

THE LITTLE WAR OF PRIVATE POST

WHEN Charles Johnson Post slipped away in 1956 it would have been natural to prepare a eulogy, the best, for he was a favorite character of ours among the dwindling company of impressive older Georgists. We found it hard to sweep together the monumental epitaph he deserved because there was a haunting doubt that he might not really be dead. A man who could go through the battle of San Juan and scarcely even mention it thereafter must bear such a charmed life that who could be sure? Furthermore, he would have roared a frightening disclaimer if he had caught anyone verbalizing over him unduly.

Last week when we had nearly forgotten the matter, who should appear but Charles Johnson Post, in the form of a book, and hardly recognizable in his comic uniform. But on the very first page he made his appearance evidential beyond a doubt. This was so pleasurable that there was nothing to do but relax and enjoy the visit from start to finish.

Many a tourist has enjoyed the romantic first or last view of Havana across the harbor and observed the spot where we "remember the Maine," without remembering the dreary sequel which followed in 1898 when President McKinley declared war on Spain for the sinking of that little ship.

This book tells the whole amazing tale, written in a heady style which makes death commonplace and pain easy to take. Disease, futility, treachery—those too are treated lightly. For the men were young, and a few were still alive when it was over. In fact the author of these memoirs lived through many succeeding adventures, so this episode in retrospect could be revealed with tranquilizing humor.

Mr. Post used to stroll into the HGN office following board meetings of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, nattily turned out with gloves and cane and a devil-may-care demeanor. Would he write an article for HGN? Yes, but the Georgists wouldn't like it, he invariably replied, "it would disturb them in their ivory towers."

He once expressed his views thus: "I am not a devout and sentimental believer in Henry George; I am simply one of those who cannot escape from his keen intellectual analysis and the economic principles from which his logic offers no escape." On another occasion, in a labor article, he pleaded, "we must become a living part of the issues and forces of our own day. Our obligation is to train leadership, to work with and within human associations. One cannot escape from life by recoiling from it."

In a last visit at Bayside, Long Island, where he lived, sitting in the garden beautifully cared for by his wife, Alice, he spoke of Georgists, not with rancor, but with convincing firmness. They overlooked the fact that this was primarily a fiscal reform, he said. They wasted their time in reflections, when everything George worked for was predicated on taxation.

If a city official should call the school and ask for someone to come and help put this plan into effect, he went on, you'd have no one to send, because no one has taken the trouble to become well informed on assessment procedures and tax policies generally. Who have you got who could give practical help in making George's reform possible, he asked, without, of course, expecting an answer.

So while Private Post returned to private life and dropped his army title,

he engaged himself in a private war for years thereafter. Sometimes he fought for labor rights, sometimes for political or tax reforms, but whatever the cause, he was always personable and interesting. His father was the Louis F. Post of formidable stature as a contemporary of George: Charlie, as a little boy, was taken to hear him, but he seldom spoke of this because as a youth he often felt neglected by parents who gave so much time to the movement.

His book does not mention the single tax. It is a chapter in his life complete in itself—closed off, almost, from reality—yet an accurate record of what seems now like a story-book war.

If you have a young Presley among your friends who is dreaming of his first uniform, hide this book where (after reading it yourself) he will be sure to find it. Before the boys march off to a push button war let them catch a glimpse of an old fashioned war where they hunted their prey and shot to kill, without first carefully destroying the minds of soldiers and

civilians alike.

If you have a very correct and gentle lady among your friends, one who knows how to savor an unusual book, you might endear yourself to her also with this bouncing tale, which exposes an all-male world with amiable frankness and a straight face, by an author who is always a gentleman but an incurable wag. Even the army profanity takes on some of the rhythm of a litany, and the moral, if there is one, is comfortably played down. Of course it is great for historians, too, but they can take care of themselves. This is, for the rest of us anxiety-ridden readers, a much needed antidote.

For this bright and living book, illustrated with paintings which have already become nationally famous, we are indebted to the wife and daughter of the author, who retrieved it from among the many treasures left in his studio.

THE LITTLE WAR OF PRIVATE POST—An Artist Soldier's Memoir of the Spanish-American War, by Charles Johnson Post. Little, Brown & Company, Boston, 340 pages, \$6.50



SERVICES MAKE LAND VALUES

A shut-down of commuter rapid transit in North Jersey would "result in a devastating" collapse of "property" values. Representative Frank C. Osmer, Jr. said recently. He urged that all commuter transit lines be connected with the Pennsylvania Railroad tubes and the Hudson Tubes. Other representatives from New Jersey protested that a jet airport in the great swamp area near Morristown would lower present land values there. It would add new land values, but the new values would be more commercial and less residential.

Several Connecticut city and state officials have expressed deep concern that poor service by the New Haven Railroad has lowered land values already, driving some home owners to sell and move to New York. Every raise in fares lowers rents and land values.

Commuters are getting a hard lesson in what makes land values. When the developers and agents sold them land they described all the services which made their location a "bargain," assuring stability of value or even rising prices.

An analysis of the bewildering problem of where to live provides students of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" with numerous examples of the operation of the Law of Rent.

—Lancaster M. Greene