in proportion as it expands and seizes new spheres of production, credit offers to the individual capitalist, or to him who is regarded as a capitalist, absolute command of the capital of others and the property of others, within certain limits, and thereby of the labour of others.* A command of social capital, not individual capital of his own, gives him command of social labour. The capital itself which a man really owns, or is supposed to own by public opinion, becomes

*See, for instance, in the *Times* the list of business failures of a critical year like 1857, and compare the private property of the bankrupts with the amount of their debts.

purely a basis for the superstructure of credit. This is true particularly of wholesale commerce, through whose hands the greatest portion of the social product passes. All standards of measurement, all excuses which are more or less justified under capitalist production, disappear here. What the speculating merchant risks is social property, not his own. Equally stale becomes the phrase concerning the origin of capital from "saving," for what he demands is precisely that others shall save for him† The other phrase of the "abstention" is slapped in the face by his luxury, which now becomes a means of credit by itself. Conceptions, which still have some meaning on a less developed stage of capitalist production, becomes quite meaningless here. Both success and failure now led simultaneously to a centralization of capital, and thus to an expropriation on the most enormous scale. This expropriation extends here from the direct producers to the smaller and smallest capitalist themselves. It is first the point of departure of the capitalist mode of production; its complete accomplishment is the aim of this production. In the last instance it aims at the expropriation of all individuals from the means of production, which cease with the development of social production to be the means of private production and products of private production, and which can henceforth be only means of production in the hands of associated producers, their social property, just as they are social products. However, this expropriation appears under the capitalist system in a contradictory form, as an expropriation of social property by a few; and credit gives to these few more and more the character of pure adventurers. Since property here exists in the form of shares of stock, its movements and transfer become purely a result of gambling at the stock exchange, where the little fish are swallowed by the sharks and the lambs by the wolves. In the stock companies the antagonism against the old form becomes apparent, in which social means of production are private property; but the conversion to the form of shares of stock still remains ensnared in the boundaries of capitalism; hence, instead of overcoming the antagonism between the character of wealth as a social one and as private wealth, the stock companies merely develop it in a new form.

The co-operative factories of the labourers themselves represent within the old form the first beginnings of the new, although they naturally reproduce, and must reproduce, everywhere in their actual organization all the shortcomings of the prevailing system. But the antagonism between capital and labour is overcome within them, although only in the form of making the associated labourers their own capitalists, that is, enabling them to use the means of production

†In this way all France saved one and a half billion francs for the Panama Canal swindlers. In fact the entire Panama swindle is here correctly described, fully twenty years before it happened. FRED. ENGELS,

for the employment of their own labour. They show the way, in which a new mode of production may naturally grow out of an old one, when the development of the material forces of production and of the corresponding forms of social production has reached a certain stage. Without the factory system arising out of the capitalist mode of production the co-operative factory could not develop, nor without the credit system arising out of the same mode of production. The credit system is not only the principal basis for the gradual transformation of capitalist private enterprises into capitalist stock companies, but also a means for the gradual extension, of co-operative enterprises on a more or less natural scale. The capitalist stock companies as well as the co-operative factories may be considered as forms of transition from the capitalist mode of production to the associated one, with this distinction, that the antagonism is met negatively in the one, positively in the other.

* * * * *

The credit system appears as the main lever of over-production and over-speculation in commerce solely because the process of reproduction, which is elastic in its nature, is here forced to its extreme limits, and is so forced for the reason that a large part of the social capital is employed by people who do not own it and who push things with far less caution than the owner, who carefully weighs the possibilities of his private capital, which he handles himself. This simply demonstrates the fact, that the production of values by capital based on the antagonistic nature of the capitalist system permits an actual, free development only up to a certain point, so that it constitutes an imminent fetter and barrier of production, which are continually over-stepped by the credit system. Hence the system accelerates the material development of the forces of production and the establishment of the world market. To bring these material foundations of the new mode of production to a certain degree of perfection, is the historical mission of the capitalist system of production. At the same time credit accelerates the violent eruptions of this antagonism, the crises, and thereby the development of the elements of disintegration of the old mode of production.

