

THE
"Plebs" Magazine

Vol. III.

September, 1911.

No. 8.

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EDITORIAL

THE SECOND ANNUAL MEETING of the Central Labour College was in every way a pronounced success, and suffered nothing in comparison with the two previous annual gatherings. The discussion throughout maintained a high level, and the delegates showed by the keen attention paid to the deliberations and by the enthusiasm with which that attention was backed, a very considerable appreciation of the importance of the movement for genuine working-class education. The official report of the Conference appears in another part of the Magazine, and as a result of it, "Dennis" and his works rose still higher in the scale of the conference's admiration. At the evening meeting, we had another of those eloquent and comprehensive addresses, which laid bare within an hour the march of man from bruteness to brotherhood. We have added another stalwart soldier to the third army of labour since the 1910 inspection of forces, in the person of Mr. George Davison, who delivered an illuminating address at the evening meeting. Mr. Davison took off the cover from some of the externally embellished dishes that are set before the working class as "something which matters," and showed them to contain nothing but hollow shams and lures to catch the unthinking and unwary. To Mr. Davison the Central Labour College is something which really matters, because it gets down in the right way to the real cause of modern slavery and social inequality.



At the Annual Meeting a matter was brought before the delegates which reflects very seriously on the methods of the Parliamentary

Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Management Committee of the General Federation of Trades. An announcement has been appearing during the past fortnight, in

**Un-Democratic
Methods.**

most of the daily and weekly papers, to the effect that "the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Management Committee of the General Federation of Trades are founding at Ruskin College, Oxford, a series of Trade Union Scholarships. All unions affiliated to the Congress and the Federation will have the right to nominate candidates for a matriculation examination; those who are successful are to take up residence in Oxford for two years. The first batch of students holding these scholarships begin their studies in September next. In this way the Trade Union Movement will soon be assured of a constant supply of young men specially trained for bargaining operations in industry and politics." We have seen no repudiation of this by any of the committees of these two bodies, and if such an action, as is set forth in these announcements, has taken place, we have no hesitation in stating that it is an outrage upon the democratic ideals of the working-class movement. It may be, of course, that it is the members of these committees that are subscribing the money for these scholarships, but in that case *it is a private endowment*, the scholarships are private, and it is a piece of shuffling and misrepresentation to call them Trade Union Scholarships or to associate them with the Trade Unions which make up the Trade Union Congress or General Federation of Trades. On the other hand, if these scholarships are being paid out of the Congress or Federation funds, the bodies affiliated to the Congress and Federation have something more than "the right to nominate candidates." They have the "right" to say, in the first place, whether their money shall be spent in any such way or not. It is intolerable that those Trade Unions now supporting the Central Labour College should be contributing to an organization whose executives take the liberty to use that money, or at least part of it, for the purpose of financing an institution from which these Unions have withdrawn and to which they are opposed. But, apart from the question as to whether the Central Labour College or Ruskin College is the best for working-class interests, surely it is the affiliated unions that should decide to what institution financial assistance should be given—surely it is from these unions that the mandate should come. Real democracy begins at the bottom, and anything that partakes of the character of the methods adopted in this case by these executive committees is bureaucracy of the most detestable order. It is high time such methods as these are banished from the field of the Labour Movement, as, if this is allowed to continue, there is no guarantee where it is going to end. And this incident provides a splendid opportunity for having the whole matter thrashed out and the avenues of intrigue closed up. Let all those who have the interests of the Labour Movement at heart, and who are determined

upon maintaining the democratic course and control of that movement, get to work at once and see to it that these bureaucratic tactics are stopped. The matter will be raised at the forthcoming Trade Union Congress, and it should be insisted upon that before anything is done in the way of supporting Ruskin College, that an opportunity be given for a representative of the Central Labour College to place before the delegates of the affiliated bodies the claims and principles of that institution. Whenever our position has been clearly placed alongside that of Ruskin College, Ruskin College has lost. To those unions who are anxious to take part in the movement for working-class education, we say: Have representatives of both institutions before you, and let them present and debate their case, *and then decide*. We have no trepidation as to the result, for our movement is in line with the actual social conditions of the hour, and is itself a product of those conditions.



THE bulk of the discussion at the Plebs conference, a report of which will appear in next month's Magazine, centred around the financial position of that organ and the possibilities of its continuation. While it was decided to continue publication, it rests to a large extent upon

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the members of the League how long the Magazine will continue. Certainly there will have to be less apathy in certain quarters if we are going on. We are more than a trifle disappointed at the attitude of one or two of the old students, who might very well be living upon some lonely island in the South Pacific, far removed from contact with the movement. We must say that those who have done most for the movement are those of whom we expected least, and in many cases are men who have never been at Oxford. Still, "a broken and contrite spirit" we will not despise, and now is the accepted time for sinners to approach the editorial mercy seat. In any case, we are having the sin-slips sent out. In order that the practical side of the movement may not be too much overshadowed by the theoretical, arrangements are being made for the publication each month of an article dealing with current industrial movements and developments. There will also commence next month a series of articles by Anton Pannekoek on philosophy, which have been translated from the German by Mr. N. Nicholas, a member of the "Plebs" League. Although Mr. Nicholas is one of the proletariat, being engaged in the coal mining industry, he has been able to make himself proficient in German. He has done what, as far as we know, no other member of the League has done. He has read *Das Capital* in the native language of its author. In addition, Mr. Nicholas is a student of considerable ability in Economics, and is sure to come to the front in the Labour movement. We believe these articles, from so able a pen as Anton Pannekoek's, will prove of deep interest to our readers.

