

Philip Webb's visit to Oxford, November 1886

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Philip Webb's amusing and revealing account of his trip to Oxford on Thursday 11 November 1886, entitled 'Town and Gown', appeared in *Commonweal*, the newspaper of the Socialist League, three weeks later on 4 December. As Webb indicated in the article, 'it was a place that had concerned me in my earlier years of life'. He had been born in Oxford in 1831 and after school, and training as an architect away from the City, he returned in 1854 in order to work in the architectural practice of George Edmund Street until the firm moved its office to London in 1856. Oxford was a special place for Webb, who believed himself to be 'coloured and even trained by its fashioning'.¹ Naturally, he was always pleased to return to Oxford as he did on this occasion, combining business with attendance at a meeting of the local branch of the Socialist League.

The Oxford branch of the Socialist League emerged during the first weeks of 1885 out of the Oxford Radical Association which itself only seems to have been recently constituted.² It was described by a local newspaper as including 'few of the most advanced spirits of the Radical Party', by which the reporter would have meant radical members and supporters of the local Liberal Association – but not exclusively because we know a number of self-declared socialists also took part, notably Charles James Faulkner, a mathematics lecturer and senior fellow at University College, who was Webb's 'host' for the visit.³ Faulkner, like Webb, was a long-standing friend and political ally of William Morris, joining the League at its outset and contributing £100 to the launch of *The Commonweal*.

The secretary of the Radical Association was Arthur Stuart Robinson, a twenty six year old gardener employed at Wadham College, who obviously possessed a left-wing stance and some political education, as he described himself as a supporter of nihilism as the Association converted to socialism.⁴ Its chairman, Joseph A. Partridge, was a heavyweight of the Oxford Liberal Association who allied himself to Joseph Chamberlain's radicalism and came close to contesting the Parliamentary seat of Walworth during the 1885 general election. It was Partridge who told Faulkner that 'he never had an easy moment since I (Faulkner)

began to attend meetings of the society', and whom Faulkner described as 'a Hyndman in a small way'.⁵ Partridge opposed Faulkner's successful move during the third week of January 1885 to commit the Association to the 'transference to the people of all means of production', a principle which Faulkner explained to the forty or so present would make them socialists.⁶ Unable to accept the 'confiscation principle' of public ownership, Partridge severed his connection with the Association on 21 January. The following week, a meeting of the transitional body confirmed Robinson as secretary, and Alfred Quelch, a market gardener, as chairman.

Faulkner obviously felt the strain of carrying the preparatory work almost single handed, especially as he believed that he was the only member of the emerging socialist group 'who had anything that can be called an education of any kind'.⁷ In response, J.L. Mahon, the League's secretary, encouraged Faulkner to seek out George Gibson Brown, a recently-arrived undergraduate at Balliol College whom Mahon had met in Edinburgh the previous year. Brown had completed his first (arts) degree at the University of Edinburgh, where he became involved in the University Socialist Society (much admired by Morris), and the Scottish Land and Labour League.⁸

At this stage, the Land and Labour League was affiliated to the Social Democratic Federation, but under the leadership of Mahon and Andreas Scheu, it operated largely autonomously, making an easy secession to the Socialist League in early January 1885.⁹ By this time Brown was in Oxford living in Museum Terrace, where he was visited by Faulkner drumming up support for final conversion of the Radical Association to a branch of the Socialist League. Following Faulkner's visit on 1 February, Brown wrote to Mahon that 'I liked him very much indeed. I hope that we may soon get a branch started here'.¹⁰

Brown did not need to wait long. Two days later, at the Elm Tree Tavern on the Cowley Road, the meeting listened to Faulkner explain the manifesto of the Socialist League – 'of course it went over the heads of the poor illiterate men to whom one has to present it' wrote Faulkner – after which it was agreed to change the name of the Association to the Oxford Socialist League and seek affiliation to the League in London.¹¹ During Faulkner's ninety minute speech, in which he rounded on Joseph Chamberlain, George Goschen, and John Bright, he also mentioned Frederick Gustavus Burnaby, a colonel in the British army who had been killed a fortnight before as troops attempted to come the rescue of General Gordon at Khartoum. Faulkner, probably taking Burnaby's previous record as an adventurer into account, as well as British imperialist motives in Sudan, described him as a 'murdering scoundrel', a remark which Morris ascribed to Faulkner being 'somewhat down-right in his oratory'.¹² Faulkner's comments, which anticipated the Socialist League's denunciation of the war on 9 February, and its *Manifesto on the Soudan War* published later that month, provoked

some furious press coverage, including a condemnatory editorial in *The Daily Telegraph*.¹³ Mahon congratulated Faulkner on his speech, but typically Faulkner deflected the praise which, he wrote, 'really belongs to the society and not me. I am happy that anything done by our socialist society in Oxford should have helped turn people's attention to what the principles of socialism are in respect of murder.'¹⁴

