

BOOK REVIEW.

to determine the value of the product of each individual worker in a co-operative commonwealth, where labor-power is no longer a commodity? Ah! who, indeed? Might we not as well try to determine the value of commodities under capitalist production by ascertaining the exact amount of physical and mental energy contributed by each individual worker?

A little further on Mr. Harris tells us that "The truth is, the inventors and captains of productive industry bring a special talent to their work and special exertion, and if you do not pay for it with special and extraordinary profits you will not get it and this, according to science, is the chief source of progress. What but the hope of extraordinary profits nerved the Wrights to their years of experiment and perpetual danger?"

The above quotation gives us an idea of the type of Socialism advocated by Mr. Harris, so we know just about where to commence. When the bourgeois intellectuals, and especially the university professors of Russia tried to sabotage the Soviet Government by refusing to lower their dignity to the extent of educating the working class, we have it on the authority of some of those professors themselves that the Bolsheviks did not hesitate to put them navvying. An atrocity of course— but nevertheless, a solution of the "problem." When men refuse to do the work they can do best, it is a good idea to give them a taste of the work they like to do least. Perhaps Mr. Harris would rather manipulate a pick and shovel on such terms as a proletarian dictatorship might see fit to impose than to illuminate the pages of "Pearson's Magazine" with his bright and witty literary criticism without "hope of extraordinary profits."

Let us take another instance. Two or three years ago it was reported that the salary of Charlie Chaplin was six hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year. (I understand he has had a raise or two since, to offset the rise in the cost of living). This sum represents the "extraordinary profits" that Charlie receives in return for the "special talent and exertion" he brings to his work, said work being that of making an artificial fool of himself, to amuse others. But suppose Charlie lived in a system of society in which profits were abolished, would he still continue to act in his present occupation for the highest standard of living society could produce, or would he prefer to sweep streets on the same terms?

It is not a question of equalizing talent; everyone knows that is impossible. There are few among us who could make such successful fools of themselves as Charlie Chaplin, although we all have considerable talent in that respect. There are not many of us who could edit a magazine as well as Mr. Harris. But there is other work just as useful to society that many of us can do better than either Mr. Harris or Charlie Chaplin.

It is idle to speculate on the future, we know, but I can see no reason why a rat catcher who gives good satisfaction should not receive the best living the world can produce. And we would like to have Mr. Harris or anyone else tell us just what the greatest genius or captain of industry could do with more in a society where exploitation no longer existed?

While it is true that at the present time there are quite a few humans of the hog type who seem to have no other ambition in life than that of accumulating wealth, nevertheless, avarice is not the dominant passion in human society. But the capitalist system of competition and exploitation in industry is particularly adapted to bring out and develop to the utmost the last spark of avarice that lurks in the human character. It is the fact that this impulse is so weak in the great majority of people that makes it so easy for the few to accomplish their purpose.

We would like to have Mr. Harris tell us if it is the "hope of extraordinary profits" that nerved the miners, the structural steel workers, and the workers in other industries to labor under conditions of "perpetual danger" every day of their lives?

Was it the "hope of extraordinary profits" that nerved Giordano Bruno to defend the Copernican system of astronomy, to endure seven years of persecution, and eventually die at the stake rather than recant? Was it the "hope of extraordinary profits" that nerved Karl Marx to write Capital?

(A Group of Essays by Famous Writers—B. W. Huebsch, New York—141 pp.)

THIS book contains excerpts from the writings of Buckle, Emerson, Thoreau, Spencer, Tolstoy, and Wilde; and with some passages omitted, the pamphlet by Kropotkin on "The State: Its Historic Role."

As these men represent comfort, leisure, and culture in the highest degree, no one can object to their views on account of working class bias. It cannot be said of them, that their minds were poisoned by foreign or un-British or un-American agitators. No more representative men could be named in science and literature, and with the exception of Wilde, not one of these men has ever had his honesty of purpose questioned in bourgeois circles; their concepts of the State are therefore of particular interest in these days of rabid democracy.

The Editor, Waldo R. Browne, has taken liberties with the original text of Kropotkin's pamphlet on the grounds that the translation from the French was "poorly done"; of course having the benefit of a second translation, we can be assured that Kropotkin's ideas are fairly reproduced.

Kropotkin as a thinker, as one who has accomplished something in the realm of science commands attention; he is always readable and rarely orthodox. He alone of the seven writers, deals with his subject in a scientific manner. He maintains that a proper understanding of the State can be gained only through studying its historical development; notwithstanding which, he arrives at the purely anarchist concept that "ideas" constitute the basic force in social movements. The free cities of Medieval Europe surrendered to the State—"because the ideas of men had changed. The teaching of canonical and Roman law had perverted them." He looks back with regret at the Individualism which he professes to see in these free cities, and he sees no hope for Society until Individualism again asserts itself in the mind of man.

