

an institution, having State support and extending to the whole Empire, for the maintenance of old and infirm persons" (p. 14). For comment I would refer to an article in *THE ECONOMIC JOURNAL* of June, 1911, in which I gave some particulars of, and commented on, the large increases in recent years in poor law charges. There are many reasons extraneous to insurance why poor law charges have increased, and it may be true, as many able and experienced apologists have held, that the increases are in despite of relief afforded by the insurance schemes. But this remains to be conclusively proved. As I have stated elsewhere, it does not seem to me that an insurance scheme is necessarily a failure because it does not reduce public dependence.

A close and careful examination of the experience of German insurance should yield results invaluable for this country in regard to the new measures of insurance which have been undertaken. The lessons of German successes and failures need to be extracted and learned. For this purpose I am afraid that Mr. Dawson's book, though useful in other ways, is not of much help.

I. G. GIBBON

The Progress of the Nation, in its Various Social and Economic Relations, from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century.

By G. R. PORTER. A completely new edition, revised and brought up to date by F. W. HIRST, Editor of *The Economist*. (London: Methuen, 1912. Pp. xvi + 735.)

THE crop of valuable statistical blue books and buff books issued since 1903 by the Board of Trade has already been so plentiful that it was a happy idea of Mr. Hirst to have their richest grain garnered, under his supervision, by members of the staff of *The Economist*. But whether it was altogether the best plan to tack their work on to a number of selected and abbreviated chapters and paragraphs of Porter's classical treatise, and call the combined result a new edition of Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, may perhaps be doubted. In the first place, we lose by this procedure the full flavour both of Porter and of Mr. Hirst. The first writer opened his treatise—as early as 1836, he it noted—by the confident assertion that "this country and . . . the present generation . . . have . . . made the greatest advances in civilisation that can be found recorded in the annals of mankind." According to the later writer, "It may be gravely doubted whether 'the Progress of the Nation' is not a misnomer, if the condition of the working classes from, say, 1794 to 1844 be impartially

surveyed." Porter was dominated by the thought of the great mechanical improvements of the age. He writes in 1836:—"It is to the spinning jenny and the steam-engine that we must look as the true moving powers of our fleets and armies, and as the chief support also of a long-continued agricultural prosperity." Free trade, in which, of course, he was an ardent believer, would, in his view, only swell the already rising tide of progress. To Mr. Hirst, on the other hand, freedom of trade is the one thing that matters; and 1846 stands out in his mind as the date of entry into the Promised Land. It is a pity that Mr. Hirst has not felt free to develop his own thesis in his own way; and it is a pity also that those who make the acquaintance of Porter for the first time in this new conjunction should miss in these pages some of his most characteristic utterances. The editor has indeed, in some cases, been even too tender in the employment of the pruning-knife. But Porter's forecasts are sometimes too palpably in conflict with subsequent events to be allowed to remain. If anyone has access to Porter's original work—it can easily be obtained for four or five shillings—and will compare, for instance, the opening of his chapter on Agriculture with the "condensation" in Mr. Hirst's volume, he will discover that the first sentence has disappeared from the abstract at the head, and the first two paragraphs have fallen away from the text. The sentence is: "Impossibility of importing any large proportion of food for the population"; and the opening passage of the text ran thus: "In every country the condition of its agriculture must be a subject of the very first importance. An inconsiderable state or colony may, it is true, without much danger or inconvenience, exist under circumstances which oblige it to be habitually dependent upon the soil of other countries for the food of its inhabitants; but a very little inquiry and a very simple calculation would suffice to convince us that this can never be the case with a numerous people."

Again, in the chapter on Foreign Commerce, the sentences are allowed to remain which were inserted in the 1847 edition, and in which, *à propos* of the Repeal of the Corn Laws, Porter remarks: "It is not conceivable that our example, which on all other occasions have furnished motives of action, should cease to do so. . . . Shall we too greatly flatter ourselves if we hope that the nations of the world . . . shall be brought to see and act upon the conviction that the happiness and prosperity of each must tend to increase the happiness and prosperity of all other nations?"

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast," as this matter
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of Free Trade and English example has sufficiently illustrated; and it is good to be reminded of the happy confidence of our grandfathers. But, from this point of view, one cannot but regret the omission of the fine sentence (written in 1836, but retained in 1847) which almost immediately follows: "It would be absurd to suppose that in a state of things such as has here been contemplated" (*i.e.*, "full freedom to the productive industry of the country in all its branches"), "with a constantly increasing number of customers, our agriculturists must not share in the general prosperity, and that they should, *under any circumstances*, fail to obtain a return for their capital and labour equal to that realised by all other classes in the community."

Even the omission here and there of a phrase, or the alteration of a single word, is enough to rob Mr. Porter's writing of its "fine careless rapture." Thus how cold is Mr. Hirst's version of the effect of the Jacquard loom, "Our weavers were enabled to produce fancy goods of high quality," compared with the original of Porter: "Our weavers are now enabled to produce fancy goods, the quality of which is, with a few exceptions of little importance, fully equal, and, as regards some sorts, superior to the quality of goods made in France"!

