

assessed at its market price, or 100 per cent., it is really assessed at only three-quarters of this, or 75 per cent. This makes the land tax equivalent to 15 mills, or 1½ per cent. on the true value—manifestly a trifling tax.

No wonder then that land speculation is setting in. From this small land values tax a revenue of \$2,000,000 is obtained. This amount is this year supplemented by \$5,000,000 of bonds; for, as the city's values grow, the debt limit expands and more municipal bonds may be issued. In addition, then, to expanding speculation in land, Vancouver is piling up a municipal debt.

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What is true of Vancouver is, as far as I was able to ascertain, true to more or less degree all over British Columbia. It might be said for some at least of the municipal governments, that they are restricted by Provincial laws to a maximum of 3 per cent. land values tax; yet none of them are approaching even that limit.

But Vancouver enjoys a special charter which has no such limitation. It is without let or hindrance to making the tax what it pleases. By making it so low, it unnecessarily courts land speculation with its certain penalty of enormous inflation of land prices, and then a pricking of the bubble and a dead city for a longer or a shorter period.

This is precisely what caught Portland years ago; what seized Seattle immediately after the Alaska-Yukon Exposition, and from which it is only commencing to recover; and what is about to take hold of San Francisco now that it is to have the Panama Canal Exposition.

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If a similar reaction comes soon to Vancouver, many may cite it as proof of the ineffectuality of the single tax.

It will in truth prove no such thing.

The thing it will prove will be the necessity for full application of the single tax—not only exemption of improvements, but increasing tax burdens on land values. Obviously the first step in the single tax must boom land values; this makes the second step obligatory.

The people of Vancouver and all British Columbia are realizing this, as can be seen in the spread of literature and the popularity of meetings urging the justice of taxing all land values into the public treasury. So it is probable that a heavier land tax will soon come in the progressive Canadian Provinces.

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I have found the same ideas making great headway through the States of Washington and Oregon, where fine lecture audiences have greeted me under the management of Frederick H. Monroe of the Henry George Lecture Association.

In the little lumber and cannery town of Anacortes, Wash., for instance, no public speech on the single tax had ever before been delivered; yet the truth of it when uttered appeared so obvious that an organization was at once appointed to work for its local application in this place, where D. J. Davis for a long time considered himself the only single tax man in town.

In Everett, Washington, I found that W. N. Proctor, a large lumber merchant, president of the single tax club, had been active in a movement which by exercise of the principles of the Initiative and Referendum, had turned the town from "wet" to "dry". The Mayor and councilmen who had been for a "wet" town, thereupon left the streets uncleaned, saying they lacked the revenue which had come from liquor licenses. Later they proclaimed a vocation tax. This has raised a storm that threatens the application of the Recall principle to the Mayor and all the members of the Council. It also brings into active politics proposals for increased taxation of land values as a means of raising additional revenue.

In Spokane*, the commission form of government has just put the city's affairs into the hands of five commissioners. Two of them are known to be single tax men. One of these is the Rev. W. J. Hindley, elected by the Commission to be Mayor. Up to the election campaign he preached the single tax from his pulpit. The other single tax commissioner is C. M. Fassett.

In Seattle†, Wash., Oliver T. Erickson, for years the head and front of the single tax movement in that aggressive city, has just been elected to the Council by 80 per cent. of all the votes cast—the most sweeping election ever known there. And he has with him several single tax men.

In Oregon the forces for and against the single tax are drawing themselves up for a fierce struggle. At the last election the State Constitution was amended so as to give local option in taxation‡, but at the fall election of 1912, which is the earliest moment this local option may be availed of, the great timber, mineral and other landlords will try to have this single tax permission in the Constitution stricken out. So a battle royal is on. The single tax men are under the leadership of that old, tried and shrewd campaigner, W. S. U'Ren, and are confident that they will win.

HENRY GEORGE, JR.

*See The Public, vol. xiv, p. 278.

†See The Public, vol. xiv, p. 251.

‡See The Public, vol. xiv, p. 228.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

LETTERS FROM CHINA—II.

Peking, January 20, 1911.

The Advance Toward Constitutionalism.

For the advance which followed the Boxer war there was of course a background of progressive ideas. The students and travelers who had lived in other nations were of course aware of the superiority of Western learning and had long been spreading new ideas; many of them had fallen martyrs to the reform ideas and many more had been punished in other ways. The Tzucheng Yuan, the National Assembly, which has just adjourned,* among other things memorialized the throne to pardon the reformers who in 1898 were ordered punished, and this on the ground that the government itself has now

*January 11. See The Public of January 20, page 61.

adopted the ideas for which these men were condemned.

