

BOOK REVIEWS

ANOTHER USEFUL BOOK

"Land and Unemployment." By James F. Muirhead, M.A., L.H.D. 12mo. Clo. 211 pp. Price \$2.50. Oxford University Press, New York and London.

Here is another book among the growing number that seek to present the Henry George philosophy as the antithesis of socialism. It would seem that in the world of books at least the issue is being sharply drawn. Against a flood of books that advocate the teachings of communism, or the parlor pink school of socialism, or the New Deal brand, books like those of Francis Neilson, Albert Jay Nock, Gilbert M. Tucker, Louis Wallis, Prof. George Raymond Geiger, Henry Ware Allen, Dr. S. Vere Pearson, Frederick Verinder, the late Dr. Muirhead and many others, the literature of protest against the present trend and in favor of the teachings of the great American economist is receiving adequate presentation as the alternative philosophy.

The editor of LAND AND FREEDOM has already reviewed Dr. Muirhead's "Land and Unemployment" in the *Survey Graphic* of this city, but it is well to call attention to it here, for it is a work which merits careful consideration. It is an Oxford book which label bespeaks its character. It is worth reading if for nothing more than the "foreword" of Arnold Wilson, conservative member of Parliament, and the slight but significant sketch of Henry George by its scholarly editor, Garnet Smith.

Perhaps the most portentous of Dr. Muirhead's statement, and he writes with amazing clarity, is the following:

"The Old Order seems to have more or less collapsed; the outlines of the New Order to arise out of the ruins remains very vague. We begin to realize how much of our civilization rested on tradition and how little on reason. We are amazed, now that the crash has shaken the blindness from our eyes, how preposterous were many of the conditions that we accepted unthinkingly and even complacently."

It should be said that the chapter on "Tariffs and Trade" is a bit disappointing.

The absence of a concluding chapter that would "appropriately follow the appeal and exhortation struck at the beginning" is noted by the Editor, and the fact recalls the unfinished task of Henry George in his "Science of Political Economy." In each case death intervened. But while this is to be regretted Dr. Muirhead in his present work has left us material in which the finely persuasive character of the appeal is certain to be of value to the movement.

The progress that has been made in many countries is outlined in one of the latter chapters and reference is had for some of these historic instances to the Single Tax Year Book published and edited by Joseph Dana Miller in 1917, as well as to Prof. George Raymond Geiger, author of "The Philosophy of Henry George," and to Frederick C. Leubuscher from his address at Copenhagen.—J. D. M.

A VALUABLE BOOK

"The Path to Prosperity." By Gilbert M. Tucker. 12mo. Clo. 312 pp. Price \$2.50. G. P. Putnam's Sons. New York and London.

Here at last is a book we can recommend without apology or dissent, practically without qualification of any sort, and with all the enthusiasm of which we are capable.

On the "jacket" of the book we are told something of its author whose father was the writer of several books and the editor of *The Country Gentleman*, with which the son became associated on his graduation from Cornell University in 1901. From that time to this Gilbert M. Tucker has been interested in the teachings of Henry George, and this work is the ripened fruit of prolonged study and observation.

It is not easy to review a work in which there is so much that tempts us to quote. There are wise words in defense of the "profit motive," against which so many socialistically inclined professors and well-meaning divines have thundered. To these our author replies (page 74) as follows:

"Why labor with brains and muscle? Why wear ourselves out

teaching and training? * * * Why lie awake nights, thinking, planning, working to organize a new industry, to develop a new process or invent a new tool for mankind? Is not our incentive nearly always the hope of profit?"

And again:

"And to some of us this expectation of profit is a far more powerful incentive to achievement than any vague dream of some hazy social benefit, as conceived and planned by some official."

Mr. Tucker indicates that this incentive may be misdirected. "Any good quality" may be carried to excess." Surveying the practical side of the question he contrasts the private physician, "frankly expecting his fee," with the less efficient service of the great public clinic. It is such considerations as these that are lost sight of by those who decry the profit motive, and our author presses home his argument from every angle.

