WILEY

Review

Author(s): P. G. C.

Review by: P. G. C.

Source: *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Dec., 1906), pp. 765-768

Published by: Wiley for the Royal Statistical Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2339278>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 02:59 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Wiley, Royal Statistical Society are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*

of check. The data of the Census reports are handled here with considerable force as illustrating what are the true features of the recent movement in different kinds of districts, and these well deserve attention in detail; and here alone we may perhaps venture to offer a word of statistical criticism on so useful a treatise. The defective nature of the occupation statistics which the English Census offers is not so fully insisted on as perhaps it might have been, complicating as it does very materially the comparison between one date and another.

The work, however, which Professor Nicholson has compressed into this little volume of 176 pages is undoubtedly valuable alike for the instruction of the student, and for the warning of the hasty politician, and we heartily welcome this completion of the series of Cambridge lectures on agricultural problems. P.G.C.

6.—*The Return to the Land.* By Senator Jules Méline, with a preface by Mr. Justin McCarthy. London: Chapman and Hall, 1906.

The original title of the volume here translated was *Le Retour à la Terre et la Surproduction Industrielle*, and the last words would have helped to explain the author's standpoint had they been retained. The very eulogistic preface of Mr. Justin McCarthy, however, makes clear the scope, and even claims this English version of M. Méline's recent work as a volume "destined to make a deep mark upon the age." In more than one way it may be admitted the book undoubtedly is remarkable. For, first of all, the theme is weighty, and the conclusions by no means limited to the pictures drawn of the existing relations of industry and agriculture in France. The treatment, too, for a work which tackles grave political, economic, and statistical problems, is light, attractive, and even rhetorical. It would not be, of course, fair to hold the author responsible for every flourish of the somewhat picturesque pen which the translator wields and the slips which apparently he has occasionally made. But it is to the arguments rather than their dress that criticism must be mainly directed; and this will be forthcoming, no doubt, from others than statistical writers. The writer, M. Méline, it need hardly be said, is no poet or dreamer, but a man of affairs, a leader of the moderate Republican party in France, and a statesman who has been successively Minister of Commerce, Minister of Agriculture, and Prime Minister of the Republic. Recognised as a champion of protective duties, he has also the reputation of being a singularly well-informed and enthusiastic advocate of other measures—practical, scientific, and legislative—for the promotion and improvement of agriculture. Even, therefore, where his economic views are rejected, his description of what has been and what can be done for the land will be studied.

What the statistical student will ask for when he consults a volume of this type is not for eloquence or persuasive language, but how far the evidence on which the ex-Premier here relies establishes his premises and comes up to the standard necessary to secure acquiescence in the conclusions. These are that the future of the

nations lies in a general return to the soil and a fuller use of the land itself, with a general abandonment of what is assumed to be an internecine struggle of the nations to swamp each other's industries by a flood of unneeded manufactures. For these buyers are wanting, and the manufacturing industries are, we are assured, already finding this out; the return on the capital employed is dwindling, and the masses of labour, diverted from their proper home in the fields, are crowding with unemployed workers the cities, which are themselves the product of over-developed industrialism. M. Méline's history shows us that this industrial race was led first of all by England, and next by Germany; but that country again has been distanced by the exporting energy of the United States, which is attracting in its turn the Continental Powers of the Old World. Yet even that Transatlantic Power, it is predicted, will ere long have to yield industrial pre-eminence to the Rising Sun of Japan.

One by one the ex-Premier examines the leading industries of his own country, and pronounces the output overdone and the profits waning, while the land is being deserted, and a vagabond army of 400,000 tramps is constituting a scourge and a danger to society. Relying on the estimates of the Antwerp Statistical Bureau, he finds in the world as a whole an aggregate export of 60,000,000,000 frs. in 1903, against 46,000,000,000 frs. seven years before, and he claims this ratio to be out of all proportion to the growth in the world's population, or the increased consuming power which might be due to advanced prosperity.

Back to the land, therefore, he asserts, must come the labourers, whose agglomeration in factories has produced this plague of unabsorbed abundance, and back to the land and its more effective and intensive development must be drawn the capital which has fled. It is when he turns to paint what agriculture has lost, and what she has yet to regain, even in France herself, that the English reader is startled, and asks if the picture be not more deeply shaded than the commonly received statistics warrant. Those who are never weary of telling us in England that the depopulation, often exaggerated, of country districts is largely due to our land system of great estates and the prevalence of tenancy against ownership, will find matter for reflection in M. Méline's account of the results of the agricultural crisis in his own country, where the peasant owner bulks so largely. With revenues cut down one-half, and the capital value of the land vastly reduced, with farmers and petty landowners speeding off to the cities to recruit the swollen numbers of middlemen traders and wineshop keepers already there, and with labourers crowding the mills and shunning the fields, we seem to have presented to us an experience little looked for under French conditions.

