

MICHAEL FLURSCHEIM'S NEW BOOK.

That the "Clue to the Economic Labyrinth,"* by Michael Flurscheim is a disappointment may be to some extent due to its title; "A Labyrinth of Economic Clues" would have been more fitting. For instead of arguing from the complex to the simple Mr. Flurscheim makes the simple complex. This is the result of his expressed scorn for deductive reasoning; for although he sees and says that all reasoning must be both deductive and inductive, yet there is apparent throughout the book a dislike for exact conclusions. His method is to bring against a principle all possible illustrations, which apparently, though not actually, controvert it; but nowhere is there any attempt at an orderly grouping of similarities in these phenomena on which to base a principle which will be in truth a clue. The nearest Mr. Flurscheim comes to furnishing an exact solution is in his description of the advantages of mutual banking. Undoubtedly these will be very great, and Mr. Flurscheim's arguments and illustrations are well worth consideration, but by his own admission there are two fundamental reforms, without which mutual banking would not be of much value. These two are the money reform and land reform. Mr. Flurscheim believes they must come largely together but that the money reform is the most important.

It is his treatment of the land question, however, which will most interest readers of the REVIEW, for Mr. Flurscheim has been called the Australasian Henry George, and indeed has done much to rouse the people of that continent to the iniquity of and economic loss involved in the present system of land ownership. While admitting the effect of "Progress and Poverty" in bringing the land question to the front, and paying the highest tribute to the character and work of Henry George, Mr. Flurscheim disagrees with his remedy, the Single Tax, upon two grounds. One is that it is a confiscation without compensation; yet he argues that the Single Tax can only come slowly at a rate of increase of present taxation which at the best will not bring it for thirty-five years, and that the amount of rental value left the land owner for that period will be more than the principal and interest involved in government purchase now. Just how it will be confiscation to leave the landlord more money than he would get if his property is taken and he is compensated Mr. Flurscheim does not explain. He makes the further argument for government purchase that it will be easier to obtain because more in line with popular ideas.

His other objection to the Single Tax is that it does not guarantee equal access to the earth. Among others the old bogie of

the wealthy man buying up all the land is again trotted out; Mr. Flurscheim does not see that in that extreme case the land would be so valuable that all the population could live without working upon the tax that this one man would have to pay—a proposition he may call an absurdity, but it is no more so than his objection and is a logical answer to it.

His substitute for the Single Tax is government ownership, and it is not surprising, therefore, to learn at the end of the book that Socialism has lost its terrors for Mr. Flurscheim.

There are many apparent contradictions in the 550 pages of the book, and the lack of orderly sequence is bewildering. Although the arguments will not convince one who understands the Single Tax of its injustice or impracticability, it is unfortunate that to those unused to exact thinking many of them will weigh quite as heavily against land nationalization as against the Single Tax, and thus tend to make people endure things as they are. However, there is a wealth of illustrations of the injustice of monopoly of land and money, to offset the caution of the argument, and the book is one which, on the whole, Single Taxers will find worth reading.

One part of it especially the followers of Henry George may well ponder over, and that is the section devoted to interest. The arguments against the justification of interest attempted in "Progress and Poverty" are not stated as clearly as they might be, but a very strong case is made for the position that interest is the result of monopoly of money and land and does not inhere in the nature of things.

A. C. FLEYDELL.

THE WIND TRUST.

This is a little satire in the form of fiction detailing how a company was formed for the control of the wind, and how finally this company, having obtained from the Oriental Supreme Court a decision that air was also included in their original charter, attempted to lay a tax upon the air which the inhabitants must breathe in order to live. Taxes had already been imposed on the favoring gales in the harbor, the amount of such tax being determined by the superficial area of sail; and upon all the windmills of the country. But the attempt to tax the air proved the trust's downfall, for it provoked the revolution that resulted in its ruin. Altogether the little satire is a good one, showing much real cleverness. Its only defect is in its selection of the leader of the revolt, who is said, on account of his prowess, to have borne the name of Buffalo, while his followers were known as

*Clue to the Economic Labyrinth. Swan, Sonnenschein & Co. London, Eng.

* The Wind Trust, a Possible Prophecy, by John Snyder, paper, 36 pages, price, 10 cents. James H. West Co., pubs., 79 Milk St., Boston.