

emplified in South Carolina. By accident it has been discovered that labor contracts are made in that state which return negro workmen to a condition which, if it differs from chattel slavery, differs only for the worse. Under these contracts the laborer agrees to work under supervision upon certain terms, and "at all times to be subject to the orders and commands" of the employer, who is authorized by the contract "to use such force as he or his agents may deem necessary" to compel the laborer "to remain on the farm," including the right to lock him up "for safe-keeping," and if he should run away, "the right to offer a reward" for his capture, such reward to be deducted from his wages. The employer is empowered also "to transfer his interest in this contract to any other party." This system of serfdom is in general use in at least one South Carolina county. The facts came out in a murder trial at Columbia, in which one Newell, a convict farmer, was charged with the murder of a negro named Hull. Newell had complained to a magistrate that Hull refused to carry out one of these labor contracts which Newell held. The magistrate thereupon issued a warrant for Hull, and placed it in Newell's hands for execution. Newell arrested Hull and took him to his convict "stockade," where he held and worked 18 convicts. Here Hull was treated like the convicts, and upon attempting to leave, was shot dead in his tracks. Upon these facts Newell was tried for murder. The result of his trial has not come to our attention; but the circumstances led the trial judge to charge the grand jury most earnestly to make a full investigation. The resemblance of this labor contract practice to the worst features of slavery is very marked, and the practice has a significance that extends beyond the confines of South Carolina and reaches to others than individuals of the negro race. There is a growing army of men everywhere, white and black, whose opportunities for making a livelihood are so meager that

they would gladly sign labor contracts like those quoted from above. Let this army but grow a little larger, and its members become a little more desperate and obtrusive, and public opinion would readily countenance the summary enforcement of such labor contracts. Through that door lies the reestablishment of a system of slavery in support of which there already exists the makings of a strong sentiment among the comfortable classes.

With some flourish of journalistic trumpets it is announced through the press that one of John D. Rockefeller's daughters is studying industrial problems in a fashionable young woman's school of New York. That news would be encouraging if there were any reason to suppose that the instruction were serious and the instructors courageous. The indications are, however, that this is only another fad, like the heartless and brainless slumming fad of a few years ago. Its keynote question appears to be, How shall employers improve the condition of their employes? Miss Rockefeller, however genuine and earnest, may study that question until she dies of old age and a plethora of wealth without making any further real progress than the daughter of Robert Toombs would have made half a century ago had she joined a class of Georgia aristocrats to study how masters might improve the condition of their slaves.

A fine modern type of the old-fashioned inquisitor who accelerated the administration of justice with thumb screws and the like, is Mr. Senior, the recorder of Paterson, N. J. His torture machine was up to date, for he operated it with electricity. But the squeamishness of some of his townsmen has compelled him to remove it from the court. Mr. Senior's torture appliance came to public knowledge through its use in the case of an Italian charged with forgery. The Italian asserted his innocence. The evidence was hazy and weak. But the

prosecutor was certain, as usual, of his guilt. So the recorder, personating Justice, pulled the bandage from his eyes, laid his sword upon the bench, and dropping his scales, ran a strong electric current into the brass rail upon which the prisoner was resting his hands. As the current caught and held him while it vibrated through his body, the prisoner yelled, as many an innocent but cowardly victim of torture in the middle ages had done before him: "I did it! I did it!" Whether he really did it or not, no one but himself knows. But he was promptly convicted, and Recorder Senior has his own opinion of the weakness of a people who object to so simple and effective a method of securing criminal convictions.

Judge Dunne, of Chicago, has made a suggestion regarding the constitutional obstacles to local self-government in this western metropolis, which would, if adopted, settle all the difficulties with which the city contends, and without involving the expense and uncertainties of a constitutional convention. He proposes a constitutional amendment to which no fair objection can be interposed. It consists merely in supplementing the clause in the present constitution which forbids special legislation, with these words:

Save and except that in all cases where any common council of any city or any board of county commissioners of any county or 25 per cent. of the voters of any city or county shall request the passage of any law applicable only to such city or municipality, the legislature shall have the power to enact the law so requested, said law not to take effect, however, until submitted to popular vote in said city or municipality and a majority of voters thereof shall approve the passage of the same.

The only improvement that might be desired in Judge Dunne's proposed constitutional amendment is a requirement that questions shall be submitted to the people upon the demand by petition of a much smaller proportion of voters than 25 per cent., and that when 25 per cent. vote for it in principle, it shall be mandatory

upon the legislature to frame and submit a statute for final adoption. Judge Dunne asks why this simple amendment does not cover completely all the needs of a city like Chicago. It does. And it is in harmony with the line along which public opinion is forcing legislation. It would tend to establish home rule.

