

especially worth reading. It is not often that the smooth tradesmanship of writing is varied by a fresh accent, telling of a new domestication of the spirit. Mr. Leonard has that accent, and for all his amateur conventionality at times, his possession of a clear personal experience is unquestionably "the real thing." Very often the trained writer tries to make his bricks without straw and wonders why he is criticized. Here is a writer who has material above criticism, handled with sufficient skill. Perhaps, after all, the gauche writers who are supposed to have had "experience" have only passed blindfold through the country of experience. The Desert, at any rate, has bloomed for the eyes of Mr. Leonard, and he has found words to tell his racy tale.

F. H.

## A Labor Programme

*The Restoration of Trade Union Conditions*, by Sidney Webb. New York: B. W. Huebsch. 50 cents.

IT requires no profound insight at the present time to perceive that we are on the threshold of grave industrial change. The political and industrial supremacy of the middle classes has been challenged to produce its justification; and the patent dependence of political power upon economic control is being made strikingly evident at every stage of the governmental process. Yet the vagueness of our knowledge as to the nature of the crisis that is upon us is hardly less evident than the grim certainty of its presence. We seem, for the most part, almost curiously unable to realize that labor has determined, as in the great prophecy of Sieyes, to become everything in the state. This little pamphlet of Mr. Webb's is without exception the wisest and weightiest pronouncement on these issues that has come from an English publicist. It has all the patent virtues of Mr. Webb's work. It is at every point sober and cautious and amazingly well-informed. If it has a single defect, it is the absence from it of that willingness to take a leap in the dark by which the critics of Mr. Webb's school are at present courageously distinguished. It has, that is to say, the character that one would expect from the very finest type of governmental official. It has a certain blindness to the force of idealism, a tendency to distrust the largeness of a great programme, a willingness to accept facts as valid rather than to take them as the basis of transmutation. But it defines with remarkable clarity the central issues upon which the future of English labor depends; and it arouses in us the wonder whether, now that Robert Hoxie is dead, there is anyone in America who will be able to do for this country what Mr. Webb has so strikingly achieved for England. Yet it is upon the possession of the kind of knowledge that he has made available that our industrial future also must largely depend.

It is well known that in order to secure unrestricted output of munitions the British government obtained from the trade unions an agreement to the abrogation of their rules on condition of their immediate restoration at the close of war. Sealed by Act of Parliament, the credit of the British state is behind that pledge; and no one can mistake its purport who realizes that what was surrendered was virtually the profit of the bitter industrial war of the last hundred years. Labor confidence in the honesty of political life must inevitably depend in a high degree upon the way in which that pledge is fulfilled. The restoration agreed upon was absolute; and no one

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is so solemnly involved in its maintenance as the present Prime Minister. The point that Mr. Webb has to make is the apparent impossibility of carrying out that pledge. The war has brought about changes so vast as to make unthinkable a return to the pre-war status. The processes of manufacture have been revolutionized. New machinery has given unskilled and female labor a position in industrial life hitherto unknown. Piecework and bonus work have largely replaced the old time-wages. Productivity has been increased to an extent almost undreamed of before the war. Compulsory arbitration, compulsory ignorance of the kind of disputes which, before the war, seemed the very basis of the labor conflict have shifted the entire industrial perspective. What in fact is obvious is that new interests have been created of a magnitude so great that no government can afford to ignore them. Partially, at least, these interests are antithetic in their demands to the original pledge of restoration. It is clear that the task of reconciling such differences, especially when the new orientation of capital is borne in mind, is perhaps the most difficult problem by which British statesmanship is confronted.

Nor is it with a contented working class that the government will have to deal. No one who reads the recent report of the Trade Union Congress, or the eight reports of Mr. Lloyd George's very remarkable and courageous commission on industrial unrest, can have any doubts on that issue. What has everywhere been revealed is a declining faith in parliamentary government. What has been everywhere obvious is distrust in the policy of the government. What has been everywhere manifest is the desire of the workers to have in industrial life the power

of control they theoretically possess in the world of politics. Broadly speaking, they are determined no longer to be satisfied with a state that is not primarily in their own hands. They have realized that the first stage to that end is the democratization of industry. The kind of ideas for which intellectuals like Mr. Cole and Mr. Orage, politicians like Mr. Lansbury, trade-unionists like Mr. Mann and Mr. Robert Williams, all alike stand are the only ideas that are making headway. The decision of the Labor party to open its ranks to every sympathizer is only a result of the goading criticism of that left wing. The determination of the cooperative movement to enter politics marks an epoch in the history of Great Britain; for it is the first attempt to project into the House of Commons the point of view of labor organized in its consumers' perspective. These are essentially an issuance of challenge to the middle class of Great Britain; and they clearly envisage for the next half century the same kind of struggle for England as is today evident in Russia. It is the acceptance of the class conflict, freed from the narrow rigidity in which Marx would have enshrouded it, as the basis of political life.

