

## "THE ROMANCE OF JOHN BAINBRIDGE."\*

It is given to few men to attain excellence both as an economist and a novelist; for the two parts demand such very different qualities and attainments. Those who have read "The Menace of Privilege" will know that its author, Henry George, Jr., has acquired that command of inductive reasoning and firm grip of economic principles that alone enables a man to trace social phenomena to their hidden causes. Those who will read "The Romance of John Bainbridge" will soon discover that he also has that keen insight into the never changing fundamental mainsprings of human action, coupled with an artistic power of expression, that alone enables the novelist to excel in his attractive and fascinating art. The love story, which forms the basis and *raison d'être* of every novel, is a simple and pleasing one, and told in a manner that will, we think, make it attractive even to the most surfeited novel reader. All the characters are well drawn, and with the one exception of Frederick Penn, the father of the heroine, true to life. The hero commands our admiration, the heroine commands our love, and the rich suitor for her hand at first repels us, though his undoubted love for a noble woman subsequently transforms him into a better and nobler man. Even the subordinate characters—more especially the rich young man who goes into politics for fun, but who, thanks to the hero, soon discovers what is really at stake—are drawn with the hand of a master of his craft. The little scene between Nora, the consumptive young artist, and Jessica, the beautiful rich heroine, is one of the most moving and pathetic, and the final scene between father and daughter is one of the most powerful and dramatic passages in recent fiction.

It is, however, our author's masterly picture of the bitter political struggle, which forms the background and setting of his love story, that lifts his work far above the level of the ordinary novel, and will specially commend it to our readers. Though never didactic, it is in this portion of his book that our author reveals himself, and proves himself a worthy son of his great father, whom he surely had in his mind when he penned the following reflections of his hero on his return to the East from the more natural expanding life of the free West:—

"Here was the richest city on the hemisphere. It produced abundantly of the things needed to satisfy human desire, and every new process, every labour-saving invention, tended to increase that abundance. Yet had most of the men, women, and children in that city a sufficiency? Far from it. They were in truth half famished. Little children died like flies in the tenement regions for want of nourishment. . . . That raised the question: Did work make riches? If so, why was not the 'working-class' the rich class? Why, in fact, was the 'working-class' the poor class? Why were those who did so little work—who had so much idle time—the rich class? Was it because the drones robbed the workers? That was it. It was robbery—huge, gigantic, widespread robbery of the many by the few that was producing the wild, wolfish humanity. The workers were robbed into poverty—into intense competition amongst themselves for the brute needs—into suffering, vice, and crime."

This passage alone should suffice to induce many of our readers at once to order the book for their own or a public library. Besides being an interesting, it is in every way a wholesome book, and one which inspires us to right action by revealing the far-reaching influence for good of every honest man and of every noble, pure-minded woman.

L. H. B.

\* "The Romance of John Bainbridge." By Henry George, Jr. Publishers—Macmillan, London. Price 6s.

## TWO DISAPPOINTING BOOKS.

"PEERS OR PEOPLE: AN APPEAL TO HISTORY." By W. T. Stead; Price, 2/6. Publishers: Fisher Unwin, London.

"TO COLONIZE ENGLAND: A PLEA FOR A POLICY." By C. F. G. Masterman, M.P., W. B. Hodgson, and others; Price, 2/6. Publisher: Fisher Unwin, London.

Publishers are always keenly alive to whatever questions are agitating the public mind; hence we may reasonably expect a flood of books on the two questions of to-day in the very forefront of the political struggle, the Land Question and the House of Lords Question. As most of our readers are well aware, they are really one and the same question; and manifestly if the former were once equitably solved, the latter would present no real difficulties. For as Mr. W. T. Stead well expressed it in the book now before us, "Peers or People."—

"What is the House of Lords? Primarily it is a House of Landlords. The landed system of this country was created in order to make the peers the owners of the soil and the lords of the land. It has done its work. . . . The landed system exists to maintain the House of Lords, and the *ultima ratio* of the House of Lords is to maintain the landed system. The House of Lords is a mere Tory caucus for all other purposes of legislation. But it will defeat even a Tory Government when it attempts to reform the landed system. To the peers there is only one thing more sacred than the interests of the Tory party. That is its own interests in the land."

We wish we could have written that this passage indicates the drift of Mr. Stead's somewhat wordy book—but it doesn't. Though in itself it indicates the one true constitutional remedy, the well-tempered constitutional weapon of taxation already in the grasp of the people, the author pursues his way as if quite oblivious of its existence, and leaves his readers, more confused it may be, but certainly no wiser as to the best means by which the people may attack "the essential rottenness of the hereditary bulwark" of privilege and plunder.

The second book—"To Colonise England"—is even more disappointing. Everybody knows that the present land system is ruining our agricultural industry; that the conditions under which our agricultural workers live and toil are a disgrace to our civilisation; that the one thing they everywhere need is access to land on fair terms; and that given this, everything else that may be desired will follow as a matter of course. But before we can colonise England, we must get it into our possession. At present it is in the hands of our enemies, and the first policy that is wanted is one that will force them to relinquish their crushing hold. Of any such policy not a word is said in the 211 pages of this book. Moreover, as at least some of the many contributors to its pages ought to know, small holdings of themselves offer no remedy against the social ills which afflict alike both town and country. However, the book may do some good in indicating to the ordinary thoughtless voter that it is to the Land Question that he has to look if he would understand the political and social problems of the day. Just as Mr. Stead's book may do some little good in revealing to the uninitiated the iniquitous manner in which the peers have for centuries plundered their fellow-citizens, and levied tribute on all their industrial activities. But our readers will surely not need either of these somewhat elementary lessons.

L.H.B.

*Le Journal des Debats*, of March 27th, the leading literary newspaper in Paris, contains an admirable review of Mr. L. H. Beren's "Digger Movement." It says—"L'extraordinaire ferveur morale, l'esprit d'honnêteté et de droiture qui anime ce livre, commande le respect et la sympathie pour l'écrivain et pour son héros." "*L'Indépendance Belge* (Brussels), of February 27th, also contained a good notice of the book.