Two natures, then, are imminent in the credit system. On one side, it develops the incentive of capitalist production, the accumulation of wealth by the appropriation and exploitation of the labour of others, to the purest and most colossal form of gambling and swindling, and reduces more and more the number of those who exploit the social wealth. On the other side, it constitutes a transition to a new mode of production. It is this ambiguous nature, which endows the principal spokesmen of credit from Law to Isaac Pereire with the pleasant character of swindlers and prophets.

The Case against Ruskin College Proved by Documentary Evidence

III.—THE PLOT THICKENS

IN 1906, the year in which the Labour Party made its appearance in the House of Commons, there was redoubled activity on the part of the anti-labour section at Ruskin College, (See pp. 5-6 *Burning Question of Education*).

An interesting movement began on June 30th. 1906, the Bishop of Hereford called a private conference at Balliol College. Those present were Sir William Markby, an ex-Indian Judge, and member of Ruskin College Executive Committee, Mr. Marriott, of the University Extension Delegacy. Mr. Sydney Ball, another Don who sits on the Executive of Ruskin College, Mr. Mansbridge of the Workers' Education Association, Mr. R. H. Tawney of Glasgow University, Mr. Albert Taylor, Mr. Robert Young of the A.S.E., one of the very few ex-students who do not sympathize with the Plebs Movement, Canon Barnett, and the Rev. W. Hudson Shaw. The Bishop took the Chair. All the speeches sounded the same note and it was ultimately agreed that a letter be sent to the University Extension Delegacy, asking them to consider the advisability of making a grant in aid of Ruskin College, and that those present representing the Colleges form themselves into a Sub-Committee to endeavour to bring about a better feeling between the Colleges of Oxford and Ruskin College. The latter institution had begun by being sneered at and hated by the University, it had subsequently been tolerated, and was now about to be patronized by it. The last proved the most perilous stage. Only in the previous year R. C. students had been advised by Mr. Lees-Smith that if they attended the Lectures of any Dons *except those connected with the Delegacy* they would probably be welcome.

Coupled with this was an increase in the attempts to discourage every form of activity amongst the ex-students, which might tend to give them sufficient coherence to in any way influence the course of events. The Ruskin College Educational League which consisted of ex-students, Correspondence students, and a few sympathizers had been persistently snubbed. In January 1907 a letter was received by the Secretary of the London Branch which practically told its members that their organization was not wanted, and that they might as well give place to the Workers' Educational Association. (See Appendix I, *Burning Question of Education*.)

The next move was an attempt to remove from the curriculum Mr. Hird's subjects, Sociology, Evolution, and Logic, (the first two do not enter as subjects into the University's system of study) and to substitute Literature, Rhetoric, and Temperance. A Sub-Committee

was appointed, which recommended this course of action, but owing to the opposition of the students, the scheme never reached the Executive Council. The Sub-Committee consisted of three Dons, Professor Lees-Smith, and one Labour Representative, Mr. Albert Taylor. Mr. Hird was not appointed a member. The Committee sat in September 1907 and the Joint Committee of the University and the Workers' Education Association was appointed the previous month. Two members of the Sub-Committee were also members of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee also included Messrs. Berry, Bowerman and Shackleton of the Ruskin College Council. Into the proposals of this Committee it is not our business to enter, but the following "Notes for the consideration of the Joint Committee &c. on the possible relations between Ruskin College and the University" are instructive. They were considered by the Ruskin College Executive, although they were described as having no authority from them :—

1.—The University would help the work of Ruskin College, if it were to establish and endow lectureships in the University in Applied Economics (i.e. the Economics of Transportation, Trusts, Methods of Wage Adjustment, Pauperism, &c.) and in the Political Science of the modern organizations of Society (i.e. such things as Local Government, Temperance legislation, &c.), and if such lectures were open free of charge to the Students of Ruskin College.

2.—The second year students of Ruskin College might take advantage of a Diploma in Political Science and Economics. A new Diploma might be established by the University, or the present Diploma might be modified in this direction. The second year students of Ruskin College would probably be able to take advantage of lectures in connexion with such a Diploma.

3.—Residence for one year at Ruskin College with a Certificate that the College is satisfied with the student's work should be accepted as equivalent to the "good general education" preliminary to Diploma work.