We can picture the sentimental and benevolently sloppy, condemning the author for his contention that it is no business of government to regulate wages nor to tax the employing class in the interests of so-called "social security." Socialists and trade unionists who obstinately refuse to take the necessary steps to solve both the wage question and the question of the unemployed will not agree with Mr. Tucker when he says:

"The sum and substance of it is that the State cannot justly interfere in the freedom of contract and compel employers to pay higher wages than conditions justify, or dispense charitable benefits. The obligations of charity and generosity are very real obligations but they should not be made compulsory by mandates of the State"

These are brave utterances in a timid and cowardly world, and we thank whatever gods there be for the man who stands up and says them. And this chapter is further enriched by historical analogies and illustrations. Mr. Tucker shows that unemployment insurance, especially when such plans involve the taxing of pay rolls, is a policy which must slow down employment.

On page 99 Mr. Tucker says (under the heading, "Regulating Business"):

"Not content with various schemes of making the employer play the combined role of fairy godmother and nursemaid, not only to his own employees but to the public at large, Uncle Sam must have his finger in the pie of business management at every turn, fixing prices, regulating methods, and meddling with every aspect of trade policy."

It is impossible not to admire the author's pointed thrusts at the stupid persons in charge of public affairs. What can be better than this:

"Only two centuries after the Norman Conquest there was passed The Assize of Bread and Beer, the first statute drawn in the curious old Bastard Norman-French which displaced Latin. This was an attempt to set prices on a sliding scale, based on the price of wheat, and our British progenitors, with typical British tenacity, kept experimenting with such follies for hundreds of years, despite the monotonous futility of bucking natural laws. Apparently the lesson was learned and the fallacious scheme abandoned, but just when we think we are done with them, they crop up again with the next generation, determined never to learn by experience unless it be their own. One wonders sometimes if the Brain Trust in spite of all its erudition, college degrees and economic standing, is not a bit rusty on economic history. (Pages 102-103.)

The chapter on "Regulating Business" is full of meat. It should be read by every business man and by every one who is seeking relief from oppressive government policies. "There is scarcely a trade practice that is not in constant danger of some new ruling or decision," our author tells us. This chapter reviews the many preposterous interferences with the normal process of industry and closes with restrained eloquence in a picture detailing the progressive abandonment of what we have won in a thousand years of struggle.

The chapter on "Money and Credit" will not find favor with those who entertain weird notions of the circulating medium, but it is a very sane contribution to the subject. We can imagine the anger of this class of thinkers at Mr. Tucker's statement that he would "like to see the value of the dollar definitely established in terms

of gold by amendment to the Federal Constitution." Such a doctrine is anathema among those who propound theories of money in which no two out of a hundred are in agreement. Mr. Tucker's contention that it is the wealthy interests that profit by the devaluation of the dollar, and his accompanying demonstration will be new to the loose thinkers who argue for inflation in the interests of the poor debtor. This Mr. Tucker makes clear. Nothing can be better than the way this is done.

The chapter on "Government and Law" carries us into higher fields of thought, and in Chapter XIII, which is entitled "The Land Privilege" he approaches the problem on which all these minor problems rest. Here he says: "The outstanding instance of the perpetuation of privilege is our recognition of private property in what should be the heritage of all."

Unlike so many writers of the day who, deriving their economics from Henry George fall into the fashion of belittling him on some minor point, our author acknowledges his indebtedness to "Progress and Poverty" and lists the names of prominent Americans who are similarly indebted. This is refreshing in one who has made so important a contribution to the subject.

In Chapter XIV Mr. Tucker deals with the practical aspect of the remedy. In his definitions he treads ground familiar to most of us and no fault can be found with his treatment. It is essentially unsailable.

In his chapters on "Corporations and Utilities" he approaches more controversial grounds. To give it fair treatment would require more space than we can devote. With the degree of caution that is necessary for their consideration our author nevertheless argues for regulation that will avoid the abuses which have grown painfully familiar to us. He is not afraid of the cry of socialism that may greet his recommendations, for he reminds us that "no principle is involved." It simmers down to questions of expediency and the adequate protection of the public, and he stops far short, as we should expect, of government ownership or public operation. His arguments against the assumption of the "utilities" by the State are effectively marshalled. Our author lays down the kind and degree of regulation he would recommend, and here he has some sharp things to say of public accounting in the business operations of government.

