

SHOULD WORKERS THINK?

(Continued from page 1)

which he eloquently emphasised the proposition that, despite all argument to the contrary, "a man is a MAN." Now that doesn't sound very terrible. But then as Spinosa wrote, to determine or limit means to negate or deny. There were other "men" (?) in Burns' day, some one of whom might conceivably be "ca'd (called) a Lord." But by defining such a person as a Lord, Burns rather too cleverly suggested the legitimate conclusion that he could also be probably a fool, at whom the man of independent mind would look and laugh. Result, a sentence of "no promotion for you in the excise" was rigidly imposed upon the poet. See what that syllogistic stuff can do! And by the same token, it will be noted that in ordinary speech or writing, we scarcely ever frame our arguments in the rigid form of the complete three-propositioned Aristotelian syllogism. Like Burns, we more or less merely suggest them.

So much, in brief, for the Aristotelian syllogism, which Mill despised as merely a "Subjective Inference" because a subject (or person) who knew its first proposition, didn't need to exert himself in order to infer (or draw) his conclusion, since the first proposition already carried it ready-made for him. For instance, if I hold that all capitalists are pests, I know at once without any further brain-racking that if Jones is a capitalist, he is likewise a pest. But it was "Inductive Inference" that Mill set himself to boost and that too with nearly as much claim to originality as Aristotle was entitled to for the invention of the deductive syllogism. Mill called the former "Objective Inference" and claimed it to be the only true scientific form of inference; although, as Killick remarks, there is no real inconsistency in the two views, as both forms of inference make up a complementary whole.

Mill avers that in "objective inference" the fact stated in the conclusion is a genuine new truth, and not merely part of the same fact or facts already contained in the premises. Thus, the magnetic oxide of iron (lodestone) can attract iron like a magnet. After trying out, say six pieces of it, one came to the conclusion that a seventh, or eighth or every piece of it would also attract iron. This follows by virtue of a law of external nature and not by a mere law or cudgelling of the mind. Hence the name "objective" inference to describe this kind of inductive reasoning. And, by the way, the true founder of nature questioning and scientific reasoning was not the 16th century Lord Bacon, but Roger Bacon, a 13th century monk and professor of Oxford, who denounced the barrenness of the schoolmen's word-jangling. His logical reforms were submitted to the court of Rome, and they not only fell flat, but actually earned for Roger twelve years of imprisonment. The seed sown by this Medieval clear-sighted thinker did not spring up till centuries later.

Let us now take up two other forms of inductive reasoning. The first, as follows, is more useful for ordinary, every day purposes than for strictly scientific research. It is made up of four different steps: 1, preliminary observation; 2, the making of hypotheses (guesses); 3, deductive reasoning; 4, verification. As regards the guesses, these are based on the fact that Nature is a tremendous aggregation of causes and effects; and being "logical" means acting as Nature commands us to act; for, as the philosophers say, Nature is existing reason and Mind is thinking reason; and we, ourselves are part of Nature, as Omar the poet indicates in these lines:—

For let Philosopher and Doctor preach
Of what they will and what they will not—each
Is but one link in an eternal chain (of causes and effects)
That none can slip, nor break, nor over-reach.

Therefore the guesses must not be "wild" ones. A somewhat freespoken "humorist" the writer used to work beside, on being asked some such ordinary workshop question as "wha done that?" would dryly and solemnly draw out "God!" No doubt, but He was never the effective cause! Here is an illustration in practice of the four steps:

A few miles out from the writer's location, is a wooden bridge which got badly damaged from the heavy Spring floods of 1923. Early in the Spring of

this year he noticed that the bridge had just been renovated and where the overhead timber is mortised into the traffic side-rails, a coating of healthfully smelling tar had been smoothly and skillfully applied. Later visits in the season gave a sort of "too much of a good thing" shock because the top of the side rails were now covered at intervals with an irregular confusion of unsightly separate drops of tar. Thus much, on the second visit, did preliminary observation reveal. Next "Wha done that?" gave a chance to employ hypotheses as to the cause thereof. The likeliest guess was that the hotter sun of the advancing spring had melted deposits of tar somewhere above the side rail, thus making these fall down on the rail in drops. Next, deductive reasoning (always supplied by previous experience of cause and effect) enabled one to assert that IF other tar deposits had been spread over the higher overhead timbers, such deposits, when sufficiently melted to the flowing point by the sun's heat, would inevitably drop down below. Last step of all that ends this "strange, eventful" reasoning, is verification or confirming the soundness of one's deduction. In this case it was done by gazing aloft, and it was at once seen that just above where lay the ugly collections of tar drops, were several separate thin streams of tar clinging down the sides of the overhead timbers, the surplus from which had fallen "as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath." The hypothesis or guess was, therefore correct—quod erat demonstrandum (which was to be shown).

