



"Quit cher bellerin'! Look what I gotta carry! Look what we all gotta carry!"

From *The Masses* (150 Nassau St., New York) for December, 1912.

## BOOKS

### MONEY AND MEN.

**Natural Money: The Peaceful Solution.** By John Raymond Cummings. The Bankers' Publishing Co., New York. 1912. Price, cloth, \$1.50 postpaid.

A succession of carnally-minded generations necessitates the continued rediscovery and elaboration of truths which are but sub-titles of the fundamental law, so that we learn from De Tocqueville that there is a natural system of political action, from Henry George that there is a natural source of public revenue, and from the present author that there is a natural medium of exchange. Practically all the factors of the book have been discussed elsewhere, as the factors of "Progress and Poverty" had been before George wrote, but the relationship remained to be delineated and the delineation is a genuine service.

Mediums of exchange consisting of labor time-checks, inconvertible and standardized by reference to no unit of measure but that of the clock, have heretofore been proposed. Only careless

thinking could cause anyone to identify with that the proposal made in this book. The proposal here is that a natural money be created by having the government employ at common labor all those who can not be employed privately to better advantage for themselves, at say \$2 per day, issuing in payment certificates in convenient denominations which shall be receivable for taxes due the government; and finally making the whole disbursement of the government in "natural money," standardized by reference to a day's common labor at \$2.

The fluctuations in the number of people publicly or privately employed are relied upon to regulate the supply of money; the excess of expenditure over income, now reflected in the national debt, and further excesses due to a plausible plan for the termination of private land monopoly set forth in the book, create and maintain a sufficient volume of currency for the demands of trade. Savings would be in money instead of in property, so that interest as we know it would cease and be had in the increased purchasing power of a day's labor ten years hence over that of today; money having no intrinsic value would rise or fall in value in proportion to its purchasing power, which would be measured by the effective worth of a day's common labor and skilled labor in proportion—hence labor would be not only the measure but the beneficiary of social progress. This is the promise and the vision which make the book more a contribution to social ideals than to the prosaic science of finance.

The author assumes that but one species of property is, for the present, a suitable subject for taxation—the social- or people-value of land; though even this might disappear when the increased effectiveness of labor in both measuring and receiving the benefit of its own progress had rendered the quasi-socialization of industry, with its inevitable exploitation of labor and land values, impossible.

The author has forgotten that great thoughts like those of the "Sermon on the Mount," of the "Social Contract" and of the "Declaration of Independence" are usually compressed into a small compass. Though not large, the volume contains matter dealing with remote applications of the proposed system which may give reason for criticism unconnected with the real and vital issues of the book.

"Natural Money" as a book has an important place in the economic and sociological literature of the time. Only the judgment of many minds can determine its ultimate worth. That it is a book of vital importance is possible, that it will have a considerable place in the thought of the coming years is probable, that it, now, is a book worth while is certain.

THORWALD SIEGFRIED.