

DEMOCRACY AND REACTION.*

Those of our readers, and we believe they are numerous, who have felt themselves profoundly discouraged, almost to the point of despairing of the future, by the wave of reaction that during the past twenty or thirty years has invaded and paralysed almost every department of human thought and activity, will derive much comfort and encouragement from the pages of this thoughtful and philosophic book. For in it the material and intellectual causes of this reaction are carefully analysed; its true character, as well as the base uses to which it has been put, is ruthlessly exposed, and the promise of a new era of further social progress is clearly indicated. To its author, Mr. L. T. Hobhouse, as to ourselves, the problem of social progress is the problem of social justice. To the average man in the streets, as to the select Baliol men who to-day play such a prominent role in the administration of the non self-governing parts of our world-wide Empire, social justice may seem but a dream, a mere figment of a disordered imagination, which can be disregarded and disobeyed with impunity. To others, with more profound insight into the conditions under which man—a social and therefore an ethical being—has to live and work, and who in consequence realise that mutual aid, not mutual strife, is the animating principle of social—national and international—life, social justice seems the one thing indispensable to civilisation, forming as it does the fundamental law of peaceful social union, disobedience or disregard of which is, in truth, the unpardonable sin, the sin for which there is no forgiveness, and from the inevitable consequences of which there is no escape. We do not wish to suggest that Mr. Hobhouse as yet sees eye to eye with us as to what social justice demands and involves. But he evidently recognises its overwhelming importance. In fact, he is manifestly animated by those ideals of personal freedom, social justice, national rights, and international peace which inspired the social reformers of the past century, including Cobden and Henry George, and which to-day are again re-asserting their influence, even though materialists, politicians and bureaucrats, of the Balfour, Chamberlain, and Milner type, would fain see them relegated to the lumber room of discarded ideas. Hence it is that earnest progressives, whether Liberals, Georgians, or Collectivists, would do well to see that his book finds a place in every library to which they resort. Not the least of its merits is that it crushingly confutes much specious and spurious reasoning which, though it might not have gained a hearing some thirty years ago, to-day finds a welcome in minds shaped and dominated by that wave of reaction to which we have already referred, and to combat which the book has evidently been written.

L.H.B.

*"Democracy and Reaction." By L. T. Hobhouse. Publisher, Fisher Unwin, London. Price 5s. net.

OWNING LAND-USER DISAPPEARING.

"All over the world the land-owning land-user is gradually disappearing. First, he borrows and so falls into the hands of the money-lender; later he is sold out, and vanishes to reappear as a tenant. Even in America this process is proceeding steadily, and it has visibly commenced amongst ourselves in Australia. And as with the Trusts, so with the landlords; the big ones begin to eat up the little ones, and estates to increase in size, superficially and financially. Some admirers of this process say it is proof that the large owner can put the land to more productive use. This is obviously nonsense, because the great land buyers have rarely the least intention of putting the land to any use at all, but only to make a profit out of the man who does use it.

"BUYING AS AN INVESTMENT.—More and more land is coming to be bought up as an investment, that is, not to use but to prevent anybody else from using except for the highest

rent that can be got by practically open tender, that is, for the most money that can be squeezed out of the most eager applicant. Land is gradually passing into the hands of the rich, not for better use, but for larger exploitation. It does this in two ways, or for two reasons.

"FIRST REASON.—On the large sheep stations there occur periodically droughts or diseases of some kind, that send the squatter to the money-lender, from whose clutches he rarely escapes, and the small land-owner generally incurs the same fate from very similar causes, and the Banks eventually foreclose. But it is a bad sign for a country when most of its land is owned by the Banks.

"THE CHIEF REASON.—But the second and chief reason, one that operates everywhere is, that the ordinary land user has to live by his work and so must have quick returns; while the rich investor can afford to accept a very small return for his capital, or even none at all, for a few years, in view of the increase of land value later on; and no kind of investment is so safe (except State Bonds which consequently yield little interest and offer no prospect of a later rise). So the rich investor can afford to give a higher price for the land than the actual user can, and cuts him out. It is this, and not any superior ability to use, that is consigning land generally into the possession of the rich. Superior ability to use does not come in anywhere. Everywhere the user of the land is ceasing to be the owner."—A. J. OGILVY, in *Land and Labour*.

THE SUM OF KNOWLEDGE.—"Fear God," said the clergyman. But my soul answered, "I am not afraid of God—He is a friend of mine."—BOLTON HALL.

Our purpose, our aim, is, by abolishing monopolies, by giving to each his equal right and his equal opportunity, to bring about a state of things in which no human being shall suffer want, unless it be by his own fault; in which there shall be no child that shall go hungry; in which there shall be no woman, be she maid, wife, or widow, who will be driven to unsex herself by hard and unseemly work; to bring about a state of things in which there shall be work for all, leisure for all, opportunity for all; in which not merely the necessities of life, but even the luxuries and the refinements of a high civilization shall be the portion of all. We have a faith—that our Father in heaven did not decree poverty, but that it exists because of the violation of His law. We have a belief—that poverty can be abolished by conforming human laws and institutions to the great principles of equal justice. And having this faith, and having this belief, we have a destiny. That destiny is to abolish poverty in the United States of America, and in doing so, to fire a beacon that will light the whole world!—HENRY GEORGE, "God Wills it." Speech, Sept. 4th, 1887.

JOHN SPEIRS (Late WILLIAM GRAY),

Tailor, Clothier, and Gentlemen's Outfitter,

133 TRONGATE, GLASGOW.

Business Hours—9 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Saturdays, 6 p.m.

SPECIALITIES in

Gent.'s Waterproof Coats. Any Style to Measure.

Ladies' Waterproof Coats and Capes, in all the Leading Styles to Measure.

LADIES' TAILORING A SPECIALITY.