W. W. C.

Central Labour College, Oxford

Report of Second Annual General Meeting held
August 7th, 1911

DELEGATES present 60, representing branches of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, South Wales Miners' Federation, Trades Councils, Co-operative Society, Independent Labour Party, and Social Democratic Party. Letters expressing regret for absence were read from Mr. D. Watts Morgan (Miners' Agent S.W.M.F.), Messrs J. E. Williams, E. Edwards, and C. T. Cramp (Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants), Mrs. Bridges Adams, Mr. A. H. M. Robertson, Mr. J. F. Green, Dr. Dessin, and others. In the absence of Mr. D. Watts Morgan, Mr. E. Gill, of the Western Valleys District S.W.M.F., presided. The Secretary's Report was submitted by Mr. W. W. Craik, Acting Secretary.

Secretary's Report

The College commenced its second year in September last with 15 students. Of that number 6 held Trade Union Scholarships, 8 held College Scholarships, and 1 student paid for himself. The College will re-open on the 18th of September next with at least 20 students. Courses of lectures have been given by Messrs Dennis Hird, George Sims, F. C. Charles, J. A. Fallows, W. W. Craik, Mr. Dixson and Mr. Sunman. The following subjects have been dealt with in these courses, viz., Sociology, Logic, Organic Evolution, Economics, Industrial History, Political and General History, Social Movements, Literature, English and Elocution.

The students' conduct and work have been very satisfactory. They have assisted in every possible way the general progress of the College and that, considered in the light of the trying circumstances through which the College has passed is most encouraging not only to the Committee but to all those who have the success of the Movement at heart.

At the end of March last, Mr. George Sims, who has been Secretary of the College since its inception, was compelled through serious illness to give up the secretarial work for a time and to leave Oxford . . . The Committee sincerely hope that he will soon be restored to health and strength and once more be able to resume his office. The Committee feel that this Annual Meeting will join with them in that expression. The Committee also wish to acknowledge their appreciation for the excellent services rendered by Mr. James Reynolds, who acted for Mr. Sims from March to May last. At the June sitting of the Committee Mr. W. W. Craik was appointed Acting Secretary and Permanent Lecturer of the College.

The Committee desire to express their very great indebtedness to Mr. Dennis Hird for the invaluable services he has rendered as Warden of the College, during the past twelve months. As in the previous year, and as was reported to the Annual General Meeting of 1910, Mr. Hird's services have been entirely gratuitous. Obviously this cannot go on indefinitely and the Committee have decided that a small honorarium be made to Mr. Hird, who has, in a spirit characteristic of him, generously consented to continue as Warden of the College, until it is securely established. This should greatly encourage and inspire all who are striving for the triumph of the Labour Movement to still more strenuous endeavours for the maintaining and strengthening of Labour's third army—the army of working-class education. The Committee also wish to testify to the very valuable and effective work performed by Mr. Hird in the general administrative work of the College, particularly in connexion with the formation of the Rent Fund which has materialized so fruitfully, and which has rendered the continued existence of the College much more secure. In this connexion the Committee have also placed on record their keen appreciation for the work performed by Miss Hacking, Mr. Hacking, and the students in residence.

The best thanks of the Committee are again extended to Messrs. T. Brown and C. Pendrey for the very efficient manner in which the cooking for the Institution has been performed by them.

As will be seen from the financial statement, salaries still play an insignificant rôle. The Committee are assured of being able to deal with this matter in a more satisfactory way during the next year.

The difficulty of securing premises for the College was reported to the Annual General Meeting of 1910. Since then it has become a much more serious difficulty. Owing to the unwillingness of St. John's College, the ground landlord, to allow the College to remain in Bradmore Road, these premises were vacated in March last, and after considerable trouble, premises were secured at 5 Park Town, Oxford. These latter premises are situated upon the Park Town Estate, and the Trustees of this Estate have decided that we must vacate this house in September next. The premises available in Oxford and suitable in size and position for the College are mainly upon the land owned by St. John's College, and although we have made application to them for permission to lease some of these available premises, we have in each case been refused. The Committee, however, undertake to secure permanent premises by September 18th, suitable for the College, either in Oxford or elsewhere. The Committee recommend that the Trusteeship of the College premises be vested in three of the supporting Trade Unions instead of in individuals. The Western Valley's District of the S.W.M.F., the Anthracite District of the S.W.M.F., and the A.S.R.S. have been asked to act in this way. The

Western Valley District have just decided in favour of this policy and have appointed Councillor John Phillips to act as their representative Trustee. The matter is still under consideration by the other two organizations.

Progress has been made in the direction of forming the permanent Board of the College, which is to take the place of the provisional Committee. The A.S.R.S. have appointed their two representatives in the persons of Mr. J. E. Williams, and Mr. E. Edwards.* The other Unions are being urged to hasten the appointment of their representatives so that the College be controlled by directly elected working-class representatives. Within the next few months this should be realized.

The Committee report, with great regret, that Mr. George Barker (Miners' Agent, Monmouth Western Valleys District, S.W.M.F.) has resigned his position on the Board owing to pressure of work. Mr. Barker and this District were our earliest and best friends, and their interest in our work has not diminished with the passing years, so while we regret his disappearance from the Board, we rejoice in the knowledge of his and their continued support to the College. We are pleased to announce that the District have elected Mr. Edward Gill as his successor.

The following Unions are now supporters of the College :—

The Western Valleys District of the S. W. Miners' Federation.					
The Anthracite	"	"	"	"	"
The Rhondda	"	"	"	"	"
The Eastern Valleys	"	"	"	"	"
The Tredegar	"	"	"	"	"
The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.					

In addition to these, the College is supported by a large number of Trade Union branches and lodges, Co-operative and Socialist branches and Trades Councils.

The attention of this Annual General Meeting is urgently called to a paragraph which has appeared in the Press throughout the country during the last fortnight. The following from the London *Times* of the 28th of July is typical :—

UNIVERSITY INTELLIGENCE

TRADE UNION LEADERS AND EDUCATION.

