

'A HERITAGE WORTHILY UPHELD.

(For the Review.)

By GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

It is not an easy task to live up to a great name. It is harder, in fact, than to make a name, as the latter task is a self-chosen one, the choice for which comes with the power to accomplish. To live up to an inherited name is something imposed upon some of us whether we have the power to accomplish it or not. Henry George, Jr., is proving, in his published work, as well as in his political life, that he is capable of living up to his heritage. His second book, "The Menace of Privilege" (New York, Macmillan and Company) takes its place with its predecessor, "The Life of Henry George," as a worthy and necessary addition to the economic library given the world by his father.

Mr. George's book bears the sub-title "A Study of the Dangers to the Republic from the Existence of a Favored Class;" it might with full right call itself "American History Up to Date." For it gives a true and exact history of developments in our social life within the last fifty years, or more properly,

* The Menace of Privilege. By Henry George, Jr. See adv. among back pages.

within the last century, developments far more important as historical evolution than the fact that we sent men out to kill other men in various places. This last being what is called in our schools and newspapers, "Making history."

Mr. George does not attempt to comment upon, or even to elucidate, except in terms of popular exposition, the economic philosophy which made his father famous. He wishes merely to show us how true the prophecies that were uttered by the author of *Progress and Poverty*, and how surely social life is taking the turn he predicted it would take, unless the great truth he had laid bare to us is heeded. There is a great deal in this book of the younger Henry George that might win for it the popular success which would lend far-reaching power to its teachings. There is an enormous public that loves to read of the luxury and the looseness of the private lives of our multi-millionaires, and Mr. George has a good deal to say on the subject. But the connection in which he says it, and the moral he draws from such conditions, are not of a nature to strike the fancy of a sensation-loving public. The public that revels in the stories of laxness of morals prevailing in moneyed circles and the absurd luxury that has become a disease there, likes to be told that this is because of personal depravity on the part of these rich ones. * * * A sort of consolation for those not so rich, and a sign, in their eyes, of the benevolence of God in distributing his gifts of morals and riches in inverse ratio. Mr. George says nothing of the kind, however. And furthermore, he plainly tells the less rich that not the moral laxness of the very rich is at fault, but that the civic laxness of the middle strata is responsible for the conditions they appear to think so abhorrent. This is a fearlessness which may cost the book some readers, but which gives it its greatest value.

The book comes at the right moment. There is a spirit of unease abroad in the air, a feeling of awakening consciousness that things in the body public are not as they should be * * * and a still more dangerous feeling that they *can* be changed somehow. At such a moment a book that puts the blame calmly and sanely where it belongs, that does not point at persons, but at systems; and that does this in an easily comprehensible popular manner, backed by an array of easily proven facts, such a book can be of tremendous value.

Mr. George has made his book a study of what Privilege,—those vested rights made sacred by man-made laws antagonistic to God's laws; *i. e.*, natural laws, has done in bringing about a false distribution of wealth, and therefore an unhinging of all social conditions. He has not attempted to do it in the large philosophic manner in which his father treated the subject, but has shown us, by examples taken from our life here and now, that his father's doctrines were not merely academic theories, but were truths as important to the welfare of the body public as the laws of sanitation are for the physical body. He has done something worth while therefore, and has done it well.

The volume is subdivided into nine Books in which various phases of the subject are treated. Privilege itself is explained in the first book; then the types of those who profit by Privilege and the types of those who suffer under it are given two large and important divisions. Under the title of Resistance to Privilege, two chapters on Labor Unionism contain the sanest material that has been written about this important subject yet. The Weapons of Privilege come next, the perverting of justice through corrupted courts, and that hideous crime of modern time, the use of the bayonet in civil affairs. Then the influence of Privilege in the corrupting of politics and the perverting of the official guides of public opinion,—the press, the university and the church, is described. An interesting division warns against the dangers of centralization of government and foreign aggression, two evils that must follow Privilege grown powerful; and the last book, *The Remedy*, gives a short, popular exposition of the Single Tax, and of the methods and results of public ownership of natural monopolies.

The tone of the book is most hopeful in spite of an unflinching fidelity in the portrayal of apparently hopeless conditions.

It is difficult to single out the most important points in a book which treats of so many important things. The matter of the influence on the social life of a nation of the piling up of enormous fortunes in a few hands, with resulting widespread dire poverty for the many, is certainly a vital matter. It is also a vital matter that Privilege should thus corrupt our politics, and hold out its threat over what should be freest, the education of the growing mind. All these Mr. George treats of, and treats of them well. There are two other matters, however, which are so pressing and actual for the moment, and which he writes of in a manner so fearlessly true, that it is from these chapters I would like to quote a few of the many good things he says.

The problem of labor unions is a most difficult one for the modern radical, particularly for the Single Taxer, to solve. Our radical sympathies naturally lie with the workingman seeking his honest share of the wealth he produces, and we realize that, under present economic conditions, organization is the only means by which the great body of the workers can be helped. But the many vital mistakes made by the unions, their distorted point of view in a fostering of class hatred * * * and a hatred turned toward the minor evil instead of the greater * * * their false conception of the problem presented to them, and their apparent lack of understanding of fundamental truths; all these make it hard for us to be on their side in their fight for that justice for which we ourselves are fighting. But while Mr. George is quite frank in pointing out the mistakes of the unions, particularly in regard to the tariff, and in regard to the benevolent slavery in which they keep their members * * * though he recognizes that while such slavery is not compatible with free conditions * * * still he says: "Conditions are not free. Privilege controls the avenues of employment and in that sense tends to enslave laborers. If labor unions are against the free exercise of personal liberty, censure should not be bestowed upon the unions without first condemning Privilege, which drives laborers to this course." The two chapters on trades unions are illuminating and instructive in their calm, impartial sanity.

Then there is another question which calls for consideration from every right-thinking man and woman in our country. This is the growing tendency to use the bayonet in civil affairs, to make of the army, federal or state militia, a sort of police force for internal troubles, but a police force that is dangerous and hostile to every principle of liberty in that it is above and outside civil law, and responsible only to its own courts and code of ethics for whatever it does. The presence of a body of men systematically trained to hold in scorn and contempt the laws and moral codes that regulate the lives of other citizens, is always a terrible menace in a nation that calls itself civilized. This is what the armies of to-day are to the nations of to-day,—not a protection, but a direct menace to every principle of liberty. And Privilege has been quick to recognize the power of this weapon standing outside the law. Mr. George shows how recent events have proven what use Privilege can and does make of this deadly anachronism we still foolishly foster in our body public. Among other instances he describes the Colorado strike, put down by troops, and adds a warning which is only too terribly true.

"Now, as has been said, a strike is not according to the natural order of things. It is only a temporary expedient of combined laborers. But if, under cloak of protecting life and property against strikers, a military despotism is for a season to be erected, what is to become of the sacred principles of liberty? If this can be done in one State, why should it not be done in others? If miners in one part of the United States, because they are labor unionists, can be thrown into prison or deported, why cannot miners in other places be similarly treated?