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Syndicalism and Labour. Notes upon some Aspects of Social and Industrial Questions of the Day. By SIR ARTHUR CLAY, Bart. Fourth edition, abridged. (London : Murray. 1912. Pp. xv + 166. Price 1s. net.)

Syndicalism : a Critical Examination. By J. RAMSAY MACDONALD. (London : Constable and Co. 1912. Pp. vii + 74.)

SIR ARTHUR CLAY'S book is the fourth and abridged edition of his *Syndicalism and Labour*, first published in August, 1911. That by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald is based upon six articles on Syndicalism which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* during May, 1912. The two books, of course, have certain points in common : e.g., they both discuss the general strike, they both contain some account of the writings of M. Sorel, and they both have a good deal to say about the relation of Syndicalism to Socialism and to trade unionism. But they approach the subject of Syndicalism from very different points of view, and the differences between the two books are much more noticeable than their resemblances.

Mr. Macdonald thinks that "even in France . . . Syndicalism as a policy is absurdly weak and is not making progress" (p. 35), that it has taken little hold in the other European countries, and that it is weakening in America ; while Syndicalism in England he regards as "negligible, both as a school of thought and as an organisation for action" (p. 39). "No one," he says, "would have troubled very much about it had not the sanguinary flavour of the word Syndicalism been necessary as an ingredient for the repulsive mixture of licence and absurdity which is placed by unscrupulous persons before the public day by day in order to disgust it against everything which concerns Labour and Socialism" (p. 42).

Sir Arthur Clay, on the other hand, is very much alarmed at the progress which he thinks Syndicalism is making, not only on the Continent, but in England. He sees the hand of the Syndicalist at work in recent strikes, which have "made it clear that the object of a general strike in this country is not primarily economical, but political ; that it is a declaration of war by wage-earners, not, except indirectly, against their employers, but against the whole of the community outside the ranks of the belligerent unions, and that its use as a means of waging industrial war is incompatible with national security" (p. ix). He thinks that Syndicalism, if properly understood by British wage-earners, would be indignantly repudiated, but that there is some danger of their being led through ignorance of its doctrines to

adopt its methods. In Mr. Macdonald's opinion, however, Syndicalism "is as likely to dominate trade unionism as are the tenets of Johannah Southcote to become the established religion of England" (p. 61). He thinks, and we believe it to be the truer view, that the recent strikes have been merely the result of a swing of the pendulum from political to industrial methods as a means of settling questions between capital and labour, a phenomenon which has often been witnessed in the history of trade unionism. "The revival of trade union activity was erroneously identified with the Syndicalist movement, and what on the railways and in the mines has been merely a return to the methods of 1860-1890, is thought to be an embracing of a new revolutionary purpose. All that is happening in England at present is that trade unionism as an active force is reviving, and that industrial action is being resorted to with, perhaps, the over enthusiasm which always follows upon a period of over-neglect" (p. 45). The two authors are at one as to the futility of the general strike in bringing about revolutionary changes in social relations. But Sir Arthur Clay seems to think that the use of the general strike has always been proposed with the object of overthrowing society, and he also certainly gives the impression that he imagines the idea of the general strike to have originated with the Syndicalists, which is, of course, not the case. Mr. Macdonald points out that the weapon may be used not merely to bring about revolutionary changes, but also to secure either "some specific demand—say an extension of the franchise, the resignation of a Government, or the defeat of a war party; if used for political purposes, as it well may be; or increased wages or any other trade union claim if used only for industrial purposes" (p. 61), and in these cases, as he says, "it need not be unsuccessful" (p. 61).

