

discuss whether the tax should be one per cent. or two per cent. upon the extremely valuable public property now in the hands of private railroad corporations. The appropriateness of the analogy will be apparent to those who are aware that at least 90 per cent. of the assets of the railroad companies of New Jersey, consist not in *wealth*, but in land values and franchise values, which are not the product of human labor but which are created by the presence of the people as a whole, and which therefore *belong* of right, to the people as a whole.

When a citizen of a non-monopolistic corporation acquires property, full value must be paid, representing just so much labor performed, and then that property remains subject to the prevailing tax rate. The immensely valuable franchises in the possession of the railroad companies are public property, and instead of beclouding the public mind by a discussion as to whether such property should remain in private hands, subject merely to a trifling tax, the people should be informed *that 100 per cent., the whole annual rental value of such franchises* should be taxed into the public treasury, thus proportionately reducing the burden of taxation as laid upon our citizens. The process of educating the public mind is a slow process and yet upon it depends all social progress; our tax laws cannot be made to even approximate justice, until the public shall recognize the natural line of difference between private property, that which human labor has produced, and *public* property, those values which human labor has not produced but which are created by the presence of the whole people. When this natural distinction shall come to be recognized by leaders of public thought, the present unprofitable discussion of "what the public should own" will cease, the real and therefore the practical question is "what *does* the public own?" and the first step toward the solution of our great national problems must be to recognize that the public *does* own land values, including franchise values, even though these be at present regarded as private property.



RADICALISM IN LITERATURE.

PART I. Its Justification.

(For the Review.)

By GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

Throughout the ages there have been two great themes for the poets, for all the arts in fact, the two great motor impulses that make the world go on: love and hunger. Art puts them in this order of succession, but nature reverses it. With nature as with mankind, hunger comes first and is strongest. The instinct of self-preservation is the first impulse known to the child, and is far stronger, preceding and outliving the instinct for the propagation of the species, the love instinct. Now, as art has been defined for us most cleverly as a bit of nature seen through a temperament, and the poet's temperament, being the temperament of the grown man with higher ideals than those of the multitude, it is natural that the lesser impulse, and the less purely instinctive one, should have most appealed to him. It was the only other thing that could occasionally engage the attention of barbarous man, and make him forget the more primal occupation of seeking his food. Because it was an intermittent interest, and the food seeking was continuous and part of the necessary daily routine, therefore the love instinct seemed something finer and better, and the artist soul, made of finer clay, seized upon it as a special field set apart for the development of beauty through art. But a one-sided beauty is a dangerous

thing, even for genius, which should, and can, lead human thought. While the daily routine of life, that part of man's work and interest impelled by hunger—which includes every means of seeking a livelihood, and incidentally all the work of the world—while this daily routine was rough and rude and brutal, unrelieved by variety or invention, it was around the love impulse that all the finer things of life gathered, all its beauty, its refinement, its daintinesses. Then it was that the poet could sing of love exclusively, and hold his audiences. But even then he sang of hunger and still held them, for he sang of war, and war is but the barbarous expression of the food seeking instinct. So that even in the Dark Ages the poet sang of both love and hunger, more of hunger perhaps than love, even then. The war songs have continued down through the ages to be the only expression in poetry and art of the hunger impulse, and this is just where the division between the New and the Old, between classic and what is specifically known as "modern" literature, in a narrower definition than merely that of literature produced within the last century. The love song has not changed, the technical manner of expression may have changed, and a greater recognition of hunger as a factor even in love, may characterize the modern love literature, but the basic impulse is the same and will be while human nature exists.

But the expression of the hunger impulse is what has changed so entirely with the shaping of modern civilization, and has changed until the motor instinct at the base of it all has been so buried under a mass of refinement of living, of complicated economic and political machinery that we forget that it is still hunger that makes the world go on, just as it did in the days when pre-historic man grubbed for roots or slew the mammoth. The difficulty of finding the single fundamental point in all the complication made the poet forget the importance of the hunger instinct, and for a time it was love and only love that bore the burden of his song. During this time a public taste was formed that still in a measure gives the tune for criticism, unofficial and official, and the modern poet who is returning to the hunger impulse for his theme; in other words, to economic and political conditions . . . because the poet has his finger on the pulse of the age and knows the war song to be out of place, . . . is still misunderstood and not unwillingly recognized. Unless he be a genius, of course, for genius is its own law-giver. Therefore talent, which is the interpreter where genius creates and leads, is the more easily frightened because the less independent, and abides in the safer lower levels that look to the so-called public demand and the chance of royalties for a reward that shall take the place of the less substantial immortality. But it looks as if a too close scrutiny of that most uncertain factor, public taste, and of the possibility of royalties, often results in a missing of both, and the new way of singing of the hunger impulse is winning not only shadowy immortality, but substantial shekels for many of the poets of greater daring. In America last of all, of course; and the critic's lament that American literature does not touch American life, is still all too true, in spite of some brilliant exceptions. A foreigner reading what, from a literary point of view judged by academic standards, is certainly the best in our literature, would gain a very different idea of our mental habit than he would from reading the newspapers. In the one place all activity, a combat all along the line between the Old and the New, economic and political energy, a contest of ideas and actualities stirring and exciting, . . . in the other, calm classic smoothness, psychological hair-splitting, academic serenity. He would wonder, and if he were a man of perspicacity, he would conclude that the mass of the people read the newspapers for information, and literature for amusement, or for a sort of dimly understood uplifting. And he would feel sorry for us, for while newspapers are not reliable guides to thought and while it is very well to have a smoothly kept park in one's mental land-

scape, it is a pity to make over all Nature's wild exuberance into academic gardening.

