

Pricking A Brisbane Bubble

THE editorial reprinted in this issue from the *Christian Science Monitor*, rebuking a writer who said that the late William Rockefeller had "done much to benefit the country, and to solve the problems of others by giving them work," evidently referred to an article written by Arthur Brisbane, editor of the *New York Evening Journal*. Mr. Brisbane has attained the proud eminence of having a greater number of readers, and receiving a larger salary, than any other editor, a success due chiefly to his amazing energy and his ability to say the undisputed thing in such a solemn way. The son of a wealthy landowner, who held radical views and took an active part in the Fourierite and co-operative propaganda of the Brook Farm era, he was in his youth a professed believer in the Single Tax. The changing years brought prosperity through his attachment to the fortunes of William Randolph Hearst, and having grown rich by speculation in land, he has become respectable and conservative in his old age, and no longer pretends to advocate the principles laid down by Henry George. Yet by some strange tie of the past he cannot wholly escape from the aftershine of his youthful radicalism, and his occasional petulant and cynical references to the Single Taxers show that he knows that they are right, even though he does nothing to further their aims.

A student of Voltaire, Mr. Brisbane may be familiar with a letter written about 160 years ago by the great French thinker, in which he said: "These abuses and evils that imperil France exist because the men of intelligence, who know their source and the remedy, are cowards. It is the great misfortune of honest men that they are too often cowards." Possibly it is not cowardice that keeps Mr. Brisbane from denouncing land monopoly as the great fundamental injustice. He may have become a cynic through watching Mr. Hearst's success in fooling so many people with his pretense of devotion to the public welfare. It must be hard to think hopefully of human progress when he regards the millions who buy and read the loathly Hearst newspapers and magazines. Whatever the reason may be, it is certain that when he recalls his convictions of 30 years ago Mr. Arthur Brisbane must have some uncomfortable moments.

The Muscle Shoals Power Project

A TYPICAL example of the way in which land speculators manipulate legislation to promote their selfish ends, is found in the widespread agitation throughout the Southeastern States in favor of granting the Muscle Shoals water power, located in Alabama, to Henry Ford for a period of 100 years. In addition to the enormous value of the power provided by the Tennessee river, Congress is urged to turn over the dams, buildings, and other property on which \$100,000,000, has been expended by the wise

paternal Federal Government, to Mr. Ford. For all this plant he is to pay the United States \$5,000,000, and 4 per cent. interest on the \$42,000,000, that the Government is to advance to complete the unfinished dams.

The popular worship of successful money makers; the curious notion that a very rich man is in a class apart from ordinary mortals, may partly account for the fact that this most outrageous proposition to give away one of the most valuable water powers on the continent is strongly favored in Congress, and may secure a majority in both Houses at the next session. The farmers have been deluded into supporting the scheme through a half-promise that part of the power will be used to produce cheap nitrates for fertilizing purposes. The real force behind the project, however, is the greed of land speculators, who are spending their money on a propaganda designed to show the immense increase in land values that will follow the establishment of Ford industries in Alabama. City sites for a population of millions have already been mapped, and the credulous investor is urged to buy barren acres at city lot prices. If Congress yields to the clamor of the speculators great fortunes will be made for a time by the owners of what is now practically worthless land.

It is fortunate that in Senator George W. Norris, of Nebraska, who has led the fight in the Senate against the grant to Mr. Ford, there has been found a fearless defender of the people's interest who protests against the gift of Government property and power privileges on what he holds are entirely inadequate terms. He has so far been successful in preventing favorable action by the Senate on the Ford proposal, and if he is supported by those Americans who believe that the great natural resources of the country should be utilized for the general welfare, instead of profit-making for a favored few, he should be able to secure better terms for the development of the Muscle Shoals power.

Keeping a White Post White

THE attitude of those calling themselves conservatives, who maintain that the interests of society are best served by strict adherence to existing social institutions, is questioned by Mr. G. K. Chesterton, by no means a radical, and hardly what in the United States would be termed a "progressive." As an outspoken antagonist of Socialism he finds himself, somewhat to his distaste, in the company of reactionaries who vigorously protest against all movements looking to the improvement of social and economic conditions on the general principle that innovations are wrong. To all demands for constructive legislation designed to abolish admitted abuses the reply of the conservative is: "Leave well enough alone. See what happened in Russia when the old order was overthrown."

The desire to maintain outgrown laws and timeworn institutions because of the possible danger of destroying something of value that has come to be associated with them, meets with no sympathy from Mr. Chesterton. He