

SYNDICALISM

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book is based upon six articles on Syndicalism which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* during May 1912, and I am greatly indebted to the editor and proprietors of that newspaper for the favour of allowing me to publish these articles in their present form. They have, however, been substantially altered and expanded, so that the book is not merely a reprint.

It is in vain that one searches in English dictionaries for the word Syndicalism. It is a French stranger in our language, with no registered abode as yet. Had it not been an ugly word it would probably never have been brought over, for it has achieved fame by reason of its capacity to frighten. The House of Commons is often dull and is rarely amusing, but if any one who has studied Syndicalist literature is left with nothing but the forbidding pages of *Hansard* for recreation, he will find the debate on Syndicalism, which took place on the 27th of March 1912, refreshingly delectable in its simple innocence and its charming revelation of the ordinary Englishman's mind under the influence of a bogey. If Syndicalism could only think for itself it would be in a great

state of mental perturbation, for in France it is an innocent thing, meaning nothing more or less than trade unionism. There are two wings of trade unionism in France, however, the *syndicalisme réformiste* and the *syndicalisme révolutionnaire*; but Syndicalism has come to indicate in the English tongue the ideas and policy of the latter alone.

In that narrow sense I am to try and explain what it means. It ought to be made clear, however, that the *syndicaliste réformiste* commands the confidence of the greater part of French trade unionists, and follows a policy similar to that of our own Labour Party. He believes in politics; he co-operates with the Socialist Party. He has an organ of his own, *La Revue Syndicaliste*, edited by Albert Thomas, a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and, judging by what indications recent votes at Trade Union Congresses in France can give of the flow of opinion, he may soon dominate the policy of the *Confédération Générale du Travail* itself.

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