In Europe, in those countries where the poet is still considered the teacher and preacher, radical thought has long since obtruded itself into literature. And in the literary sense, radical thought means at the last no more than a realization of the fact that all our complicated modern machinery rests upon the same hunger impulse that set some prehistoric savage to grubbing for roots to eat raw. The poet who stands outside the battle line and can see both sides of the question, should always be the one to understand the laws of equal justice, and to recognize the equal rights of man through the veiling of man's jaws. When he does this we have radical thought in literature, and as the creative genius that leads is far less frequent than the sincere talent that interprets the trend of modern thought, modern radical literature has in but few cases been responsible for modern radical economic and political thought, but it is a most interesting measure of the actual spread of the new economic thought, which is but the century-old thought of Justice and Equal Rights.

That it is not the freedom accorded the spoken and written word that fosters radicalism in literature, but the attitude taken by public opinion towards the position the poet should hold, whether it be that of teacher or merely entertainer, is shown by the fact that it is Russia with its rigorous press laws that has the most radical modern literature, Germany coming next, while free England shows comparatively little, and freer America still less. If the poet takes himself seriously as a leader and interpreter of the thought of his nation, he will express that thought, even in the face of probable imprisonment and death. But if he sees that nobody cares for more than entertainment from him, and that he is respected by the shekels he makes in entertaining his audiences, he is not likely to injure his health dealing with more serious subjects. At his best he withdraws into an academic solitude and occupies himself, away from the madding crowd, with the Study of the Beautiful.

This last is justifiable as an art form, and must always be a part of all healthy literature, but no literature is healthy that does not show also a reflecting of the burning questions of the day, a picture of the serious, earnest conflicts of the times. And the most serious question of the day is undeniably the social question, so called, the economic question of the distribution of wealth, which is the present day manifestation of the hunger instinct.

Civilized man considered that he had gone a tremendous step forward along the line of progress when he had clothed the crude satisfying of his hunger in a more refined and dainty way of getting his food, and still further, when he cloaked the basic impulse in all the complication of the modern economic system. His self-satisfaction led him to think that he was progressing in the right direction and that all the advance necessary lay along the same lines, to refine still further the manner of getting food, to complicate still more the economic process. But every now and then some poet-teacher has suggested that a little justice in the distribution would be good, that refinement did not mean all it should, if it were to remain the property of the few. Finally these warners divided into two classes, the teachers proper and the poets proper, those who taught without poetry and those who taught through poetry. The voice of the latter is still as powerful, if he deals sincerely with his mission, and his influence reaches a wider circle than that drawn about the official teacher of any thought.

Through the influence of the poet, the gradual enlightenment of economic and political thought is reflected for all to see, and in every civilized country the frankly radical tendency of the best in the new literature is a cheerful sign of the demand, even if unconscious as yet, for a greater freedom and justice in our economic life. The New Thought in literature, as in every other mani-

festation, must be combative and aggressive at first; must overdraw to make the moral plain to him who will not heed a hint; must exaggerate to drive the lesson home. But the poet can do all this with so much more effect than the teacher proper, for art is a prism that reflects even the sharpest colors in blended beauty, and art's frank appeal to our emotions permits an over-accentuation that would be out of place elsewhere. Therefore the poet is the agitator's and the reformer's chief ally, and it would be a sad day for public opinion in any country, and for that country's literature, when Art is divorced from Life, when the Beautiful only shall be worshipped, and not the living Truth. It would be divorcing the two great motor impulse, Love and Hunger, and considering the lesser, Love, as sufficient to fill the place that should be shared by both.

NOTE.—Part II of Miss Colbron's essay on "Radicalism in Literature," *Some Recent Manifestations*, will appear in our Spring number.—THE EDITOR.



NEW YORK CITY'S PROGRESS IN TAX REFORM.

(For the Review.)

By DURBIN VAN VLECK.

The changes made during the past three years in the method of levying taxes in the City of New York have placed this city in the front rank of municipalities on this question. There is still much to be desired in the way of minor changes, but so much progress has been made that there is little room for criticism. Changes in methods, even though the vicious principle of taxing all property is retained, are interesting to Single Taxers because of the bearing they have on the ultimate introduction of a just system of raising revenue.

Three conspicuous changes have been made in the method of levying taxes since 1902, and all are interesting from the Single Taxer's point of view. These changes are: the 100 per cent. assessment first applied for the tax of 1903; the separation of the land value from the total assessment, introduced first in the tax of 1904; and the publication of the assessments, which has only just been completed for the tax of 1904. All three changes are interesting to the Single Taxers and useful to the student of taxation generally. It is yet too soon to determine what the practical effects of these changes will be, but there can be no doubt that the educational results have already proved gratifying. We can hazard a guess as to some of the direct effects of the changes, and one result which is sure to follow and of which there is already some evidence, is that the mere ownership of land will no longer be as profitable as heretofore. Of course, Single Taxers will recognize this as a result which is bound to follow from an increase in the tax on land values, without a corresponding increase of the amount to be paid on improvements. The 100 per cent. assessment has materially equalized the valuations of vacant and improved real estate, and as a result the land speculators are loud in their complaints and their condemnation of the system which increases the cost of holding vacant lots held for speculative purposes.

It is well nigh impossible to determine the effect on building that the change has had. Other factors bearing on this question have to be considered, such as the new tenement house act and the stricter investigation and supervision by the Building Department of new structures. As a matter of fact during the past year there has been very little building in some of the newer