

A GERMAN AUTHOR ON SOCIALISM
AND THE SINGLE TAX.

It is rather late to review a book that has appeared quite a while ago, but in this case it is better late than never. For the book on which I wish to speak here has been written with the special intention to help our movement and to bring about a clearer understanding of the principles of our cause, and in this it has succeeded remarkably well.

The book is entitled: *Die vier Hauptrichtungen der modernen sozialen Bewegung* (The Four Principal Currents of the Modern Social Movement), by Benedict Friedlaender, published by S. Calvary & Cie, Berlin, 1901. Price \$3.00.

As the title indicates, Mr. Friedlaender deals with the principal currents of social reform, which he defines as follows: Marxian Socialism, Anarchism, Eugen Duhring's Social System and Henry George's Neophysiocracy. It must not be supposed that Mr. Friedlaender uses the name neophysiocracy to belittle George's philosophy; on the contrary he speaks of him in the highest terms, and the special aim of his book is to show that all attempts at the solution of the social problem, except the Single Tax philosophy, must fall short of their purpose. He is perfectly aware of the shortcomings of scientific socialism, as well as of those of the scholastic political economy, and he deals them many a severe blow. The fallacies and the useless, but often imposing subtleties of both these schools, are mercilessly exposed. Ignorance and conceited sophistry are shown to be the chief hindrance to a universal acceptance of the Single Tax doctrine. A little story which the author tells in one of the last chapters of the book is very enlightening. "A rich American told him that he need not be afraid of George's agitation; of course, the thing would be of the greatest benefit to the working people, and would destroy at once our economic supremacy; but happily the workmen do not understand the thing, and never will understand it."

On only one point do I differ with Mr. Friedlaender, and that is his treatment of socialism. Though I know him to be right in his exposure of the fallacies of the Marxian doctrine, I have come to think his condemnation somewhat too hasty and one-sided, inasmuch as he overlooks the merits of the socialistic propaganda. This has led him to treat the leaders of socialism more harshly than they deserve. There is truth in the saying that to understand everything is to pardon everything. And the truth is that in matters of social as well as in matters of technical progress, most people are unable to distinguish between a practical and a beneficial idea, and a wild and unsound one. Socialism was the first of all schemes of social reform; it is therefore

only natural that it has attracted more popular attention than any other plan. And in this respect even Marxism has a great merit for the cause of mankind. Marx was the first German author who ventured to attack the superficiality of the Manchesterian school, who reminded those who were singing the praise of harmony of interests, of the starving children and the men and women working fourteen hours a day in dismal factories and more dismal slums, perishing between the two millstones of the landed and capital interest. He felt that it is not the task of political economy to produce capital, but free and happy men and women. That he unconsciously erred in the remedy which he proposed, that his mind lacked the acuteness of thought and the foresight of genius is not a fault which he is to be held responsible. It is true that socialism evidences a want of accurate thinking. But is there not a good reason for this? Have not the landed interests for generations tried to confuse the difference between land and capital, land values and labor values? Is it to be expected that the working people, after having been cheated out of their birthright by all possible sophistry, will at once discover the difference between the possession of land and the possession of capital, capital that is often produced by labor reduced to a state of abject misery. Certainly socialism is wrong. But no less certain that if socialism should produce a social cataclysm in which the good and bad should be destroyed alike, our ruling classes will only reap what they have sown. We ought not to point to the incoherences of socialism without recognizing that these incoherences are the inevitable results of the injustice of the present order of things. By every word we speak against socialism we are in danger of morally degrading our cause and degrading ourselves to the plane of defenders of injustice and robbery. It is better to take side with those who suffer injustice than to side with those who do injustice. This is the flaw in Mr. Friedlaender's criticism, as well as in all other criticisms of socialism from the Single Tax point of view, and though Mr. Friedlaender has not quite overlooked it, it would have strengthened his argument had he pointed it out more clearly.

