

BOOK REVIEWS

A NEW "LAND & LIBERTY" BOOK

"Why the German Republic Fell" and other essays, edited by A. W. Madsen. Hogarth Press, London. 1941. 177 pp. 75c.

An effective group of essays has been culled from *Land & Liberty* of London and published in this volume, designed to stimulate interest in the Georgeist philosophy via pressing current issues. The well-rounded selection has been taken from matter written since the outbreak of the war; and the leading themes are war and the maldistribution of wealth. In the Foreword we find the following: "That there are economic causes of war is generally admitted . . . What is often less clearly realized is that there is an ethical side to these questions, and that this is not simply more important but it is decisive. It is conceivable that war might be eliminated and the distribution of wealth equalized under a world-wide dictatorship. But would this be a tolerable solution? Would life be worth living if liberty were lost, or is it not freedom which alone gives value and dignity to life?"

The leading article, from which the book takes its title, is by Bruno Heilig, an outstanding Austrian journalist now in England. We have seen many expositions of the fall of the German Republic and the rise of Hitlerism; the whole story has been described and documented, footnoted and anecdoted by no end of writers. But in Mr. Heilig's brief essay is the clearest account we have yet seen of the basic causes and trends in the Republic leading to industrial collapse, and to the change from democratic to despotic government. Henry George's remarkable vision of the decline of civilization, quoted in the essay, is seen to apply with startling accuracy to Germany—and the warning is given that the same trends exist in most countries throughout the world.

A good deal of the other selections in this volume are reviews of recent books, reports, speeches and journalistic utterances. With sober good sense various current ideas and statements are examined. The editor and his associates do not hesitate to point out errors and shortcomings in these recent contributions; but at the same time they are able and willing to appreciate what is worthwhile and in harmony with the fundamental principles of liberty. An outstanding example of clear thinking on the philosophy of freedom, treated at length in this *Land & Liberty* book, is Walter Lippmann's "The Good Society." Among other subjects dealt with are federal union, Lebensraum, peace proposals, town and country planning, and property rights. The volume closes, appropriately enough, with Judge Samuel Seabury's address at the Henry George Centenary celebration—"The World of Tomorrow."

Copies of "Why the German Republic Fell" may be obtained from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation at 75c per copy.

BJORNER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

J. L. Bjerne, president of the Danish Henry George League, has written a very interesting autobiography entitled "*Dagvaerk*"—"Daily Work" (published by *I Nyt Nordisk Forlag*, Copenhagen). A self-made man, who came to know Europe and America well, Bjerne relates simply his career of carpenter and economist. Though he began as a Social-Democrat, he soon became a fervent, convinced and convincing free trader and single taxer.

Bjerne declined an invitation to be nominated for re-election to the *Rigsdag*, believing that, for more perfect democracy, no one should be allowed to hold office more than once; although his wife opined that "the world will not be better until those who have knowledge govern."

It should be interesting to Americans that Bjerne came close to being appointed Governor of the Virgin Islands, before they were

purchased by the United States. At the beginning of the century, Sophus Berthelsen, then president of the Danish Henry George League, proposed a land value tax for this neglected portion of the Danish Empire, citing the example of the German province of Kiau-Chow. A similar resolution together with a free trade proposal, was presented by Bjerne in 1915 to the Minister of Finance and Agriculture. But a year later, Denmark sold these islands to the United States.

One finds "*Dagvaerk*" full of ideas like these: "To make bread dear is to mock God." "The ways of trade have ever been the ways of culture." "An American Ford car or a Scottish dress are as much the result of Danish labor as if they had been produced in Denmark, inasmuch as they have been paid for by exported Danish goods produced by Danish workmen."

An interesting episode related in the book is characteristic of Mr. Bjerne's views and those of his family: In a public discussion, Bjerne's daughter mentioned that her father had made an unjust profit of 100,000 crowns by selling a plot of urban land he had purchased a few years before. The cry went up, "Give this money to the poor"; whereupon Bjerne published a public notice in the newspaper, *Politikken*, that he would be willing to give not only the 100,000 crowns but his whole fortune to the poor, and disinherit his seven children, as soon as Danish legislation would put an end to the perpetual donation that goes to landowner-monopolists by introducing a single tax on land values, establishing free trade, and abolishing all taxes on incomes below 5000 crowns per year, and also exempting 1000 crowns for every minor child.

It is to be hoped that this admirable autobiography, available now only in Danish, will be translated for American and English readers.

PAVLOS GIANNELIA

GEORGEAN ECONOMICS IN ARGENTINA

From Buenos Aires has come a new book on the science of political economy ("*La Ciencia de la Economia Politica en forma Didactica y Apodictica*") by Sr. B. Machello. This is a work of 136 pages, with illustrations by Raul Rainaud.

As explained by the author in his Introduction, the book is a "concrete recapitulation" of the three main works of Henry George—"Progress and Poverty," "Protection or Free Trade," and "The Science of Political Economy." Its purpose is to popularize the subject by presenting some of the fundamental concepts of George, to whose original works the reader is referred for a thorough study. In this Sr. Machello has succeeded admirably and his work should be valuable in creating in the people a desire not only to study political economy, but also to act in accordance with the exhortation printed in large type on the cover of the book: "People: This is for you—that you may defend yourselves from the evils that crush you."

The text is in three parts—1, The nature of wealth; 2, The laws of production; 3, The laws of distribution—having 15, 19 and 6 chapters respectively. The chapters are short and to the point, and each is followed by a series of questions and answers dealing with the text. This is somewhat of an innovation in Georgeist literature and quite in keeping with the modern trend toward pedagogical propaganda.

The book is in Spanish, of course, but it is the author's hope to have it translated into many languages, including English; and he also hopes to have it made into a motion picture film. Sr. Machello will be remembered for his slide film version of the science of political economy. (See *LAND AND FREEDOM*, March-April 1941.)

The coming publication of two pamphlets is announced in the book, one on political science and the other on social science. It is to be hoped that Sr. Machello will be able to carry out all these plans without delay.

GASTON HAXO