The Executive Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the General Federation of Trade Unions are founding at Ruskin College, Oxford, a series of Trade Union Scholarships. All Unions affiliated to the Congress and the Federation will have the right to nominate candidates for a matriculation examination; those who are successful are to take up residence in Oxford for two years.

* The Anthracite District have since appointed Councillor J. J. James as their representative on the Board.—*Ed.*

The first batch of students holding these scholarships begin their studies in September next. In this way the Trade Union Movement will soon be assured of a constant supply of young men especially trained for bargaining operations in industry and politics.

Surely this is a reflection on the democracy of our Labour organizations! That a question so keenly controversial as the dispute between Ruskin College and the Central Labour College should receive partisan treatment by these executive bodies, must surely arouse indignation, not only on the part of those Unions who have definitely decided to support the Central Labour College, but on the part of every Union where the idea of democracy obtains. The constituent bodies, whatever their opinions, will be called upon to support a principle abhorrent to many of them. We therefore earnestly appeal to all lovers of democracy to do everything they possibly can to prevent this outrageous bureaucracy imposing its malevolence on the Labour Movement.

In conclusion, the present Annual General Meeting finds the College in the ascendant. The past two years have been very trying ones, and there have been moments when the clouds have looked very dark and threatening. Our position at the moment assures us that the College will not be called upon again to face such serious difficulties or be weighed down by such heavy burdens. The outlook for the future of the College is at the present time promising and most encouraging. When we come to consider that the College has only been in existence for two years, when we consider the newness of our principles and ideals in education, and the difficulties with which such a propaganda at its inception had to face; when we recollect the unscrupulous enemy and the indifferent friend, there can be no dispute that the progress of the institution has been unparalleled. It is an evidence that the whole Movement is in tune with the genius of industrial evolution.

The Committee sincerely hope that the Conference will be a successful one, and that the delegates will draw from it much inspiration and encouragement for the directing of their efforts in their respective organizations and districts, toward the upbuilding and strengthening of this important and epoch-marking Movement.

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The Secretary's report was then endorsed unanimously on the motion of Mr. Brooks (Worcester), seconded by Mr. Musselwhite (Macclesfield).

Arising out of the report a discussion took place with reference to the action of the Executives of the Trade Union Congress and General Federation of Trades. The following resolution was moved by Mr. N. Ablett and seconded by Mr. Andrews (Cricklewood), and carried unanimously:—

That this Conference expresses its indignation at the autocratic methods of the Executive Committees of the Trade Union Congress and General Federation of Trades in connexion with their founding scholarships at Ruskin College, Oxford, and calls upon the Labour organizations affiliated to the T. U. C. and G. F. of T. to take such steps as will result in ending such undemocratic actions.

Mr. Dennis Hird then submitted the Warden's Report, of which the following is a summary :—

Warden's Report

The year through which the College has passed has been the most trying in its experience. The students have had many difficulties and endured severe hardships, and as far as physical comforts go it has been a hard life. All this has been due to our lack of funds. Nevertheless the students have shown great diligence in attending lectures and classes, and they have made good progress.

When at our darkest hour it seemed that the College must close, I conferred with the students and submitted a plan of what is now known as the Rent Appeal Fund. This they heartily took up, and everybody worked hard to develop the new scheme. Success crowned this effort. Already £150 has been received in answer to this appeal. Old students and friends have not failed us, and the future of the College is assured.

* * * * *

Moved by Mr. Andrews, seconded by Mr. Brooks, that the Warden's Report be adopted. Carried unanimously.

Mr. Dennis Hird then submitted the Financial Statement and dealt with the general financial position of the College.

Financial Report

Owing to personal misfortunes our Hon. Treasurer has not been able to furnish a balance sheet to this Conference. At the last moment a small error was discovered in the printed cash account for which the Executive take no responsibility.

* Present financial position of the College as under :—

LIABILITIES,			ASSETS.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Catering Account ...	57	17 0	Balance at Bank		
Due to Secretary ...	47	16 0	General Fund	24	10 0
Rent due in September ...	45	0 0	" " Rent Fund ...	30	0 0
			Cash in hand ...	2	0 0
	<u>£150</u>	<u>13 0</u>		<u>£56</u>	<u>10 0</u>

* Cash account left out for reason given above. Income is given as £519 8s. 9d., and Expenditure as £553 8s. 2d.—*Ed.*

Of course credit must be taken for nearly £300 worth of furniture which is paid for. Many subscriptions to the Rent Fund are not due till September 29th.

The furniture liability outstanding at last Annual General Meeting has been entirely cleared off.

In addition to thanking those subscribers whose names are on the printed lists, we owe special thanks to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, for the grant made last month to the College, of £50, to the Tredegar District of South Wales Miners, for their recent grant of £20, to the Vivian Lodge of Monmouthshire Western Valleys, S.W.M.F., for their grant of £5, and to the many branches of Railway Servants, Miners, and other bodies for their thoughtful contributions.

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Moved by Mr. Rees, seconded by Mr. Snelling, that the Financial Report be adopted. Carried unanimously.

The Report on the Correspondence Department of the College was submitted by Mr. A. J. Hacking.

Correspondence Department Report

The Correspondence Department was opened on the 1st, September 1910, and the number of Courses available is the following:— (1) Grammar; (2) Economics; (3) Logic; (4) Evolution; (5) English Literature; (6) Industrial History; (7) General (European) History. There are, at present, 73 students in connexion with the department. The work done has been satisfactory.

The receipts for the year have been:—

	£	s.	d.
September 1st, 1910—August 5th, 1911.			
Fees for work done ...	19	7	8½
,, ,, Books supplied	8	6	6½
	£27 14 3		

Remarks:— The number of students is yet small, but their character is, intellectually speaking, good. Several causes have probably contributed to the lowness of the number; the newness of the department, and the high level of the fees payable which must deter many workers whose economic basis is but slender. It is to be hoped that some arrangement may be made in the near future to reduce the fees.