Mark Twain is severely criticized by friends of Dr. Ament, the Chinese missionary, for his condemnation of that gentleman's exploit in levying contributions upon Chinese villages with a "mailed hand." The missionary's friends protest that Dr. Ament "appealed" to the head men and the people of these villages for redress for the destruction by Boxers of the homes of Chinese Christians, and, to quote one of them, that "the villagers responded nobly to this appeal." That response must have been a sight for the gods. A whole people aroused to madness by foreign intrusion, and native Christians despised and hated and assailed as perverts to foreign superstitions; yet a foreign missionary collects from Chinese villages a large fund to reimburse these Chinese perverts for their losses, and does it by moral suasion alone! If that story were true, it would go far to prove that Chinese villagers are morally head and shoulders above other races of men. But it is much to be feared that Mark Twain's estimate of Dr. Ament's exploit is correct. All the probabilities point to the good doctor's use, in addition to moral suasion, of something like immoral threats.

That eminent professional regulator of poor people's lives, Jacob Riis, has been studying the inhabitants of Chicago's First ward, with a view to the possibilities of putting them under plutocratic tutelage. Having made observations at a ball of the First Ward Democratic association, he sagaciously concludes that these people are not fit to govern the most valuable two square miles west of the Alleghanies, and suggests that the owners of First ward property

should, regardless of where they live, be allowed to vote for First ward aldermen. This is the old British landlord idea of a vote to every landlord wherever he owns land. It is the manifest political evil which Anglo-Saxon common sense has resisted under the cry of "one man, one vote." Government is for men, not for valuable lots. When consulted about Mr. Riis's plutocratic proposition, several Chicago property owners thought it excellent. But one sensible downtown merchant, Otto Young, of the Fair, gave it a quietus. "According to law," said Mr. Young, "every man who lives in the ward has a vote, and that is all there is to it; you can't take his vote away from him, and you can't give a vote to a man who lives outside the ward." Mr. Young's remark is true, whether stated as matter of law or of good American horse sense. If the First ward property owners wish to vote in the First ward, they have only to move into it. As yet, men and not property are the voters in this country. That is a condition, however, which plutocrats, rich plutocrats and poor ones, are extremely anxious to reverse.

The disposition of the senate to retain the check stamp tax is another indication of the indifference of lawmakers to the rights of that part of the community which cannot or does not make its demands known forcibly. This stamp tax is a burden upon the ordinary man. To rich men it makes no difference. Their checks are so large that a two-cent tax on each is less than a bagatelle. And it is no inconvenience to them to invest ten dollars or more in books of ready-stamped checks. Even if it were, they have clerks to draw their checks; and the clerks would suffer all the bother of affixing and cancelling. Not so with the man of small means, who nevertheless uses checks for his payments, as all business men should. Unless he spends ten dollars in a lump sum for a stamped check book, he must "lick" and stick and cancel stamps every time he draws a check; and as

his checks are small, the tax of two cents on each is out of all proportion to the tax upon rich men's checks.

Addressing "the man with the hoe," by way of inculcating a general lesson on capital, that unique and bright little publication of New York, "The Straight Edge," says:

Do not imagine that your debt to all those fellow men and to those other thousands who have lived and died and left the products of their brain and skill to swell the common capital of the race, is paid when you hand 50 cents over the counter for a hoe!

The debt referred to is described as running against "the man with the hoe"—

to the brain and skill of thousands upon thousands of his fellow men, from the prehistoric inventor down to the miner who digs the iron out of the earth, the machinist who forges and tempers it, the woodsman who fells the tree from which the handle is made, the workman who turns the handle, the railroad that transports the products, with all the innumerable gangs of workmen who have a part in making the miner's pick and shovel, the machinist's forge and tools, the woodsman's ax and wagon, the turner's lathe and chisels, the railroad's engines and cars and signals and warehouses, etc.

But why is not that debt all paid when "the man with the hoe" hands 50 cents over the counter for that implement?

It is a very common thing for men of socialistic trend of mind to say that the debt is not paid, and to think so. The idea is common, too, with the university cult of economists and sociologists, whose chief aim in life it seems to be to blur the primary distinctions and obscure the elementary differences between mine and thine and ours. But we have yet to be shown in any rational way why "the man with the hoe" does not discharge all economic obligations when he hands his 50 cents over the counter for it. Being "the man with the hoe," he earns that 50 cents. It represents less than the value of his labor rather than more. Consequently, he starts fair. And as the merchant who sells him the hoe charges him 50 cents, that sum must fully represent all that has been paid for the labor of making