4.—The University might offer scholarships for the second year students at Ruskin College, open to those students who desire to qualify for such a Diploma; such scholarships to be awarded by the Council of Ruskin College.

5.—Whether scholarships offered under any scheme of the Joint Committee should be tenable at Ruskin College, depends upon the principle on which such scholarships are to be awarded. Ruskin College must be regarded primarily as a place of training for men who will return to their handicrafts, and may take part in the work of labour organizations, and of local authorities. The College cannot be used as a Hostel for students who are taking the general course of University education.

WILLIAM H. SEED.

CHEERFUL CHUCKLES

ON PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY teaches everything about Nothing and nothing about Anything. It was discovered by Napoleon during his famous flight across the Thames, about the time of the Black Plague. Much to the indignation of the Tariff Reform League he dumped it into England untaxed. In those days philosophers wore bald heads and looked wise: under the present corrupt system of Capitalism a man may become one by merely swallowing a dictionary and wearing a fancy vest (see Karl Marx, page 22½, vol. 10). The word "Philosophy" comes from the Greek — "Philos" — meaning "Fibber" and "Ossus" meaning "Official" — "Official Fibber." Owing to the fierce competition under the present system (Karl Marx, page 5½, vol. 12), they have been driven out of this position by Cabinet Ministers who make a better job of it.

The world of philosophy is agitated at the present time by two vital questions, viz.—(1) "Should Bald Heads be Buttered,"? and (2) "The Budget and its relation to the Nebular Hypothesis," whilst a correspondence is being carried on in the "Weekly Fortnight" on the subject "Should Protoplasm be municipalized?" I, myself, am pretty well known in philosophical circles (Scotland Yard section especially) and my friends number a great many (one numbers 999, and has a Government appointment). The first to take me into the fields of philosophy was Hardnut. He was certainly a very smart chap was Hardnut, at least so the chaps at the club said, and he has never contradicted them. He invariably wore a pair of gold spectacles and a puzzled look as though life was, to him, one vast interrogation mark. It was a distinct pleasure to hear him talk, even if you did not understand him, which was generally the case. He once told me that I was suffering from an "inefficient correspondence between thoughts and things," and it was not until I went to the doctor to get something for it that I discovered he had called me a lunatic.

After that we did not speak for some time, until strolling into the club one day who should come up to me but Hardnut. "Hallo, old chap" he said, "I see you are still carrying on the process of Metabolism"! Now this was too bad in front of all the other chaps, and I told him so, and demanded to know whether I had ever borrowed any from him? Hardnut then explained he only meant that I was still alive and kicking. This being the case, of course, I remarked what a fine day it was, that I hoped he was doing all right and keeping well. Hardnut told another. He said he was all right and hoped I was the same. I asked him if he would care to—? He didn't mind, so I ordered two (on Hardnut's account). Hardnut

then began to talk Philosophy and I looked round for an escape. "You see, old chap, everything is in a state of flux. All phenomena (well I don't mind another). All phenomena is not static, though you might think so, there is absolutely nothing absolute; everything is in a state of relativity, *nothing can stand by itself.*" Hardnut sat down suddenly as though to emphasize his point and I took the opportunity to order a fifth (to Hardnut's account). His voice had grown thick with emotion as he went on. "The world, nay, the Cosmos, is one constant process" (he said "procesh" but he had warmed to his subject). "You should read 'Itchskin' my boy, if you want to become a philosopher." When we parted (after the ninth) it was with sincere regret, for, as I left him to walk home I saw the truth of his philosophy "that nothing could stand by itself." Next day Hardnut sent by post Itchskin and a headache powder. I determined to try both. Having nailed my study door up I sat down to read "Itchskin." On looking at the first page I began to wonder whether it was a misprint or the "Great Contradiction," then I tried to pronounce one of the words—when I found my teeth again I went to the second chapter.

"The unlimited is made up of an infinite number of finite limitations." This passage was marked, I read it again, then I tried the headache powder.

