

BOOK REVIEWS.

A NOTABLE WORK.

A book giving the history of the Digger movement and the striking figure of its leader in the days of the English Commonwealth has been needed ever since Mr. Lewis H. Berens, through the columns of the *Single Tax REVIEW* and elsewhere, told us something of this remarkable prophet of the people who, by reason of his commanding abilities and magnificent devotion deserves to rank among the great reformers. That Gerrard Winstanley has not received the honors due him from the too partial hand of history is owing to the fact that the great truth for which he stood was overborne. The generation for which he worked was unmindful of the light of which he was the torchbearer, and he was one of the great prophets of unsuccess.

More than usually endowed with the faculty of philosophic reasoning was this sturdy reformer, as many of his compact and far reaching generalizations prove. His mind was singularly acute and powerful, and his expression often eloquent and forcible.

It was in 1649 that Gerrard Winstanley with his associates began to dig upon Surrey Hill and sow the ground with parsnips, carrots and beans. Thence originated the name by which they began to be known—the Diggers—perhaps as unfortunate an appellation in their day as ours (*Single Taxers*) in this, since it tended to obscure the broad universal principle they were teaching. How firm was Winstanley's grasp on the essential truth this paragraph from "The New Law of Righteousness," must suffice among many quotable passages;

"And this is the beginning of particular interest (monopoly?) buying and selling the earth from one particular hand to another, saying, 'This is mine,' holding this particular propriety by a law of his own making, and thereby restraining other fellow-creatures from seeking nourishment from their Mother Earth. So that though a man was bred up in a land, yet he must not work for himself where he would, but for him who had bought part of the land, or had come to it by inheritance of his deceased parents, and called it his own land. So that he who had no land was to work for small wages for those who called the land theirs. Thereby some are lifted up in the chair of tyranny, and others trod under the footstool of misery, as if the earth were made for a few and not for all men."

Whereas we would say to-day that land monopoly is the basis of industrial slavery by which some are exalted and many degraded, Winstanley put the same thought

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in the language of metaphor, with which he constantly enriched his strong and sturdy habit of expression. Something, too, of the mysticism of his theology permeated his thought and language; something, too, of a prophetic utterance, characteristic of those who have glimpses of universal truth. This is curiously similar in all those whose names are allied with that of Henry George as "precursors" of his in the discovery of the truth which to-day numbers hundreds of thousands of adherents—Winstanley, Spence, Dove, and George himself—fuller, completer, more emphatic and defiant in George than in any of the others, in keeping with his firmer and more comprehensive grasp of the great truth which the others had striven to teach—and had indeed taught well according to their lights.

Mr. Berens has made Winstanley a real and impressive figure. The chapters of the book which treat of the Reformation and the Civil War contain many valuable reflections on the history of the period, its seething political and social unrest. This part of the volume reinforces Hon. Joseph Leggett's opinion that no reform movement is so valuable in good literature as ours. Mr. Berens' work is a contribution to the library of our propaganda of permanent historic interest and usefulness.

J. D. M.

GREAT ECONOMIC CHANGES POSSIBLE BY ENFORCEMENT OF PRESENT LAWS.

A recent number of "The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science" contains a symposium on Taxation in American Cities. The cities considered are Buffalo, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Detroit, Washington, Seattle, Grand Rapids, Milwaukee and Duluth. While the systems of taxation in these cities differ somewhat and the conditions differ still more, the similarities are striking. In all the cities some revenue is derived from sources other than taxation. Cincinnati obtains the largest revenue in proportion from sources which are not classed as taxation source. 60 per cent of its revenue, however, is derived from taxation. A large part of the 40 per cent is obtained from subjects which in other cities contribute taxes. For example, a railway pays \$1,000,000 as rental, and the street railways pay \$250,000 as a percentage on their receipts. Milwaukee obtains 85 per cent of its revenue from taxation, and the percentage of revenue from taxation in the other cities is greater than in Cincinnati and less than in Milwaukee.

The only city in which real estate is said to be assessed at its full value is Detroit, and that is also the only city in which vacant land is said to be assessed at its full value, although the very interesting asser-