Morris honoured his promise, 'I will come when you want me', made to Faulkner and the Oxford comrades when speaking to Edward Aveling at a meeting held in the Music Room in Holywell Street on 25 February 1885.¹⁵ This, and Morris's subsequent speaking visits to Oxford during June and November 1885, are recounted in detail by Tony Pinkney and need not be repeated here. Suffice to say, a problem with the venue of the February meeting was indicative of some of the hostility the branch encountered during the first two years of its existence. The original venue had been the Clarendon Hotel assembly room in Corn Market Street, but the owner withdrew permission late on 'for fear of rowdiness'.¹⁶ The branch continued to experience similar problems, finding a regular meeting place away from public houses which Robinson, the first branch secretary, believed put off 'members of the Varsity and the Town from joining'. On one occasion in February 1886, policemen prevented League members from meeting at its usual venue. Intriguingly, the secretary's note to the London office reported that 'comrade C. Harse immediately placed his house at the disposal of the members so we had our meeting there and invited the two sergeants in plain clothes to join us which they did'.¹⁷ It was a couple of months before the branch found the Temperance Hall in Pembroke Street where the meeting attended by Webb was held.

Achieving City-wide coverage of newsagents willing to sell *Commonweal* proved an insuperable problem for the branch, added to which, two of the three vendors who did sell the newspaper needed to be careful because of the reaction of some customers. Faulkner told Henry Halliday Sparling, Mahon's successor as League secretary, about Annie Foy a widowed newsagent on the Plain: 'She is courageous, but told me that a gentleman had said to her that if she sold a socialist newspaper it would damage the sale of other newspapers, e.g. *The Daily Telegraph*, to conservatives. She will however do what she can and dare – I only pity the situation in which she might be placed'.¹⁸

Similarly, Frank Plummer, a bookseller on Broad Street, who was a branch member 'dare not openly declare himself a member of the League, but he sells ten copies of *The Commonweal* to regular subscribers'.¹⁹ In addition, Faulkner conducted a running battle with the League's London office over its often delayed and numerically inaccurate dispatch of the paper to the branch, on one occasion telling Sparling that 'It is now 4 pm on a Saturday afternoon, and Saturday afternoon is market day in Oxford, and people from town and country are gaping at

windows of the newspaper shops by the score. But there is no *Commonweal* to be seen. It is fatal to success that we cannot even as late as 4 pm on Saturday show them a specimen of the paper published on a Thursday'.²⁰

Despite obvious boycotting by newsagents, and logistical obstacles to supply, the branch did not in its early existence take the paper onto the streets to sell alongside open-air meetings. In fact, it seems to have done very little open-air propaganda work, there being only one account from the early years of a meeting at the village of Wheatley which 'met with great success', but failed to inspire similar activity elsewhere.²¹ One possible explanation for this inactivity may be the relative political and industrial experience of its leading members, who had come to socialist politics with little or no record of participation in working class organisations. Certainly, with the University as the largest single employer and social relations between 'town and gown' fostering what Mahon described as 'a general spirit of flunkeyism', it is not surprising that Faulkner felt the branch to be intellectually under-resourced, hence his disappointment at the failure of the University's Marx Club to connect and support the branch.²² For its part, the branch was unable to defend the position of two college servants who had joined the League in 1885 but were told by their employers to leave or lose their jobs.²³

