

rush into the midst of things. As the poet in the course of prolonged digressions still keeps by occasional allusions the leading personage in the reader's thoughts, so throughout our author's book on Distribution we are reminded by occasional references that the subject is dependent on the theory of Value (*Elements*, pp. 22, 66-7).

There is a further reason in favour of the arrangement adopted by Professor Nicholson: it is Mill's arrangement. The treatment of Progress in a separate Book is similarly justified. Considering that Mill's Political Economy still forms a part of the curriculum in more than one distinguished University, a textbook which will serve as a *vade mecum* for travellers along that smooth but not always easy road to economic knowledge may well be a *desideratum*.

National Progress in Wealth and Trade. By A. L. BOWLEY.
(London: P. S. King. Pp. 88. 2s.). 1904.

MR. BOWLEY'S work belongs to a small class—Soetbeer's *Materialien* may be instanced as one of the few other examples—characterised by impartial statements, which command the respect of disputants on either side of a heated economic controversy. The modesty of the true statistician contrasts favourably with the hectoring tone of political partisans. Mr. Bowley's main position is thus cautiously stated:—“Our information is not sufficient to allow us to form an absolutely certain judgment as to our recent progress.” “It is conceivable that the facts that we do not know may present an appearance opposite to that of the facts that we do know, as it is conceivable that the hidden hemisphere of the moon differs from that which we see; but it is *prima facie* improbable that the same main causes are presumably acting in the unknown as in the known.” All the phenomena in the observed economic hemisphere—the changes of occupation, the progress of wages, the increase of national income, and so on—suggest that we have made considerable progress in wealth and welfare during recent years.

It is true that there has been a diminution in the numbers employed in certain occupations, in particular the textile trades. But what of that, if the numbers employed in other occupations, such as the production of iron and steel manufacture, have increased? The shifting of occupations is often a mark of progress to a higher level. Men earn more, not only because the same

work is paid more highly now than formerly, but also because the proportion of men in the better-paid occupations has increased. Half of the total increase of average wages—some thirty per cent. in all—during the last twenty years is accounted for by the change from the less to the more highly skilled occupations. From this point of view the drift from agriculture into other industries does not seem an unmixed evil. In 1886 the average weekly wage of English agricultural labourers (including all perquisites) was about 14s. 6d., while the average for the great bulk of other trades was about 24s.

The increase of 30 per cent. which we have mentioned refers to money wages. It is further to be taken into account that the prices of most commodities purchased by the working-classes have fallen by about 8 per cent. It would appear, therefore, that the increase in real wages is some 40 per cent. This estimate derives confirmation from Mr. G. H. Wood's brilliant calculation, by way of index-numbers, of the increase in the consumption of necessities and common luxuries. On the other hand is to be set the increase of rent in towns. Mr. Bowley, with characteristic caution, contents himself with the conclusion that "the value of £1 in the hands of a working-man has, at any rate, *not fallen* in the last twenty years; while the evidence, on the whole, is in favour of the rise in the purchasing power of money."

To return to the trades, of which the decreasing numbers have excited alarm, it is to be noted that the products per head of population, as measured by the quantity of raw material used up, have increased in many cases. Mr. Bowley does not pretend that there has been progress in all trades—linen and silk, for example. But he finds that the falling off in the export of some manufactured commodities is compensated by the increased export of others. This compensation may occur in ways which escape the attention of uninstructed observers. "Germany imports wool from Australia; Australia imports machinery from England; England imports chemicals from Germany; an increase in the last might easily cause an increase in the second, but the loss (if any) to the English chemical manufacturer would not be obviously connected with a gain to the machine producers." It is justly observed by Mr. Bowley that the amount of loss incident to the substitution of one export for another depends mainly on the rapidity of the change. But there is no evidence of change so rapid as to be disorganising on a large scale.

