

American Jewry

In *Saga of American Jewry, 1865-1914* (Arco Publishing Co., 1959), Harry Simonhoff gives brief accounts of prominent American Jews for the period concerned, as a sequel to his *Jewish Notables in America, 1776-1865*. Among those who pass in parade are Daniel Guggenheim, Emma Lazarus, Samuel Gompers, Joseph Pulitzer, Felix Adler, Oscar Hammerstein, and Joseph Fels—who is billed as “social reformer and single taxer.”

Philip Rubin contributed the chapter on Fels, and relates interestingly how, after having secured fame as the producer of Fels-Naphtha soap, Joseph Fels went on to greater fame as a social reformer.

As first, he sought amelioration of the poor by buying vacant land and settling workingmen on it. Discouraged with his failure at these efforts, Fels then discovered Henry George and realized that in the single tax lay the answer to the problem of poverty with which he had vainly been grappling. Thenceforth, Fels devoted his life and his fortune to the single tax. He campaigned

throughout the U. S. and Canada for legislative enactment of the single tax. In England he aided the Lloyd George campaign for land value taxation, and he also gave considerable help in half a dozen other countries. Toward the end of his life he became interested in Zionism, and his widow, Mary Fels, contributed large sums to the Jewish National Fund to purchase land in Israel for settlement.

Philip Rubin is also the author of an article on Sholom Aleichem (the Jewish author whose centenary is being celebrated this year), in the March 16th issue of *Congress Bi-Weekly*. One of the sayings of Sholom Aleichem quoted in this issue might have served as good advice to Joseph Fels to turn to education instead of politics: “The truth requires a hundred years to be understood, and another hundred years to be put into practice, says Richter. I say, the truth requires a hundred years to be understood and could be put into practice in a single decade, if only everybody understood it.”

—R. C.

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