

A CHAMPION OF HUMANITY

"The Life of Joseph Fels," by Mary Fels. Doubleday, Doran and Co., New York. 1940. 192 pp. \$1.50.

Written by a devoted wife whose spiritual encouragement played no small part in the career of her illustrious husband, this new and revised work is a welcome addition to Georgeist literature. The author does more than record events in the subject's life—she succeeds in admirably blending the economic and social wisdom of Joseph Fels into a complete philosophy of living. The book is a model for simplicity and beauty of style.

It is related that Joseph Fels was born of Jewish parents in 1854, in the State of Virginia. Moving to North Carolina and then to Maryland, the boy found in his childhood associations a combination of Semitic, Gentile, and Negro influences that were largely responsible for the "cosmopolitanism which was so marked a characteristic of the man."

Like Henry George, Joseph Fels was unorthodox in his attitude toward pedagogical schooling. Early in youth he showed signs of being the "self-made man." At the age of 15 he became a responsible assistant to his father, in the latter's business of toilet soap manufacture. After various hard knocks in the school of experience, we find him, at 22, the founder and head of what later became the world-famous "Fels-Naptha" soap industry. Being an employer of great numbers of workmen, he had every opportunity to be informed on the problems of labor.

It is in the home and social surroundings of the great soap manufacturer that we receive our first intimation of the affection he felt for his fellow man. There is also a delightful account of the courtship and marriage with his biographer. Their union served to give added impetus to his determination to be of service to the world. While of necessity he was a shrewd bargainer when engaged in business dealings, Joseph Fels was nevertheless in his relations with mankind at large a very type of gentleman.

On the economic side, having observed that the unnatural lockout of labor from land was at the bottom of the unemployment everywhere to be seen, and embittered by the resulting degradation of his fellow human beings, Fels turned his attention early in life to the encouragement of garden planting. The success of the undertaking (on city lots) was immediate, and the idea became very popular at home and abroad. While sojourning in England and on the European continent, he became a leader in a "back to the land" movement. A non-Malthusian, and knowing the capacity of Britain's resources for the support of her people, he was strongly opposed to a then current proposal for reducing the "excess" population by shipping stalwart Englishmen abroad for colonization. He deplored the condition of the "landless man in a manless land."

Later, the Single Tax movement provided a medium for the spread of his ideas. The celebrated Joseph Fels Commission was a result of this comradeship with the disciples of Henry George. Impelled by a spirit resembling the zeal of a crusader, he continued the battle against privilege until his death, in 1914. "He was dynamic, out in the open, fighting with every emotion that caught him, but always with a heart tender, true and direct."

Himself a generous giver, "faith without works" was nauseating to this man of justice. Tinkering with poverty brought his quick reproach. His credo can be best stated in his own words—taken from a reply he made to a suppliant for "charity."

"I am using all the money I have as best I know how to abolish the Hell of civilization, which is want and fear of want. I am using it to bring in the will of our Father, to establish the Brotherhood of man by giving each of my brothers an equal opportunity to have and use the gifts of our Father."

A rather sizable following remain who have seen Joseph Fels in action. How the world needs such men today! J. H. N.

Correspondence

DRAMATIZING THE GEORGEIST PHILOSOPHY

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM:

Most of us Georgeists, in attempting to spread our philosophy, ignore the fact that the great majority of people are more impressed by story and dramatic action than by reiteration of bare principles. The phrase, "universal brotherhood of man" has come to be repeated parrot-like by many persons, with no mental attempt whatsoever to analyze its meaning and its possibilities.

I speak from experience when I say that actions speak louder than words, and vivid demonstrations make a more lasting impression on the mind than cold, calculated statements of the truth. Therefore, I wish that the Georgeist movement would encourage our fellow-workers who have a real ability in this line.

It was in recognition of the possibilities of demonstration that I have been working for years on parlor games. I have been amazed at the way children and grown folks who know nothing of Georgeism or economics have taken to the games. But I fear that Georgeists have been slow to appreciate the value of such things as these games. I can well appreciate the sorrow of the great educator, Froebel, when his kindergarten toys were ridiculed by educators as "just silly toys." But now, the value of the ball, the cube, and the cylinder is appreciated by all educators. I hope Georgeists will also recognize the value of other than academic approaches.

2309 N. Custis Rd., Arlington, Va. ELIZABETH MAGIE PHILLIPS.

We, too, would like to see Georgeists make use of the methods mentioned by Mrs. Phillips. Her games, notably "The Landlord's Game," are noteworthy contributions to the Georgeist movement. Mrs. Phillips' address is given above, for those who may be interested in these games.—Ed.

HIGH WAGES OUR AIM

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM:

A correspondent tells how rents were raised when a bus line was put through a street in his neighborhood. Some tenants had to pay five dollars more a month and some seven. Now, when those rents were raised the tenants' wages were reduced that much, were they not? And the price of everything else, being squeezed upward by capitalization of land values and disuse of land, limits wages accordingly, does it not? No one can deny it.

Why then do our collect-the-rent men and payment-for-service men ignore in their writings and speakings the object of the Georgeist proposition, namely, to raise wages by lowering rent? They must know that wages is a definite proportion in distribution; that high rent makes low wages; that low rent makes high wages.

Ninety-five percent of the people work or are dependent on people who do work. Why then, ignore that in which they are most vitally interested, the returns of labor? Of what significance is "public revenue" compared to doubling or tripling wages? With rightful wages restored, "service" would practically take care of itself.

The rent-and-service men are still twenty leagues below George. Apparently they do not recognize the elements of political economy. Instead of talking as if soaring above George, they should make an effort to catch up with him. If all George men would learn the simple, technical part of what he taught, that labor is defrauded out of about two-thirds of its wages by disuse of land, private capitalization of land values (monopoly and speculative rent), and consequent vicarious taxation; and would consistently spread the news, the "solution" for which contemporary writers are asking would soon become popular.

Waterbury, Conn.

DR. ROYAL E. S. HAYES.