Faulkner made special effort to use the foreign language skills of one member, Jules Nicholas Guggenheim, with the suggestion that the branch could place translated articles in local newspapers, but nothing came of this.²⁴ He also did all he could to encourage reading and self-improvement, including helping to establish a branch library on which he consulted the London office for fear of 'choking them with works too difficult'.²⁵ But clearly the Oxford membership did not include the kind of proletarian activist who frequented London's workingmen's clubs, or the experienced trade unionists of northern towns and cities, a reality Webb was able to convey without condescension in his description of 'the considerable freedom of speech from the distinctly working men [whose] illustrations were vigorous and greatly amusing so that we were in no way dull'. As Lethaby noted, Webb 'spoke of the great gain socialism had been to Morris and himself, especially in bringing them into contact with all kinds of the "lower orders". Then he would quote Dumas, to the effect that one must know all sorts of life to keep one's heart tender'.²⁶

It was Faulkner who, as others came and went, also provided continuity among the elected officials of the branch. As treasurer, and as a man of some means compared to his comrades, he frequently used his private account with the League's office in London in order to settle branch debts. Aware of, and uncomfortable with this arrangement, the half dozen workplace members employed at Benjamin Harse's cricket ball factory raised money at work in order 'to defray the cost that will fall on comrade Faulkner ... as it will fall very hard if he has to pay

for the papers every time'.²⁷ One of these cricket ball makers, Frederick Martin, a twenty four year old living in Cross Street, took over as secretary from Robinson (who seemed to have inherited the post from the Radical Association and who lasted only until May 1885 when it was found he had lost the minute book and subscription cards). Faulkner told Mahon that Robinson 'is not dishonest, but is one of those sloppy characters on which no reliance is to be placed. He has been a protestant, roman catholic and Buddhist'.²⁸ In contrast, Martin appears to have been a diligent secretary, reporting regularly and was still in post when Webb visited during November 1886.

Webb's description of his twenty four hours spent in Oxford occurred during a period of his life when virtually all his 'leisure time was given over to the League, as his life assumed the pattern of the political activist'.²⁹ His perceptive account reveals his commitments and clearly illustrates the importance he attached to the cause of the Socialist League, the comradeship it embodied and a shared view with Morris on art and labour. How appropriate, therefore, that he should round off his piece with a description of one of Oxford's architectural glories, the library at St. John's College, 'crying aloud for "poor scholars" by the hundred to fill them and with such good as heads untrammelled by hypocrisy, misbelief, class fear, and other devils, could make use of'. Doubtless Morris, preparing the article for publication in *The Commonwealth* would have approved.

NOTES

1. Cited in Sheila Kirk, *Philip Webb: Pioneer of Arts and Crafts Architecture*, Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2005, p.10.
2. Tony Pinkney's excellent account of the Socialist League in Oxford confirms the inception of the Oxford Radical Association as January 1885. *William Morris in Oxford: The Campaigning Years, 1879–1895*, Grossmont: Illuminati, 2005, p. 86. (Afterwards Pinkney)
3. For Faulkner (Hereafter CJF), see Florence S. Boos, 'Morris's Truest Follower: Charles James Faulkner', *Newsletter of the William Morris Society in the United States*, June 2014, pp. 18–21.
4. *Oxford Journal*, 31 January 1885, p. 8. (All newspapers cited may be consulted in the British Library Newspaper Collection)
5. CJF to J.L. Mahon (Hereafter JLM), 19 January 1885. Archive of the Socialist League (hereafter SL), International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; SL 1385/1.
6. CJF to JLM, 20 January 1885; SL 1386/2.
7. CJF to JLM, 22 January 1885; SL 1386/3.