I went back to the first chapter, I had determined to become a philosopher. "Whoever understands understanding, cannot misunderstand." Oh! this is a little better, if I can only understand how to understand the misunderstanding of how to—humph! If I can understand—. Hardnut has wonderful presence of mind and when he called round in the evening he instantly unfastened my collar and gave me water. I pointed feebly to the book. A light of cognition sprang into Hardnut's eyes "Oh! I see, you did not take into consideration the relativity of things. You cannot understand only by relativity. Listen.—"The faculty of thought having all relations for its object must abstract from all of them in order to understand its own nature. Simple enough," said Hardnut. "You must objectize your mind, throw it in front of you, as it were, and make an analysis of it and then you will understand—relatively speaking of course! Good night!" I gritted my teeth together and walked to one end of the room. "I must do it," I muttered grimly. Standing with my back to the wall I tried to place my mind in front and examine it. With a tremendous effort I hurled my mind forward. It must have gone too far, for it established close relations with the other wall unfortunately carrying my head with it. When I recovered consciousness I sent Hardnut a note, it ran thus:—"Dear Hardnut,—Last night I unfortunately met with something absolute, the contact has left me in a state of flux. I am forwarding doctors bill to you. Yours faithfully NITUS."

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FESTINO.—The only authentic account of the discovery of the North Pole is contained in "Home Chat." All other accounts are "cooked."

MRS CARRAWAY SEED.—The best way to make a pudding is first to get some old nails and leather, mix gently with flour and currants and season with a woodbine to taste. Allow it to simmer for five hours, stun it, then lift out, extract flour and currants, take away the number you first thought of and serve up rapidly.

BEERY BILL.—No, you need not be afraid, Tariff Reform will *not* find work for all.

SCHOLAR.—An Oxford Don is one who wears a cap and gown and goes along the line of most assistance.

The Study and Interpretation of History

"THE present is the child of the past and the parent of the future," in other words, that which is has come out of that which was and out of that which is will grow that which will be. An understanding of the *present* being an indispensable condition for the making of any speculation as to the *future*, and understanding of the *past* is fundamental and essential to both. Such an understanding is therefore involved in the study of historic epochs and the economics of those epochs.

THE SUBJECT OF HISTORY.

The subject of history is the life of man in society, human relations and institutions—the development of society itself. The State, the family marriage, science, philosophy and religion, and all social institutions have their history. To have a history is to have been different at different times—to have undergone change. The mere narration of differences however is not enough. History is unintelligible unless it shows *why* there have been differences, unless it points out the cause of differentiation. Until comparatively recently, very little attention has been paid to the subject of causation in history. Science first invaded and subjected to law the inorganic and afterwards the organic, before it entered the domain of the super-organic or social. Even at this hour social phenomena is in some quarters isolated from all other phenomena as the only ones which cannot be linked to determining causes. If the past, present, and future of society is not bound together by chains of unbroken causation, then the past can have no interest save as a tumultuous tale signifying nothing, and history might as well be thrown out on the rubbish heap. History written as it was, and this edition is by no means out of print even to-day, consisting of nothing but the intrigues and improprieties of rulers, of political events and military campaigns, and taught as a mere chronology of events springing from the wisdom or wickedness of certain individuals is a useless study.

THE DEISTIC CONCEPTION OF HISTORY.

The oldest notion with regard to social phenomena was that they were the resultant of super-natural design. All peoples have thought that a god directed their history. The axiom still remains with us that "man proposes but God disposes." The states and cities of the ancient world each possessed their state divinity who watched over their separate interests and destinies dwelling in the temple specially consecrated to him. The Jahveh of Israel was such a divinity and was frequently carried about in a box so that he might direct "the goings out and comings in" of his people whenever they changed their location. Especially in war were the gods of the contending tribes or states most active. Hence the intimacy of relationship between patriotism and religion. Civilized nations still pray for the direction and intervention of the "God of battles" in the extermination of their enemies, even though special and increasing attention is paid to the inspection of rifles, and the supply of machine guns. The belief in the intrusion of God into social affairs is made manifest in the private letters written by Bismarck to his wife during the war of 1870-71 wherein it is shown, that he believed God passed his time in occupying himself with Bismarck, his son and the Prussian Armies. "The God of historic philosophy" says Lafargue "is a mechanic who for His amusement constructs the universe, whose movements He regulates, and manufactures man, whose destiny He directs after a plan known to Himself alone, but the philosophic historians have not perceived that this Eternal God is not the creator but the creature of man and that far from being the director, He is the plaything of historic events."