Curiously enough, all seven authors have the same opinion. This individual Freedom is as vague and complex, and quite as canonical as the Roman "ideas" which perverted the free cities.

Kropotkin finds that the peasants are prompted to combine "in pursuit of their lawful occasions" as the Prayer Book has it, but the State will not permit combination. In fact all anarchists discover the same principle in the State. Pure, canonical freedom is suppressed by the State, and that freedom consists of the right to combine. Truly, individualism must assert itself.

The State as Kropotkin sees it is a creature which has entered the individualistic Garden of Eden, bringing sorrow and sweat and sin. It is as real to him as the Adamite snake is to the orthodox Christian. It does not "belong." History goes on repeating the same story. The primitive tribe becomes the Free City, the Free City becomes the State, then wealth ends its evil ways. So it was in Egypt, in Assyria, in Persia, in Palestine and again "a new civilisation sprang up in Greece, always beginning by the tribe, it slowly reached the village commune, then the period of republican cities. In these cities civilisation reached its highest limits. But the East brought to them its poisoned breath, its traditions of despotism. Wars of conquest created Alexander's empire of Macedonia. The State enthroned itself, killed all civilisation, and then—death."

The original pamphlet says "the State enthroned itself, the bloodsucker grew, killed all civilisation and then came—death." We read, too, that all the great achievements of man end with the Free Cities: from Emerson, Tolstoy or Thoreau we could accept such nonsense as a matter of course, but they come from the pen of the author of "Mutual Aid" and carry with them the conviction that science does not

In conclusion I might say that it was the extraordinary views held by Mr. Harris with regard to Socialism that nerved the writer to rack his brains and test his proletarian education to the limit to produce this article. Not the "hope of extraordinary profits."

F. J. McNEY.

always guide her sons. Let us not forget amidst the grandeur of Greece and the glory of Rome not a glass window let in the light of day or a chimney let out the smoke of fires and every walled city contained besides poets and artists, slaves and masters. The history of man is not a series of paradises destroyed by the State but an unbroken progress, not in a moral but in a mechanical sense.

Buckle is a pioneer in sociology, although he is purely an historian. He saw at least as early as Marx that historical progress was not the result of great men, but resulted from causes beyond the power of man to exchange. Climate and situation affect mankind greatly. In this book a portion of his "History of Civilisation in England" is reproduced. It deals with the influence exercised by government. He frankly tells us that lawmakers have little to do with progress, and that little retards rather than helps. Ideas and knowledge of certain character circulate and become general, then lawmakers give expression to public opinion by enacting the legislation desired.

He was but 41 years old when he died, and in that time had absorbed a truly astonishing amount of historical lore, besides having mastered most European languages and written a "History" in three volumes. When we chance to meet a government official with any pretensions to learning we as surely encounter Buckle. Generally we are advised to read Buckle.

Generally our government official's acquaintance with Buckle extends over just such books as the one under review. (Gems of History Series in ten vols. \$1.00 down and \$1.00 a month till you are sick of them.) Huxley said Buckle was a topheavy man and Spencer said he had taken in more than he could organise and staggered under the mass of it. This gives us the key to his failures, leaving no room to appreciate his tremendous labors and original and daring conception. However, none more respected or influential historian exists for Flunkeydom. Buckle then sees in the State, not a bloodsucker, but a fussy and foolish old lady, always interfering with healthy men and women and by that interference perverting and befouling humankind. "It is no exaggeration to say the history of the commercial legislation of Europe presents every possible contrivance for hampering the energies of commerce." Again (and here is the complete objection of all sentimentalists) "but the accusation which the historian is bound to bring against every government which has hitherto existed is that it has overstepped its proper functions and at each step has done incalculable harm. The love of exercising power has been found to be so universal that no class of men who have possessed authority have been able to avoid abusing it. To maintain order, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak and to adopt certain precautions respecting the public health, are the only services which any government can render to the interests of civilisation."

(To be continued.)

SUBSCRIPTION FORM.

WESTERN CLARION.

A Journal of History, Economics, Philosophy and Current Events.

Official Organ of the Socialist Party of Canada.

Issued twice-a-month, at 401 Pender Street, East, Vancouver, B. C. Phone: High. 2583.

Rate: 20 Issues for One Dollar. Make all moneys payable to E. MacLeod.

For enclosed herewith,
send issues to:—

NAME

ADDRESS