

he intends doing, he will bring the matter before the City Council itself, in such manner as to force all the members of that body to line up in the open on the traction question, as he has forced the majority of the transportation committee to do, he will have made another important gain no matter how they line up. Should he secure a majority in the Council, he will have won a distinct victory then and there; should the majority prove to be the other way, the record will be in shape for reference to the aldermanic constituencies at the election next Spring. His victory then, no one doubts,—least of all the traction ringsters. They know full well that unless they can win with friendly aldermen before another election, they cannot win at all. And signs are not lacking that they are even now preparing to railroad through the Council, over the Mayor's veto, and by corrupt means, an extension of their expired and expiring franchises.

#### Lawson and the genteel grafters.

When Lawson began his picturesque exposures (pp. 226, 243), it was regarded as a sufficient reply to call him a liar, and let it go at that. And really what could be said for those exposures, when they were not only lurid in their picturesqueness but included such truly good persons, such eminently sane and superlatively safe persons, as the high-salaried managers of those splendid eleemosynary institutions, the Mutual Life, the Equitable Life, the New York Life and the Rockefeller-Morgan hierarchy? To paint such men in Lawsonian colors as swindlers and pirates, how could it be other than a lie,—a most dangerous lie, because calculated to undermine the confidence of the unsophisticated and shatter the fragile temple of the great joss "Business"? True enough, Lawson retorted that if anything he said wasn't true, the good men he assailed could easily prove it wasn't true. But, they were such very good men. Why put them to the proof? And now, lo and be-

hold! Lawson's character-pictures seem tame and colorless in comparison with the rigid photographic portraits that the Armstrong investigating committee is turning out. And the culprits seem able to say nothing for themselves but "that they all do it."

In themselves these exposures are of very little consequence. Whether they result in reorganization or spectacular criminal convictions can make but little difference one way or the other, except to the persons immediately concerned, nor to them for long. But in their effect on the public mind, the exposures are invaluable. The shattering of a fetish is always wholesome; and this is as true of flesh and blood business fetishes as of fetishes of wood and stone. The general realization that great rascals who have been cunningly filling their pockets with loot while the people worshiped them as models of business virtue and leadership, is of incalculable educational benefit. It will not, indeed, prevent similar fetish worship in the future, but it will go far to deprive that sort of thing of its deadening respectability.

Lawson's "bear" raid against this same gang of genteel grafters has begun. Whether it will amount to much as a raid is yet to be learned. If it does, let us not be too swift to object that there is no good in it. Don't you remember how, when you were a boy and read your father's copy of the Farmer's Friend, you were interested in its exposures of the different kinds of fakirs who made the farmers their prey? Wasn't it exciting, those solemn descriptions of the "seed oats" swindle, the "lightning rodders," the "gold brick" men, the "green goods" men, and the various devices they used for hoodwinking farmers into signing promissory notes in the guise of receipts? Well, with his brilliantly descriptive exposures and his "bear" raid, Lawson is doing the same thing

for the innocent of all classes that the vigilant Farmer's Friend did for your father and his fellow subscribers. The "System" which Lawson assails, although enormous in its magnitude, is the same in kind as the petty systems of the fakirs who preyed on farmers. What is it in the main but a system of devices to fool the great gullible public into taking nothing for something from slick rascals whose ideas of business is to get something for nothing? And what is Lawson doing but so exposing the votaries of this grafting system, which dominates the business of Wall street, as to enable the public to detect the trick when its schemes are unctuously laid before them. His work is more difficult than that of the Farmer's Friend. It is not so simple as explaining that "a man with a mole on his left cheek, of sandy complexion, height about 5 feet 8 inches," etc., "is going about the country trying to get farmers to sign contracts for seed oats for future delivery," which contracts afterwards turn up in the bank, changed in form to promissory notes. But the one is to the other as shark to pickerel—an example in comparative voracity.

Do advocates of industrial reform ask how Lawson's plan, as far as disclosed, would, though successful, further industrial reform in any substantial way? This at least may be said in reply: It would help check the concentration of wealth, and would do so whether all victims of the "System" begin a bear raid or not. This first step in Lawson's plan would keep money from flowing into Wall street. It would probably be the beginning of a movement that would make the speculative devices of the stock gamblers impossible on the same scale as hitherto. The whole investing population are seeking the biggest returns, as well as the excitement of gambling, and the big fakirs of the "System" have hitherto managed to get the biggest share of this loose cash and turned it into solid investments in land.