8. For Morris's remarks on the Edinburgh University Socialist Society, see 'A Talk with William Morris on Socialism', *The Daily News*, 8 January 1885, p. 5.
9. E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1955, pp. 404–412, 445–446.
10. G.G. Brown to JLM, 1 February 1885; SL 957/1.
11. CJF to JLM, 3 February 1885; SL 1387/1.
12. To May Morris, 20 February 1885, in Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, 4 vols in 5, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984–1996; Vol. II, p. 389. (Afterwards Kelvin)
13. *The Pall Mall Gazette* (p.7) printed the League's first statement on 11 February 1885. The full statement was published as *Manifesto of the Socialist League on the Soudan War*, Socialist League, London, 1885. For reaction to Faulkner's speech, see Pinkney, pp. 87–89.
14. CJF to JLM, 1 March 1885; SL1387/5.
15. To CJF, 17 January 1885; Kelvin, p. 376.
16. M.P. Ashley & C.T. Sanders, *Red Oxford: An Historical Essay on the Growth of Socialism in the University of Oxford*, Oxford: Holywell Press, 1930, p. 5.
17. A.S. Robinson to JLM, 17 March 1885; SL 2586/2. F. Martin to H.H. Sparling (Hereafter HHS) nd, ca February 1886; SL 2202/2.
18. CJF to HHS 19 October 1885; SL 1394/4.
19. CJF to HHS, 4 November 1885; SL 1394/5.
20. CJF to HHS, 29 May 1886; SL 1397/3.
21. F. Martin to HHS, November 1885; SL 2201/5.
22. *Commonweal*, 5 February 1887, p. 5, CJF to JLM, 29 April 1885; SL 1389/1.
23. F. Martin to HHS, 7 October 1885; SL 2201/2.
24. CJF to HHS, 19 October 1885; SL 1394/4, 14 October 1885; SL 1394/2. Jules Nicholas Guggenheim was born in Budapest in 1820 and came to England in 1848 as a refugee, settling in Henley-on-Thames where he worked as a teacher and photographer. He moved to Oxford in 1860 where, on the Cowley Road, he set up as a photographer and lithographic printer before moving to more prestigious premises in the High Street near Magdalen College in 1863. After some success, the business declined and in 1883 went into liquidation with all equipment sold. In October 1885, Faulkner described Guggenheim as 'half starving and would be only too happy to do this (translate from French or German) if he could get a little money by it'. Guggenheim died in the Radcliffe Infirmary during December 1889.
25. CJF to HHS, 19 October 1885; SL 1394/4.
26. W.R. Lethaby, *Philip Webb and His Work* (with an introduction by Godfrey Rubens), London: Raven Oak Press, 1979, p. 241.
27. P. Harse to JLM, 1 May 1885; SL 1664/2.

28. CJF to JLM, 20 May 1885; SL 1389/4.

29. Mark Swenarton, *Artisans and Architects: The Ruskinian Tradition in Architectural Thought*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989, p. 50.

Town and Gown

Having an engagement a little time back whereby I was obliged to go to Oxford, I was able so to time my visit that I should be there on the evening of the usual weekly meeting of the Oxford Branch of the Socialist League. Not having lately travelled by the Great Western Railway, I was unaware of there being third class carriages to the fast trains, I therefore booked by second class. I hardly regretted this after being seated, as my company was instructive. As soon as we were out of the darkened station I turned to the work I had to attend to and studied my papers of instructions. When this was done I looked out on the country to see if the Moule and Wey were in flood, for it was raining heavily, as it had done for some days. This relaxation from the study of papers induced, I suppose, a lady opposite to say to me that it was a bad day for the wedding, and was I going to it? I said no, and that I was never at a wedding, to my comfort, but I supposed that a wet day did not much matter for a wedding, but was certainly trying at a funeral. The lady was good-natured enough not to be put out by this somewhat rude indifference to so soul-moving a contrivance as a modern wedding, and entered freely into jests at the expense of the unhappy (*sic*) who had not the courage or the wish to go to weddings. Our conversation lulling a little, I turned to consider and make a note or two as to what I should say at the meeting in the evening if I were asked to join in the discussion, and I mused over the text for debate which had been sent to me by the friend, who would be my host at Oxford. This was it: "For lack of knowledge." My friend had added as a note, "This lack of knowledge, that is most fatal to progress, is the lack of how others live and feel." One of my notes was, "Hear the other side, the most important and least allowed to speak; the 'other side' is practically dumb." When I noted down thus far we were at Reading, and two other passengers got into the carriage. One of them was an English church dignitary of such extraordinary cleanness of person that I gaped with wonder at what soap and patience could do on a human being destined for the shining courts of paradise. This almost transparent image evidently did not belong to the aforesaid "other side." If the Royal and Imperial Queen of England, Ireland, India, etc., etc., had got into the carriage, with all her finest State robes on and the fourpenny-bit of a crown stuck on the tip of her top-knot, it would hardly have been a greater contrast. Well, my mother-of-pearl like Churchman found

a friend in the lady who had talked awhile with one who was not all transparent, and they fell-to on gossip, leaving me free to think of the “great unwashed.” Occasionally, what I had wrote in my note-book got mixed up with the conversation of my opposites, and the incongruities must have cast a humorous smile on my otherwise absorbed face. As I went on I wrote down “these dumb have to depend on ‘middlemen’; now middlemen have, deservedly, a bad name, as their usual quality is not that of impartial judge between differing people, but rather that of advocate for himself or his class; and for types of middlemen we may say, on one side, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and on the other, Mr. Bradlaugh; both respectable people,” etc. While I was writing down this wide reflection, he with the little dignitarian rosette on his hat-band, was so impressive on the subject of some sapling of his order doing pretty well at college, but as not being particularly bright, that my ears were engaged in his talk whether I enjoyed the distraction or not. It seemed to me, as my thoughts coursed at lightening (*sic*) speed, that a second-class carriage was not a bad place in which to consider causes of ill or well.