But it seems to me that it was the Boxer war which suddenly shocked the whole nation, or so much of it as is intelligent enough to think at all, into the suspicion that whatever the superiority of the Chinese and their ways, safety for China lay only in learning the ways of the despised foreigners.* The Chinese-Japanese war had perhaps begun this work of persuasion by fact, and almost unanimously the nation reversed its policy and plunged into the task of recreating its industry, its government, its social customs, its whole life, according to the methods of Constitutional Monarchy. So far as I know, no nation ever before accomplished so complete a change of attitude unless it be the Japanese, whose revolution presents in some degree a parallel. And I, for one, have a profound admiration for the poise, the balance, the self-command, which in a nation worshipping the past as China has done, can deliberately acknowledge an error, a blunder, and set forth to repair it by so tremendous a movement.

There have, of course, been instances of disagreement over the rapidity with which the work should be done, in which, with the heartiest sympathy with the reformer's view, one may still feel some doubt whether the reluctant conservative, seeking to go slowly, may not have something of reason with him.

The National Assembly.

One episode of the Tzucheng Yuan will give a glimpse into possible doubt and trepidation behind the scenes, which I have often suspected in the happenings of public officers here, in these weeks of my sojourn.

The Assembly, be it remembered, is not a Parliament, nor is it elective. Most of its members, and I think all, were appointed by the government, and it was intended rather as a beginning of an aristocratic house than of an elective one, consequently it is frequently termed in English, the "Imperial Senate." Originally, the Imperial order was that the present Assembly should meet rather as an advisory body than as one having actual legislative powers; and its members were not likely therefore to be radical, or other than subservient to the constituted authorities. Previously, the Provincial Assemblies† had been established, with the idea that through them legislators might be trained for the Parliament with full powers which was directed to meet in 1915.

Now, that seems not wholly an unreasonable suggestion, for in fact the establishment of a Constitutional Government in such a nation of 400,000,000 people or more is no small task, and might well be undertaken with a vast deal of preparation. In fact, it should be mentioned, there is a Commission for the Study of Constitutional Government which is apparently making careful plans. But the Assembly, almost upon its meeting, presented a memorial urging that the period of preparation be shortened and the Parliament meet at once,‡ to which the Emperor responded by an edict providing for a meeting of the new Parliament in 1913. The

reformer element were still impatient; delegations from distant provinces came to urge immediate meeting, but the autocracy began then to be impatient, and sent them packing to their homes, with admonitions that worse might happen to them and to the public officials who should permit further pilgrimages of the same sort. And I confess I rather sympathize with autocracy once more. If I were deliberately arranging to divest myself of autocratic power and privilege, and then people tried to hurry me faster than I thought wise or prudent for the success of the movement itself, I think I, too, would get peevish.

That autocracy, even though it be considering abdication, is not yet out of business, is suggested by an order that a student who sought to start a students' strike in the government schools should be deported to the "New Dominion" and "placed under the strict control of the authorities."

One other illustration I want to give of this conflict of ideas. The reformers of China are men of analogy. They are planning to copy the government of western nations, and their minds seek in each of their institutions, especially the new ones that are being established in this transition period, for the analogue of some English or German or Japanese institution, and they instantly clothe the new with all the characteristics, the duties, the burdens, the rights, of the old, which is supposed to correspond to it. The Tzucheng Yuan is a National Assembly, therefore a National Parliament, and clothed with its rights, its duties, its powers. The Grand Council of Ministers, an ancient institution descending for hundreds of years as one of the parts of the autocratic system, is in its functions somewhat analogous to the ministry of England, and, therefore—so runs the assumption of the eager reformer—is to be judged by the same rules, has the same powers and authority, and is subject to like duties. A Ministry in England is subject to the Parliament, and resigns when the Parliament votes want of confidence in it.* The debates in the Assembly, as they are reflected in the English edition of the Peking Daily News (a Chinese paper), disclose this idea in many phases. But in one it led to an interesting dilemma. The Assembly memorialized the throne on the question of abandonment of the queue,† but was not granted what it asked in full measure. This then was the situation as it presented itself to the leaders of the Assembly: "Parliament has adopted a measure which the Ministry opposes. In accordance with the precedents of Constitutional Government, therefore, when we pass a vote of lack of confidence in them, the Ministry will resign, a new one will be formed which will adopt our view, and our measure will become law." They therefore memorialized the Emperor to remove the Council of Ministers. The latter, in accordance with Chinese usage, offered their resignations on the ground that they were unable to cope with the situation. The Emperor's answer, as reported in the Peking Daily News (English Edition) for December 19, 1910, was as follows:

The Grand Councillors, Prince Ching and others, have presented a joint memorial, requesting that they be relieved of their responsible duties as Grand Councillors

*See last week's Public, page 274.

†See The Public, volume xiii, page 112.

