

"THE MENACE OF PRIVILEGE."

First let us congratulate Henry George, Jun., on having produced a book which is a worthy and fitting sequel to the world-renowned works of his noble father. Like the latter "The Menace of Privilege" is, in truth, a book deserving the most earnest consideration of students of modern political and social thought; of all, in fact, who fain would read the signs of the times. Recent events in Russia should serve to emphasise the solemn warning and lesson it conveys. The same causes must everywhere produce the same effects. This is as true in the social as in the physical world. And this being so, we feel that no one can arise from its perusal without being appalled by the conviction that the United States of America, once the home of freedom and equality, heedless of the lessons of the ages, as of their own earlier and nobler traditions of history, are to-day blindly rushing towards a social revolution compared to which the one now proceeding in Russia will appear as the play of children. It is earnestly to be hoped that it may yet be averted, and this book repeatedly and convincingly indicates the only means by which this is possible. But we look in vain for any evidence that this is to be expected, for any signs that the nation, as a whole, is awakening to its dangers, and is preparing to remove their causes—for it is only by removing causes that we can hope to remove their effects. All the evidence, in fact, points the other way. Privilege is insatiable; hence it is ever active in extending its dominion. Privilege never feels secure, and can never feel secure so long as the most elementary precepts of honesty and morality are taught to the common people, for in its essence it is the very opposite of these, and has been created and can be maintained only by force, fraud, and corruption. These three malign and dangerous factors have been very prominent in the domestic, as in the foreign history of the United States during the past five and twenty years, the main episodes of which our author has occasion to refer to in the course of his work. After having despoiled the masses of the people of their inalienable rights to the exhaustless bounties and blessings Nature has so lavishly placed at their disposal, and thus plunged them into helpless and hopeless poverty and dependence, privilege, in its never ceasing efforts to extend and secure its sway, has given "the common people" abundant practical object lessons that, so long as it is maintained, they can have nothing to hope for from peaceable constitutional reform—nay, not even from such

protection and aid as the accepted and established constitution and laws may to-day nominally afford them. For, when it suited their purpose, the restraints of the established law have been ruthlessly swept aside by the proud Princes of Privilege. Hence it is that Government by Injunctions—by injunctions made by highly-placed and highly-paid parasites and dependents of Privilege—has at times been made to usurp the place and powers of Government by Law. Whilst at the command of the Princes of Privilege the use of the bayonet, not by State but by the more blindly obedient Federal troops—the Praetorian Guards of Privilege—has become almost as frequent in civil affairs in the free United States as in despotic Russia. In short, after having robbed the masses of the power to earn their bread save on its terms and by its permission, Privilege in the United States has laid its sacrilegious hand on the Government, and has so corrupted the politics of the nation that to-day it allows of no legislation save that to its liking. Not content with this it has so debauched the sources of law and justice that to-day our studiously moderate author finds himself warranted to write "Privilege uses the courts as it uses the soldiers of the Republic, for itself and in violation, in abrogation of the rights of the body of the people."

"Those whom the Gods wish to destroy they first make mad." And the Princes and parasites of Privilege in the United States of America may well seem to the few philosophic minds who can impartially survey their doings as maddened, as well as blinded, by their reckless and ruthless pursuit of the power to rob and to enslave their fellow-citizens. That books such as this, and those epoch-making words of Henry George should come to us from the Great Republic may, however, be taken as evidence that there is an awakening going on amongst the masses of the people. It is not yet too late, though it soon may be. To-day they know not only that they are being robbed, but how the process is being maintained, as well as how it may easily, simply, and yet effectively be put an end to. We do not doubt but that sooner or later they will act on this knowledge, peaceably, if they are allowed. But should the blindness and madness that always attends established Privilege hinder this. "Should" (to use the words of our author) "the few refuse to relinquish the power of appropriation that exalts them and depresses the mass, there can be no conclusion but a social cataclysm, in which the primal truth of equal rights will declare itself, even though clad 'in hell-fire.'"

Such books as this, such work as ours, may help to avert any such catastrophe. May it be so:—

"The future hides in it,
Good hap and sorrow;
We press still thorow.
Naught that abides in it,
Daunting us, onwards."

L. H. B.

* "THE MENACE OF PRIVILEGE. A Story of the Dangers to the Republic from the Existence of a Favoured Class. By Henry George, Jun. Publishers, Macmillan & Co., London. Price, 6/- . Post free from these Offices at Publisher's price.

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