When I got to Oxford, and had done my particular business, I went to the College where my host was at *his* business; the work of putting two and two together, and, in the matter of academical life, finding (though he is a mathematician) that they make five, or perhaps seven, but certainly not four. After a simple lunch of bread-and-cheese, and quick talk on things various and moving, I left him to his further “nut-cracking,” and went on my way, having first agreed to be back at College at 6 o’clock to meet two or three undergraduates, who were friendly to the cause of the people, at a modest dinner before going to the Branch meeting. I then wended my wet way about the still beautiful old city and University, and, as it was a place that had concerned me in my earlier years of life, I found much to make me notice that any town not ugly in England, now, was a surprise as well as a delightful wonder. One of the things claiming my attention was of history, on points of date of the construction of one of the ancient buildings, and in turning over books, what struck me most was, that the founders, in the main, gave their estates for the good of the “poor scholars,” and my mind recurred to the transparent dignity of the morning and his saplings to be provided for! Oxford is a place having this advantage over funerals in churchyards, that if you have thick shoes and an umbrella, you need not be wearied in mind though it may rain “cats and dogs,” and the cats be “gib cats,” and the dogs be muzzled and likewise “melancholy.”

I was back at College eager and hungry at 6 o’clock, and while my host was washing his hands I introduced myself to two undergraduates – somewhat fearfully, I must say – but as I was in for the penny of Socialist ignorance, I might not be disturbed at being in for the pound of sucking learned students. They met my somewhat old-fashioned advances with very becoming friendliness, and we

four sat down to dinner, in an ancient seat of learning, in a beaming frame of mind, though the minds themselves were almost as various as the direction of the weather-cocks on the many steeples of the place. Now, catch an "Oxford man," a young one, just on the second or third rung of the ladder of learning, and, not unjustly, you may expect he will be reserved, or antagonistic, or bumptious, or in other ways inhuman, but the colleagues at my host's table were neither, they were good company with natural tact; and, as it will out, neither of them asked me what I thought would be good rendering of a passage in Plato! So far, for awhile with "Gown." We four now trudged through the lit wet streets to the meeting-place of the Oxford Branch of the League.

The Temperance Hall is a good enough and airy room, not so large as to look dismal with a small meeting, and yet with space to hold a hundred or more easily. On entering I saw a known comrade, the representative of the Oxford Branch at our last congress.¹ I was at once at one home and in good company. After awhile, chairman and secretary were in place, and the work of the evening began by the aforesaid congressman opening the discussion – the subject pitched upon having been chosen from the curious letters which had lately appeared in the *Daily News*.² Facts and figures were given in proof of our lack of knowledge, and of how things went from bad to worse because so few amongst us noted amazing anomalies wrapped in customs of the Mumbo Jumbo, "respectability;" the devotees of this great god not being anxious to encourage knowledge which might reduce the offerings at the highly favoured shrine; – Silence being Golden here, surely!³ Well, our company, amounting to some twenty-five or more, among which were two or three women, followed on in discussion, and in that curious variety of ways in which I have observed different people look at the same facts. Still, the points were kept to, and the arguments carried on in a spirited way. One of the undergraduates spoke, and without regard to the possible consequences to himself.⁴ There was considerable freedom of speech from the more distinctly "working men," and illustrations were vigorous and often greatly amusing, so that we were in no way dull.⁵ The writer of this article put in his railway-considered words to an audience too kind to be harshly critical; and my college host added a short speech in a way very much unlike an Oxford "don," but humanly wise; and so we came away. As my feet clattered in the now quiet eleven-o'clock streets, I thought "Here are the founder's 'poor scholars'!" No need here, if things were as they should be, for long galleries of well-filled libraries being only accidentally tenanted with a student as at present day after day. It does not need a very strong imagination to see your cobbler, or seamstress, or wheelwright, mason or girl schoolmistress busy at his or her work for half the day and treading the quadrangles of a quiet college for the other half, and no man saying them nay.

