

## To Relieve Housing Shortage Italy Exempts Dwellings

A SPECIAL cable dispatch from Rome, published in the *New York Sun* of January 25, says that by royal decree all homes throughout Italy, built between 1925 and 1935, will be exempt from taxation; and this regardless of cost or rent charged, or whether rented or occupied by the owner. The exemption includes houses occupied partly by small stores. This sweeping measure, says the dispatch, has been adopted as a measure for solving the housing shortage. Further details will be awaited with much interest.

## Where Faith Begins

HENRY GEORGE was one among the millions of thinkers who tried to fathom the ultimate meaning of life, only to arrive at the place where all must stand—before a closed door. Reasoning, he followed the scriptures of the men who have been and gone—the Bibles, esoteric doctrines of old philosophers, the inner meaning of grotesque religions, the dogmatic constitutions of Ecumenical Councils, the preachings of Foxes and Wesleys, the traditions of red Indians and black savages.

Now for a true quotation of this man's own words: "And out of the chain of thought we have been following there seems vaguely to rise a glimpse of what they vaguely saw—a shadowy gleam of ultimate relations, the endeavor to express which inevitably falls into type and allegory. A garden in which are set the trees of good and evil. A vineyard in which there is the Master's work to do. A passage—from life behind to life beyond. A trial and a struggle, in which we cannot see the end."

—Harrisburg, (Pa.) *Telegraph* Editorial.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### POLITICAL MYTHS AND ECONOMIC REALITIES\*

In these days of rapid-fire treatment of historical problems by glorified reporters like Wells and Van Loon it is a relief to come across a work which is a serious attempt to consider events in the light of principles that determine them and to build, however imperfectly, a philosophy of history by which we may interpret historical phenomena.

We are far from endorsing what seem to us the extravagant encomiums which this book has received. But we are glad to record that as far as M. Delaisi has travelled his journey has been a profitable one to the reader, for it has carried him to the point where political formulas have broken down and economic facts are given their due proportion and significance. We say this is a far step in current speculation which hitherto has not even given us that much.

The title is an arresting one. But what our author sometimes mistakes as myths are after all only the conflicts which have arisen in history between the principles of democracy and the arrogant claims of privilege. This struggle M. Delaisi does not always see as phenomena of progress. Perhaps his formula has been a little too much for him, and has exercised a constraining influence upon the freedom of his

speculations. Beneath what he calls myths is something much more fundamental than he indicates, and the "economic realities" might be made more real if he had been able to discover the chief of these realities in all its relations. He sees it in many forms, it is true, but being unable to trace these to their paternity his speculations leave something lacking. He remains a captive to formula.

Had our author been able to trace the progress of mankind as a struggle to escape from slavery, and to discern in the failure of the struggle what it really is that brings so many of these efforts to naught—really the divorcement of men from their rights to the use of the earth—he would not descant thus on the Russian Revolution, (page 52);

"It is true that all the workers, the intellectuals, the people with generous and vague aspirations who suddenly declared themselves "Bolsheviks" were totally ignorant of the circumstances of the Russian Revolution and of its true history. They were attracted neither by Lenin's method nor by its results; it was the latent myth within their minds which suddenly blazed out under the action of an apparently successful event."

What our author has done—and it was a work needing to be done—is to dissipate the myth of nationalism (in the economic field) and demonstrate *interdependence* in the economic realm. He has demonstrated the fixity of the economic laws and the constant transformation of political forms.

Governments erect institutions in ignorance of economic influences. Constitutions and laws which statesmen fondly imagine embody finalities are slowly modified in obedience to the economic urge. They see established rules of law slowly yielding to a silent authority whose decrees determine their existence and duration. These are the political myths, and the stern realities are those economic truths which modify or destroy political theories.

Republics, democracies, monarchies, dictatorships are merely political forms in which there is neither stability nor efficacy. Nor do they contribute to the happiness of the people. Seeing this the debate has run along endlessly as to the comparative merit of these forms of government. The question is still unsettled. And the reason is clear. Economic realities are still ignored in the world, though they are imperative and insistent causes, which every now and then destroy institutions in violent revolutions.