What Mr. Friedlaender says about Henry George's theory (pages 140 to 386 of the second part of his book) is certainly the best and clearest description of the teachings of our great master that has hitherto appeared in the German language. He accepts fully George's views, except his theory of interest. With excellent clearness he shows how George's sober, business-like taxation reform would more certainly sweep away the injustice of the present systems than those more elaborate schemes of social rearrangement and revolution. There are many excellent passages and ingenious remarks in this part of the book

which will delight the full-blooded Single Taxer. In accuracy of thought Mr. Friedlander's interpretation of the Single Tax philosophy leaves scarcely anything to be desired.

His treatment of the theories of anarchism in all its forms is equally enlightening and comprehensible. For the readers of *THE REVIEW* I need not further comment upon them here. The third part of the book is devoted to the theories of Mr. Eugen Duhring, a German writer of great power and ingenuity; certainly the most important author on social subjects whom Germany has produced. Having fallen a victim to a strange conspiracy of silence and slander, he is very little known outside Germany. On the whole, his fate is such as hardly to be comprehensible to people accustomed to more liberal conditions of mind and thought than prevail in Germany. The essence of the doctrine of this author was an attempt to reconcile communism and personal liberty on the basis of an enlarged Trade Unionism, an attempt which it is hardly necessary to say must fail, and has at last been abandoned even by its author. Nevertheless, Duhring's theories have had more influence than any other writer in Germany, besides the more noisy teachings of the Marxian school. Here also Mr. Friedlander conclusively shows that all attempts to reconcile communism and personal liberty must necessarily fail.

The book is, on the whole, well worth reading, and really indispensable to one who wishes to understand the development of ideas of social reform on the continent of Europe. Single Taxers ought to know of it, for it is another proof that:

"Never yet
Seed of truth was vainly set
In the world's wide fallow."

GUSTAVE BUSCHER.

Zurich, Switzerland.

PUT THE TAX ON LAND VALUE.

The Legislature had decided to put a tax of three cents a ton on coal.

"Dear, dear!" said the coal baron, sympathetically, "won't those radicals ever get through clinching the poor consumer?"

Thereupon he marked the price up ten cents a ton, naturally charging the extra seven cents for his trouble.—*Chicago (Ill.) Journal*.

The Seattle, Wash., Library, would like to secure the following issues of the *REVIEW*: No. 3, vol. 1; Nos. 1 and 2, vol. 2; No. 2, vol. 3; Nos. 1 and 3, vol. 4. The library displays the current *REVIEWS* conspicuously. The librarian is W. E. Henry,

RAILROAD LAWS.

In his Decoration Day speech at Indianapolis President Roosevelt said that he asked for railroad regulation "nothing more than the provision of such laws as now obtain in England." His own recommendation is for a national commission, and New York, under pressure of a great unanimity in public sentiment, has authorized a "public utilities" commission to be ready for business.

Confronted as she is by the final steps in a wholesale consolidation of railroads and electric ways and waterways, what State could have more immediate need for such a commission than the commonwealth of Massachusetts to day?

The English parliamentary committee of 1872 was composed of five peers and six members of the House of Commons, under the presidency of the Earl of Derby. Upon its recommendation the administration of the railway and canal traffic legislation was assigned to a special tribunal of three members, one a lawyer, one a transportation expert, and one a statesman. The immediate remedial measures which this parliamentary committee proposed were:

"First. The maintenance of effectual competition by sea by preventing railway companies from obtaining control over the public harbors. Second. The maintenance of competition by river and canal, by requiring, under severe penalties, the railway companies that had already obtained important links or whole systems of canals to maintain them efficiently.

"The further utilization and development of inland navigation was strongly recommended, as also an absolute inhibition on the transfer of any inland navigation then in the hands of a public trust to the control of a railway company.

"It was further proposed to enable canal companies to purchase from railway companies, by compulsory process, canal lines which could be made to form a part of a canal system, and to prevent thereafter any canal from being transferred to or placed, directly or indirectly, under the control of any railway company.

"A recommendation was made to prevent the temporary lease of any canal to a railway company being renewed until it could be conclusively ascertained that the waterway could not be amalgamated with or worked by an adjacent canal, or by any trust owning adjacent inland navigation.

"Railway companies were also to be required to make through rates for the canal companies, or trusts operating canal or river navigation, upon their lines of rail."

Under an act of parliament these commissioners were appointed for five years, and after two renewals came to be regarded as a permanent tribunal, having all the powers