THE GREAT MAN CONCEPTION OF HISTORY.

Following from the conception of a god directing history is the one which ascribes social movements and social progress to the influence upon society of individual great men. A great promulgator of this theory was none other than Thomas Carlyle. According to his *Heroes and Hero Worship* the whole of the Reformation turns upon Martin Luther. No Luther; no Reformation. In fact he makes all subsequent history to hinge upon what Luther did at the Diet of Worms. "It is, as we say, the greatest moment in the Modern History of Men. English Puritanism, England and its Parliaments, Americas, . . . French Revolution, Europe and its work everywhere at present; the germ of it all lay there: had Luther in that moment done other, it had all been otherwise." Nothing is clearer from an examination of the facts, than that Martin Luther was simply the product of conditions that bore him to the top, and made him the mouth-piece of the ruling class of Germany. The latter were ripe for a revolt against the Papacy. The historian Swinton points out that, "they were angered at seeing large quantities of money drained from their own country to be expended on works of art in Italy." The German ruling-class felt quite confident, of *their* ability to monopolize the surplus wealth which *they* appropriated from the German peasantry. Had not this disinterested "spiritual hero" been backed by the ruling-class of Germany, as well as of other countries whose material interests he was in reality

defending, he would very soon have received his quietus in true Roman fashion. This material factor was either ignored or remained invisible to Carlyle. Years before many priests had anticipated all that Luther said and did but the economic circumstances were not yet ripe for the creation of "heroes."

Oliver Cromwell is another oft-quoted example in proof of the "great man theory." But Cromwell would have been no Cromwell had the conditions which had been gathering for the downfall of the feudal nobility, not been ripe for revolt. Cromwell stood forth as the representative of the trading class then rising into power, and the struggle between him and Charles I, was simply an expression of the conflict of economic forces embodied in two different economic classes.

THE REALISTIC CONCEPTION OF HISTORY.

Early history lacked continuity both in time and in space. Not only were the stages in the development of a given society regarded as isolated, not only was there an absence of any conception of growth, but the relation of events occurring in different countries and their influence upon each other was not comprehended. The general result of this failure to perceive the continuous thread of progress running through society, a failure inevitable up to a certain stage of social development, was to convey to the mind the impression that institutions were static—stationary. Even to-day this way of looking at things still obtains.

Hegel, the German philosopher, was one of the first to attempt to apply evolution to social phenomena and by so doing created a revolution in philosophy. He pointed out that all history is an evolution and not a collection of chaotic and disconnected facts. It was the great merit of Hegel to have destroyed the dualism of his predecessors and to have taught that the world was not made, but is always in the making by its inherent force, or as the old Greek philosopher put it, "Nothing is; everything becomes." And while Hegel by his evolutionary *method* looked at things in their movement, his *system* was built up on the basis of idealism, i.e. the movement of things had their source in "the Absolute idea." While *thinking* and *being* were monistically combined, yet according to the Hegelian, thinking was the only reality and being merely a manifestation.

The contradiction between the Hegelian method and system caused that school to divide into two camps, the *left* and the *right*. Of the left we shall speak later. The right held to the idealistic system. According to their concept, the world which we perceive with our senses is not the real world, does not contain within it the laws of its own existence, but is derived from the non-material world, the world of ideas which alone is the reality and of which the material is but its shadow. To know the evolution of ideas is to acquire the laws of history. Pythagoras held a somewhat similar notion when he claimed that the properties of bodies could be deduced from a knowledge of the property of numbers.