Here is a suggestive thought on page 155:

"The natural tendency of every landowner is to "round off his land" by the inclusion of his neighbor's field. There are always excellent reasons why he should; the coveted strip forms an enclave and hampers cultivation, or it may be advisable to join together pasture land and cornfield whose produce complement each other. Given that the soil is the source of all wealth the common ambition is for each to increase his own portion.

"Nations are subject to the same law. So long as they were merely an aggregate of farmers—or landowners living by the revenues of the land—their ambitions were territorial, and the general tendency of their policy was to annex the border provinces."

The author makes clear that these territorial ambitions, eumpehized as "historical rights"—what else are they but the landowning interests?—are directly responsible for most of the wars that have made Europe a bloody battleground. But he does not amplify this thought and is too apt to treat it as negligible as he proceeds with his more elaborate and intriguing thesis.

A heading to one of the chapters is "Free Trade as the Doctrine of Interdependence." The author holds that with the abolition of the Corn Laws in Great Britain, which he calls the "defeat of the landlords," a new episode in history had seemingly begun. "Interdependence had secured a triumph over economic nationalism and reality over myth."

With Free Trade now established in Great Britain, with all its implications accepted, and with the commercial treaties negotiated in 1860 by Cobden with Michael Chevalier for Great Britain and France, with similar treaties with Belgium, Italy, Switzerland and Holland and the Zollverein it seems to M. Delaisi that the world was heading rapidly toward free trade, and he says: "The principle of free

\*Political Myths and Economic Realities. By Francis Delaisi. 446 pp. Cloth bound Price \$4. The Viking Press, New York City.

trade by turning the economic interdependence of nations into a reality would have eventually made for universal peace." But it was not to be. As our author remarks historical events do not unfold in logical sequence.

The author's treatment of free trade leaves little to be desired. One of his phrases is "the *homo economicus* who acts internationally and the *homo politicus* who thinks nationally." The deepest instinct of the economic man is to act internationally, and this should teach our protectionist that the normal and primal instinct is to trade freely, and that the exercise of this instinct results in bringing about the largest general satisfaction in the production and enjoyment of wealth.

In the very manner of Henry George, M. Delaisi gives a striking illustration of the benefits of cooperation made possible under our modern system of exchanges in one day in the life of well-to-do Parisian:

"On awakening, M. Durand washes himself with soap manufactured out of Congo peanut and dries himself with a cotton towel of Louisiana. He then proceeds to dress himself. His shirt and collar are made of Russian linen, his coat and trousers of wool from the Cape or Australia. He puts on a silk tie made of Japanese cocoons and shoes whose leather is derived from the hide of an Argentine ox and tanned with chemical product from Germany.

"In his dining room—adorned with a Dutch sideboard, made of wood from Hungarian forests—he will find the table laid with plated metal made of Rio-Tinto copper, tin from the straits and silver from Australia. He will find a fresh loaf, made of wheat, which according to the season of the year, may come from Beauce, from Roumania or from Canada. He will eat eggs newly arrived from Morocco, a slice of frozen presale from the Argentine and preserved small peas which have seen the California sun: his sweets will be English jam made of French fruit and Cuban sugar, and his excellent coffee will come from Brazil.

"Restored to vigor he now goes to work. An electric tram run on the Thompson-Houston system, takes him to his office. After making a note of the quotations of the Liverpool, London, Amsterdam or Yokohama exchanges, he dictates his correspondence, which is taken down on an English typewriter, and he signs it with an American fountain pen. In his workshop Paris articles are being manufactured out of material of many origins, by machinery built in Lorraine, according to German patents and fed with English coal. His instructions are to send them to Rio by the first German steamer that puts into Cherbourg.

"He then proceeds to pay in a cheque in guilders from a Dutch client and to buy sterling to pay for English goods. The bank manager will take the opportunity to point out that his account shows a considerable balance and that oil shares are rising. Mr. Durand agrees to the suggestion, but unwilling to place all his eggs in one basket, he gives orders to buy at the same time four Royal Dutch shares and ten of a French company affiliated to the Standard Oil.

"Satisfied with a profitable day, he proposes to spend the evening at a show with his wife. She will don her best frock from Pauquin, Ltd., her pretty fur or blue fox (Siberia), her diamonds from the Cape. Then they will dine in an "Italian restaurant" and debate whether to go to the Russian ballet or to a music hall to hear Raquel Meller, or perhaps decide for one of d'Annunzio's plays acted by Ida Rubenstein with designs from Bakst."