But for deeper scientific purposes, another kind of inductive process is used, which has really six steps. This kind, as Marx's son-in-law pointed out in his biographical pamphlet, was used by both Darwin and Marx, the latter of whom, Aveling repeats, had read all of the former's works, whilst Darwin, as he admitted in a personal letter written to Marx in 1873, on receiving a copy of the second edition of "Capital" Vol. 1, was little versed in political economy. Yet the British "Labor" Premier, Ramsay MacDonald, in his recent "Socialist" pamphlet which repudiates the Russian Revolution and belittles Marx, stated that the latter was out-of-date and "pre (before) Darwinian"—whatever MacDonald means by that! These six steps are: observation, experiment, recordal, reflection, generalisation and verification. Darwin observed and experimented upon plants and animals for twenty-eight years. He recorded in countless notebooks the results of these observations and experiments and then reflected upon his records until he arrived at the well known Darwinian evolutionary generalisations which, though now pretty universally accepted are still considered all the better for every fresh bit of verification that crops up.

(To be continued in next issue)

CORRESPONDENCE.

HISTORY OR WORSE.

Editor Clarion:

On the front page of Clarion No. 915, appeared an article entitled "The Importance of History" which, so far as a brazen perversion of the facts of history is concerned, beats anything I have read for some time.

The writer of the article—G. R. Stirling Taylor—true to his Labor Party connection, abhors the very thought of revolution. He sees that the social upheaval is a long way off, and the farther the better.

All revolutions, we are told, end in the same place as they started, so what is the use in noise and bloodshed that merely brings us back to where we began? He concludes that all who believe in revolutions must be a bunch of ignoramuses. This, of course includes the Marxian school, as no proletarian teacher has ever emphasized the necessity for revolution to a greater degree than Karl Marx.

This conception of revolution clearly portrays the blatant ignorance of your contributor. The term revolution means change—a complete change.

By an industrial revolution we imply that a great change has taken place in the manner of producing wealth, e.g. the tool has been replaced by the machine. A social revolution means that the oppressed class has become the dominant one, e.g. the bourgeoisie has seized the power once held by the feudal lord. A political revolution takes place when one group, or clique, ousts its rival and takes control itself, e.g. the American Colonists assert their independence from British jurisdiction. This should be sufficient data to show that revolutions do not stop where they started.

Taylor again states that "One would have thought that

a primary schoolboy's knowledge of history would have made clear that this Russian revolution has almost followed the lines of the earliest French Revolution." Now, I am going to grant that a primary schoolboy might possibly arrive at such a conclusion, but any mentally mature person who has paid even the slightest attention to a comparison of the two revolutions can see the vast difference between that of Russia and that of France.

History from Taylor's point of view, is nothing more than a sleight-of-hand performance where merchants, bankers and feudal lords have played the role of conjurers and harlequins to trick an unsuspecting public. That history is the life story of the human race, made up of many material factors, but where the driving force is economic necessity, the writer does not seem to be able to grasp.

A decided contempt for Imperialism is again noticeable. Nationalism is alone lovely, but Imperialism is a monstrous policy. All the great nations of the ancient world had their careers blighted in the field of Imperialism. Ergo—don't try to extend, your doom awaits you. He might as well advise a young boy not to grow old else he would surely die. Imperialism is the natural outcome of Nationalism, and history declares that the process must be completed.

Much of the article is devoted to eulogising the Labor philosophy and denouncing that of the Liberals. From the standpoint of the exploited workers they both mean the same thing. Each Party appears to be quite capable of administering Capitalist property and keeping the producing masses in their old position. As a Capitalist instrument of administration and coercion the Labor policy of today is the logical sequence of yesterday's Liberalism. Even on the question of Imperialism his Gitche Manitou—Ramsay MacDonald—appears to be a worthy successor to Curzon and Chamberlain.

The workers of England, and elsewhere, are sufficiently confounded as it is without adding to their confusion by the publication of such drivel in the name of science.

Yours for history not bunk,

J. A. McDONALD.

San Francisco, Calif.

Editor's Note: G. R. Stirling Taylor is a writer to whom considerable attention is paid in the book world and among publications. We had thought he was better known to Clarion readers. "The Importance of History" (quite evidently an incomplete article) was reprinted from The Socialist Review in order to present the "Tory-Democratic" point of view on the British Labor Government to Clarion readers, much in the same way as Wells has been reproduced and Shaw quoted.

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