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The Economic Journal

Political Socialism: A Remonstrance. Edited by MARK H. JUDGE. (London: P. S. King & Son, 1908. Pp. 187.)

THIS is a collection of papers by members of the British Constitution Association, published in a popular form. The volume, as its sub-title implies, is an attack, from many points of view, on political socialism, and the names of its contributors sufficiently suggest its tone. The presidential addresses of Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Lord Hugh Cecil are eloquent dissertations on the theme of the Association's watch-words, "personal liberty" and "personal responsibility." Of the less general papers the most interesting are perhaps those of the Rev. P. S. G. Propert on unemployment and of Dr. Sibley on secondary education. The former writes with all the force of his experience as guardian against relief works, pleading for the co-ordination of charitable societies and recourse to the poor law, according to the recent successful practice of his union at Fulham. He does not, however, make any allusion to the encouragement of insurance against unemployment, which is often suggested as a part of such a policy. Dr. Sibley, from the point of view of the Private Schools Association, denounces the nationalisation of secondary education and the uniformity of type which must, in his opinion, be the result of transforming the grammar schools and crushing private ventures. Some recent statistics are given in illustration of this. Lord Avebury expounds once more his facts and arguments against municipal or national trading. Sir William Chance has a paper on the alternative to old age pensions, and Sir Arthur Clay on the probable and the realised effects of the State-feeding of children.

Some of these papers seem likely, at present, to be of more historical interest than practical value, owing to the development of affairs since they were written. The attitude of the individualist, moreover, unless he indulges in rhetorical effusions on liberty and personal dignity, is apt to be so negative as to appear less immediately attractive than that of the socialist enthusiast. It is possible, therefore, that the British Constitution Association will be a more effective antagonist of "popular" socialist publications when it has developed the constructive side of its programme. In any case, dispassionate—and accessible—criticism by experts must have its value in guiding public opinion on legislative experiments in socialism.

C. V. BUTLER