I parted with my host under his college gateway, after witnessing there, at past eleven o'clock at night, a half comical, half-rough bit of wrestling bear-fight

between three or four students; just to get their wind, I suppose, after, perhaps some heated controversy over the merits of a deceased jockey – who knows? I came away to the inn for the night, and slept the sleep of – say – one who has slept for years under the sound of the bells from the many towers of this noble city.

At breakfast in the morning (it being degree time) there were some out-of-college young fellows in the coffee-room. One of them was silent and sullen over the fire, seemingly as if he had too much care on his mind, or too little. After a while another student came in; he was bright enough and company for me. He had taken his degree the day before, and smiled pleasantly at his own name in the *Times* as a B.A.⁶ He fell to asking what I thought of the translated Welsh prayer given in the newspaper as having been offered at a “Gorsedd of the Bards of the Isle of Britain” in the Temple Gardens the day before.⁷ I read it seriously and said I thought it admirable. He told me it was much briefer and better in the original; at which I expressed an old longing I had to know Welsh. My friend thought this strange, for he said, most people speak slightingly of the Welsh and their language; to which I repeated to him Carlyle’s saying, concluding with “mostly fools.” From this we (my friend was a Welshman who could talk Welsh, and from Jesus College of course) got to talking of various things, and among others of the Welsh poets, of the Icelandic sagas, of George Borrow, of William Morris, and as much other talk as could possibly be put into half an hour. When I left, he asked me why Morris did not go to Wales and preach Socialism? I answered, “Why not? the Welsh people at all events are worthy of the effort.” As long as I live I shall say that a good free honest companion is the best boon in the wide world. Given that we get Socialism there will be more of them, and what is perhaps better still, a less number of unfree, cross-grained darkeners of counsel and other learned and ignorant pests of the present state of things, – existing, let us hope, only to die, and that quickly. This seems as if all I had to say which would in any way interest my comrades is said; but it is possible that those of them who have not looked about such a place as Oxford still is might be interested in my saying a word or two to picture one of the pleasantest colleges? I wanted some further information about the buildings of it, and my host in the afternoon, when he had done the first part of his day’s work, good-naturedly offered to get me inside the library.⁸ We called at the porter’s lodge and found the authorities were out at exercise; but while thinking of what next to do, one of the powers came into the quadrangle who was personally known to my host. This lock-compeller addressed my host in the half-jocular half-cynical way as a “Dynamiter;” upon which my friend introduced me as another of the same trade!⁹ However, we found our way into the library; and although Cerberus was in a hurry, he got interested in my questions and doubts as to facts, or things stated to be facts, and stayed longer than we expected. On his leaving, my host said, “Well, you can leave us here alone a little; we will promise not to blow the place up, and will shut-to the door with its spring

lock." Some laughter and some shrugging of the shoulders, and we were alone to enjoy there what was a pleasure indeed. A great, long, handsome old wide gallery of a place, misty towards the end from its great length. Bookcase after full bookcase, set at right angles to the walls, windowed right and left, leaving a private chamber with its double bench and reading desks, space after space the whole length of the room. Overhead, the old oak cradled roof which clearly belonged to the same walls before they were transformed in Queen Elizabeth's time. In truth, this portion of the building was part of what remained of Chichele's monks' college, taken over by the founder of the present college. At the end of this, the old library, was the new one at right angles to it, and of even greater length – built by Inigo Jones in James the First's time. Here you have two great libraries only crying aloud for "poor scholars" by the hundred to fill them and be filled by them with such good as heads untrammelled by hypocrisy, misbelief, class fear, and other devils, could make use of.