‡See The Public, volume xiii, pages 1022, 1073.

*See The Public, volume xiii, pages 1188, 1211, 1231.

†See The Public, this volume, pages 61, 84.

on account of their inability to cope with the present difficult situation. Upon perusing the memorial we clearly understand that these high officials have been exerting themselves in rendering services to the Government. But, having received profound grace from Us, they ought not to have made such a request. We hereby command that they be not allowed to be relieved of their duties as Grand Councillors.

We have perused the Tzucheng Yuan's memorial impeaching the Grand Councillors for being unaware of their responsibilities and consequently unable to render satisfactory services. We wish it to be understood that the supreme power of appointing, remunerating and dismissing officials is in the hands of the Government and is so stated in the Institutes of the former dynasty. Thus, it is clear that the question as to whether or not the Grand Councillors should assume responsibility and whether a responsible Cabinet should be formed is to be decided by the Government and not to be interfered with by the President of the Tzucheng Yuan and others. We hereby order that the memorial need not be considered.

The position seems unassailable. The Council of Ministers is a part of the autocracy, aids to the Emperor as an autocrat, not a responsible Ministry, which of course will come with a Constitutional Parliament. From their point of view the leaders of the Assembly found themselves in an ambiguous position, and threats of immediate adjournment were made. Curiously enough, also, some of the Provincial Assemblies sent telegraphic inquiries as to these matters, offering also to adjourn likewise, as a protest. Fortunately, this was not done, though it may be that the irregular attendance of which the papers complain was in part due to a feeling that the Assembly had no real power, for good or evil. While one can quite understand their wish, in the midst of a chaos of antiquated and inefficient institutions, to proceed with the work of supplanting them with better ones, it is probably true that an experimental and advisory Assembly may be needed before an actual Parliament can profitably be established.

It is, however, to be noted that the Peking papers intimate that the edict for the early establishment of a responsible Cabinet is believed to be due to the controversy above suggested, and that a further session of the Assembly is to be held in the spring.

Freedom of the Press.

Probably the fact is that nothing more could be expected from this Assembly than it has done—though it has, of course, met the usual fate. Some newspapers have severely criticised it from a progressive standpoint, and one published a cartoon representing the members as a set of dogs led by the collar. This latter was prohibited from publication for a short term. While with our ideas of legal freedom to say what one pleases, even if one chooses to say blackguard and foolish things, this seems harsh, it is mild enough compared with what would probably have happened ten or twenty years ago. On the other hand, a dignitary of high rank presented to the throne a memorial charging the Assembly with disrespect for old customs—a close parallel to the charge against Socrates. In this case no one but the memorialist seems to have taken his complaint very seriously. It is interesting to note, in connection with the above, that one of the papers here, the National Daily News, condemns the Free-

dom of the Press Act, passed by the Assembly, stating that it is copied verbatim from the Japanese Act; "and it is notorious," says the News, "that in Japan freedom of the Press does not exist."

In connection with this, also, is of interest the recent prosecution of certain Socialists (or Anarchists) in Japan.* Correspondence from Tokyo in a Peking paper states that the Government has found evidence which justifies relentless prosecution of those "believed to entertain dangerous views." Upon objection by an Englishman whose letter is quoted, the same correspondent states that the prisoners are not prosecuted "merely because they professed extreme socialistic views," but for "having conspired to commit a crime falling under the category of Article 73 of the Criminal Code." He does not, however, state what that Article covers. It is interesting to note the opinion of at least part of the progressive Chinese. The China Critic comments: "No wonder other nations are pointing the finger of scorn at Japanese law." And the Peking Daily News refers, quoting the last sentence from the Critic, to the trial of "a small crowd of Socialists who did nothing more than is openly done by these people in every capital in Europe without any official notice being taken of their actions."

But, on the other hand, the native papers claim that though papers in America and Europe are in such respects more free, they are in effect enslaved by subsidies of the rich. One of them charges that the London Times is subsidized by the Japanese Government—as a result of which a copy of an antiquated edition of an Encyclopaedia sold by the Times is to be seen in every station and hotel, besides many other places, along the South Manchurian Railway, and therefore it is impossible to get into the Times anything that is not strictly pro-Japanese.

W. M. E.

*See The Public, volume xiii, pages 1155, 1181, 1211; this volume, page 84.

NEWS NARRATIVE

To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article, on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date.

Week ending Tuesday, March 28, 1911.

Mexican Government Shaken.

President Diaz's (p. 276) cabinet resigned on the 24th in a body. The President immediately began the formation of a new cabinet, re-appointing one old member, José Yves Limantour, minister of finance (p. 276). Francisco Leon de la Barra, ambassador to the United States (p. 276), was appointed minister of foreign relations, and immediately upon notification left Washington by