This report would be incomplete without mention of the great help given by Mr. Victor Grayson, whose article to the *Clarion* has brought many applications for information as to correspondence work, and the addition of a considerable body of students.

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Moved by Mr. Benton, seconded by Mr. Rowlinson, that the Correspondence Department Report be adopted. Carried unanimously.

Rochdale and District C.L.C. Classes Report

Mr. Harold Kershaw reported on the progress of the Rochdale and District C. L. C. Classes.

These Classes commenced in October and continued until April last. Total number of Classes 7 per week. These were held in Bury, Bacup, Rochdale, St. Helens, and Preston. Total number of students 150. Subjects: Industrial History, Economics and Logic. Lecturer: Mr W. W. Craik. Owing to the width of the class area, expenses involved through travelling amounted to very nearly 20/- per week. This will be reduced to 4/- per week next session, owing to the area having been contracted. Classes will be held next winter at Rochdale, Bury, Bacup, Oldham, Shaw, and Radcliffe. Application has been made for classes in Todmorden and Burnley.

Two scholarships tenable for twelve months were awarded by the Central Labour College to two of the students attending the Classes last winter. They will take up their studies at the College in September next.

The prospects for another successful winter's work are very good, and from what has already been accomplished, there can be clearly seen what important and beneficial results to the Labour Movement the development of this extension work involves. The report was supplemented by a few comments made by Mr. W. W. Craik.

The report was endorsed unanimously. The Conference then adjourned.

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In the evening a very enjoyable social was held. Councillor Hancock, of Blackwood, presided in the unavoidable absence of Mr. C. T. Cramp, Heeley.

Mr. George Davison, Shiplake, and Mr. Dennis Hird delivered two very eloquent and appropriate addresses. The musical part of the programme was ably sustained by Miss Witts, Messrs. M. F. Titterington, H. Slack, and B. Lee, while Mr. T. V. Brown contributed two excellent recitations.

* * * * *

On Tuesday morning Mr. Dennis Hird lectured on Sociology, and gave an introduction to the study of Logic.

On Tuesday afternoon Mr. W. W. Craik lectured on Industrial History, and Mr. Noah Ablett, on Economics.

N.B.—The Report has been slightly curtailed.—Ed.

The Law of Social Progress

III.

The Working-class Movement

THE modern working class is a product of the capitalist mode of production, and it is to the history of the working-class movement we now must turn to discover the nature of those social changes pending in the existing order ; for to the working class belongs the mission of carrying society forward the next stage of its development.

The history of the modern working-class movement begins about the middle of the sixteenth century, when the old system of handicraft and petty industry was being rapidly superseded by the manufacturing system of capitalist production, followed a century and a half later by the manufacturing system. The forces which brought the working-class movement into existence were the class-antagonisms generated by capitalistic developments.

The form which this new movement took is seen in the Trade Unions which began to spring up towards the end of the eighteenth century. Organizations had hitherto existed, but these had included both employers and employees ; the workers had not, up to this time, considered it necessary to have separate and distinct organizations of their own. The Guild system, which had come down from the middle ages, allowed for no distinction of class ; originally, of course, no such distinction existed.

Master-craftsman and journeymen were organized in the same guild for the protection of their common trade interests. As long as the economic and social distinctions between employers and the employed were slight, and so long as the workmen had a fair prospect of becoming in their turn masters of their own craft, this joint-arrangement worked fairly satisfactory. But when, with further economic developments, the system of small productions was rapidly giving way to the system of large machine production, and the workers and employers were being separated ever more widely into two distinct camps, whose opposing interests could no longer be reconciled or concealed—then would arise the necessity for separate and independent economic organizations.

And so we find that towards the end of the eighteenth century, employers were complaining ever more bitterly of the activity of

the men's Unions, and were reiterating their demands for Parliament to intervene, and put a stop to working-class combination and aggressive activity. Parliament, as might be expected, readily responded to the appeals of the employing class, and in 1779 the Anti-Combination Act was passed.

By this Act all industrial combinations of workers were made illegal conspiracies in restraint of trade, and as such were liable to the most severe penalties.

These penalties, however, did not have the desired effect. Class-antagonisms, and the combinations which spring from them, are not to be abolished by Parliamentary decree, while the conditions which produce them are allowed to remain.

The workers having been made outlaws by Parliament, acted as such by engaging more strenuously, if more surreptitiously, in these "illegal conspiracies" so much so, that by the year 1824 they were in a position to force an unsympathetic Parliament to repeal the Anti-Combination Laws.

The struggle was by no means ended, though repeated attempts were made by Parliament and the Law Courts thenceforward to cripple the men's powers of combination.

If the Parliamentary reports and Law Court proceedings of the past century are studied, it will be seen how frequently they reflect the irrepressible conflict of classes whose root-cause must be looked for in the economic conditions of society.

This great class struggle between labour and capital has, during the period covering the capitalist system, manifested itself in many different ways, such as strikes, lock-outs, political agitations, &c.

Working-class expression in this great conflict of interests, has taken on various forms at different periods of its development. We see this expression in the Trade Unions, the Chartist Movement, the Co-operative Movement, the Electoral Association, and the more recently-formed Labour Party. All these institutions and associations have been developed in the class struggle as a means of protection, and of advancement of the working-class movement.

It has become fashionable in these latter days for so-called social reformers and flabby sentimentalists to decry the class struggle, and to deprecate the emphasis that is laid on it by the revolutionary Socialists. These would-be reformers would, if possible, have a

cessation of the struggle, and through conciliation schemes, and by other means, establish a "better understanding between capital and labour."

Were they to succeed in achieving their purpose, the worst calamity that could befall the working-class movement would happen ; it would be just as disastrous to society in general.

As Kautsky says : "The way of development being that of struggle, the reconciliation of antagonisms implies the arrest of development." For the working class there can be no reconciliation between it and Capitalism ; it demands the unconditional surrender of the Capitalist class. To ask for less is to deny the main purpose of its existence, and to betray the cause of social progress.

