cipitated the European war. Nock did some editorial work on the manuscript, wrote a Preface, and had it published here as *How Diplomats Make War*. Neilson was an old-fashioned liberal and a single-taxer; he and Nock were *simpatico* on these two points, but Neilson had what Nock lacked, namely, a wealthy wife willing to sink money into a journal of opinion. The first issue of *The Freeman* is dated March 17, 1920. It promised to meet "the new spirit of inquiry which recent events have liberated, especially in the fields of economics and politics. It will follow developments in all phases of international life, and its point of view in the discussion of industry and commerce will be that of fundamental economics."

In the course of the next four years Nock collected an extraordinary stable of writers, and himself became an almost legendary figure. When the journal folded he set sail for Europe. Five years later he worked with Suzanne LaFollette on the revived *Freeman;* he did some teaching and lecturing; but mainly he went his own way at his own pace until his death in 1945.

Francis Neilson had early challenged the official and propagandist versions of the causes and origins of World War I, and *The Freeman* did pioneering work in revisionism. Nock's editorials on the subject were published in 1922 as *The Myth of a Guilty Nation*. There is every reason to believe that Nock would have come down even more firmly on the side of World War II revisionism; he regarded the turn taken by our foreign policy in the late thirties as little short of insane.

But it was against the grain of Nock's nature to be a propagandist even for causes he believed in; he was a man of letters, and in this capacity edited a collection of Artemus Ward's writings. Here was a man after Nock's own heart. Ward appeared before the American public in the mid-nineteenth century as a humorist affecting an exaggerated back-country dialect. He appealed to Abraham Lincoln, who sometimes opened a cabinet meeting by reading one of Ward's discourses, much to the annoyance of some of the members. Ward knew what he was, even if the public did not, and speaking of men like himself, he observed that "the truth has found more solid aid from them than from all the grave polemicists and solid writers that have ever spoken or written. . . . They have helped the truth along without encumbering it with themselves."

Rabelais, too, was such a man, and one of the greatest. Nock had discovered him during his school days, and had been a Pantagruelist ever since. Now he set to work in earnest, with the assistance of Catherine Rose Wilson, to prepare an annotated edition of the Urquhart-Le Motteux translation of *The Works of Francis Rabelais*. The long Introduction made a substantial book when issued separately. "It must be laid down once and for all," he writes, "that the chief purpose of reading a classic like Rabelais is to prop and stay the spirit, especially in its moments of weakness and enervation, against the stress of life, to elevate it above the reach of commonplace annoyances and degradations, and to purge it of despondency and cynicism. He is to be read as Homer, Sophocles, the English Bible are to be read. . . . Rabelais is one of the half-dozen writers whose spirit in a conspicuous way pervades and refreshes one's being, tempers, steadies, and sweetens it, so that one lays the book aside conscious of a new will to live up to the best of one's capacity, and a clearer apprehension of what that best may be. An unexampled power to render just this service is what has made the English Bible the book of books to all sorts and conditions of men, even when most ignorantly and unintelligently used."

Nock was attracted to Jefferson for quite other reasons. The grave Virginian was a country man, a utopian, a republican; Rabelais would have embarrassed him. But Jefferson was a man of utter integrity; he was as apolitical as a politician could be; and he championed human liberty. Nock's *Jefferson* is not a biography in the usual sense; it is "a study in conduct and character." A contemporary historian calls it "the most captivating single volume in the Jefferson literature."

Jefferson was strong for the idea of "natural rights," and the case for

Nock on the State and the Individual

"It is unfortunately none too well understood that, just as the State has no money of its own, so it has no power of its own. All the power it has is what society gives it, plus what it confiscates from time to time on one pretext or another; there is no other source from which State power can be drawn. Therefore, every assumption of State power, whether by gift or seizure, leaves society with so much less power; there is never, nor can be, any strengthening of State power without a corresponding and roughly equivalent depletion of social power." — *Our Enemy, The State*

"The only thing that the psychically-human being can do to improve society is to present society with *one improved unit*. In a word, ages of experience testify that the only way society can be improved is by the individualist method which Jesus apparently regarded as the one whereby the Kingdom of Heaven can be established as a going concern; that is, the method of each *one* doing his very best to improve *one*." — *The Memoirs of a Superfluous Man*