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Review

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*National Economy.* By HENRY HIGGS, C.B. (London : Macmillan and Co., Ltd. 1917. Pp. xii+147. 3s. 6d. net.)

MR. HIGGS, in the preface to this valuable and interesting book, states that his Newmarch Lectures, reprinted here as they were given, "contain no official information and have no official authority." But, in spite of this proper reserve, it is hard, if not impossible, for any man to "split" himself into disconnected "fragments"; and we feel again and again, as we read each instructive chapter, that we are benefiting greatly in this firm "outline of public administration," by the knowledge and experience of a "civil servant" of long training and high rank. Perhaps, indeed, the reminder addressed to the plain citizen that by his watchfulness, or the reverse, he may be held responsible for the capability or the laches of the officials he employs, may not carry complete conviction to those who feel, especially at the present time, that their nominal servants are their real governors. But Mr. Higgs, at any rate, by the masterly facility with which he here lays bare the primary conditions of efficiency in the sphere of "national economy," enables the "man in the street" to understand the mechanism; and he may in consequence hope to discern, if he cannot remove, the grit which obstructs the working, or be emboldened to offer, if he is hindered from applying, the lubricating oil at the appropriate moment. His part in this work is rendered more agreeable by the felicitous use of apt epigram and illuminating metaphor which Mr. Higgs commands; and from this standpoint we imagine that the book has gained by literal reproduction of the vivid lecture-form what it might possibly have lost, had the existing "tract" become a more elaborate and formal "treatise." As it is, a rich abundance of apt, suggestive commentary is put into a modest compass; and, as Mr. Higgs observes, the ground traversed had not been thus surveyed before, at least on this side of the Atlantic. We feel sure that, in the final words of his concluding lecture, his purpose "not to satisfy" an "appetite" but to "stimulate it" will be achieved in the case of many of the readers of his book. If, fortunately, it does not belong by express intention to the swollen catalogue of ambitious schemes of "reconstruction," to be effected after the upheaval of the present war, but is, by contrast, conceived and built on the more solid permanent basis of wholesome financial truth commended chiefly by the normal trend of ordinary business experiences, it should nevertheless be useful, if not

indispensable, in dealing with a situation in which "national economy," shown in the administration of public finance, must play, for good or ill, a leading rôle for many years.

L. L. PRICE

*Agriculture in Oxfordshire.* By JOHN ORR. With a Chapter on Soils by C. G. T. MORISON. (Oxford : The Clarendon Press. 1916. Pp. xii+239. 8s. 6d. net.)

*Allotments and Small Holdings in Oxfordshire.* By ARTHUR W. ASHBY. (Oxford : The Clarendon Press. 1917. Pp. vi+198. 5s. net.)

NOT the least curious or considerable of the changes due to the imperative influence of the war may be discovered in the attitude of Ministers, politicians, and the public towards English agriculture. Long indifference or neglect has been suddenly replaced by peremptory alarm. The whirligig of time has brought its appropriate revenge; and the "landed interest" might be tempted to contrast the immediate standpoint with the fateful choice made some seventy years ago. The exclusive dominance of manufacturing industry in towns was then definitively preferred to the encouragement or the defence of the traditional activities of the inhabitants of the countryside. The owners and their tenants, who were left alone to meet the overwhelming difficulties of depression, which followed later, might now be excused if they regarded the solicitude awakened with misgiving; and some of the dogmatic counsel offered by the new advocates of "reconstruction" is not conspicuously free from the defects of ill-informed and "hustling" panic.

The two important contributions to the careful study and reflection which should always precede wise reform, made by Mr. Orr and Mr. Ashby in the companion volumes now before us, are, as we should have expected from their source, immune from this reproof. Both, it is true, reflect the notable recent drift of expert opinion, which favours "industrialised large farms" as the most promising economic units for the agricultural future of this country; and Mr. Ashby more particularly, as the limited scope of his survey might suggest, furnishes the critics rather than the friends of the small holdings, preached a short while ago as the sovereign remedy for rural woes, with argumentative support. Allotments, he shows valid reason for maintaining, have an ominous casual connection with the unenviable repute of Oxfordshire for its low level of agricultural wages. But, while