The assumption that is made by those who decry the class struggle that it is anti-social and degrading, is a superficial assumption, and one that is falsified by all the facts of history. The contrary is nearer the truth. Instead of having a demoralizing, it has a stimulating and ennobling effect ; especially is this so with the class that is behind the historical forces that are seeking to realize themselves. All the great movements of history, even the great religious movements, are, in their essence, great class struggles. The crusades against evil (religiously expressed as the devil and his angels) are, in truth, crusades against the material forces which, having reached the limits of their developments, are conserved in the social institutions, and thus block the way and prevent the development of the newer forces which are to carry society forward the next stage of its development.

To establish an "agreement" of any permanence between the class representing the old order of society and the class representing the newly arising order, is tantamount to upholding the old decaying society, and thus preventing the development of the new social system which should succeed it.

The working class should view with suspicion and disfavour all joint agreements between itself and the capitalist class. For the workers, such arrangements only mean prolonged enslavement and the ultimate extinction of their own movement.

The time, too, is rapidly approaching when it will be more than ever essential for the working class to be free of all capitalistic entanglements. Signs are accumulating which suggest that capitalism has about reached the limits of expansion, and will soon be heading towards a stupendous crisis. If, as this crisis approaches,

the working-class movement is not fully equipped for meeting it, the consequences may be disastrous for itself and for society in general. To make itself thoroughly equipped, the working-class movement should cut itself as free as possible from all capitalistic institutions, and have its own independent economic, political, and educational institutions, so that the new social order, which is the special mission of the working class to inaugurate, shall be provided with all the necessary organs for the performance of its functions.

So far, only the positive effects of capitalistic developments as they have manifested themselves in the developing working-class movement have been emphasized. It now becomes necessary to bring into prominence some of the negative effects. This negative aspect of capitalist society is presented by the growing industrial and social anarchy accompanying its economic developments.

If the development of the present industrial system is traced from its simple beginnings to its latest manifestations it will be seen that it has been a development from simple individual tools and individual production of wealth, to complex collective machinery and the social production of wealth. Moreover, goods were originally produced mainly for personal use, but now they are produced mainly for the market.

While, however, these transformations have taken place in the tools, methods, and objects of production, no corresponding change has taken place in the methods of appropriation. Consequently, wealth socially produced by the collective labour of society is appropriated by a small class of owners who contribute nothing towards producing it. This fundamental contradiction upon which the capitalist system rests is a natural result of the private ownership of the resources of production, which has been allowed to continue in spite of the industrial revolution.

The problem before society is to adjust its social arrangements to fit in with the recent economic developments.

Society might refuse to face the question, and the present arrangements might be perpetuated indefinitely, were it not for the fact that the very existence of society is endangered if the problem is not settled. As it is, the anarchy produced by the system is frequently throwing our industrial and social machinery out of gear, and bids fair, shortly, to bring things to a complete deadlock.

The problem that is created by the individual or class appropriation of socially produced wealth, did not manifest itself in the early days

of the capitalist system. With the still crude methods of production prevailing, with so much of the surplus wealth produced needed for the further developments of industry, and with such a wide field for extending the market, any surplus commodities were quickly disposed of by this extension. But with new and improved methods whereby the amount of wealth produced was vastly augmented, the problem of disposing of the surplus became an acute one. And so we find that in the third decade of the nineteenth century this failure to get rid of the surplus commodities fast enough, produced the first great crisis due to "over-production."

C. WATKINS.

To be continued.

Geoffrey Chaucer

(Continued).

THE CANTERBURY TALES

AFTER Thomas à Becket sank under the swords of his slayers, on the memorable night of the 29th December, 1170, his tomb served for several centuries as the shrine of one who had become a saint, and it was also enriched marvellously with the lavished-out gifts of the faithful. Piety may reverence, and charity adorn, the memory of the revered dead, but shall we not judge what other feelings, of an egotistic kind, animated the pious, actuated those who recalled the departed? Pleasure, as of picnic, of travel, is the outcome of worship, and delight in a personal pilgrimage made to an ancient city, as well as his connection with Kent, which county he served as Knight of the Shire in 1386, was powerful with Chaucer, and supplied the *motif* which inspired him to write his greatest work—rather than reminiscences of Boccaccio and the *Decamerone*, which he may never have read.

The distance from London to Canterbury is one of 56 miles, and proves an easy task, even for one day, for a vigorous man, over well-made, well-kept roads; but, in the fourteenth century, conditions were very different! The journey had to be made over bog and swamp, and by evil paths, haunted by evil men who, famished or discontented, lay in wait to spoil the unwary of their goods, or even leave their lifeless bodies on the highway. Men and women hence associated themselves in considerable parties for mutual protection, and a band of pilgrims, twenty-nine in number, accompanied by their genial host, Harry Bailey, are fabled to have set out from the "Tabard Inn" in Southwark on the 17th (27th) of April, of the year 1383, and, representing all ranks and conditions of men, gave the

author the opportunity of presenting, with vivid colouring, a lively portrait of the actors in the drama of his age. By his painting of these different characters, each of whom has his or her own strongly marked individuality, we have a presentment of history which would have been impossible of conception without the pencil of genius which has outlined so happily myth and activity, has arrayed sober fact with the brilliant dress of fancy!

These are the persons which appear on the stage, and play their parts for our amusement and instruction: a knight, his son, and a yeoman-servant who follows them; a prioress, a monk, a friar, a clerk from Oxford: these represent the Army and the Church of mediæval times: the law is typified by the learned serjeant; medicine has its support in the "doctor of physic," while the varied trades and employments are seen in the franklin, the independent country gentleman, the haberdasher, the carpenter, the weaver, the dyer, the tapestry-maker, the prosperous members of trade guilds; the cook, the seafarer, the Wife of Bath, while the poor parson and his brother, the ploughman, show us the better, the more human side of society; three priests and a nun, who follows in the prioress' train, the reive, the miller, "the sompnoir," the gardener, "the manciple," the merchant, the landlord, and the poet himself, complete the heterogeneous company.