But our author hints that even wider disaster would have followed, but for the shelter of the duties which have at least stood between the perishing French farmer and the desolating force of foreign competition. Indeed, on the strength of certain estimates by M. Henri Sagnier, the "foreign invader" would seem to have been repelled, and an excess importation of agricultural produce,

reckoned at 441,000,000 frs. in 1884, is claimed to have been turned into an excess of agricultural produce exported, amounting to 124,000,000 frs., in 1904. Still, even this has not set up the national industry securely on its legs, although we are told hope is returning, and a return to the land in sight if only further remedies be applied by the State.

What the rural exodus in France has actually amounted to, and what force is required to set the deserted acres to work again, nowhere exactly appears in this volume. But after what is said here, one's appetite for the overdue figures of the decennial *enquête* due in 1902, but not yet revealed, is certainly whetted. For surely in the one passage where M. Méline gives us certain figures relating to the diminution of a particular class, he has good reason to complain of his translator, for the passage as printed contains a grievous statistical error, and one which unhappily seems to have entirely misled certain English commentators on the lessons of this book.

We are told—and the passage lends itself to facile newspaper quotations—that, in France, “the number of peasant proprietors went down from 1,134,000 in 1862 to 727,000 in 1882, and in 1902 it had sunk to 589,000”—surely an unlucky slip, containing two notable errors, as well as being absolutely inconsistent with M. Méline's later statement—that a bulwark against agrarian socialism will be found in “the *three million* proprietors who represent half our agricultural population.” Let us hasten to acquit M. Méline. It is not “peasant proprietors” as a whole whose reduction is bewailed in the figures given above, but—in the original French—*journaliers propriétaires*, quite a different and much more limited class, the proportion of working labourers of rural France who, beyond their wage-earning services on the farms of others, are themselves possessed of small portions of the soil. Even so reduced, it is true the movement is striking and suggestive enough, and well worthy of further examination at a moment when the steady effect of a small ownership is so widely proclaimed. But to be sure of its economic meaning, we would need to have before us the parallel movement of all other agricultural classes. If we recollect aright, the official report on the 1892 inquiry suggests an addition to the peasant proprietors who do not work for wages. Again, it is surely the English translator and not the French Prime Minister who gives 1902 as the date at which this class had sunk to 589,000 persons, for these were the exact numbers of the group in the 1892 inquiry, and no data for 1902 have yet reached us here.

We have been tempted by the use made of the wrongly interpreted figures to leave too little time to M. Méline's long list of measures which have yet to be secured before the full return which he wishes to the soil can be achieved. Briefly, then, he relies on a greater use of facilities for credit to agriculturists, such as the network of 1,500 mutual loan banks is beginning to afford, so that the small farmer should only have “to put out his hand” to get possession of the small amount of capital he needs to purchase the fertilisers and the live stock he requires. Already, French

agriculture, he claims, has no reason to be jealous of manufacture in this respect, and can find borrowed money at low rates since the Bank of France placed at the disposal of the regional banks 40,000,000 frs. without charging them interest. A large extension of co-operative methods is also recommended, a direction in which considerable strides have been made. Relief from oppressive taxation of the land in France is yet another remedy demanded to make farming again popular, a claim which is echoed very widely in England. But the statistics M. Méline quotes surely require some detailed revision, for they put the existing incidence of French land taxation as high as 36 or even 41 per cent. on the revenue, while he warns his political opponents of the aggravation of the farmers' burdens which the threatened direct income tax would impose. Education, as with ourselves, is needed to be yet more fully spread, and the return of women to a love for and interest in agricultural work is advocated if men are to be retained on the farms. Insurance measures, savings banks, free hospitals, almshouses, and the enactment of a "Homestead Law," securing a *bien de famille*, inalienable and not to be mortgaged, is demanded to benefit social life and guarantee tranquility. These and many other reforms are pleaded for as still needful to stem the exodus ascribed to the undue growth of industrialism and to secure a successful re-settlement on the soil. This list of what has still to be done is at least sufficient to prove, on the evidence of the ex-Premier himself, that neither the French land system nor the French protective duties have by themselves sufficed to meet the difficulties which still impede a revival of complete agricultural prosperity. P.G.C.

7.—*La Femme dans l'Industrie*. By H. Gonnard. Paris: Armand Colin, 1906. Price 3 frs. 50 c.

M. Gonnard's interesting study of women's industrial work shows, among other things, that the distribution of women in occupations in France is curiously unlike our own. Dressmaking and other kinds of work connected with clothes, including millinery, umbrella making, and the laundry, occupy over 1,000,000 women in France, greatly exceeding the numbers employed in domestic service (737,000); whilst with us, on the contrary, domestic service is far the largest women's industry (1,285,000), those employed in dress—including laundry workers, to correspond with M. Gonnard's figures—numbering less than 900,000. Perhaps one explanation of the alleged scarcity of servants with us is that the servant-keeping class is here either larger or more luxurious than in France, and demands a larger proportion of servants to population. It is curious also to find that M. Gonnard, writing for a French public, stops to explain why the proportion of men in domestic service is *only* about 1 to every 3 women. This proportion seems very large to us in England, who keep only about 1 manservant to every 27 women, and can reckon more than five times as many women as men in "domestic offices and services" generally. Whatever be the explanation of the fewer servants in France, the preponderance