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Review

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Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 68 (Dec., 1907), pp. 541-543

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2220857>

Accessed: 25-06-2016 07:08 UTC

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It is too early yet to give up hope that the gradual extension of the Factory Acts so as to bring the home worker effectively within their scope will succeed in bringing about such improved conditions of housing and sanitation as will afford a basis on which Trade Unionism can operate to raise the standard of life and the rate of wages.

ARCH. B. CLARK

*From Serfdom to Socialism.* By J. KEIR HARDIE, M.P.  
(London: George Allen, 1907. Pp. ix. + 105. 1s. net.)

THIS little book is Mr. Keir Hardie's contribution to the *Labour Ideal Series*—a series the object of which, as the publisher's note informs us, is "to put clearly before the public a complete conspectus of the present policy of the English Socialists and the Independent Labour Party." Mr. Hardie, in his "Foreword," disclaims the intention to write "an elaborate disquisition on the historical basis of Socialism, or to embody its economic theories and principles in a learned treatise." His work is merely "a brief unadorned statement of the case for Socialism, easily understandable by plain folk," written, as he informs us, "literally in the odd half-hours of a busy period in a life crowded with work." As such, therefore, it must be judged.

There can be no question as to the attractive qualities of Mr. Keir Hardie's literary style, or the superficial persuasiveness of his argument. But this latter quality, it seems to us, is gained only by so adjusting the light and shade as to render it easy to ignore some inconvenient historical facts and economic principles.

Mr. Keir Hardie makes light of those who insist on raising difficulties on points of detail, and whose attitude, he says, "is that of the man who could not see the wood for the trees." Our own fundamental objection to his work is that it is all wood and no trees. At all events their outlines are vague and ill-defined. But the plain man to whom he appeals will insist on putting questions till the outlines become clearer and the trees begin to look a little more real and lifelike.

Socialists, Mr. Keir Hardie tells us, seek the same end as Individualists like Herbert Spencer, namely, the freedom of the individual. They differ only as to method (p. 3). But the plain man distrusts that freedom of the individual which is to be secured through the despotic authority of the Socialist State, and may take leave to doubt Mr. Keir Hardie's dictum that "Socialism and

freedom 'gang thegither.'” Again, we are told that the State in its present form is primarily concerned with the preservation of the rights of property (p. 8). And of Individualists Mr. Hardie asks: “If the poor are to be left to struggle for existence unaided by the State, then why not the rich?” (p. 4). But, apart from the objection which may be legitimately taken to this rigid division of society into rich and poor, our author may be invited to consider in his next work whether, in giving security to property, the State is not taking the most obvious means of guaranteeing to the poor the fruits of their toil, and whether it is not the poor whom history shows to have suffered most grievously in times of turbulence and insecurity.

Economists are accustomed to recognise a vital distinction between the gifts of nature, on the one hand, and the fruits of labour and saving, on the other. Mr. Hardie, however, is satisfied that just as the land would remain were the landlord abolished, so would the capital remain were the capitalist abolished (pp. 11–12). The distinction, nevertheless, is fundamental, as is that between the natural and acquired qualities of the land itself; and of this distinction any exposition of Socialism must take account. Well may Mr. Keir Hardie write: “With the speculative side of Socialism the average man with us has but small concern; it is its common-sense which appeals to him” (p. 34). Incidentally a protest may be entered here against our author's too frequent use of question-begging epithets. The capitalist is “a parasite” (p. 5). The pursuit of self-interest is “Mammonism” (p. 22), and the “gospel of Selfishness” (p. 34), and so on.

Mr. Keir Hardie more than once refers to John Stuart Mill's doubt whether mechanical invention had lightened the day's toil of any human being (pp. 48, 99). And he goes on to say: “The social investigator of the twentieth century is prepared to affirm positively that the lot of the poor in normal times under Capitalism is worse than it ever could have been in normal times in any previous period in British history” (pp. 48–9). If for “social” we read “Socialist,” the statement may be accepted. Otherwise, it is emphatically contradicted by every recent authority.

This leads us to note that Mr. Keir Hardie's economic history is throughout in very great need of revision. It is possible to notice here only a few examples. He speaks of the Mediæval Gilds as “originally the equivalent of our modern Trade Unions” (pp. 18, 46). He cites once again that opinion of Thorold Rogers, which has done duty in so many Socialist speeches and pamphlets, that “the fifteenth century and first quarter of the sixteenth”

was "the golden age of the English labourer" (pp. 45-6, cf. p. 80). Mr. Hardie strangely overlooks the fact that more recent writers, e.g., Dr. Cunningham, have shown that this view is untenable, and that, however valuable Thorold Rogers's statistics may be, his deductions from them are to be received with caution. Similarly Mr. Hardie, again following Rogers, attributes the degradation of labour in England partly to the Tudor debasement of the coinage, which he speaks of as having doubled and quadrupled the price of food, ignoring altogether the restoration of the coinage by Elizabeth, and the influence on prices of the great silver discoveries of the sixteenth century (p. 47).

Finally, Mr. Hardie finds the cause of the downfall of Rome in the abandonment of Communism and the growth of Capitalist Individualism. But a deeper study of history may serve to convince our author that the scarcity of money, and the enforced return to that ideal of the Socialist, a natural economy, together with over-organisation and consequent inefficient government and the growth of taxation, were not uninfluential causes in bringing about the ruin of the Roman Empire.

Mr. Keir Hardie appends to his work a long list of quotations from writers on Socialism, and a useful bibliography, to which, however, we would suggest the addition of Dr. Cunningham's *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, and Denton's *England in the Fifteenth Century*.

ARCH. B. CLARK

*The Socialist and the City.* By FREDERICK W. JOWETT.  
(London: George Allen. Pp. 88. Price 1s.)

MR. JOWETT, the author of this little volume, is among the more thoughtful of the Independent Labour group in the House of Commons. His book is an eminently sane one, distinguished by moderation and a sense of the possibilities of the situation. He does not aim at setting before his readers a picture of some ideal Utopia. He is dealing with questions of immediate importance, and aims at supplying the Socialist who has obtained a seat on a town council with a practicable programme. Indeed, so far as the greater portion of his proposals is concerned, he would find few points of difference between himself and others eager for social reform. He feels, and feels rightly, that if Socialism is ever to become a working force, it must descend to mother earth after forsaking its haunts upon the cloud-wrapped mountains of an