In an age when books were rare, when printing was unknown, when writing was the painful painstaking employment of the learned few, story formed the "literature" of the many, and it was appropriate that story should beguile the progress of these travellers, as the railway-novel, the newspaper, *London Opinion*, or the *Strand Magazine*, serve the ends of those who make a more rapid flight by steam! The host had a brilliant thought—What more pleasing than that diversion should be made of what could but be, at times, a fatiguing journey, by diverting tale, and what more just than that *all* should entertain, while all shared in the pleasures of tale-making? Zest was given to this by the promise of a guerdon to the successful narrator, the hero of four stories, two of which were to be told by each on the outward, and two on the return journey. He was to be crowned with the substantial laurels of a supper provided for him—and themselves—by those who had been entertained by his descriptive talk! Of the one hundred and twenty which were designed by the poet, only twenty-four were actually completed, but these will probably more than suffice for the modern-day reader, perplexed as he is by the rich abundance of the intellectual feast of many generations!

In these *Tales* we have the note of pessimism, of satire—the depiction, by a man of the world, of men and women of too earthly mould. Society, then as now, was not perfect—far from it! and hence the cynic is more at home in his delineation of character than

the optimist, the hopeful believer in human goodness! "Art is long and time is fleeting!"—and the space at my disposal is limited. I propose, therefore, in treating the subject, to give Chaucer's own sketches of the life of his period, and trust that the necessarily incomplete pictures of the company concerned will not be without some few of their characteristic features.

We will begin, however, with a pleasing picture, a rosy one, that of the Knight. The glamour of arms and chivalry yet survived in Chaucer's days, though as a shadow rather than as substance, and we may also conceive that the youthful spirit of the poet was charmed with the life in camp and field which he himself experienced!

A Knight ther was, and that a worthy man
That fro the time that he firstē begane
To riden out, he lovēd chevalrie,
Trowthē and honour, fredom and courtesie,
Ful worthy was he in his lorde's werre,
And therto hadde he ridden no man ferre.¹
As wel in Cristendom as in Hethenesse,
And ever honoured for his worthinesse—
. . . . He never yet no vilanie ne sayde
In all his lif, unto no manere wight,²
He was a veray parfit gentil Knight.

¹ Farther. ² Man.

Goodness had not, alas! profited him in a worldly sense. If "his hors' was good," his accoutrements were stained and besmirched with his toil, and as sorry apparently as those of the "Knight of the Doleful Countenance," Don Quixote himself! His son was better apparelled than his sire.

We pass now to the depiction of a woman in the party:—

There was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hire smiling was ful simple and coy;
Hire gretest othe n'as³ but by Seint Eloy;
And she was cleped⁴ Madame Eglentine.
Ful wel she sange the servicè devine,
Entunēd in hire nose ful swetely;
And French she spake ful fayre and fetisly,⁵
After the scole of Stratford-atte bowe,
For French of Paris was to hire unknowe.
At mete was she well ytaughte withalle;
She lette no morsel from hire lippēs falle,
Ne wette hire fingres in hire saucè depe.
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,
Thatte no drope ne fell upon hire brest. . . .

³ Was not. ⁴ Called. ⁵ Cleverly.

The rudeness of the manners of the Middle Ages is seen herein, the gluttony and coarseness of unclean feeding : at that time, only a "lady," and a refined one at that ! indulged in what are now the common-places of the table. Her compassion for the lower life is seen in the following passage, though one may wonder how far irony is to be seen in the feeling displayed to the exclusion of more humane emotions !

But for to speken of hire conscience
 She was so charitable and so pious,
 She woldè wepe if that she saw a mous
 Caught in a trappe if it were ded or bledde,
 Of smalè houndès hadde she, that she fedde
 With rosted flesh, and milk and wastel brede
 But sorè wept she if on of hem were dede,
 Or if men smote it with a yerdè smert,
 And all was conscience and tendre herte.

Chaucer reflects the corruptions of the Church—as effectually as, if not in the spirit of Wycliffe, his contemporary, or of Longland, the champion of the poor and down-trodden. Satire gives, perhaps, more effective delineation than that of either in his sketches of "Monk and Friar," not to speak of Pardoner :—

A Monk ther was, a fayrè for the maistrie.
 An outrider, that lovèd venerie ;⁶
 A manly man, to ben an abbot able—
 Ful mony a deintè hors hadde he in stable. . . .
 He gave not of the text a pullèd hen,
 That saith that hunters ben not holy men,
 Ne that a monk whan he is rekkeles,⁷
 Is like to a fish that is waterles ;
 What shulde he studie and make hisselven wood,⁸
 Upon a book in cloistre alway to pore
 Or swinken⁹ with his hondès, and labour
 As Austin bit¹⁰ ! how shall the world be served ?
 Let Austin have his swink¹¹ to him reserved,
 I saw his sleeves purfilèd¹² at the hont
 With gris,¹³ and that the finest of the lond
 And for to fasten his hood under his chinne,
 He had of gold ywrought a curious pinne ;
 A love-knotte in the greter end ther was
 And eke his face as it hadde ben anoint,
 He was a lord ful fat and in good point,
 His eyen stepe, and rolling in his hed.

⁶ Hunting.

⁷ Abroad from his cloister.

⁸ Mad.

⁹ Toil.

¹⁰ Bade.

¹¹ Labour.

¹² Embroidered.

¹³ Fur.

. . . . He was not pale as a forpinèd gost,¹⁴
 A fat swan loved he best of any rost,
 His palfrey was as broun as is a berry.

