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Economics is a subject of the greatest importance. Nothing but the union of clear thinking and accurate reasoning with a knowledge of concrete facts can lead us to sound conclusions. The detailed study of the actual, if uncombined with proper theory, will not lead us very far. The collection of stones is not the sole work of the geologist. He must collect with an object. He must classify on a principle. He must theorise in order to make a proper scientific hypothesis to co-ordinate his facts. Descriptive economics has its uses, it also has its dangers; M. du Maroussem does not see them very clearly.

C. P. SANGER

L'Utilité sociale de Propriété individuelle. Par ADOLPHE LANDRY.
(Paris: G. Bellais. 1901.)

IT is difficult, while reading this book, not to feel that its views are out of date. Not indeed that there is nothing original in the book; on the contrary it would appear that a good deal of M. Landry's arguments are not to be found elsewhere. But for the time being socialism, in this country at any rate, seems to have fallen out of fashion; consequently one feels that it is unfortunate that this book did not appear say ten or fifteen years ago. Then it might have been hailed with delight by secretaries of trade unions and progressive radicals; now it is hard not to feel a sense of unreality in reading it.

The above remarks are not intended to imply that this work is not scientific in form, or that such parts of it as are true are not valuable, or that the economist should follow the base arts of the politician and try to produce his book at a time when it should be most effective; but it cannot be denied that a great change in the economic organisation of a country cannot be effected except under the stress of economic forces or the play of great feeling. At present the nationalisation of the means of production seems very remote, and though it is good that the scientific economist should go to the root of the matter, yet in a matter of such practical importance the author should indicate more clearly the precise legal and economic changes needed to attain the ideal he aims at.

The general outline of the author's argument is as follows: Under the present *régime* of private property, the result of which is that a comparatively few individuals own or control a large part of the means of production, society as a whole loses or fails to gain a large amount of material wealth. In the first place, taking money value as the measure of utility, it often pays the capitalist-entrepreneur to restrict his production in order to obtain a higher price for his goods. In the second place, because money is of different value to different people, the goods produced are not consumed by those to whom they are most useful. Hence, concludes M. Landry, we must abolish private property as the means of production.

Now, what is the economic justification of a *régime* of free com-

petition? It is, that the rates of exchange of one article for another are determined so that the total utility is a maximum. In so far as monopoly conditions exist (and they always are liable to exist to some extent) we have not got free competition; but this is an argument against monopoly and not against free competition. The second question is more serious. The distribution of riches at present is by no means that which gives the maximum utility to the nation. It is true that on every exchange there is a gain of utility, for if not why should the exchange be made? But for an exchange there must be a gain of utility to both parties: the total gain of utility might be greater if one party lost a little and the other gained a great deal. So that under the present *régime* wealth is not distributed so as to make the total amount of utility a maximum. If, however, incomes were more equal the possibility of increasing the total utility by rearrangement of wealth (except by the method of exchanges under free competition) would be greatly diminished. Thus, a more equal distribution of wealth would make each exchange more truly tend to maximise the total utility afforded to the community by that wealth. The equal distribution of wealth would be difficult to effect in practice, owing chiefly to the infirmities of human nature; a different distribution of the results of production would in all probability cause a great diminution in the total amount of production, and hence might cause a loss of utility to the nation which adopted communistic principles.

Considered as a scientific treatise on economics, this book fails chiefly because the author does not give sufficiently rigid proofs of his propositions. He has a tiresome habit of giving arithmetical or algebraic illustrations, instead of using the calculus. On the other hand, the question of the relation of private property to social utility has not always been sufficiently considered by orthodox economists, and M. Landry's book in provoking criticism compels his readers to think. It should be mentioned that a not inconsiderable portion of the book is taken up with the exposition and criticism of the views of M. Effertz.

C. P. SANGER

Le Finanze degli Stati Composti. By FREDERICO FLORA. (Turin: Fratelli Bocca. 1900.)

PROFESSOR FLORA'S little book, which forms vol. 31 of the *Biblioteca di Scienze sociali*, deals with a subject of considerable and increasing interest. The subject of the relations between local and imperial taxation is now attracting some interest in this country, and it seems inevitable that if ever Imperial federation does become an accomplished fact, the question of the financial relations between the Imperial and Local Governments will not be very easily solved. A study of the existing financial arrangements of composite states will