Ph. W

Commonweal, 4 December 1886, pp. 284–285. see also <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/g/genpub/0544678.0002.001/284?page=root;size=175;view=image>

NOTES

1. The Oxford branch delegate to the Socialist League conference of 13 June 1886 was William Ogden, born in Rutland in *ca* 1829, a carpenter and joiner by trade, who ran a small building firm in Oxford during the 1860 and 1870s, before setting up in Worcester Street as an antique dealer. During those decades he was active in civic affairs, the Liberal Association and the Oxford Radical Association. Siding with Faulkner and others, he supported transformation of the Radical Association into a branch of the Socialist League, and played an important part in leading branch meetings, often with an introductory talk in order to generate discussion. Ogden spoke to Faulkner at one of the branch's open air meetings at Wheatley during the winter of 1885, and then again at Norwich during August 1888, when he shared the platform with Morris, Annie Besant, Sam Mainwaring, and Herbert Burrows (SL 3479). In 1889, Morris told his daughter Jenny that he 'tumbled upon Ogden' and travelled with him to London: 'we talked about the strikes wherewith he was much excited' (Kelvin, Vol. III, p. 93). Ogden was still active in the Socialist League in August 1890, when he was reported as speaking at a conference of revolutionary bodies (*Commonweal*, 16 August 1890, p. 261). He died in Oxford in January, 1903.

2. The branch secretary was Frederick Martin, born Southborough, Kent *ca* 1861. Almost certainly related to the county cricketer and cricket ball maker in the Tonbridge area, Edward Martin, Frederick was apprenticed as a cricket ball maker before moving to Oxford during the early 1880s, where he worked for Benjamin Harse. He appears to have been the driving force behind the recruitment of the four Harse brothers to the League, and possibly other ball makers in the City. With Henry Wright, also a League member, he successfully prosecuted Harse in the county court in September 1888 for non-payment of wages. During the case, the defending counsel asked Martin, 'You are a socialist, are you not?', to which the ball maker replied, 'I have no solicitor representing me, and I don't think that is a proper question to ask'; *Oxford Journal*, 15 September 1888, p. 6. Between inception of the branch and the time of Webb's visit, there were at least three chairmen – William Burr (cricket ball maker), William Parker (furniture broker) and Alfred Quelch (market gardener), but it is not possible to be certain who chaired the meeting on 11 November 1886.
3. Ogden's introduction related to a series of letters to *The Daily News* initiated on 29 October 1886 by Lord Brabazon, dealing with industrial training. The Oxford comrades clearly discussed a second letter (2 November) in a series written by Caroline A. Leigh from Stoneleigh Abbey, relating to the absence of domestic training for women, which, she argued, 'for lack of knowledge', had disastrous results: 'Oh! What a welcome is that which many an honest man receives after hours of work, and when he puts his hardy-earned wages into his wife's hand – a poor fire, a dull light, a dirty room, cold, tasteless, unsatisfying food. Where? Oh! Where is the pretty girl with whom, on a bright May morning, he went to church not so long ago, with the clean fair face, the spotless gown, the snowy ribband? What stands in her place? A careworn, frowsy woman, with careless hair, gown coarsely patched, and the beauty and attraction of a woman lost, her voice rising to a fretful scream as she threatens the children who should be the rosebuds of the family, but who, like pigs, in every sense, and to every sense, quarrel on a dirty floor'. The irony of these comments, from the daughter of Robert Grovesnor, 2nd Marquess of Westminster and wife of William Henry Leigh, 2nd Baron of Leigh, was not lost on the Leaguers. Faulkner had written to Webb that, 'This lack of knowledge, that is the most fatal to progress, is the lack of how others live and feel', to which Webb added, 'Silence being golden here, surely'. A third letter, by 'V' of University College, Oxford, was also published on 2 November. J.C. Buckmaster concluded the correspondence on 3 November.
4. It is almost certain that the undergraduate was George Gibson Brown whom Faulkner identified in April 1885 as the only member of the University Marx

