

Bourbon Economics

AUTOMOBILE 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.

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

AMERICAN 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.

It must not be understood that the present reviewer condemns this book in its entirety. Indeed there is much that is valuable in it to those who will skim through it. There are many delicious touches of which the following is an example from page 191, where speaking of a work by Cardinal Polignac he says:

"I used to own a fine copy, but old Prof. Peters of the University of Virginia, made off with it thirty years ago, and refused to give it back—as fine a piece of broad-daylight, open-air stealing as anyone ever saw. He died a year or so afterwards, and I never recovered the book. May the devil bless him."

And this is even better:

"Today I learned ex-President Hibben of Princeton is dead. He may now be where he can talk over things with his cousin Paxton Hibben, but I have my doubts especially if he sees him coming. I think the first question Paxton would ask him is whether he climbed over the pearly gates or burrowed under them."

There are some wise words on the policies of the Roosevelt administration and its acts. And there is an enthusiastic mention of Prof. George Raymond Geiger's "Philosophy of Henry George:" "The book on Henry George that I have been asking for these many years is at last published by MacMillan." But he spoils it by adding, "The truth is that no one takes any interest in George's philosophy or can get to take any." We venture to submit to our readers the question whether that has been their experience. No one can convince others of a truth unless he has confidence in it himself. He cannot find out whether others are receptive to any degree unless he himself carries to them his own conviction of the truth he is trying to impart.

J. D. M.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Here is a new printing, with a newly prepared index, of "Social Problems" by Henry George. It is published by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 9—11 Park Place, New York City, at one dollar. It is accurately described as "the best introduction to Mr. George's economic and social teaching."

This collection of essays was originally written for *Leslie's Weekly* in 1882 and 1883 under the title "Problems of the Times." Subsequently they were collected and published under the title "Social Problems."

They read today as if written for today, prophetic in their insight, simple and clear in their explanations. A few of the titles show how startlingly these problems of nearly fifty years ago assume their place as discussions of present day difficulties, with their real and fundamental solutions. Note a few of the titles, Political Dangers, Public Debt, Functions of Government, Over-production, etc.

There are minds sufficiently familiar with economic reasoning to grasp the essentials of "Progress and Poverty." But we fancy that the average mind might well begin with "Social Problems." It is easy reading, interesting as a novel, and throws a flood of light upon those questions which are as vital now as in the years when they were written.

The following should arouse the curiosity in the minds of those not familiar with his teaching to examine one of the great works of Henry George:

"So true it is that poverty does not come from the inability to produce more wealth, that from every side we hear that power to produce an excess of the ability to find a market; that the constant fear seems to be not that too little, but that too much will be produced. Is not a large part of our machinery constantly idle? Are there not, even at what we call good times, an immense number of unemployed men who would gladly be at work producing wealth, if they could only get the opportunity? Do we not, even now, hear from every side of embarrassment from the very excess of productive power, and of combinations to reduce production? This seeming glut of production runs through all branches of industry, and is evident all over the civilized world."

ADDRESSED TO MOTHERS*

A book has recently been published by Dorrance & Co. of Philadelphia, that should be of interest to Single Taxers. It is the work of John O'Kelly Smith and is entitled "Freedom for Women."

While the main object of the book is to convince the reader that mothers should be pensioned, the greater part of it is dedicated to explaining how adequate funds for this compensation may be collected, i. e., by installing the economic system known as the Single Tax.

Many believers in that sane and civilized programme may feel that when it is adopted there will not be the necessity for singling out one group as particularly in need of compensation. Rare indeed are the fathers who would not provide for their wives and children, if they were capable of so doing. Under an order where workers will get what they really earn, where the cost of living will be far below what it is now, where it will be no difficult thing to save against a rainy day, there may not be the need for the State to provide particularly for mothers.

But under present conditions, a pension to relieve the young mother from being forced to earn her living, as now she is so often compelled to do and frequently at the expense of her health; to finance her so that she can remain home with the baby or babies who need her unremitting care; a pension that would spare the old mother, perhaps no longer capable of working even for herself, the agony of knowing that she is a financial burden on her children, a dependence that is often degrading—such a pension under today's maladjustment of society, would be a step toward civilization.

This cry for freedom for mothers one might expect to come from a woman instead of from an old bachelor and Mr. Smith's understanding of the subject and appeal for help is therefor particularly commendable.

In a letter he writes:

"In 1900 I went on the road as a traveling shoe salesman. I have followed this work continuously since—twenty years in Iowa and Missouri, then twelve years in the extreme Southwest and the last two years in Florida. In the fall of 1912, while in a little town in Iowa, the idea that the state should provide a certain income for mothers came to my mind and lodged there. Wretchedly prepared for writing I went to Wallace Rice of Chicago for literary assistance. I was constantly trying to figure out a method whereby the state could provide an income for mothers. One day Wallace inquired if I had ever read "Progress and Poverty." I had not, but at once bought a copy. And that was the commencement of my serious reading and research.

I soon concluded to join my idea to Single Tax and write a little book."

Mr. Smith shows a knowledge of the ethical side of the Georgan creed as well as the fiscal. He makes a capable fight for the adoption of the Single Tax and his book might well be used for propaganda in strongholds of feminism and among crusaders for civic welfare, where possibly a more scientifically built plea might seem too dry or erudite.

Certainly all imbued with a longing to better present conditions will be glad for this voice raised in protest and supplication.

ANNA GEORGE DE MILLE.

*Freedom for Mothers, by John O'Kelly Smith, 212 Pages, Cloth. Price \$1.75. Dorrance and Company, Philadelphia, Pa.

Correspondence

ANSWERS HIS OWN QUESTION

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

In the March-April copy, handed me by a friend, I find on page 59, in reply to John C. Rose the following: "Under the Single Tax there would be no mortgages on land. Mortgages would be against buildings and improvements only."

I have long been a student of the Single Tax and am convinced that the purpose in the mind of Henry George was to establish communism in the ownership of land (a purpose with which I am in full accord). However on page 403 of the fourth edition of "Progress and Poverty," I find the following, second paragraph: . . . "Let the individuals who now hold it (the land) still retain possession of what they are pleased to call *their* land. . . . Let them continue to buy and sell, and bequeath and devise it. . . ."

Now it occurs to me that your statement above does not square with