

The Chicago traction grafters.

The citizen or newspaper of Chicago, with any pretensions to intelligence, that is disposed even to consider the propriety of adopting the ordinance which the traction grabbers offer as a solution of the traction problem (p. 426), thereby justly becomes an object of suspicion. This ordinance is thrown defiantly in the face of a vast majority of the voters who were intelligent enough and public spirited enough to vote on the question. They have voted overwhelmingly against it three times. It demands a franchise for the full term allowed by law, without any other compensation than about a quarter of a cent per fare for the city and a pretended but invalid relinquishment of comparatively unimportant claims for litigation. And it proffers a referendum which would count for the company every citizen too ignorant or too lazy to vote on the question, which would force the initiative upon the believers in municipal ownership who have taken the initiative three times already and have each time defeated the traction grafters, and which if it went against the company would leave them in possession of a rich field for graft from which they could not be evicted as long as they could control a majority of the Council. It is barely possible that a fool may favor this ordinance honestly; but anyone who has intelligence enough to own a newspaper or to have secured a seat in the City Council has no reason to complain if his complaisance is regarded as an indication that he has bargained for his price. Since these insurance exposures, general denials are not so valuable as evidence of innocence as they were before.

Bribing newspapers and magazines.

The Star-Chronicle of St. Louis makes itself authority for the statement that the New York Life Insurance Company is trying to flood the country with false reports of the exposures of its scandalous management. Its publicity bureau sent to the Star-Chronicle

a "news" dispatch which lifted its scandalous conduct almost to the level of a loyal work of charity, and wired this version of the testimony to all the St. Louis papers with a request that it be printed as news with a news head above it, the line "Special dispatch to the —" and the date, and without advertising marks of any kind, at the same time authorizing each newspaper to make the price "whatever you like" and send bills to the home office. In its exposure of this proceeding the Star-Chronicle recited that on receipt of the New York Life's edited "news" and the accompanying request for publication, it had wired back its rejection of the proposal, offering, however, to print the cooked dispatch as a display advertisement. To this offer the publicity agent of the New York Life promptly replied: "Your proposition does not go. I ordered telegraphic news printed. When I order terrapin I do not propose to accept tripe." The Star-Chronicle refused to publish the dispatch. Other papers published it in the deceptive manner required, and presumably got their bribe money. Similar methods of bribing periodicals have been common enough. The railroads are even now bribing newspapers right and left all through the country. But heretofore it has been regarded as "pessimistic" to mention such facts. Now, however, exposures are widening out to such an extent as to make the sophisticated wonder whether Rockefeller and the Standard Oil crowd are not also engaged in it. Certain it is that a great silence with reference to Rockefeller's rascalities, and a great devotion of space to the bright side of this man of millions, a side hitherto concealed, coincide with an outburst of lavish advertising of Standard Oil specialties.

Philanthropy with unearned money.

There is in Chicago a philanthropist of the name of Pearson. He belongs to the class of seekers of something for nothing of whom Zangwill tells a significant story.

Zangwill's man prayed: "O Lord, give me \$100,000 and I will distribute half of it among the poor. Or, O Lord, if you can't trust me, give me \$50,000 and distribute the rest among the poor yourself." Mr. Pearson has been trusted, whether by the Lord or not is another story, and he appears to have been approximately faithful to his trust. At any rate, of his something for nothing he has distributed a share—mostly among small colleges, which are grateful enough to defend the economic institutions that give Mr. Pearson so large a proportion of the good things that other people earn and he does not. If it is unfair to say that his great income is an unrequited drain upon others, let us call the man himself as a witness. "Years ago," says that witness, "I saw that Chicago was to become a great city. I bought land." He adds that he worked. Perhaps he did, but whether his work was useful he does not say; and we all know that it was not the work he did, but the rise in the value of the land he bought, that has given him his great income. That income is unearned by him. Yet Mr. Pearson does himself an injustice when he says that his money "is no better than Rockefeller's." Rockefeller's money has been got by defrauding the confiding, corrupting public servants and throttling competitors, but Mr. Pearson has got his smoothly and lawfully every year as a free gift from the people of Chicago. There is a difference between loot and a gift. And yet, in the one case as in the other, the earner loses his own and a non-earner gets it. Perhaps Mr. Pearson understood and referred to this when he spoke of his money and Rockefeller's as being alike.

TOM WATSON AND THE LAND QUESTION.

Moved by a persual of Tolstoy's letter on the land question, Mr. Thomas E. Watson, the brilliant historian and People's party leader, who is editor of Tom Watson's Magazine, contributes to that periodical for October a characteristically interesting editorial