

BOOK REVIEWS.

A POSTHUMOUS WORK OF JOHN S' CROSBY.*

We knew John S. Crosby as a great orator; we had not learned to esteem him as a profound thinker. We now know that those "glorified words" which delighted Mr. Crosby's hearers really proceeded from a colder and more calculating analysis of principles than we had assumed him familiar with. Those winged utterances which exercised so potent an influence over his listeners, an influence we attributed to his manly beauty, his speaking countenance, his dramatic art, we now see borrowed not a little of the power they carried to his many hours of thoughtful contemplation of the problems of human society, of all problems the profoundest save those of the soul's destiny. We now see how persistently he had thought, how earnestly he had endeavored to master those principles which on the platform he translated into flashing thunders of eloquence which made him one of the great orators of the time, and perhaps the greatest in a movement already noted for the number and character of its platform figures.

In the argument of this little work Mr. Crosby contends for the doctrine of natural rights; the primary right is the right of self-defence, and to this right may be traced the origin of the State. The State is organized, not for the self-defence of the individual against aggression but to compel all persons to refrain from peace-disturbing self-defence. One must follow this somewhat novel theory and the reasoning by which it is buttressed with care, for from it Mr. Crosby educes the nature and function of the State, what it must do and what it must not be permitted to do.

That the State exists only to conserve the natural rights of the individual, that it cannot do legitimately or with warrant what

society itself cannot do, and that it cannot justly prevent the exercise of any primary right, is the crux of the contention.

Not all Single Taxers will agree with all the conclusions that Mr. Crosby draws from his premise. Some will not regard the creation of artificial persons or corporations, to serve what may be regarded as a useful expedient, as wholly invasive. Nor does it seem to us that his argument against the right of property in an invention will stand the strict test of analysis of a true right of property. There may arise great difficulties of administering and conserving such right but those who contend for the principle of the right of an inventor to his product are more nearly in line with the true economic doctrine of reward for service than those who on any ground seek to question it.

But these are minor blemishes, if blemishes they are. Mr. Crosby has established successfully the true nature of the State; he has shown the slow progress of the arts of Government toward the scientific stage; he has shown the many misconceptions of the nature of the State; and he has declared, in a notable sentence, "What we ought to do is to be learned not so much from the study of history as from that common sense upon which we rely in forming our judgments of history."

Frankly, we were not prepared for so searching an examination as Mr. Crosby has furnished us. It is clear that if greater leisure had been given him he might have contributed much that the best thought of the world would not willingly have permitted to perish. It is a precious moment that he has left us in the ripened thought of a really profound student of the problems which as Single Taxers chiefly concern us.

The dedication adds a personal note which will touch many of those who have felt that bond of sympathy and fellowship with which our departed friend inspired those who were privileged to know him intimately. "To John J. Murphy, Lawson Purdy, Chas. H. Ingersoll and William Lustgarten, but for whose kind offices it might not have been published, this booklet is affectionately dedicated (in an hour of physical darkness)."—J. D. M.

* *The Orthocratic State. The Unchanging Principles of Civics and Government.* By John Sherwin Crosby. 12 mo., Cloth, 166 pp. Price postpaid, \$1.10. Sturgis & Walton Company, N. Y. City. See advertisement in this issue.