

BOOKS

INEQUALITY AND PROGRESS.

In what different spheres men live—yet all are men. Not to speak of the multifarious life of a city, in which no quarter knows how the other quarter lives, it is true of the great reading public in the world of thought here in democratic America, that there are different sets, whose intellectual food and mode of thought are as different as if some of us lived in Peru and others in Japan. The books we read, the periodicals we take, have utterly different ideals and points of view, and it is only rarely that they cross each other. The result is that hardly any of us know how the other half thinks. What a surprise, for example, it would be, if the *Outlook* and the *Appeal to Reason* could exchange for a month their subscription lists. Clergymen, even of different denominations, sometimes exchange pulpits—would it not be a good idea for some of our many weeklies to try the experiment of exchanging subscribers for an issue or two? It might be both amusing and profitable.

This thought of the ignorance of some men concerning the thoughts, sentiments and philosophy of others, cannot but be suggested to some who may read a book by Prof. George Harris, entitled *Inequality and Progress* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., \$1.25). Dr. Harris, at the time of the publication of this book, was a professor in Andover Theological Seminary; he is now president of Amherst College.

The central theme of the book is sufficiently indicated by the title, and necessarily a large part of the argument deals with equality of opportunity. There must be to-day thousands of readers, readers on economic subjects, who do not imagine that such a book could be written, printed and read in these latter days; and yet our election returns indicate that it voices the sentiments of a majority of American voters.

It may be said that the author himself seems to illustrate the point of our ignorance of one another, for in this book, dealing with the problem of inequality of economic opportunity, he ignores, and one would think is in fact ignorant of, the works of the man who in modern times has written most and most clearly on this very subject. In some parts of the book it would seem that if he had known Henry George at all he must perforce have mentioned him from the sheer impulse of diametrical opposition.

In chapter 5, which is entitled *Economic Equality a Chimera*, he deals with "certain theories of equality which have some currency"; and then he goes on to say, "After the impracticability of those theories has become evident, I shall proceed from negation of equality to the positive advantage

of inequality as a condition of progress." There is nothing to show in these chapters that he has any conception whatever of what is really meant by equality of opportunity in the economic sense, and yet he closes chapter 7 with the following expression of satisfaction: "What, now," he says, "is the use of talking equality of opportunity under any economic or political system? A mouse and an ox may be in the same field, ranging over the same area, but the roots are no opportunity for the ox, and the grass is no opportunity for the mouse."

May we not see in this sentence the fundamental belief of all such writers as this theological professor and college president? To them the difference in men amounts to a difference in genus. To them we are not all oxen—some fat and some lean, some large and some small, some red and some white—but some of us are mice. They make, as the above illustration perhaps unconsciously shows, a real difference of genus. They have not attained the conception of the value of man as man. They deny humanity, and with all their theology virtually deny God.

Mazzini has a great sentence: "Yesterday," he says, "we revered the priest, the lord, the soldier, the master; to-day we reverence Man, his liberty, his dignity, his immortality, his labor, his progressive tendency—all that constitutes him a creature made in the image of God." Writers, like the author of the present book—and they represent even now the majority of us—are still living in Mazzini's yesterday. It is the "priest, lord, soldier, master" that they really reverence, not the man; and with this thought—whether it be conscious or not—they do not really know the meaning of the word "equality" as it is used by the great modern champions of freedom. With this thought, they do not and cannot believe in "equality of opportunity." With this thought, they honestly believe that some men have a higher right, by virtue of being lords and masters, to the privileges which heighten superiority and emphasize inequality.

J. H. DILLARD.

THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE.

One of the most valuable contributions of the year to the reading public is "The Yellow Van," by Richard Whiteing (New York: The Century Company, \$1.50). The book has a claim to be read by whomsoever is interested in bringing about a total change in the absurd social system under which we live to-day. Its story centers about a village in the England of the present time. Though a great landlord, the duke of Allonby and his wife hold an important place in its pages, it is with "the infinitely little of Slocum Parva, mere items of entry in

the parish register," that the book has most to do.

Into this village, from which a false state of society has drained nearly all its life, comes the American wife of the duke to take her place. She has been brought up, as Americans mostly are, to believe in the England of fiction and poetry. Here she finds it in the grim reality of its poverty and squalor, its abject degradation of body and almost total annihilation of mind. The procession of villagers, gentry and clergy, which welcomes her husband and herself is but an evidence of the fact that feudalism has lived over into this twentieth century and, like the older feudalism, bases its power to exist upon the power of its might to exclude the great mass of humanity from the land, save on the terms of slavery. From the large farmer down through the varying degrees of men who own some 50 acres of land to the men and women who own not one spot to rest a foot and call their own, all living things in human shape come that day to do homage to their lord and master.

The yellow van with its words of revolt against this system, "The Land and the People," reaches this village one day. Speaking from its steps, the owner makes one firm convert to his teaching, a young man, George Herion. Just here is where the human interest deepens. For George has committed the folly, so his betters call it, of marrying and having a home. Opportunity, self-made, brings him a new sense of independence, and Rose and himself seem on the road to success. But, in punishment for his having supported the Radical candidate in an election, they are evicted from their cottage. This means ruin for them, as they can go nowhere else in the countryside under the ban of the great lord's displeasure.

In despair they turn to London. There they sink from poverty to utter penury, their rent paid in the city as in the country to the duke of Allonby eating away their youth and strength. For awhile they are lost to us. They have entered that room which Hugo tells us is utterly dark and where people who have lived on little, entering in, live on nothing.

The duchess, searching for many days, can find no trace of them. When, by accident, she comes upon George she finds him maimed and helpless in the ward of a city hospital. There is the old excuse for such a wrong—neglect of an employer to protect a place of danger, a misstep and another man thrown to one side, broken and useless for all his days to come. In the depths of their misery a little child had come to them, not to lead them as was promised years ago, but to be another weight to drag them down still deeper. Rose, working by day and night, weakened by starvation, despair and sickness, dies before aid can reach her. And so they are taken back to Slocum.