* * * * *

A Frere ther was, wanton and a mery.
 Ful wel beloved, and familier was he
 With frankleins over all in his contree,
 And eke with worthy wimmen of the town;
 For he had power of confession
 As saide himselfe, more than a curat
 For of his ordre he was licenciat.
 Ful swetely herdè he confession
 And pleasant was his absolution,
 He was an esy man to give penance
 There as he wiste to him a good pitance :
 For unto a poure ordre for to give
 If signe that a man is wel ythrive.
 His eyen twinkeled in his hed aright
 As don the sterres in a frosty night.

¹⁴ One which has pined away.

Whatever may be thought of the Oxford of the present day, it was once, as Chaucer shows, the home of "plain living and high thinking":—

A Clerk ther was of Oxenforde also,
 That unto logike haddè long ygo.
 As lenè was his hors as is a rake,
 And he was not right fat, I undertake.
 For him was levèr han¹⁵ at his beèdes hed
 A twenty bokès clothed in black or red,
 Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
 Than robès riche or fidel or sautrie.¹⁶
 But all be that he was a philosopre,
 Yet haddo he but litel gold in cofre,
 But all that he might of his frendès hente,¹⁷
 On bokès and on learning he it spente.
 And bisily gan for the soulès praie
 Of hen that yave hin wherewith to scolaie¹⁸
 sowning in moral vertue was his speche,
 And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

¹⁵ It was pleasanter to have. ¹⁶ Psaltry. ¹⁷ Acquisition. ¹⁸ To be a scholar.

The character—its lighter and darker phases—of the legal and medical practitioner has not changed greatly; learned in their art, they are yet not averse to profitable gain!

A sergeant of the lawe warë and wise
 That often hadde yben at the parvis,
 Ther was also ful riche of excellence,
 Discrete he was, and of gret reverence :
 Nowher so bisy a man as he ther n'as,
 And yet he seemd bisier than he was.

* * * * *

With us ther was a doctor of phisike,
 In all this world ne was ther non his like
 To speke of phisike and of surgerie.
 For he was grounded in astronomie.
 He knew the cause of every maladie,
 Were it of cold, or hote, or moist, or drie,
 And wher engendred and of what humour.
 He was a veray parfite practisour.
 Of his diete measurable was he,
 For it was of no superfluitee,
 But of gret nourishing and digestible.
 His studie was but little on the Bible.
 He kept that he wan in the pestilence,¹⁹
 For gold in phisike is a cordial ;
 Therefore he loved gold in special.

¹⁹ The Plague of 1348, possibly.

Others are well worthy of mention—"the frankelin," the prosperous farmer, or country-gentleman, of whose state it is said, "It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke, allë daintees that man could of thinke"; the haberdasher, carpenter, weaver, dyer, well-favoured specimens of the trade-guilds; the cook, and shipman, the "good wif of Bathe," worthy of study! the miller, the reeve, the pardoner,—all indeed—but we must hasten to an end. We will speak of the leaven in the society of those faulty times :—

A good man ther was of religioun,
 That was a poure persone of a tounne :
 But riche he was of holy thought and work,
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk.
 That Cristès gospel trewly wolde he preche,
 His parishens devoutly wolde he teche.
 Wide was his parish and houses fer asonder,
 But he ne left nought fer no rain ne thonder.
 In sikenesse and in mischief to visite.
 The ferrest in his parish, moche and lite,²⁰

²⁰ Rich and poor.

. He settë not his benefice to hire,
 And lette his shepe accombred in the mire,
 And ran unto London, unto Saint Poulès,
 To seken him achantrie for soulès.
 Or with brotherede to be withold.
 But dwelt at home and keptë well his fold.
 He waited after no pomp ne reverence,
 Ne makèd him no spicèd conscience,
 But Cristès lore, and his apostles twelve,
 He taught, but first he folwed it himselve.

This was the time when the first rays of a coming dawn began to be seen with the moving of the waters, the coming reformation in the Church, while the plowman, to be mentioned finally, foreshadows, such as Langland, the author of *Peres the Plowman*, and the champion of the down-trodden poor:—

With him ther was a plowman, was his brother,
 A trewë swinker^m, and a good was he,
 Living in pees and parfite charitie.
 God loved he bestë with alle his herte
 At alle times, were it gain or smert.
 And then his neighbour, right as himselve,
 He woldë thresh and there to dèke, and delve.
 For Cristès sake, for every pourë wight
 Withouten hire, if it lay in his might.
 His tithës paied he ful fayrë and wel,
 Both of his proree swinke and his catel.

^m A toiler.

We must end here, if abruptly. Much has been left out—of interest. We may hope that what has found a place will yet cause those who read to seek deeper knowledge of a poet whose work is yet alive, and throws light upon the condition of our fourteenth century forbears.

A. J. HACKING.

We are pleased to inform our readers that the following articles will shortly appear in the Magazine:— *The Gold Making Angel*, by Dennis Hird; *The Problem of Knowledge*, by Paul Lafargue, translated from the French, for the PLEBS, by A. J. Hacking, M.A. Secretary of the C. L. C. Correspondence Department; *Ethics and Socialism*, by Dr. Anton Pannekoek; and *The Holy Family*, by Karl Marx. The two latter articles have been translated from the German by Nan Nicholas, Clydach, Swansea Valley.

Owing to pressure on our space this month the Report of the "Plebs" Third Annual Meeting held last Bank Holiday is unavoidably held over.