Such in broad terms, is the dilemma upon which the English state is advancing. On the one hand it may enforce its original pledge; and the consequence of its enforcement is certain to be serious disturbance. On the other hand, as a portion of the Tory press in London is already urging, it may well insist that to such a treaty as it made a *rebus sic stantibus* clause was impliedly attached; in such an event it is hardly doubtful that England will face a formidable revolution.

What Mr. Webb has done in this book is to suggest an equivalent for the original terms. He does not seek to conceal that their enforcement has become impossible. But he gravely emphasizes what must be the consequence of any attempt to exchange them for terms of lesser worth. He will have no sham restoration. So great a betrayal is, he urgently insists, simply an invitation to widespread disaster. It is a danger that has to be watched; for no one can doubt, if he has at all closely followed the industrial history of Great Britain in the last three years, that there are employers short-sighted enough to believe this possible. There cannot either be any compromise. Too much depends upon the attainment of full compensation to make half-measures satisfactory. Their folly will be obvious immediately they are translated into practical terms. They will result in industrial dislocation. They will do nothing to solve the vast problems of unorganized and female labor. They are bound to breed a temper of which the eventual outcome can only be violent readjustment. For it is essential to bear in mind that the whole faith of the worker in government will be involved in the settlement that is made; and the measure of its retention can be alone the measure of peace.

What Mr. Webb suggests is broadly this: Steps must be taken to prevent unemployment, and, to that end, he seems mainly to rely upon a programme of public works. The standard rate must be maintained; and it must be so fixed as at no point to fall below the minimum condition of civilized life. A constitution must be drawn up for factory and industry to include the universal acceptance of trade unionism; and the evolution of work-shop standards by the employer must be determined only after consultation with a representative committee of his men; nor must the idea of a constitution imply a restriction upon the union's right to strike. There must be no limitation of output; for not only is a high rate of produc-

tivity one of the fundamental needs of reconstruction, but the conditions which rendered it a necessary method of labor protection will have largely ceased to exist. The connection between such a programme and the Whitley report is obvious. How far removed it is from the faith in scientific management and welfare work which is beginning to percolate to the economists of English universities is hardly less clear. What needs to be emphasized is that this is for labor very certainly no more than a minimum programme. It will be used, and very frankly used, only as a stepping stone to that kind of industrial control which will transfer the centre of political importance from capital to labor. It is the avenue, that is to say, to a new state-synthesis. Only by bearing in mind the inherent probabilities of such a solution, and in their very broadest aspect, is it possible to visualize the future they involve.

An observer after the Napoleonic wars who had read such a solution would have dismissed it as frankly utopian; and one imagines that under the Six Acts Mr. Webb would have gone to prison. Today we can only read it with the sober certainty that, whatever the difference in detail, his large outline of the problem is beyond peradventure accurate. Whether English statesmanship will be persuaded to accept it, whether English statesmanship is bold enough to translate it into political terms, are problems where speculation is fruitless. This much only is certain, that whatever the attitude of capital and the British government, we have arrived at a new epoch. Nor is this less true of America. On all hands it is becoming evident that problems of hours and wages are only incidental to the main theme of industrial control. Upon the wisdom of American business men much is going to depend in the next generation. If they are realistic, if they understand that the old idea of labor is dead, the period of transition will be comparatively simple. But realism in the midst of turmoil is difficult to obtain. One can only hope that measures will be taken to give Mr. Webb's illuminating pamphlet the widest possible circulation; that is a task in which state labor departments and public libraries can usefully cooperate. It is only by the constant discussion of his theme that advancement can be made to a statement of our purposes. It is only by a full statement of our purposes that we can hope to avoid disaster.

H. J. L.

## Adventures in Miniature

*Persian Miniatures*, by H. G. Dwight. New York: Doubleday, Page and Co. \$3.00.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Dwight tells of nothing that could be called a real adventure, he manages to give a charming air of adventurousness to his penetration of Persia and his winter at Hamadan. As unexplored country, Persia could not have for him the richness of the Turkey and the Stamboul Nights that he knows so well. But he cannot write without imparting his insatiable passion for the east and that imagination which leads his desire on towards Bokhara and Kum and Afghanistan and Kashmir and Tibet. The beautiful sketch of *The Caravan*, with which he closes this book, conveys all the "vague ancestral stirring of nostalgia" that comes to him from the passing of the mysterious camels with their jangling bells. So that, even if Mr. Dwight is candid enough to confess his fatigue