

amount of taxes laid in the several counties by themselves the preceding year for local purposes; and having done that to work out a simple sum in proportion. Fraud and favoritism by the state would be out of the question, for the basis of taxation would be completely within local control. By increasing its local expenses, a county would automatically increase, while by reducing its local expenses it would automatically reduce, its state taxation. This would be a most desirable extension of the principle of local self-government. And when coupled with the provision empowering each county to select its own subjects of taxation, it would make the principle of almost perfect application. Such a law as this Elsberg bill would very quickly solve irritating problems of taxation in the only way in which they can be solved, namely, by referring them to the people who are to be taxed. It is a gratifying and encouraging fact that the Elsberg bill has the hearty support of the real estate associations of New York.

#### THE NEW NOBILITY.

The constitution of the United States provides, in article 1, section 9, that—

no title of nobility shall be granted by the United States.

Why not?

The "Federalist" does not tell us, and there is little said of it in the constitutional debates. Some of the members, indeed, spoke of creating a peerage, but said that such a thing could not be thought of, because of the deep-seated prejudice prevailing against a hereditary nobility. According to Yates's Minutes, Charles Pinckney said:

There is more equality of rank and fortune in America than in any other country under the sun; and this is likely to continue as long as the unappropriated western lands remain unsettled.

This statesman must have believed as Thomas Carlyle did, when in "Past and Present," book III., chapter 8, that great Englishman wrote:

It is well said, "Land is the right basis of an Aristocracy;" whoever possesses the Land, he, more emphatically than

any other, is Governor, Vice-King of the people.

Conversely stated, Mr. Pinckney's proposition is that with the valuable free lands of the west all taken, there would be danger of a constantly increasing tenant class, keeping pace with the growth of land monopoly and resulting finally in a landed aristocracy on the one hand and complete serfdom on the other; for population must increase, while the area of land cannot. But in view of the vast area of unoccupied land in the west at that time, its complete settlement seemed so remote a contingency that it was scarcely dreamed of by the members of the convention, and had no weight in their deliberations.

They thought it advisable, nevertheless, to put in a clause against the granting of titles of nobility. That clause was a part of the Virginia resolutions. By inserting it, the framers of our constitution showed their aversion to privilege, and their determination that whether privilege existed or not the government should confer upon its possessors no honorary distinction. But by the use of that phrase they no more rendered their country exempt from the evils of a hereditary aristocracy than they would have made innocuous the serpent's venom by enacting that all snakes shall be called humming-birds. A title is but a name—the rank is but the guinea's stamp.

Privilege does not depend for its existence upon honorary distinctions. Mere titles do not create privilege, although privilege does ultimately create titles. Titles of nobility are but the emblems of the power behind them. They are dangerous only because of the "nobility" which they imply. It is not the duke who is dangerous, but the dukedom—the social condition of which the duke is but a symptom. The real value of such a title is in the power which it represents.

Such power is always based upon privilege—upon rights accruing solely to the holder of the title, to the exclusion of others not so favored; in short, it is based upon monopoly. From time immemorial the granting of noble titles has, with few exceptions, been either in recognition of power already in possession, or else

has been accompanied by a grant of power—usually a grant of lands—commensurate with the supposed dignity of the title.

So long as individuals and private corporations have the power to monopolize natural resources or public utilities they will be the masters of all who do not share in the monopoly. The coal barons, the railway kings, the steel magnates and the whole piratical fraternity of multi-millionaires all subsist, like the regal plunderers of Europe, upon the fruits of privilege. They are an untitled nobility. The sunshine scintillates upon their gilded palaces in every great city of our land; but in the same cities there are dens of squalid misery and want, where sunbeams never penetrate, and where no kindly ray dispels the darkness of despair that lurks within.

According to Charles B. Spahr, Ph. D., author of a treatise on Distribution of Wealth, one per cent. of our families own more wealth than do the whole of the remaining 99 per cent! Now, who are the favored one per cent? Men like John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie; men who own more than any individual could produce in a dozen centuries.

And are they not princes, lords, kings? They have no titles, to be sure. But what could a paltry title add to the man who controls, for instance, the oil-producing lands of the United States? They have no coronets, but they possess that without which the coronet is but a barbaric bauble. The man who bows to the throne really makes his obeisance to the power behind the throne. The king's word, the king's name, is but "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal;" the king's power is everything. Crowns, scepters, robes of ermine and cloth of gold—all these are nothing; nothing but hated symbols. If the kingly power remain, what boots it though we lack the kingly name? A king by any other name is just as bad. The powerful Earl Warwick, known to history as "the king-maker," was no more a king-maker than one Marcus A. Hanna, of Ohio; and if Hanna really wore the crown which he sometimes wears in the newspaper caricatures he would be no more dangerous than he is to-day. And what

makes him dangerous? The privileges which he and his kind possess.