Sir Arthur Clay's book really contains very little about Syndicalism, but it has a good deal to say upon various other subjects, which he seems to think are much more closely connected with it than is actually the case. If its author trembles at the idea of Syndicalism, he shudders at the bare thought of Socialism, and several chapters are devoted to a criticism of some of the proposals of Socialists. In several others he reproduces some well-known criticisms of trade union action, on the lines of the late Mr. T. S. Cree, whom he quotes with approval. The points he mentions have been thrashed out over and over again, and they do not appear to call for further comment here. The Osborne judgment is discussed and vigorously defended in Chapters vii., viii., and x., and in this connection Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb

fall very much under his displeasure in Chapter vii., which is a criticism of the introduction to the latest edition of their *History of Trade Unionism*. But to return to what Sir Arthur has to say about the Socialists. While recognising that there are fundamental differences between Socialists and Syndicalists, he, as it seems to us, fails to remember this when discussing their relations to each other, and he is inclined to lump together State Socialists, Communists, Syndicalists, and Anarchists under the head of "the enemies of society." The trade unions, in so far as they have been captured by the Socialists, also appear to be included; *e.g.*, on p. 45 he says: "It must never be forgotten that, although the ultimate objects of the State Socialists, Communists, Syndicalists, and Anarchists differ fundamentally and are indeed mutually exclusive, and although they regard each other with hostility and contempt, they are, consciously or unconsciously, acting in concert in attacking society, and in opposing all that hinders their operations. One object is common to all." And again, on the same page: "There is no hope . . . that the national danger from the forces of disorder will be lessened by the fundamental antagonism which exists between the doctrines of Collectivism, Syndicalism, and Anarchy, and we must be prepared to find these forces working in alliance for the destruction of society, as it is now organised." Mr. Macdonald also deals with the relation of Socialism to Syndicalism, and admits that "the fact that the Syndicalist founds his community on common property in the means of production used for common convenience and benefit, gives him, without being a Socialist, a right to stand on a small bit of the same ground as the Socialist" (p. 5). But he points out that "the Syndicalist . . . is poles asunder from the Socialist in method, and method counts for everything in the process of social change. . . . No one who has the least knowledge of Syndicalism on the one hand and of Socialism on the other can ever mix up the two. In fact, Syndicalism is largely a revolt against Socialism" (pp. 5, 6).

In order to prove that the Socialists are in alliance with the Syndicalists, Sir Arthur Clay endeavours to establish the proposition that the Socialists are opposed to conciliation in labour disputes, and the greater part of Chapter vi. is devoted to this object. We do not think he has made out his case, or that he has any reason for thinking that a policy of resistance to conciliation has been adopted by the Socialists, as he seems to suggest on p. 73 and elsewhere. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald is himself, as far as we know, not opposed to conciliation; while Mr. Philip Snowden, another very typical Socialist, is in favour of compul-

sory arbitration. In Chapter vi. Sir Arthur severely criticises Mr. Sidney Webb for speaking to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants unfavourably of the working of the Conciliation Boards set up in 1907. But he is surely hardly justified in concluding from this that Mr. Webb is opposed to the principle of conciliation.

According to Sir Arthur, new "forces . . . are driving the country nearer and nearer to the brink of the abyss" (p. ix); how is the country to be kept from slipping over the edge? In the first place, "free labour must be safeguarded by the whole force of the community" (p. viii); and secondly, encroachments on liberty must be stopped, and "the spirit of independence and enterprise upon which alone the advance of a community must depend" (p. 161) must be encouraged. But the bulwark on which Sir Arthur mainly relies for "safety from the attacks of the enemies of society is vigorous and well-concerted action by the middle and upper classes" (p. 148). It is on the great middle class, however, that he apparently places most reliance. But the great middle class is strangely apathetic, and some pages in Chapter xiii. are devoted to an inquiry into the causes of their apathy. It cannot be that their courage and energy have been sapped and weakened by long years of comfort and prosperity, for look at the energy they show in business and the readiness with which they responded to the call for their services during the Boer War. No; the middle classes are becoming too humane—some of their members actually having become Socialists themselves, and they have begun to believe in social reform, partly because they have become humane, and partly because they think social reform would help the particular political party to which they belong. They are, however, too ignorant to see that social reform is always a step in the direction of Socialism. Hence the apathy of which Sir Arthur complains.

His book is, as we have said, much more than a criticism of Syndicalism; in fact, it might almost have been entitled *The Case against the Labour Movement*. We do not think the author has put his case well, because he seems to us not fully to understand the position of some of those with whom he disagrees, and because, while no doubt he is well aware of the imperfections of the existing industrial system, and fully sympathises with those who suffer from them, he has not made this sufficiently apparent in his pages.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's book appears to us to be a very able little work, and we hope it will be widely read.

H. SANDESON FURNISS