

## Bourbon Economics

**A**UTOMOBILE owners, who are compelled by our legislators to bear the brunt of the expense for upkeep of roads which increase the value of contiguous lands, will be interested to learn that the arguments advanced to uphold this practice are precisely the same as those advanced by the pre-revolutionary nobility of France in favor of the *corvee*, the forced labor of peasants in building of roads, and against the proposal of Turgot to substitute for this a tax on land values. Charles Downer Hazen, Professor of History in Columbia University and author of "The French Revolution," reproduces in this work a discussion on that matter between Turgot and his leading opponent, Miromesnil, the Keeper of the Seals. The argument has a strangely modern sound.

Miromesnil—The proprietors are not the only class benefited by good roads. . . . The simple peasant goes on foot on a good road more easily than on a bad one and loses less time.

Turgot—The Keeper of the Seals must permit me to believe that the pleasure of walking on a well made road can scarcely compensate the peasant for making it without being paid.

Miromesnil—A man with nothing but his hands contributes scarcely anything to taxes.

Turgot—Here we are concerned only with the *corvee*, but certainly the man who has only his hands contributes to the taxes in the most exorbitant proportion. A man who has nothing to live upon for himself and his family but what he gains by his labor and from whom we extort fifteen days of his time, giving him hard work, no wages and no food, contributes really too much to the making of the roads.

While Miromesnil was arguing that "a man with nothing but his hands contributes scarcely anything to the taxes" the peasants of France were paying in taxes, tithes and feudal dues fully four-fifths of their earnings. While his modern prototype argues that "the man who owns no property contributes nothing to the cost of government" the greater part of 13 billions of governmental expenditures in the United States is raised by taxes on labor and the laborer must pay in addition more billions in tribute to privileged interests, besides billions in ground rents. The proposal to abolish taxes on labor and use the rental value of land for governmental expenses finds the spiritual descendants of Miromesnil on the job.—SAMUEL DANZIGER.

**A** GOVERNMENT that can not afford to abolish unfair taxes at once is one that no people can afford to maintain.

**T**O priming of a pump a sucker is essential. And the N.R.A. is said by its supporters to be like priming a pump.

**A**MERICAN statesmanship—Vigorous denunciation of socialism and communism. Then urging and supporting government control of production and distribution.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### A QUERULOUS OUTPOURING\*

Written in diary form this is a gossipy, querulous, complaining volume. The author has a bagfull of animosities, disagreements and dislikes. Even the song of the whippoorwill irritates him. With curious wrong-headedness, or out of sheer perversity he sneers at the temporary ineffectualness of Woodrow Wilson's idealism while professing a liking for Clemenceau. Out of like perversity he has a good word for Frederick the Great. One would look for a word of sympathy for President Wilson's dream even if Clemenceau's frank scoundrelism compels his admiration. Such admiration need not have blinded him to the great vision of Woodrow Wilson which he strove to make a reality.

But that is Nock. Nothing really pleases him. "American women do not attract me as a rule," he says, Dickens' Christmas stories seem hollow to him. He speaks of the greatest biography since Boswell—Harry George's Life of his father—as a book of which "the best that can be said of it is that it is competent." Though we are living in a most interesting period of the world's history amid a swirl of rushing events at the end of which great things impend, Mr. Nock says he would have chosen to be born in Paris in 1805 and depart in 1880, and he speaks of this as the most interesting period in the world's history." Why?

We must be very hesitant in questioning Mr. Nock too closely for he tells on page 29 that he was "right nine times out of ten." For fear this might leave too great a hiatus he hastens to add, "oftener than that."

Mr. Nock is a Henry George man but he is not eager to apply the remedy. Familiar as we are with the eccentricities of many who profess a belief in our principles and yet who are in deadly fear of them, this does not surprise us greatly. He says of the Single Tax that "the people would not know what to do with it if they got it," and with this shallow sophistry dismisses it. That institutions make men seems not to have occurred to him.

Mr. Nock gives us the idea that he accepts the wild rumor that McKinley's assassination was procured because McKinley was about to break on the protective tariff policy. Mr. Nock who does not believe anything is singularly credulous here.

He says of Henry George's speeches: "How flat they fall on a modern audience." Just the contrary is true. Yet he calls him "one of the half dozen minds of the 19th century."

"George's biography," he says, "makes it clear that he knew singularly little about human beings and the working of their minds." Nevertheless, Mr. Nock hastens to reassure us that something might be done with the fundamentals of his doctrine if the right people took it in hand." We find that phrase, "the right people," subtly intriguing.

We hasten to record our conviction that Albert Jay Nock is of no use to us. Speaking again of Henry George he says, "What a great man he was and how well he managed to get himself misjudged and forgotten." The gospel of futility which Mr. Nock preaches in various forms throughout this volume is partly to be traced to the fact that he is not in touch with the movement. He is in complete ignorance of what is being done. The philosophy he preaches is the very negation of any real conviction on the question or of any influence he may be capable of wielding. He can be of no help to us in advancing the cause. He would do us a great service if he refrained from mentioning it. We say this because it is rumored that he has in contemplation the writing of a life of Henry George.

\*A Journal of These Days, by Albert J. Nock. Clo. Large 12mo, 309 pp. Price \$2.75. William Morrow and Co., New York.