There is a chapter devoted to the *international* character of the *national* genius in the production of literary and artistic masterpieces. These are masterpieces not because they are national but because they are human, and M. Delaisi points out the constant variations in national taste. There is as little reality in the national literary myth as there is in the political myth. When it assumes a common inheritance from generation to generation, a literary system of unchanging tradition, the belief becomes little short of a vulgar illusion. Our author shows that this illusion is strongest among the least educated classes. The chapter is well worth pondering, as is so much of the contents of this really remarkable book, for its demonstration of the essentially international character of all art, to which breadth and liberality of culture contribute.

Of more than passing interest is the author's contention, we had almost said his demonstration, that the disturbances and bloodshed that have so often devastated the world and are attributed to religious intolerance, were really due to other causes. He tells us that religious myths are at their birth multiform, extremely variable and therefore

tolerant. Intolerance, he says, lies not in the myth itself, but springs from its *political* function. When it has attained unity, and becomes part of the social or political entity, dissidence in dogma is tantamount to a blow struck at institutionalism. He says this law applies as much to lay as to religious myths, and he reinforces his thesis with illustrations drawn from a profoundly impressive knowledge of history.

When it becomes necessary to save social institutions—institutions of privilege for the most part—the pretence of defending the religious myth is invoked for the masses, a pretence readily discarded as soon as it has served its purpose. The lesson is an important one as striking at the very heart of the notion (a notion which breeds intolerance) that one sect more than another in history has resorted to the weapon of persecution, or that the inclination to do so is inherent in the nature of religious sects.

Van Loon and Wells have sought to popularize history and in so doing have cheapened it. M. Delaisi has tried to do something different and of greater value; he has started out to discover the solution of existing problems of history, to search the heart of civilization, to give an answer why it has not succeeded. The attempt is worthy of all praise.

Yet the work fails—tragically fails. The wisdom that has traced so many economic realities has permitted the fundamental one to elude him. It seems almost pitiful that the intelligence that has set off so well the myth of nationalism against the ever pressing economic urge should be so utterly oblivious to the great question that looms behind all these very interesting speculations. Is there no such thing as a Land Question? Are the natural resources of the earth, the struggle for the ownership or control of which determines the policies of rulers and their ministers, to be utterly forgotten? At the conclusion the author writes:

"The world will only recover its equilibrium when, in the minds of each producer, the idea of interdependence has acquired the same value as that of salvation for the Christian, equality for the democrat, and the fatherland for the citizen. But how are the masses to acquire this consciousness? That is the vital problem which must be faced by all who can look beyond the surface of events."

Must it all then be summed up in this? And has the author actually abandoned all his economic realities only to fall back on a myth of psychology, lacking as little reality as the myths he indicates? Is it all to be resolved into a state of mind? And is a new consciousness to be evolved in the presence of these economic realities which have muddled our political conduct, our international outlook, our social life, and even the rationalizing of minds as keen and free from predilection as M. Delaisi's?

—J. D. M.

#### WHAT IS COOPERATION?\*

This is another of the Vanguard Press series treating of various phases of social philosophies. Socialism, Single Tax, etc., are, as our readers know, treated in books that have preceded it.

The author of this book is the outstanding authority on Cooperation and president of the Cooperative League. Cooperative Democracy published in 1923, and reissued in a revised edition in 1927, is the larger work of the same author on which the present manual is based.

There is here everything the general reader will want to know of the reasons for and history of Cooperation in the United States and in Great Britain, in which latter country the movement has attained such imposing proportions.

There is a chapter entitled "Criticism of Proposed Remedies" which is, on the whole, not unfair. On the subject of the Single Tax the author is in error in saying that "it would result in State ownership of the land." Perhaps, however, the author means people-owned, and this would be true in essence if not in form.

Mr. Warbasse says: "It would not change the motive nor method of business." He is silent, however, on whether it would or would not

\*What is Cooperation? By James Peter Warbasse. 170 pp. Cloth bound. 55 Cents postpaid. The Vanguard Press, 80 Fifth Avenue, N. Y. City.