But from whence does the "idea" come? This is an inquiry that the idealists generally disdain to enter upon. For example, what is the source of the idea of Justice? Let us look at her who has toiled in the mines of history. Among the ancient Hebrews the taking of interest was denounced as unjust and immoral. To-day the judicial lady sets her sacred seal upon the payment of interest. *The idea of justice is therefore changeable.* Justice in the society of the Hebrews and Justice in the society of to-day are two different quantities. *The difference in the ideas can only be explained by an understanding of the differences in these two forms of society.* When the Mosaic law was given there was neither industrialism nor commercialism in Hebrew Society. Production was carried on for use. The system of wages and profits had not yet developed. In the capitalist society of to-day based upon the production of commodities, the two poles of which are wages and profits, the taking of interest is perfectly reasonable and is held by some economists to be a reward for virtue, ("Interest is the reward of waiting") and by others as a natural attribute of productive capital, ("Interest is paid because capital is productive.") The idea of justice therefore takes its departure from the material world, is in accordance with the needs and interests of the ruling class, which latter are determined by the economic organization of society. With every change in the form of such organization there follows as a consequence a corresponding change in the ideas of Justice, Morality, Progress, &c., &c.

THE MATERIAL CONCEPTION OF HISTORY.

Ideas do not therefore, fall from Heaven, but have their source in the world of material reality. The abstract ideas of good and bad, of right and wrong and so on, have their origin in the concrete facts and conditions of existence. Ideas have not, nor cannot have, any independent existence. *The idea grows out of the material world, and not the material world out of the idea.*

The origin of social development, the factors that move and make history, are therefore material. Such is the modern and scientific conception of history which stands at the opposite pole to the idealistic, and which is the culmination to the development of the left camp of the Hegelians.

Buckle was one of the first to attempt an examination of history from a physical standpoint, to show that thoughts and ideas are not causes but effects, products of natural surroundings. The human mind, he held, is not a free agency, but is directed by external forces, the most important of which are climate, situation and condition of soil. This theory, while able in a large measure to explain the differences between the characteristics and customs of different countries, was insufficient to explain these differences in one and the same country. The climate of England, for example, is a factor which is constant, or at least nearly so. Variation cannot be explained by constancy. The social changes of the English nation during the last thousand years cannot have been caused by climatic or geographical factors which during that time have been practically constant.

It was left to Karl Marx and Friederich Engels to scientifically establish the materialistic conception of history. Both took their departure from the Helgelian method or dialectic, as it is called. The left camp of the school of Hegel, to which we have previously referred, revolted against the reactionary system of their master and historical materialism was its logical and lasting outcome. . That which changes most will *change most* the whole social structure. What changes most? The economic organization of society. The mode and means of production, and after that of distribution, is *the* material factor which most profoundly determines the character of social institutions. "In every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch" (Marx and Engels). And again, to quote Marx: "Accordingly, the last causes of all social changes are to be sought, not in the increasing insight of man into the laws of eternal truth and justice or some similar 'ideas,' but in the changes and methods of production and distribution—not in the philosophy, but in the economics of a given epoch."

The study of History and Economics are therefore most intimately related, and a knowledge of both is indispensable to an intelligent understanding of what has been, and what is, and of the direction in which we are heading.

History without political economy has no fruit.
Political economy without history has no root.

WILL W. CLARK.

Next Month:—The Nature and Development of Gentile Society.

A Martyr to Education

THE special interest in this particular event* lies in the fact that Ferrer was a martyr to the principle of education. There have been martyrs to religion, and to science, but never before was there *a martyr to education*. Ferrer saw that education was the great weapon. Now, it takes considerable intelligence and close insight into human nature, great knowledge of history and power to analyse events, in order to dislodge erroneous ideas, even in our own society, to rise to the conception that education is really a panacea for our social evils. Why is it so difficult to see that education will do this? It is because we are labouring under an erroneous world view, as I call it. We are labouring under the idea that there are great natural differences among men, that the lower classes are naturally inferior to the upper and middle classes. Now, in order to see that education can accomplish the reforms that the world is attempting to-day we are obliged to penetrate into that world view and to see

*Ferrer's death.