The Proletarian Theory of Understanding

III

LET us repeat again, that the purpose of our quest is the understanding of the understanding. How do we generally arrive at understanding or what is the general nature of the thought process? Does wisdom come to us in a dream, do ideas fall from heaven, does understanding arise out of the interior of our brain, or does it come from the external world? In this search we proceed in no other way than if we sought to understand carnations, cats, or capital. Thinking about capital is of the same general nature as thinking about our force of thought. And just as capital can only be studied in action or manifestation, so also is it with the force of thought. There is no such thing as capital in itself. Capital can only function, can only exist in relation to wage labour. And the existence of both are conditioned upon a certain development and distribution of the tools of production. Capital is never therefore perceived alone, and can never be understood alone. In the same way the understanding is nothing in itself, cannot be perceived or understood in itself. Thinking never takes place apart from objects which are thought of, and only in that relation can it be studied. It may help us in our investigations if we illustrate with a photographic apparatus. Is the camera anything in itself? Would there ever be a photograph taken, without the camera being brought in contact with some object outside of it? Similarly with our mental picture-taking apparatus. Our ideas are mental pictures and imply the existence of an object pictured. We are now face to face with the indisputable proposition that *all thinking being work, it requires like all other work, an object.*

Just as every photo contains an image, so every mental picture has a mental or subjective content. And just as every photo content corresponds to an object photographed, so every mental content, every definite idea, corresponds to an object idealized or thought of. We make a distinction between the image and the imaged. The carnation outside of my brain is separate and distinct from my idea or picture of it. We must distinguish between thinking and being. There *is* a difference, but not an absolute one. The question of the relation of thinking and being is one with which philosophy has wrestled until the breaking of the day. Is thinking an attribute of being, or is being an attribute of thinking? Our theory of understanding will clear that question up. For centuries thinking and being were separated by the philosopher into two worlds, an impassible gulf divided them, and it was the merit of Hegel to have been the first to unite them monistically. But he left a "nasty hair in the soup" in that he reduced being to thinking and thus left himself in the impossible position of trying to combine something and

nothing. Thinking and being have this in common, that *they are both real*. My idea of the carnation exists and can be perceived just as *really* as the carnation itself. The thought differs no more from the carnation, than the carnation differs from a cat or a capitalist. The difference is simply relative: all have the same general nature, *all equally exist, are equally parts of reality*. Here the democratic character of our theory is manifest, and this democratic idea is but a mental picture of the democratic reality outside our brains. The faculty of thought is thus but a common thing. By placing it in the general category of existence, in the universal interrelation, a great step forward is taken on the road to true understanding. It has required thousands of years of historical development to enable us to take this step. It is possible only in the day when the productive forces have grown so great as to make it so, that all mankind may *be*, and afford leisure for all mankind to *think*, when there is no need for the high and the low any more, for rich nor poor, for master nor slave, but when common equality and general freedom are alone compatible with modern conditions. What is the alleged justification to-day for the rule of class? Intellectual work, directing ability, mental superiority, "Profits are the reward of ability." Intellectual labour is placed in a different category to mechanical work and exalted above it, as if these two forms exist in isolation from each other. It is a perverse ruling-class idea, which is a poor likeness of the social conditions of modern times, conditions in which the contributions of each organ of the labour process, cannot be separated, cannot be mechanically weighed and measured. The product being a social product, a product of both mind and body, should be divided according to social needs.

The faculty of thought is a phenomenon which, like a piece of coal or a lump of lead, must first be perceived by the senses before it can be understood. It does not exist in itself, cannot be perceived alone, but only in action and therefore in relation to objects which are not thought, and which exist outside of it. To say that the world exists in thought, that the world is in our consciousness is to rob thought of all meaning, because with that there is nothing which is not thought to think about. It is to be back at that rather hazy morning when nothing was, "and the earth was without form and void."

Thought is no more "pure" than the function of the eye or the ear, the heat of a stove or the taste of vinegar. The fact that a cat may be seen or heard is due as much to its feline make-up as it is to the constitution of the eye or ear with which it enters into relation. And is not the acid taste due to the relation between the vinegar and the tongue. If you bring the vinegar into relation with iron you get quite a different result; it acts as a solvent. In relation with heat it becomes a liquid. A thing is what it is, not of itself, but in relation to other things.

What is the function of the eye? The perception of the visible! It is limited by objects which are visible. The eye cannot *see* the scent of a flower. Similarly the function of the ear is limited by the audible. It cannot *hear* the grass grow. The eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, have all their separate lines of objects with which alone they can function. *The faculty of thought or understanding has everything for its object.* Everything may be the object of understanding. It is not limited to any special object or line of objects. We may turn our mental photographic apparatus on all objects. But here we must somewhat modify that statement about "all objects" and say *all objects capable of being mentally pictured.* When you have thought about a piece of coal the latter still remains outside of you, and is not only capable of being an object of the thought of others, but is capable of being seen and felt. The piece of coal is not dissolved in knowledge, is not exhausted by thought. Thus the faculty of thought is limited to the extent that it cannot replace the other bodily sensations, such as feeling, hearing, and seeing. And just as seeing requires an object that can be seen, something that is more than seeing, so the faculty of thought requires an object that can be thought of, something therefore that is more than thought.

Thus while everything may be understood, understanding is not everything. Everything may be pictured by the mind, but there still remains outside of it that which is pictured, just in the same way that after the camera has done its work and your photograph has been completed, you still remain outside of the photograph. You might be said to exist in a two-fold way—physically and pictorially. So it is with our awareness of things. We become aware of the world in this dual way: (1) outside in the concrete; (2) inside in thought, in the abstract. Have we then failed to overcome dualism? By no means. It is the triumph of our monistic democratic logic to have shown that these two forms of awareness are not absolutely different forms, but that they are but two species of the same genus, existence. Both exist. Both are real. Both may be perceived. It matters not whether the picture taken by the camera is a true picture or a false one, a good likeness or a bad likeness. It exists and is part of reality. Likewise with our mental pictures. The picture of fiction has as real an existence as the picture of sober fact. Existence is the all perfect, the highest genus, the perfect truth, in which the imperfect, the partial truths and errors, are contained. And the first commandment of this supreme being is—*thou shalt not make of any species the genus, of any part the whole, "thou shalt have none other gods before me."*

WILL W. CRAIK.