

ter experience in their efforts to correct the evils which Mr. Bryan preached were threatening them, the American people have been convinced that the abuses which he related from the stump are more virulent than the free silver candidate himself declared them to be. They have learned that so-called conservative programmes for correcting what is wrong in combinations of capital and in fulfilling the will of the people have failed to do what must be done. All over the country, therefore, the voters are turning to men of more 'radical' principles and methods for the solution of the problems which will not be laid aside until they are settled as public sentiment demands and has the right to demand they shall be settled. It is our judgment that unless a Ryan-Belmont combination can corner the Democratic convention two years from now as it cornered that of two years ago, virtually buying the delegates on the hoof, Mr. Bryan or some one like him will be the enthusiastic choice of the Democratic party; and if Bryan is nominated we have no doubt that he will poll the votes of all those who gave him their ballots in 1900 and hundreds of thousands besides." To the same effect is an editorial of another Republican paper, the Chicago Inter Ocean of the 6th, which foresees that the practical problem for the Republican party in 1908 will be "how to beat Bryan." The Inter Ocean, however, differs as to methods. Whereas the Press would have its party beat Bryan by being more radical, the Inter Ocean would have it "stand pat." But most significant of all signs with reference to Bryan is the action of the Missouri convention of the 5th, which, in obedience to a demand from the people of the counties, names Bryan as the candidate who was defeated by corruption in 1896 and who alone can unite the Democratic party in 1908. Such a union of the party is to be hoped for, for unlike the "union" of 1904, it means union under the leadership of a democratic Democrat.

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### The Land Question in Russia.

Although the reports from St. Petersburg emphasize the struggle in the Douma over the land question, there is nothing to indicate that the land question in the form of a true issue has come before that body. The peasants need more land for agriculture, and are demanding a distribution of crown, church, and nobility lands. They are not now demanding individual titles to these lands; what they propose is to add them to the communal lands, the possessory right to which is redistributed at frequent inter-

vals. Through increase of population these redistributions have come to yield to the peasants for cultivation hardly more than seven or eight acres per family, and they are consequently obliged to eke out their meager living by working for large land owners. These are the economic circumstances that have generated the demand for expropriation from the crown, the church and the nobility.

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If successful the demand would probably culminate in a peasant proprietary, resulting from taking the titles to agricultural land away from a landed class and giving them to one branch of the working class. Were that objection raised by the landed class, it would have merit. But it would also suggest the true distribution as an alternative, namely, the appropriation of the rent of all valuable land to common uses and the emancipation of all non-valuable land from monopolization; and this is a suggestion which the landed interests of Russia and everywhere else wish to evade. So the Russian landowners object to the expropriation of their titles as destructive of property rights. What an absurdity! How did they get property rights in the land of Russia? On what theory can any one have property rights in the planet? The logical culmination of such a claim is that a few inhabitants of the earth, or even one, might rightly own the whole earth to the exclusion of everybody else. That is palpably absurd. But it is no more absurd essentially than that millions might own the earth to the exclusion of one. Property rights inhere not in the natural and indispensable source of products, but in the products. Consequently the public policy that destroys property rights is not that which expropriates land from idlers, but that which enables idlers to expropriate products from workers. The latter is precisely what the great Russian landowners do and insist upon doing. They compel the peasants to part with some of their products as the condition of their getting access to the earth in order to produce at all. It is curious to observe the contrast of so much tenderness for the property rights of these idle monopolizers of natural working opportunities, along with so much indifference to the property rights of the busy users of such opportunities. It is highly significant of love of graft.

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### The Typical Tax Dodger.

If all real estate observers were as acute and as candid as the editor of the real estate department

of the New York Herald, a very great improvement in our methods of taxation would be immediately possible. In this department, a very conservative one by the way, the observation was recently made—issue of the Herald of March 28—that real estate men are quick to raise an outcry against any attempt to increase real estate taxes. The Herald man realizes that this outcry is either stupid or dishonest, as does almost every one else, but he has the courage to say so and the skill to express himself very forcibly. “They forget,” he says, “that real estate is the direct and inevitable beneficiary not only of all private constructive enterprise, but of every public or semi-public improvement that can possibly be undertaken.” And here he illustrates so aptly that even the fool ought to see the point and the knave to hold his peace: “If Andrew Carnegie were to devote millions to establishing a system by which the streets of New York should all be perpetually kept as clean as a hound’s tooth he would be acclaimed as the benefactor of New York. In reality he would be benefiting only the property owners, who would get increased rentals to represent the value of all the better sanitation and more sightly aspect that Mr. Carnegie had arranged to provide for the city. In the same way every dollar spent on the police and fire department, on sewers, water mains, bridges and tunnels is a dollar directly deposited in the treasury of the property owner, who collects toll for every advantage that adheres to life in this city. Yet the real estate owner thinks it is unfair that he should have to pay the lion’s share of the taxes.” What is true of New York in this respect is true of every city and village in the land. The owners of their sites charge in rents for all the advantages of public improvements. This is proper enough; everybody who shares in these benefits ought to help pay for them. But after collecting this toll the real estate men put the money, not their own money but public money, into their own pockets and then roar like a wounded lion when confronted with a tax law that would squeeze some of this public money out of them.

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This matter has recently come up in a very practical way in Chicago in connection with a movement for establishing a high pressure water system in the business center—beyond question a great improvement in the way of protection from fire. The insurance companies have agreed to reduce rates five per cent. in the affected territory of the city if the improvement is

made, and this alone would amount to \$100,000 annually, or about 7 per cent. of the cost of the improvement. Other advantages would combine with this to increase rental values, especially in the business district, and everybody knows it; yet the business men have tried to get the city to bear the expense, because the site owners whine at a special assessment for the betterment. Of course special assessments are crude and often unfairly imposed, but in a rough way they do fall upon the class that benefits financially by public improvements, whereas general taxation is double taxation for tenants—once for the cost of the improvement and again for the higher rent which site owners exact because of the improvement. Fortunately the city authorities would not listen to the proposition to make landlord interests a present of eight or ten per cent. a year on the cost of this improvement at city expense, and at last the business interests are trying to get the property owners of the district to be specially benefited to submit to a special assessment. It is difficult to reconcile with any rational idea of simple honesty the disposition of the so-called property interests to force others to pay the cost of enhancing their income.

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#### The Servant Girl Question.

It was an acidulous reply that a working woman delegate to the convention of women’s clubs at St. Paul last week made to a querulous inquiry by a delegate of another class, whose problem seemed to be not how to get a living but how to get servants. Yet we should hesitate to say that the reply was not entirely just and full of wholesome suggestion. The working woman delegate had spoken in behalf of working girls’ unions, when the inquiry came: “We have been ridden to death by the working girl; why don’t you come into our homes where you can get good wages and easy hours, instead of working in ill-smelling shops?” Then came the sharp reply: “Working girls do not intend to run homes for women who are too lazy or incompetent to do it for themselves!” It seems an easy foil to the labor question as it affects women, to ask the complaining women why they do not leave stores and factories and offices for “comfortable homes” as domestic servants. But what would the questioners themselves do if forced to earn wages? It is safe enough to say that nine out of ten would avoid what they themselves regard and treat as the degraded, even if not degrading, vocation of a household servant.