The silk industry, by the way, furnishes an instructive example of the method of this new edition. The writer of the sequel to Porter's section on silk, a sequel dealing with the period since 1850, makes a gallant attempt to prove that the Cobden Treaty of 1860 did no permanent harm to the silk industry of England, and makes great play with certain assertions of Mr. Matthew Blair, "a well-known authority." The reference, the reader may like to know, is to Mr. Blair's contribution to the interesting volume edited by Mr. Harold Cox in 1903 under the title of *British Industries under Free Trade*—a volume of which Mr. Hirst's staff has freely availed itself. But even *The Economist's* staff must have found it impossible always to live up to Porter's cheerful prognostics. And so the following passage (in the 1847 edition) disappears: "Even if our silk manufacture had been left without the so-called 'protection' of any duty at all, there does not appear reason to doubt that it would not only have stood its ground among our principal branches of industry, but that the skill of our artisans would have enabled them successfully to rival those of other countries."

The new matter added by Mr. Hirst's assistants is of various degrees of merit. Mr. Hirst tells us in advance, in a preface that displays his high opinion of his collaborateurs, that he does not

expect every expert to be satisfied with the space and treatment of each particular trade; and he pleads the novelty of the attempt thus to survey all the leading trades of the country, as a reason for indulgence. It is perhaps uncharitable after this to remark that in 705 pages of text, $5\frac{1}{4}$ pages on Iron and Steel since 1850 are a somewhat meagre allowance. "Leather, Boots and Shoes," one notices, has 9 pages. But in the latter case a contribution to *British Industries under Free Trade* by Mr. Day furnished, it would seem, more convenient material wherewith to rebuke Tariff Reformers than was easily accessible in the case of Iron and Steel.

Those chapters are the most complete which are happily outside the tariff controversy. This is the case with the first nine, which deal with population, occupations, wages and employment, pauperism, housing, crime, intemperance and lunacy, education, local government, and the standard of comfort. "This preliminary survey was contributed mainly by Mrs. Hamilton, Mr. C. M. Atkinson, and Mr. W. T. Layton, on whose competence to deal with questions of local government, criminology, wages and prices," the editor handsomely assures us, "there will be no dispute." And these sections will certainly be found useful places of reference by many a grateful student. Gratitude would have been enhanced if references could have been given throughout to the sources of information. The latter merit will perhaps cause the recent "new edition" of Mulhall (another case of misnomer) to be preferred by cautious readers. For though "the figures—taken from official sources—have been so carefully tested and revised," the editor assures us, "that errors must have been reduced to a minimum," even a hasty examination of a few pages at random creates some disquietude. Thus on p. 351 there is a table giving "the total value of our exports of silk manufactures every ten years since 1850," showing that in 1910 they were bigger than ever. I have not at hand the official figures for 1850; but on looking up a series of Statistical Abstracts for the later decades, I find that those given in Mr. Hirst's volume for 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1890 are for "silk manufactures" in the then classification of the Board of Trade, *i. e.*, *not* including "silk, thrown, twist, and yarn," and those for 1900 and 1910 were for "total of silk" in the new classification which *includes* silk yarn.

May it not also be suggested that if any chapters are in fact, to all intents and purposes, the work of others than Mr. Hirst, it might have saved trouble to have placed their names at the head of each and left them the responsibility? Editorial "supervision" may easily be misleading in cases where the sub-

ordinate authors differ greatly from one another. Thus, here, p. 57 will be found arguing that unemployment has not increased of late; while p. 68 maintains that the position of the ordinary workman has become less secure. Let me add, before passing from the more or less contributed chapters, that the last in the volume, on "The Growth of Wealth and Capital," in which Mr. Hirst had "the valuable assistance" of Mr. W. T. Layton, is one of the most original, and also one of the most useful. It contains an estimate of the wealth of the United Kingdom for 1895, 1905, and 1909, drawn up upon the same general lines as as Sir Robert Giffen's well-known estimates for 1865, 1875, and 1885, though with large differences in the details of construction. One's only regret is that the opportunity was not taken to break away from Giffen's habit of identifying capital with accumulated wealth in general.

For vigour of style the reader will turn to the chapters entirely contributed by the editor himself. Among them is a chapter on National Expenditure and Debt. It is exhilarating to have the doctrine of retrenchment preached so emphatically. I find it personally easier to sympathise with Mr. Hirst's attitude here than in some other places. But I am not sure that his very facility of expression may not do a certain damage to his cause. When we are told of "the naval scare *ingeniously organised* by Mr. Stead" and of the "agitation *fomented*" by him, one is reminded of the chapter, in a book once well known in Oxford, on the controversial use of dyslogistic terms. And when one is assured that the first steps in preparing Estimates at present "is for the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary for War to find out from their subordinate admirals and generals and eagerly co-operating contractors how much public money they can possibly get rid of within the year," the effect upon the reviewer—though he wants to believe it—is to make him think that perhaps it isn't so.

W. J. ASHLEY

The Case Against Free Trade. By W. CUNNINGHAM, D.D., F.B.A., with a Preface by the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P. (London: John Murray. 1911. Pp. xvi+137. Price 2s. 6d. net.)

THIS little book was published last year, and has not yet been reviewed in THE ECONOMIC JOURNAL. But the postponement, which was accidental, is in some respects appropriate. For, although the volume belongs to a popular series bearing the