its error. We are obliged, in other words, to recognize the natural equality of all men, for which I have coined a word, namely, egalitarianism. It means simply that no class has or ever did have a monopoly of brains; that there are just as good brains among the "mudsills" and the labouring men with their picks and shovels as there are in the higher walks of life. What then is the difference, and why is it that we have intelligent and unintelligent classes? Because the unintelligent classes are uninformed, uneducated. Educate them and they are our equals. Ferrer saw that. I do not know whether he ever said it, I have said it. Already there had been intimations of it. There have been philosophic glimpses of the truth. Bacon said "Knowledge is power," and we have a proverb that "intelligence will rule," and both are perfectly true. But that does not do away with the error that prevails in the public mind. It does not teach that the power that knowledge confers it will give to anybody to whom the knowledge is supplied; that intelligence is possible to all mankind; that there is no class in society that is not capable of becoming intelligent if it can only be instructed. All classes are equal when all are equally equipped. But we are living in quite a different world view, viz. the one that I have characterized as the oligocentric world view, the view that the few are all there are of any consequence in society, that everything should be done for the few, that the great mass are of no importance to mankind but are simply used and exploited by the few, the idea which has come from antiquity that "humanity was made for the few." (Lucanus.) We are living still under that error and we must get rid of it. Ferrer worked himself out of it.

The fact is the few have been ruling the world all these ages. The tail has been wagging the dog. All we want is that all the elements of society shall be brought into action. Ten per cent. of the world to-day is ruling ninety per cent. We hear about a "submerged tenth," but there is a privileged tenth, that is no better than the submerged tenth, and the intermediate eighty per cent. is just as good as the privileged tenth if they can only be given the proper equipment for work in the world. History has shown it. So we may translate the expression which I have just used that all are equal when they are equally equipped, into this slightly changed form that all are equal when they are equally informed, and when all are equally informed exploitation and barbarisms of this kind become impossible.

The statement that there are no bad people in the world reminds me of what Buckle says in his History of Civilization, to the effect that even the Spanish Inquisition was the work of society and not of the particular inquisitors whose names appear upon the annals of history, the populace in all cases demanding the punishments which were inflicted upon the heretics.

People have spoken of the quality of education as distinguished from its quantity. What is education? My idea of it is totally different from that which prevails in our highest institutions to-day. From what I know of Ferrer I mean very nearly the same thing by education that he meant by it. I define intelligence as "intellect plus knowledge," and I embody in the word "knowledge" the whole of education. That education which does not give knowledge is not education. The whole educational problem in this country and all other countries is in a state of utter chaos. Education means "the diffusion of knowledge among men," to quote the celebrated phrase of John Smithson. It is knowledge that is going to regenerate the world. There is only one kind of knowledge, a knowledge of this world, of the universe, of our environment, of our race—its origin, development, history, and evolution. And that is exactly what Ferrer tried to impress upon the students of the Modern School.

LESTER F. WARD.

Correspondence

OPEN LETTER TO MR. RAMSAY MACDONALD

"Socialism and Society."

SIR,

Your note published in last month's "Plebs" is very unsatisfactory as a reply to my article on the above subject. I am aware that you are not expected to reply to every criticism, but you also are, of course, aware that you are compelled to take the consequences of not replying. I want to ask you to reconsider your note, and to make a more adequate reply for the three following reasons:—

(1) Your note contains a misstatement. You say:—"the article carries its own reply to anyone who has read my book." You will be surprised to learn that a large number of "anyones" who are in that condition, have notified me that this is not the fact. What can you say in face of that? After this information reaches you, your note cannot seem even to you to adequately meet the situation.

(2) From this you will see that a number of men—not without influence in the Labour Movement I can assure you—will believe that you, have been attacked—vitaly too—in the fundamental position which is alone the reason of your present political existence. These men you may depend will not be content to simply believe. They will get others to do so. It is my sincere opinion that you had much better try seriously to 'stop the mischief before the comparatively indulgent audience of the "Plebs" than to airily take the consequences, because—

(3) The fundamental error laid down in your book is greatly influencing the Labour Movement, as I believe, and others with me, for evil. It will surely cause a deep fissure in the near future, and because of this there are men who will wring an answer from you, if not on the peaceful ground of the "Plebs" then on the more unruly and violent battleground of public discussion. Surely you have learnt that it is only in mythologies

that men can wear magic caps to successfully avoid difficult obstacles? Now, Comrade, do not put on airs, but be businesslike and put your arguments on the table. There is a revival of interest in the English labour movement in Marxian literature and there is no time like the present for a discussion on such an important topic. To paraphrase a famous saying—"You have written your book, now defend it?"

