

The Book Trail

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM

By Gaston Haxo

Land and Freedom, \$1.00

Ever since the announcement last summer that Gaston Haxo had prepared and would shortly publish a condensation of "Progress and Poverty" a spirit of understandable anxiety has pervaded the minds of Georgists. It so happened that the same issue of "Land and Freedom" which announced the forthcoming publication, also contained an article by Mr. Haxo in which he advanced a theory of interest which diverged sharply from that of Henry George. Despite the reassuring sentence in the advertisement which promised that no heterodoxy would be permitted to creep into "The Philosophy of Freedom," the question persisted, "Will this book be Henry George or Gaston Haxo?"

The doubters may now rest easy. The book has appeared, and it is George clear through. The fact that there exist views of interest which differ from George's is recognized in a footnote on page 63, but is not obtruded. In this respect—the only one likely to give rise to controversy—the book is above criticism.

Mr. Haxo is not the first to attempt to abridge the 560-page masterpiece. Mrs. DeMille and Louis F. Post brought out an abridgement in 1924. Four years later, Dr. Harry Gunnison Brown of Missouri University brought out "Significant Paragraphs from 'Progress and Poverty.'" A third work, also by Dr. Brown and similar to the 1928 version, was published about a year ago. All these editions are exhausted, but the 1940 abridgement by Dr. Brown is being reprinted.

Mr. Haxo's predecessors did not hesitate to strike out whole pages, but they were reluctant to recast passages into different language. This reluctance came, no doubt, from a feeling that only the original words of George himself could properly be published under the title "Progress

and Poverty." Mr. Haxo has not used that title, and his book is largely his own, so far as language goes; the thoughts are the thoughts of George, but the words are the words of Gaston Haxo.

On the whole, the result has been happy. The style is lucid, and what the book loses in richness of example it gains at least partly in simplicity and directness. Obsolete references have been deleted and new ones substituted. The text has been cut to 200 pages, the printing is easy to read, and the green cloth binding is attractive. Best of all are the diagrams; there is a diagram for nearly every theoretical point, which materially assists the understanding. Many of these diagrams were evolved in classes at the Henry George School.

The value of "The Philosophy of Freedom" to the Georgist movement remains to be tested by time. It may turn out to be very great. But at worst it remains a dignified and capable attempt to solve a great problem of the movement—the problem of presenting Henry George in a form which will meet the conditions of brevity and directness imposed by modern readers.

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