They have been able to skim the cream, to absorb the choicest areas of natural wealth in the shape of mines, oil wells, railroads, immensely valuable land in cities, etc. Now, if people with money to invest should lose all faith in the big gambling joint in Wall street and buy such land on their own account, wouldn't there be industrial effects? That is an interesting question to consider, at any rate. The "System" does not develop new mines nor build new roads, nor create wealth at all. It only combines its little land monopolies in order to make big ones. The people, including in that term those with only brawn and brain and also those with opportunity, they create the wealth. The "System" absorbs it. If, as an immediate result of Lawson's campaign of education certain investors have been turned away from Wall street, as is apparently already the case, no doubt more money will flow into real estate in cities and into the lands of the Western country, for individual investment. Of course this in itself will not comfort the industrial reformer. He cannot get any great degree of joy out of the mere fact that "lambs" with a few thousands each to invest have had a scare and saved their wool for the present. But would there be no occasion to him for satisfaction with the education along economic as well as ethical lines which a people with the ballot would derive from all this financial shake-up?

#### THE EARTH AND THE FACTORY.

It has been objected to our recent editorials on the labor question, one on the earth as a "closed shop" (p. 339) and the other on the "jobless man" (p. 355), that workingmen need not only land, as implied by those editorials, but also machinery, which is an essential part of the prevailing factory system.

This is the essence of socialistic criticisms of the single tax. Conceding the primary necessity for land as an implement of production, socialists argue nevertheless that land alone, though it

were abundant and free wherever workingmen live and work, would not be enough to make the working class economically independent. The burden of their criticism is that the working class would remain a helpless subject of capitalistic exploitation unless the artificial as well as the natural implements of such production were freely accessible.

In genuine solicitude for the condition of the working class, the socialist does not go beyond the single taxer. It is quite as much the desire of the latter as of the former, or of any other earnest agitator for better adjustments of industry, that the working class shall not be exploited.

But the single taxer believes that the exploitation of labor results from monopoly of land. What he demands, therefore, as the fundamental industrial reform, an industrial reform that would make all other useful reforms easier, and without which other industrial reform is impossible or in the long run ineffective, is the eradication of land monopoly.

That the single tax view in this respect is the correct one, is evident upon reasonable observation and thought.

Why is it that the working classes can be subjected to industrial exploitation? They are not owned bodily, as the slaves were. They bargain in apparent freedom. To what alchemy, then, does the capitalist resort in order to exploit them.

Is it true, as socialists say, that the working classes submit to exploitation because they cannot work without machinery, and, having none of their own, must beg a capitalist on his own terms for permission to use his? Is their will thus overcome by their necessities? This is surely a lame explanation, for it fails to explain why the working classes are without machinery of their own.

Machinery is not an accumulation of the past. It is in the course of constant production, and is produced by the working class itself. Destroy all the machinery in the world to-day, and the working class, if left free to produce and trade, would soon replace it with better machinery. Why is it that the working classes have no ma-

chinery of their own when they themselves, considered as a whole, make all the machinery there is? The obvious answer is that the wages of labor are too low to enable workingmen to retain much if any proprietary interest in the machinery they produce. It is their poverty that makes them dependent, and therefore subject to exploitation.

But this obvious answer raises another question. Why are the working classes poor? why are the wages of labor low? Not because the working class is an idle class. The very terms put such a conclusion to the blush. Is it, then, because they do not produce more than their meager wages? But they do produce more; if they did not, there would be nothing for the leisure class. Wages are low and the working class poor because the working class does not get all it produces. Somehow, some way, its earnings are depleted by tribute.

This fact is expressed by socialists in their theory of "surplus value." They believe, that is, that the working class, considered as a whole, produces value in excess of what its members receive in wages.

With the intangible and elusive thing called "value," we need not quarrel. While value is neither food, nor clothing, nor machinery, nor anything else which satisfies human wants, the underlying idea of socialists is that it is a surplus of those things that the labor class as a whole produce—a surplus in the sense, that is to say, not of an excess over what the working class wants, but in the sense of an excess over what it gets.

With this underlying idea of surplus value the single taxers will agree. The labor of the working class as a whole does yield a surplus of consumable and usable things, including machinery; and this surplus is the tribute to which the earnings of the working classes are subjected and by which their wages are depleted.

A question still remains. What is it that diverts this surplus from those who produce it? That question is the crux of the economic controversy between socialists and single taxers.

Socialists attribute the diversion to "capitalism." But "cap-