WILEY

Review

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Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (Mar., 1892), pp. 129-130

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2955949>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 06:17 UTC

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The Relation of Labour to the Law of To-day. By DR. LUJO BRENTANO.
Translated by PORTER SHERMAN, M.A. New York: G. P.
Putnam's Sons, 1891.

THE translator tells us that, having some years since undertaken the study of the labour question, he could obtain no assistance in America. He found the political economists teaching the wages-fund theory in a very aggravated form, and proceeding on 'the groundless assumption,' as he very properly calls it, that labourers are unable to accomplish anything by organization. He was naturally dissatisfied with this teaching. So he came to Europe, and among the Germans he discovered a school of economists with a due respect for facts. To show his countrymen what history and the true political economy have to say on the labour question, he has translated for them this book of Professor Brentano's. Further study of the subject will, we feel sure, convince him that either he has been unfortunate in the choice of his American teachers, or he has not understood them. But, be this as it may, Professor Brentano's work was worth translating on its own merits, as a vigorous argument on the practicability of raising the labourer's position by means consistent with the continuance of the existing industrial system. A solution of the labour question, says the author, demands the raising of the labourer as a labourer, and not as something else; and the means of doing this are, in cases where the strength of the labourers is insufficient, the interference of the Legislature, and in other cases the organization of labourers into trade unions, culminating in courts of arbitration and agreement. Professor Brentano, who observes that his previous investigations into labour guilds in England had converted Lange from the belief in the necessity of a social revolution, wrote the present work with the view of stating and discussing the labour question in a brief and popular form from the stand-point of the labour guilds. Being intended for popular use, it dispenses with authorities, and is written very dogmatically. It was worth translating, as we have said; but Mr. Sherman somewhat exaggerates its value. If anybody seriously believes in the futility of labour organization, Professor Brentano's book may very likely convince him that he is wrong, but we doubt if it will do much more. Allowing that the position of wage-earning labourers has risen and may be raised yet further, we are still met with the question whether the possibility of general improvement does not lie within comparatively narrow limits; and Professor Brentano does not carry us far towards a satisfactory answer. Many things, moreover, have happened since the book was published in 1876. A translator should have indicated the changes which since that time have come over the labour question as a whole, and trade unionism in particular. And, though it may be of less practical importance, he should have pointed out that other and closer investigators do not accept Professor Brentano's views on the early history of the guilds. But Mr. Sherman

has omitted to give his readers either guidance or warning. It must be said also that in point of style his translation leaves much to be desired.

G. P. MACDONELL

Mutual Thrift. By REV. J. FROME WILKINSON. (Methuen and Co.)

By mutual thrift Mr. Wilkinson means the principle of contributing the savings of many persons to one common fund for the purpose of making provision for casualties liable to affect all the contributors. One form of thrift organization is the savings-bank, in which the individual puts his own savings in and draws his own savings out; another is the friendly society, in which has been elaborated a system of mutual insurance controlled by the members. It is with the latter that Mr. Wilkinson deals. He has already written a useful book on *The Friendly Society Movement*, but there he restricted himself to the affiliated orders. His present work (which is one of a series on *Social Questions of To-day*) is intended as a survey of the whole field of friendly society insurance. He discusses the growth of its various forms, in their two main divisions of societies which give sick pay as well as a sum at death, and societies which give only a sum at death; the difficulties which have beset the movement, through incompetence, lack of foresight, and the inaccuracy of statistics; legislation and Government control; the development and working of industrial assurance companies; and the financial principles on which mutual insurance should be conducted. The book is for popular use, written with the practical purpose of indicating both the importance of mutual insurance and the lines on which it can be safely worked; and in this regard it can be warmly commended to every friendly society official. The general student of social movements will know the very full account of the subject in Baernreither's *Die Englischen Arbeiterverbände* (which has recently been translated); but he will find a distinct value in the sketch of Mr. Wilkinson, who joins a practical knowledge of the working of the societies to an enthusiastic belief in them. Much of the information contained in his pages can only be gathered from reports of the societies, which are not easily accessible, and from Blue-books, which, as he takes pains to show, are not to be blindly trusted in this matter.

Especially in recent years, there has been a marked improvement in friendly society administration; but there is still a great deal to be done. There is still an insufficient appreciation of principles on which Mr. Ansell insisted more than fifty years ago: that contributions should be adequate to the benefits promised; that they should be graduated according to age on entry; and that a society should use its own experience to correct the tables of sickness and mortality on which it acts.

The efficiency of the societies depends upon the courage of the