The vulgar belief that our exports may be indefinitely reduced by the increase of foreign imports, as it cannot even be

conceived in thought, so it derives no support from fact. The more refined suggestion that our exports may, through foreign competition in the home market, be reduced, not in total value, but in the number of branches, so as to become more exposed to the vicissitudes of chance—this certainly conceivable case is not proved to exist. “Our exports have consisted, and do consist, of a great miscellany of goods of every description. The guarantee of their continuance is their variety.” Nor do the statistics lend any confirmation to another ingenious suggestion, that our exports tend to be the product of low-paid and unskilled labour. Rather, the increase in the numbers employed in the iron trade, even more than in the quantity of iron used, suggests that employment is increasing in the more advanced metal trades (such as machines and ships) rather than in the earlier forms (refining, casting, etc.). This explanation is indeed admitted by Mr. Bowley to be “conjectural”; yet better founded, we submit, than the contention that our manufacturing power is becoming decadent and degraded. “The handling of metals,” says Mr. Bowley, “is as meritorious as the handling of textiles, the making of machines as the making of cloth.”

One of the circumstances which has excited great alarm, the slow increase in the volume of our exports, appears to be connected with a very satisfactory incident, namely, that we are now obtaining a large return of imports per unit, so to speak, of exports. We are, in Mill's phrase, getting our imports cheaper “in the sense of cost,” the sense in which “a country gets a commodity cheaper when it obtains a greater quantity of the commodity with the same expenditure of labour and capital.” This inference, from the change in the average prices of imports compared with the corresponding charge for exports, has been set forth by Mr. Bowley in the *ECONOMIC JOURNAL* for September 1903.

Some of the above-mentioned lines of proof—not the last one, of course—may be employed to prove the progress of foreign nations. “The figures we have indicate considerable progress and, as in the case of the United Kingdom, the burden of proof rests as yet with those who deny it.” Mr. Bowley argues that the progress in the export trade of foreign countries involves an increased demand for the products of their customers. His reasoning is economically sound, but it is not altogether reassuring to patriots who prefer power and pre-eminence to prosperity. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that those are in the right who are not satisfied with the progress of their country unless it

is greater than the progress of other countries. And let us enter tain the further supposition that, if the new inquiries which Mr. Bowley suggests were carried out, the hitherto unseen economic hemisphere should prove less fair than that which has been observed. There would still remain the question whether the remedies proposed by Protectionists would correct the relative or absolute *malaise* of trade. This is a question that Mr. Bowley has very properly not touched. It belongs to political economy rather than to statistics.

Ireland in the New Century. By the Right Honourable Sir HORACE PLUNKETT, K.C.V.O., F.R.S. (London: Murray. 1904. Pp. 300.)

SIR HORACE PLUNKETT's book belongs to the art, rather than the science, of Political Economy. It is related to the ordinary treatises, as the prescription for a particular case is related to a demonstration in anatomy. The case is a very complicated one; the *malaise* cannot be ascribed to any single cause.

There is first "the influence of politics on the Irish mind." The absence of captains of industry from the councils of the political leaders is regretted. The methods employed for the attainment of Home Rule have been injurious to the industrial character of the people. Agitation, as Thomas Davis said, in a passage aptly quoted by our author, "leads to much disorganisation, great unhappiness, wounds upon the soul of a country which sometimes are worse than the thinning of a people by war." "The practice of boycotting," observes Sir Horace Plunkett, "is the very antithesis of industry, creating an atmosphere in which industry and enterprise simply cannot live."

It is not often that one whose opinion is as valuable as our author's has the courage to express it as openly. When the Homeric prophet is urged to declare the cause from which his countrymen are perishing, he will not speak until he is secured against the wrath of a man whose power over the Argives is very great. But the revealer of unwelcome truths about the cause of Irish distress does not hesitate to offend two powerful orders of men, the priests as well as the political leaders. He complains of excessive and extravagant church-building at the expense of poor communities. Referring to the multiplication of elaborate monastic and conventual institutions, he says: "I cannot believe that so large an addition to the 'unproductive' classes is economically sound, and I have no doubt at all that the