

MAXIME TOUBEAU

1882-1969

IN OUR last issue we were able to announce only briefly the death of this distinguished leader of the Georgeist movement in France, the news reaching us too late for more adequate tribute to one who, in addition to being President of La Ligue Francaise pour la Reforme Foncière, Fiscale et le Libre-Echange and a Vice-President of the International Union for Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade, was a Commander of the Legion of Honour, Honorary Director to the Ministry of Agriculture, a Doctor of Literature and Law, a distinguished administrator and an admirable poet.

Although Maxime Toubeau was only eight years of age when his father died, some reference to the father helps to explain the son's career, and it illustrates that unique and significant aspect of our philosophy, that at different times and in different circumstances men of active minds and sympathies seeking an explanation of social evils, have, unknown to each other, discovered the same universal injustice and the same natural remedy.

Albert-Maximilien Toubeau, 1836-1890, was born in Belgium in such poor circumstances that he received only an elementary education and but for his delicate health might have become a miner. As clerk to a solicitor, however, his extraordinary thirst for knowledge led him not only to the studies necessary for the legal profession but also to a profound investigation of social philosophy, and from the 1870s he wrote for reviews, first in Belgium and later in France, where he became a citizen.

He was influenced by the Physiocrats and by the Belgian sociologist Professor Colins, who, amongst other doctrines, advocated the

nationalisation of land. A. M. Toubeau recognised land freedom as the basis of all freedom, but seeing the dangers and difficulties of the nationalisation method he published in 1880 a scholarly work, *The Metric Distribution of Taxa-*

tion, in which he advocated land-value taxation under the title of Metric Tax.

It was not until four years afterwards that Toubeau read *Progress and Poverty*, and, recognising the identity of view, got in touch with Henry George. When in 1889 France celebrated the centenary of the great revolution, Henry George was invited to Paris to preside at an agrarian congress from which emerged a "Universal Agrarian Federation" of which A. M. Toubeau was appointed secretary, only to die a few months later. Lacking his initiative, the Federation languished, but the seed had been sown.

Maxime Toubeau had a brilliant career at the Sorbonne, in law, literature and philosophy. Entering the Ministry of Agriculture he eventually became director of an important legal branch until his retirement in 1948, but he had before this begun to write on economic subjects, especially for a periodical *La Terre*, founded in Brussels by a prominent business man, Sam Meyer. This journal became in 1929 *Terre et Liberté*, and the movement grew, with Daudé Bancel as editor of the journal, until in 1939 Sam Meyer was arrested and eventually shot by the Nazis. It was revived in 1947 by Maxime Toubeau and Daudé Bancel but without the financial backing of Sam Meyer, and in the disturbed post-war atmosphere progress was difficult, especially among the younger generation.

When Daudé Bancel died in 1963, Maxime Toubeau despite his advanced age, made a valiant effort to carry on the journal and the movement, but failing health frustrated him.

He was faithful to the end to those ideals of justice and social duty which always inspired him. His verse, published only at the insistence of his friends, reveals the inner man, the poet-philosopher as sensitive to the outward beauty of creation as to the eternal longings of the spirit, but throughout faithful to the supreme duties of life.

For many of the biographical details of this notice we are indebted

to Maxime Toubeau's eldest son, Albert Toubeau, who shares his father's ideas. To him and his sister and brother, Madame Andre Gouaislin, and Claude Toubeau, we especially extend our sympathy.

F.D.P.