Club who belonged to the League – ‘He is a very genuine fellow’. (CJF to JLM, 29 April 1885; 1885 SL 1389/1). Brown had been born into a middle class family in Edinburgh in 1862. His father John Crombie Brown worked for *Blackwood's Magazine* and posthumously published *The Ethics of George Eliot's Work* (1879). Brown attended George Watson's School in Edinburgh, and then Edinburgh University where, as a Pitt Scholar, he received his BA in 1884. While at Edinburgh, he became involved in the University's Socialist Society, the Scottish Land and Labour League, and the Guild of St Matthew, a Christian socialist group led from London by Stewart Headlam. Brown moved to Oxford during late 1884, taking a first in Classical Moderations and a second in Classics in 1888 (Edward Milliard, ed, *The Balliol College Register, 1832–1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914, p. 40). Active in the Oxford Socialist League branch from February 1885, Brown contributed a lecture on ‘Constructive Socialism’ during April 1885, and appears to have been the instigator of discussions and articles about the relationship between socialism and Christianity, particularly *via* the lively Oxford branch of the Guild of St Matthew (*Oxford Journal*, 21 March 1885, p. 6). J.A. Fellows wrote an article, ‘Am I right in Connecting Christianity and Socialism’, ‘for the Oxford Branch of the Socialist League’, published in *The Christian Socialist* during July, August and September, 1886. For Fellows see David E. Martin, ‘Fellows, John Arthur (1864–1935)’, in Joyce M. Bellamy & John Saville, eds, *Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol. II*, London: Macmillan, 1974, pp. 133–134. In March 1885, Brown wrote to the League secretary, Mahon, expressing reservations about the *Manifesto*, which, he believed, badly represented its policy on religion and marriage and led to ‘unnecessary prejudice against us’ (G.G. Brown to JLM, 5 March 1885; SL 957/2). After Oxford, Brown was prepared for Holy Orders at Auckland Castle from where, after ordination in 1889, he became curate at Tudhoe Grange, County Durham where he lived alongside miners, iron workers and labourers. In 1892, he accepted the living at All Saints, Colchester where he maintained a reputation as a ‘radical parson’, on one occasion intervening in an industrial dispute of boot makers (*Essex County Standard*, 3 June 1893 p. 3; *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 21 December 1894, p. 7). In 1911, he moved to St Mary's, Bedford, from where he retired in 1935. Brown then moved back to Oxford where he died in November 1943.

5. Membership of the Oxford Socialist League branch averaged between twenty-five and thirty during the years for which reports are available. Occupations of twenty-five individuals have been identified: one university lecturer; one antique dealer; one furniture broker; one bookseller; one shoemaker; one boat builder; one market gardener; one student; four college servants; thirteen cricket ball makers. The preponderance of the last is quirky, and

almost certainly explained by the close ties which bound this group of workers together in the small workshops based in the Cowley area; craftsmen would have known one another, socialised, and discussed the trade, pay and politics. However, there is no evidence of trade union organisation. The group of at least six (possibly more) League members employed at Benjamin Harse's workshop on St Mary's Road (in 1881 he employed ten men and two boys), was its strongest base, from which two branch secretaries came; Frederick Martin (1885–7) and Morton Philip Harse (1887–?). Morton, the brothers Colin Alfred, George William Henry, and Wilfred George, were all League members present at inception of the branch. (A.S. Robinson to JLM, 9 March 1885; SL 617). Unsurprisingly, their brother Benjamin, also their employer, did not join the League. During later years, it appears that some of the brothers set up a new business in Pembroke Street making cricket balls and selling bicycles.

6. This was Alfred Tudor Morris, born Glamorgan 1863, who had been awarded the Meyrick Exhibition at Jesus College in 1882, and who graduated with a BA in November 1886 (*The Times*, 22 June 1882, p. 5; 12 November 1885, p. 7). Morris went on to follow a career as a schoolteacher, including assistant master at Tonbridge School, before opening Ravenswood Preparatory School. He died in Tonbridge in July 1938.
7. The open air ceremony at which The Gorsedd of the Bards was recited formally opening the 1887 National Eisteddfod of Wales (*The Times*, 12 November, p. 10).
8. Webb visited the library of St John's College. His description and attributions are now known to have been wrong on a number of points. The old library and the rooms below, which Webb believed 'was part of what remained of Chichele's monks' college', was, in fact, built during the 1590s. The rest of Canterbury Quad, including the Laudian Library, were added during the 1630s, so under Charles I rather than his father, James I. (I am indebted to Michael Riordan, Archivist of St John's and the Queen's Colleges, for this information) It is also now known that the once common attribution of Inigo Jones as architect of Canterbury Quad, repeated by Webb, is wrong. See Howard Colvin, *The Canterbury Quadrangle, St John's College, Oxford*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 15, 44.
9. Faulkner's advocacy of socialism was well known in Oxford, especially after the nationally reported speech mentioning Colonel Burnaby. Students at Merton College named one of the runners in a donkey race 'Comrade Faulkner', which he found 'amusing' (CJF to JLM, 6 March 1885; SL 1388/3). He was attacked by *The Oxford Magazine* for 'alehouse anarchism' (William Whyte, 'Faulkner, Charles James', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004–2014).