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Review

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each for his own part—under the same headings and with the same divisions, on the aspects which these phenomena assume in their own particular sphere.

They define the parasite as *an individual living at the expense of another without destroying it and without benefiting it*: which might be said with as much truth of the child at the breast as of true parasites. Then M. Massart in the biological field, and M. Vandervelde in the social field, trace for us the diverse forms of parasitism (its manner of borrowing nourishment, force and life), its evolution, and the influence of the parasitic life on the parasite itself as well as on the “parasité.”

I assume that what M. Massart so clearly sets forth is incontrovertible. Let others judge whether it is the same in regard to the picture of social parasitism when I explain that M. Vandervelde ranges as parasites, landed proprietors (who are the *tœniada* of the social body), courtiers holding sinecures (forming a court), those who live by prostitution, usurers, professional delinquents, stock jobbers, feudal lords (who once imposed compulsory labour), sham beggars, charlatans, pseudo-scientists, “sweaters,” of course, and the shareholders of joint stock companies, &c. At first it is all somewhat amusing, but after a time this kind of play gets fearfully aggravating because one sees too much of the wires.

To sum up, I fancy that this double-barrelled essay is of a nature tending definitely to discredit the abuse of biological metaphor in Sociology.

ERNEST MAHAIM.

*Overproduction and Crises.* By KARL RODBERTUS, translated by JULIA FRANKLIN, with an Introduction by J. B. CLARK. (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. 1898.)

GREAT though the interest is attaching to the first work by Rodbertus which has been translated into English, it is impossible to avoid tempering congratulation by regret on the present occasion. This particular book is not a very happy choice on the part of the translator, partly no doubt by reason of its controversial character, though mainly because it touches but slightly and yet dogmatically on many of the cardinal features in the theory of this great socialist thinker. It is still more unfortunate that a title should be prefixed to a work which deals only in part with the subject denoted and which would be described more correctly as the second letter to von Kirchmann. If it was necessary to give another than the general title, at any rate, care should have been taken to have avoided the suggestion that this work was mainly and specifically occupied with the consideration of over-production. With regard to the matter of this volume there are two things to be noticed. It is one of a series, nominally of three, but substantially of four letters which Rodbertus wrote to his friend and opponent von Kirchmann in exposition of his views, and in this particular

instance the work which he took in hand was the contrast of the accounts given by them as to the causes of the economic disorder which shows itself in the grave symptoms of pauperism and commercial crises. These, however, cannot be fully considered without reference to the general features of a theory of distribution and a social philosophy. So in justice to Rodbertus readers of this book must in the first place disregard the title, and in the second place remember that the book itself requires supplementing. Still, taking it as it is, there is in it much of interest and importance, as is shown by the contrast between the view of society he champions and that which he attacks. Von Kirchmann in his diagnosis of social ill, distinguishes two symptoms as of special gravity, namely Pauperism and Crises. In his further endeavour to trace these to their causes, he lays great stress on differential rent as the cause of the first, and on certain functional derangements as the main cause of the second. In reply to him Rodbertus first of all attacks the Ricardian theory of rent both as to its validity and as to the importance attached to it, and then endeavours to prove that the phenomena in question can be referred to a common cause, namely the existence, or more strictly speaking, the continued existence of private ownership of land and capital, or, to use the more ordinary expression, of the instruments of production. Without entering at any length into the views he expresses as to rent, which are still further elaborated in the third letter, it may be pointed out that they are directed in the main against the grave results attributed to it by the followers of Ricardo, among whom ranks von Kirchmann. That rent is due in some measure to differences in fertility is not contested, though those are treated as cause of its increase and not of its essential existence. In answer to the question he foresaw as to the true cause he elaborates a theory of ground rent as arising from certain differences between processes of manufacture and agriculture or extraction—a theory which should be studied in his own pages inasmuch as it stands in organic relationship with the socialist difficulty with regard to interest or profits, which are first derived from labour by a method of expropriation, consequently varying in amount with labour, and are then seen to be appropriated by the interest or profit recipient in proportion to his capital and not to the labour it employs. Apart, however, from this general connection the Rodbertian theory of ground rent as distinct from profits is not important, as it is in itself mainly based on an error in calculation. Behind it and his theory of profits as due to expropriation, and behind also his assault on the positions maintained by von Kirchmann lies the implicit contention that the disorders of the state are due, not as this latter asserts to inevitable law and minor social defects, but to a radical defect in the whole organisation of society and that until this be removed society must remain a ready prey to the expropriator.

When we turn to the particular question of over-production which is one of the two symptoms which both writers agree in detecting, the

argument of Rodbertus admits of fairly simple summary. Society is treated as consisting of two classes, those who labour and those who receive rent or unearned income or revenue, these terms being for the present purpose convertible. Owing to the superior competitive strength of possession in the conditions of production over labour the proportion in which the total produce is divided is continually changing, to the detriment it need hardly be said of the working class: in other words the share of labour is ever diminishing. Lastly the direction of production lies in the hands of irresponsible individuals whose only guide to what they should produce is the experience of the past. The result according to Rodbertus is obvious and inevitable. Any improvement in productive power naturally leads to an increase in the production of what may be termed revenue goods and working class goods in the same proportions which these originally held. But during this very time labour has been exploited and subjected to a decrease in its proportionate though not its absolute share, so that the goods when finally in the market exist in wrong proportions to the power of purchase then resident in the two classes. Owing further to the recurrent or rather continuous nature of this change adjustment never has time to take effect before a new depression occurs with a demand for a new adjustment. The cause of over-production then is not inequality but increasing inequality. This feature must be emphasised here because it is on it that the argument turns. Despite its importance, it receives far too little notice on many criticisms on Rodbertus. Thus, though not overlooked by Professor Clark, its particular conditions and consequences are insufficiently taken into account in the somewhat summary conclusion at which he arrives.

The true importance of Rodbertus, however, lies not so much in his treatment of this or that particular point as in the extraordinary suggestiveness of his writings and the central conceptions set forth as to the growth of society and the relationship of economic and social life.

E. C. K. GONNER

*Reflections on the Formation and the Distribution of Riches, by Turgot, 1770.* Translated and Edited by Prof. W. J. ASHLEY. (New York: Macmillan. Pp. xxii, 112. 1898. Price 3s. net.)

THIS volume, in the series of Prof. Ashley's Economic Classes, deserves more notice from the reviewer than could be given to some of its predecessors, like the reprints of chapters from the writings of Malthus and Richard Jones. Turgot's sketch first appeared in the form of articles in the *Éphémérides*, 1770, then edited by Du Pont de Nemours. As is well known, Du Pont revised the articles before they were published, and this led to a passing tiff with Turgot. The alterations made by Du Pont were, if an editor of an Economic Journal can judge, small and unimportant compared with the fuss