From an admirer of your Political Sagacity,

N. ABLETT.

A Working-Class Publishing House*

TO publish the books advertised on page 3 of cover and to build up the *International Socialist Review* to the point it has already reached, required a cash investment of not less than forty thousand dollars. Our opponents have asked what capitalist put up the money and what was his motive in so doing.

The answer is that no capitalist advanced the money. It came from thousands of working people, most of whom advanced just ten dollars each, and their motive was, partly to secure the privilege of buying their own Socialist books at cost, and partly to make possible the general circulation of more and more Socialist books all over the world.

The publishing house was started by me in 1886, and has run continuously under the same name for more than twenty three years. Its early publications were in the line of liberal religion. In 1891 it began to issue books of social reform, and soon after it was incorporated on the co-operative plan. In 1899 it became definitely associated with the Socialist movement.

All the money I ever had went into the publishing house years ago. It was originally capitalized at 10,000 dollars, and I owned 9,000 dollars worth of the stock. The authorized capital is now 50,000 dollars, of which 29,320 dollars had been paid in up to April 1st, 1909. Of this I owned on that date 700 shares, par value 7,000 dollars. During our hardest struggle to establish the publishing house I sold 200 shares of my own and gave the money to the company as an inducement to others to contribute a like amount.

The 700 shares which I now own pay no dividends; they will pay none unless the management and policy of the publishing house are changed, for our present plans are to use all the income to pay off loans and circulate more literature. So I claim to be a proletarian; my only income is my wages.

Almost all the shares are held by those in active sympathy with our work, and with few exceptions are in holdings of one share each; these holdings constitute far more than a majority.

*At the request of many of our readers we have secured this article of the history etc. of Messrs. Kerr & Co., (118 West Kinzie St., Chicago, U.S.A.) from the founder. ED,

The publishing house is organized under the general corporation law of Illinois, this being the only safe plan in this State. Under the law the control of the company is by a board of directors elected at the annual meeting of the stockholders, which is held in January. The present board consists of seven members of the Socialist Party of Chicago, R. H. Chaplin, J. H. Greer, Marcus Hitch, Walter Huggins, Charles H. Kerr, L. H. Marcy and Charles Roux. They were elected by a unanimous vote at the last stockholders' meeting, and they are all agreed in pushing the work of the publishing house upon the lines already laid down.

Some anxiety has been expressed as to the future of the publishing house by comrades who are satisfied with my management, but fear that in the event of my death the shares of stock now in my name might be bought by some one who might thus get control of the company, and use it to injure rather than advance the Socialist movement.

Now I am fortunate enough to be still on the sunny side of fifty, and expect to work with you for some time yet, but accidents may happen, and to guard against the danger, I have made a will leaving all my stock in trust to three of our directors, to be sold, as soon as the full price of ten dollars a share can be realized on it, for the benefit of my heirs, but only one share to be sold to any one subscriber. The stock until sold, is to be voted by the trustees, and this should insure the continuance of our work along its present lines.

MORE CAPITAL NEEDED.

I said at the start that an investment of about 40,000 dollars has already been made. But the stock thus far sold amounts to not quite 30,000 dollars. We have had to borrow about 10,000 dollars. Part of this has been lent by stockholders without any interest at all; over half of it at four per cent., less than 2,000 at a higher rate of interest. If we were running the business in a way to make as large profits as possible, the interest we now have to pay would be insignificant. But we sell books to stockholders at cost, and most of our sales are to them. Every dollar we pay out for interest increases the cost of the books we sell, and we want to make loans entirely unnecessary. Moreover, we could invest 10,000 dollars more where it would bring quick and sure returns, by increasing our advertising and by printing books in larger quantities, which would reduce the cost of each book.

For these purposes we want to sell at once 2,000 shares of stock at 10 dollars each. (£2.)

The big personal advantage you can secure right now by taking a share of stock is this:

Stockholders buy all OUR books at a discount of fifty per cent. if they pay expressage, forty per cent. if we pay it.

Our main reliance is not upon large sums from a few but upon small sums from many. This is a **Working Class Publishing House**. It is a success already. With your help it is going to be a greater success.

CHARLES H. KERR.