

Fitzgerald of Brooklyn. This practically makes a czar of the Postmaster General, empowering him to decide whether a publication is "indecent, immoral, scurrilous or libelous" and to arbitrarily exclude it from the mails. Even though one might favor accomplishment of the amendment's alleged immediate purpose—the elimination of a certain bigoted and frequently libelous publication—it would be a remedy far worse than the disease. It is not necessary at this late day to repeat the arguments in favor of freedom of the press, or the fact that those injured by false of malicious statements should seek redress in the courts without trying to endanger the freedom of others. Moreover, this measure would prove a double-edged sword. Statements capable of being construed as "scurrilous and libelous" are by no means confined to the publication aimed at or to publications in sympathy with it. There are church papers of various denominations which do not hesitate to indulge in sweeping remarks about each other or to indiscriminately vilify those outside of all churches. There is little to choose between the way many orthodox papers speak of liberal denominations, rationalists, agnostics, atheists, and others and the way some organs of the latter groups retaliate. There are papers which delight in speaking offensively of adherents of unpopular or unconventional ideas. Sometimes organs of certain financial interests indulge in scurrilous abuse of advocates of principles opposed to them, and it sometimes happens that these advocates become guilty of similar misconduct. It is too frequent a thing to call for remark to see labor leaders indiscriminately denounced as lazy grafters, or to see Socialists and Anarchists referred to as advocates of assassination, riot, or other kinds of wrong. If the proposed measure were used impartially it would destroy many of its friends as well as opponents. There would in fact be comparatively few papers of any kind left to go through the mails. But even that would not be as bad as the partiality and favoritism that certainly would be resorted to in its use. The Postmaster General would probably become the servant of interests desiring to suppress obnoxious publications regardless of their merit. There is already far too much despotism and censorship in the Post Office department. Certainly no more is desirable.

S. D.



Better Representation in Prospect.

Persons addicted to speculating on the periodical returns of financial depression, the panic of 1837,

of '57, of '73, of '93, and of 1913, to say nothing of those between, may be interested in a corresponding revival in the cause of electoral reform. Thomas Hare proposed his system of proportional representation in the '50's, and after the usual amount of academic discussion that is accorded to all new ideas little was heard of it until the '70's, when General Garfield brought it before the House of Representatives. Again interest flagged and little was heard of the question in this country until the early '90's, when the agitation of a few devotees led to the formation of the American Proportional Representation League at the World's Congress at Chicago. And now it is once more a common topic of discussion. Possibly these periodical intervals of business depression cause a revival of the interest in proportional representation because the victims of the depression are then most interested in means of relief. It is to be noted also that each revival is marked by a more general and extended support of the movement.



The adoption of proportional representation in a number of the smaller and newer countries, and the growing favor with which it is received in others, encourages the hope that we are nearing practical results in this country. Congressman Warren Worth Bailey introduced in the House of Representatives on the 9th a bill providing for the election of members of the House by the new method. Congressman Bailey has sought to minimize opposition by adopting the simplest form that embodies the principle, for his bill is patterned after the so-called List system of Switzerland, rather than the Hare system. The List system recognizes party tickets and retains all the present election methods, save only the apportioning of the representation. There may be some who will object to the Bailey bill on the ground that it does not carry theoretical refinements of representation to the extent of the Hare system; but it has, on the other hand, the merit of securing the largest amount of principle with the smallest amount of change in present laws and customs. If, after the public has become familiar with the workings of the principle, it is found advisable to go on to the more refined applications of the principle, the change can be made with the required amendments; but for the present the Bailey bill offers a good rallying point for all friends of real representative government.

S. C.



Religious Speculation.

Louis F. Post, who has given to the world so

much sound economic and political philosophy, once took the public into his confidence, and delivered an address on his religious convictions. The recent appearance of the latest edition of this remarkable address will serve as an excuse for comment that would have been considered out of place in the columns of *The Public* while Mr. Post was its editor. The friends who are putting out this edition of an already widely circulated pamphlet have been actuated by the thought that there may yet be friends of Mr. Post who have not seen it, or those who would like to put it in the hands of their friends. "A Non-Ecclesiastical Confession of Religious Faith" is not a proselyting sermon to convert readers to a particular creed. Neither is it for those who have already reached a satisfying religious conviction—save as it may help to explain the condition of mind of some still groping brother. It is not a plea to follow or to shun his course; but merely a statement of fact. The end of his mental wanderings, indeed, is of minor importance. The essence of its worth lies in its evident sincerity.



As Stevenson said, "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive." Every man or woman who has wandered through the wilderness of doubt has been glad to get in touch with a fellow wanderer; and if that fellow wanderer was a man of great discretion, sound judgment, and sterling integrity, his fellowship was all the more welcome. No man, however great he may be, can by any pronouncement set entirely at rest the doubts of an inquiring mind; but every man whose life and work and character are such as win the approval of man's better self has a beneficial influence on the development of that better self. It is in this that lies the peculiar merit of this confession of faith, for in it is laid bare the soul of a man who has proven to the world the saneness, the steadfastness, and the wholesomeness of his character. And the quaintness of his style, the disingenuousness and the simplicity, bring us at once into such complete accord with him that we follow with keen personal interest his progress from a narrow-minded sectarianism through free-thought, agnosticism, atheism, on to the simple faith that has brought him peace.



No words but his own can convey an adequate idea of the beauty, the sweetness, and the sympathetic kindness that runs throughout the address; and one catches a glimpse of a great soul

when he reads in the conclusion: "I feel once more that I am a miserable sinner; though it is when I wrong a brother or drift away from the principles of absolute right, as I perceive them, and never because I miss a prayer meeting or amuse myself on a Sunday. Once more I try to pray, but in my work rather than on my knees." And in closing his confession he says a faith that was dead has revived. "But this faith is not the old terror-fostered credulity; it is implicit confidence simply in the practicability of what is right."

S. C.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

CALIFORNIA FARMERS AND SINGLE-TAX.

Willows, Cal., Jan. 15, 1915.

I received a telegram and letter some weeks ago from the President of the Board of Directors of the newly organized Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District, asking me to come up to Shasta County, 250 miles north of San Francisco, and tell the farmers in their district of the "singletax" system of taxation that will be used under our California law in their irrigation district when their bonds are issued.

Last Wednesday I addressed a meeting of 150 farmers at Anderson. They applauded vigorously when I read to them the statement on the back of the card of the real estate firm in Modesto called the Modesto Land Co., that "In the Modesto Irrigation District, the industry of the farmer is not taxed. The farmer who builds a house and barn, plants alfalfa or sets out trees pays no more taxes than the speculator who allows weeds to grow on his land."

The same evening I talked with others to a meeting of about fifty of the leading business men at Redding, the county seat of Shasta County (about 50 miles east from the Lassen Volcano). I talked pure singletax to them, and they applauded it, too. I also told of the prosperity resulting from irrigation in other sections of California and how the singletax system of taxation used in those districts causes a subdivision of the lands, and greatly increases the population of the districts.

Thursday afternoon a meeting of farmers was held at Cottonwood, which is in the southeasterly part of the district. The chairman, President Barkuloo, told them that, as the law required the singletax system to be used in all new irrigation districts they had me come up there to explain it to them. These farmers also expressed their approval of this singletax system of taxation as applied to their lands under the irrigation laws of California.

In the evening there was a meeting of about 30 of the business men of the town of Anderson at the office of the Irrigation District. The Singletax and the results brought to other irrigation districts by it were explained to them. They showed their hearty approval of this system by the applause which they gave when I had finished my talk.

This new Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District