The real groundwork of an aristocracy is not in the unequal distribution of wealth. It lies farther back than that. We must seek it in the causes which lead to unequal distribution. It is in the inequality of opportunity to produce wealth. Equality of opportunity begets equality of condition. Whether you restrict the opportunities of one class, or grant special privileges to another, it matters not; the result is the same, and that result is seen in the class distinctions which inevitably follow in the wake of privilege.

As there may be serfs without shackles, so may there be nobles without titles. We have both in America to-day. The thing which our fathers greatly feared has come upon us. We are face to face with as great a crisis as ever threatened any republic since Rome first trembled at the glance of Caesar. The final struggle may not come this year, nor next, but it will come; and when it does, the American people will exclaim, in the words of the immortal Frenchman, "Tyrant, step from thy throne and give place to thy master!"

The ballot is the bloodless guillotine of the new revolution. It is a weapon mightier than the bayonet if used in time. Let us use it while it is still at our disposal. Put a true man in the white house, and the work of reform will be more easily accomplished. Inasmuch as the barons of the United States to-day, unlike those at Runnymede 800 years ago, are seeking special privileges for themselves instead of magna chartas for the people, it should be our first duty to remove from the presidency of this nation one whose instability of character and inordinate love of power—equaled only by his incapacity to exert it—mark him with peculiar distinctness in these respects as the American ectype of King John.

SPEED MOSBY.

Jefferson City, Mo.

## NEWS

Since our last report upon the Chinese situation, the full text of the

Russian note to the powers, mentioned last week, has been officially published, as has the reply of the United States, which was understood last week to be favorable to the Russian proposition. The notes are too long for verbal reproduction here. In substance that of Russia was stated orally by the Russian charge d'affaires at Washington to the acting secretary of state on the 28th. It declared that Russia has no intention of acquiring territory in China; that she has cooperated with the allied powers to secure the safety of the legations and to aid the Chinese government in repressing insurrection; that the objects of the cooperation have been accomplished; that in the interval, incidentally to defensive measures on her own frontier, she has occupied Niewchwang, in Manchuria, for military purposes, but as soon as order is restored there she will withdraw if the other powers do not put obstacles in her way; that as the Chinese government has left Peking she has withdrawn her minister from China, and intends to withdraw her troops; that when the government of China shall have been restored to power and expressed a desire to negotiate, she will name her representatives; and that she hopes the United States shares her view of the matter. The reply of the United States was communicated on the 29th by written memorandum. It expresses satisfaction with the assurance that Russia has no designs upon Chinese territory, and averring that the purpose of the United States was to secure the safety of their legation and to help the Chinese government to repress insurrection, declares that the Russian declarations in this regard are in accord with those made to the United States by the other powers. The memorandum then proceeds at considerable length to review the situation. Observing that all the powers have now disclaimed any purpose of acquiring Chinese territory, it suggests that an amicable settlement ought not to be difficult. The safety of the ministers having been secured, it continues, the original purposes of the powers not yet accomplished are to protect foreign life and property in China, to guard all legitimate foreign interests, to aid in preventing the spread of disorders, and—to seek a solution which may bring about permanent safety and peace to China, preserve Chinese territorial and administrative entity, protect all rights guaranteed by treaty and international law to friendly powers, and safeguard for the world the prin-

ciple of equal and impartial trade with all parts of the Chinese empire.

For the attainment of these purposes the memorandum recommends the— joint occupation of Peking under a definite understanding between the powers until the Chinese government shall have been reestablished and shall be in a position to enter into new treaties with adequate provisions for reparation and guarantees of future protection. With the establishment and recognition of such authority, the United States would wish to withdraw its military forces from Peking and remit to the processes of peaceful negotiation our just demands.

This American memorandum concludes with an assurance that the United States will interpose no obstacle to the withdrawal of Russia from Niewchwang, and an indication that—

unless there is such a general expression by the powers in favor of continued occupation as to modify the views expressed by the government of Russia and lead to a general agreement for continued occupation, we shall give instructions to the commander of the American forces in China to withdraw our troops from Peking after due conference with the other commanders as to the time and manner of withdrawal.

Here the matter hangs. Russia wants to quit at once. The United States, also, would like to get out immediately, and promises to do so unless all the other powers unite with her for the pacification of China. But other powers distrust Russia's motives, and question America's good sense in falling in so readily and so fully with Russia's proposition. No change has occurred in the situation since the giving out by the United States of the memorandum abstracted above; but it is understood that Germany, England, Italy and France are averse to withdrawing their ministers and military forces.

In South Africa the British have finally annexed the South African republic to the British empire. This was done on the 1st by Lord Roberts. He issued proclamations, under the queen's warrant of July 4, announcing that thenceforth the Transvaal would form part of the queen's dominions. The "South African republic" is thereby blotted off the maps, and the "Transvaal" province takes its place. When this was announced in the Cape Colony assembly, in session at Cape Town, the ministerialists welcomed the announcement