The chapter on "Taxation" is alone worth the price of the book. No one has written more effectively on the subject. If the author cannot restrain his indignation and contempt for the wiles of the politician and the dumbness of the average citizen it is a reaction which most of us who have any knowledge at all of the subject will share. In this chapter Mr. Tucker has made what we regard as an original contribution put forth with much clarity. There is so much that is quotable that we hesitate at appropriate instances like the following which might be indefinitely extended:

"The writer will freely concede that until we have the brains to take for public use the rent that belongs to us, and as long as we support government by the confiscation of private property, the ability to pay theory of taxation is not to be entirely discredited; if we must support government by theft, let us at least steal from those who can best afford the losses."

We might, if we choose, take exceptions to some of the arguments advanced under the chapter headed "The Privilege of Inheritance." We are so convinced of the right of property as a sacred right that we would extend such right even to its disposal at time of death. But we are content to leave the problems involved to the reader of this remarkable book, for the author confesses that they must be solved by compromise and judgment, for "here things are not sharply black and white." It seems to us that fortunes left by inheritance are frequently dissipated, more frequently than not we think, and so no harm is done to society but only to the individual, and again if there is a chance, as there always is, of its being placed to profitable use, and thus benefiting society, public policy might well dictate the leaving of inheritances to find their level. But even in this chapter it

will be well for the reader to carefully consider the suggestions that are advanced as a study of the question rather than positive solutions.

The chapter on "Privilege and Labor" will be found difficult doctrine for organized labor, yet it is true in every word.

The chapter on "A Programme" is *our* programme, definitely and conservatively stated.

In Chapter XXII, "The Prospect," the author advances into the question of ethics and concludes, this being the last chapter, as follows:

"Those who seek enlightenment on some of the purely personal relations of ethics and economics may well read that unfinished and comparatively little known fragment of Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Lay Morals'—a bit upsetting but so is much worthwhile literature; and there is another book, especially valuable if one will read it without prejudice or seeking to ease his conscience by twisting its teachings and seeking there only metaphors and analogies;—it was written by a man named Luke nearly two thousand years ago."

Thus ends this very valuable contribution to our philosophy. It is written with splendid clarity. It is the book of a decade; no one can read it without profit. It supports the accepted teachings of Henry George and stands on the shelf side by side with the few which constitute permanent additions to the philosophy of freedom.

J. D. M.

LIFE OF ABRAM S. HEWITT

"Abram S. Hewitt with Some Account of Peter Cooper." By Allan Nevins. 605 pp. Price \$4.00. Harper Bros., N. Y. City.

The life of Peter Cooper is the story of a country boy who made good in the big city. True, New York was his birthplace, "but that was when it had fewer than 35,000 people." When he died in 1883, at the age of 92, he had given Cooper Union \$1,500,000, besides leaving it an additional \$150,000. Magnificent sums for those days, and for these days too.

Abram Hewitt, on the other hand, although born poor, enjoyed a more even flow of this world's goods. He managed to be graduated from Columbia College, and, for one year thereafter, to travel with Cooper's only son through England, France, Germany and Italy.

Since his sixteenth year he had been the intimate friend of the latter and had come under the eye of his future father-in-law. For over sixty years he was to be associated in business with them. In 1853, eight years after Hewitt had returned, penniless, from his European trip, he was worth \$175,000.

The interest of readers of LAND AND FREEDOM will be drawn to the chapter describing the New York City mayoralty campaign of 1886, wherein Henry George, Abram Hewitt and Theodore Roosevelt were pitted against one another. In facial outline, and testiness of manner, Hewitt reminds me of William J. Gaynor who succeeded him as Mayor.

Professor Nevins states that George had disclaimed any intention, if elected, of trying to put his economic ideas into execution. (Page 464). What is his authority for this statement? His campaign speeches, compiled by Post and Leubuscher in 1887, (which Professor Nevins fails to mention) indicate the contrary.

Referring to the public collection of rent, our author states that Hewitt would have been willing to go as far as John Stuart Mill "but, like all economists of standing, *then and since*, he was unwilling to go as far as George." (Page 564). (Italics mine). Is it not a gratuitous assumption upon the part of our author that economists, then and since, see not eye to eye with George? If Professor Nevins will make discreet inquiry among American colleges, he will find, today, many teachers who not only agree with George, but study his writings in their class and openly espouse his philosophy.

Our author states that Hewitt "protested against class war ideas drawn from Karl Marx, for between Capital and Labor there never is, and never can be, any antagonism. They are natural and inseparable allies." (Page 465). Hewitt would have us infer that George