

and the conservative portion of it shakes its head dubiously and says, "Why should such things be?" and "What are we coming to?"

They don't seem to realize that the Socialist vote is not the result, as they like to suppose, of the work of "agitators and demagogues," but a result of conditions that fill the municipal lodging houses with thousands of homeless and penniless men.

Truly saith that arch-humorist, George Bernard Shaw: "How meaningless are our observations if we haven't the right thread to string them on."

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

MUNICIPAL HOUSEKEEPING IN WINNIPEG.

Winnipeg, January 10, 1912.

We, the citizens of Winnipeg, are now in possession of our own hydro-electric power. The current from the city's power plant (see *The Public*, vol. ix, p. 749; vol. x, p. 898) was first "turned on" on the 16th of October, 1911, being immediately put to use in lighting the streets, and shortly after, in lighting private buildings, as well as those belonging to the city. The plant is now in full operation, and installations for private lighting and power are now taking place. Some delay in this was caused by attempts of the city Executive to repudiate the rates fixed by the city's "power prospectus," previously issued, by raising them; but agitation carried on by the honest newspapers and citizens, as well as the approach of the civic elections, compelled the abandonment of those attempts. So, it has come about that we are now enjoying electric lighting at one-third its usual price to us.

For, no sooner had the city announced its rates than the Winnipeg Electric Railway Company—which hitherto has had a monopoly on our lights, both gas and electric, and our power—mailed a "special announcement re electric lighting rates" to its "customers," saying: "The Winnipeg Electric Railway Company wish to announce that on meter readings taken on and after the 5th of December, 1911, the rate for electric lighting will be precisely the same as that decided upon by the City Council, namely 3½c per kw.-hour, with 10 per cent discount for prompt payment within ten days from date of bill, thus making the rate 3c net per kw.-hour, with a monthly minimum charge of 50c."

When it is remembered that up to the present the company has been charging its customers at the rate of 10 cents per kilowatt-hour (kw.-hour) this reduction is enormous.

Think of having your monthly bill of \$5.38 suddenly reduced to \$1.63! That is one case. And the same proportion in larger and smaller amounts maintains throughout this happy community of light consumers.

Although—partly owing to the delay caused by the attempts to raise the rates—the installation of the city's lights comes upon a time when lights are much needed and all are not willing to swap masters in the lighting business, and although the electric company is stooping to conquer by lowering its rates below what has been maintained as profitable, yet all public-spirited citizens feel that, by installing the city current in their houses they are assisting in an undertaking in which they themselves are the stockholders; an undertaking, it may be added, which—as shown above, and indirectly confessed by the company's announcement—has relieved them of a certain amount of monopolistic oppression.

PAUL M. CLEMENS.

WASHINGTON'S CONSTITUTION AND THE SINGLE TAX.

Snohomish, Wash.

Anyone acquainted with the people of the State of Washington, and with the people of the Eastern States during the last decade of the nineteenth century, must have been struck with the marked difference in political thought existing in Washington and the older communities at that time. The democracy and social equality which seems always to exist in a new community, doubtless was the cause of the very progressive thought which pervaded the State of Washington at the time of its admission to the Union. Every community in the State had its little crowd of thinkers, all of whom who were not Socialists were Singletaxers.

Accordingly, when the Constitutional convention met in the Territorial capitol the following was adopted:

Art. 7. Sec. 2. Taxation-Uniformity and Equality-Exemption.—The legislature shall provide by law a uniform and equal rate of assessment and taxation on all property in the State, according to its value in money, and shall prescribe such regulations by general law as shall secure a just valuation for taxation of all property, so that every person and corporation shall pay a tax in proportion to the value of his, her or its property. Provided, that a deduction of debts from credits may be authorized: Provided, further, that the property of the United States, and of the State, counties, school districts, and other municipal corporations, and SUCH OTHER property as the legislature may by general laws provide, shall be exempt from taxation.

This provision became a part of the Constitution of the State of Washington.

It seemed plain from this that any class of property which a legislature might by general law exempt, would be exempt from taxation. And one of the first laws enacted by the State legislature was a law exempting household goods and other personal property to the amount of \$300. No one questioned this law, and property was exempt from taxation under it until the year 1897. In that year the Fusion legislature, in which was a large element of Singletaxers, passed an Act relating to revenue and taxation from which the following is taken:

Section 5. All property described in this section, to the extent herein limited, shall be exempt from taxation. that is to say: . . . (5) All fruit trees, except nursery stock, for four years after being transplanted from the nursery into the orchard. (6) The personal