projects already under way by the Interior Department under the authority of the Reclamation Act, and in favor of completing at an expense of sixty-three millions a series of dams on the Ohio river in order to maintain therein at all times from Pittsburg to Cairo a depth of nine feet. On the treatment of forests, water sites and mineral lands, the message is vague and indefinitive. It is something that by formal communication from the Executive, the legislative department has been told that the administration expects action on these matters as a part of the governmental program. But it would be muoh to be regretted if the probable action depended on the degree of vigor with which the President was recommending reform. The following passage concerning the proposed treatment of government mineral land, well illustrates the temper and atmosphere of the whole message: "It is exceedingly difficult to frame a statute to retain government control over a property to be developed by private capital in such manner as to secure the governmental purpose and at the same time not frighten away the investment of the necessary capital."

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We should have been glad if Mr. Taft had explained to some of us who may be obtuse on that point, in what the exceeding difficulty consists. Take the Gogebic Range iron lands, for example. The government once owned them. It sold them for a trifling price to lumber barons. They cut off the timber and with the assistance of a high protective tariff made great fortunes therefrom. Then they foresaw other fortunes beneath the surface, and either sold the lands for a high price or held on to them for this prospective income. But neither the original or new owners engaged in mining. They knew an easier way to reap the profit without risk or possibility of loss. They simply sold short-time options to prospectors to go on the land to search for mineral; and in case it was found, to take leases of the land, with drastic conditions as to how the mines should be worked, and reservations of heavy rents in the shape of high royalties on every ton of ore taken out. This is the way the whole Gogebic iron mining country was developed. It did not seem "to frighten away the investment of the necessary capital." On the contrary great aggregations of capital are working mines over the whole range, and paying heavy royalties to a score only of fee owners, who have invested no capital, and run no risks whatever in the mining ventures. Mr. Taft's statement immediately before the quotation which we have made, is tentative: "The surface might be disposed of as agricultural land, under the general agricultural statutes; while the coal or other mineral could be disposed of by lease on a royalty basis." Then follows the remark about the "exceeding difficulty." Why would it be any more likely to "frighten capital from investment" for the government to assume the position of the fee owner who is to receive the royalties, than for the patentee of the government who has been getting the land for a nominal sum to do so? We fear the President's "judicial mind" conceives imaginary dangers.

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Timber Growing and Taxation.

A comparatively recent address by Mr. Pinchot, the late Chief Forester (pp. 25, 26, 32), frequently quoted from, draws attention to the injustice and bad public policy of taxing growing timber. In commenting upon Mr. Pinchot's address the Pittsburgh Dispatch of December 19 made some very sensible observations regarding what it justly calls, "the greatest obstacle to the increase of privately owned forests—that is, the taxation which most States impose on the forests while under the process of growth." It says:

> A crop of corn or fruit is taxed but once. But a crop of lumber is taxed each year according to the value that it has attained, not only the value added in that year, but the accumulation of growth that has been taxed previously. Under such a system the man who starts a forest is reasonably sure to have paid in taxation by the time the trees mature all that the lumber is worth. There is some modification of this in the tax laws of Pennsylvania, but not sufficient to make it an inducement for owners to devote the poorest parts of their land to the growing of timber. Mr. Pinchot proposed what has been set forth in these columns, that annual taxation shall be solely on the value of the bare land, while the product of lumber shall be taxed only when it is cut and sold.

Except as a compromise, the concession that the product of lumber shall be taxed when it is cut and sold is unwarranted. If it is a just and wise thing to exempt growing timber from taxation, it is manifestly somewhat more just and wise to exempt the lumber after it is cut. The kind of tax that burdens timber growers and obstructs timber growing will have a similar effect if imposed upon lumber cutters and lumber cutting. Why not exempt lumber making as well as timber growing? Lumber is indeed the timber harvest, and taxation of lumber when it is cut is analogous to taxation of grain when it has been harvested. But why tax either lumber or grain? We all want them both, and we could all have more of both if neither were taxed. But Mr. Pinchot and the Pittsburgh Dispatch are at any rate right as far as they go.

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Timber taxation as an annual charge ought to be imposed not upon the value of the growing timber and the land, but upon the value of the land alone regardless of the value of its growing timber. This would encourage the use of timber land for timber raising purposes, and it would be fair. It would be fair because the tax would fall in proportion to the desirability of the land for timber crops; and it would foster intelligent timber culture by giving to the grower the full value of his crop. It is gratifying to be able to number Mr. Pinchot among those who believe in lifting the burden of taxation from legitimate enterprise and industry.

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INCIDENTAL SOCIAL QUESTIONS.

Even to the extent of total abstinence, or of prohibition, it is probable that temperance ideas wield today a far greater influence than in the time of the old temperance crusades. This may be the reason why there are no John B. Goughs in our day, and so little popular response to total abstinence agitation. Total abstainers from choice do not readily respond to appeals to be total abstainers as a form of self-restraint. Imagine the discouragements of an anti-snuff crusade, for instance, as an extreme illustration. The illustration does not apply completely to anti-liquor crusades, but it does apply in principle. Although drinking is still an enormous indulgence, it has lost its popularity. No one any longer apologizes for not drinking. Apologies run in the other direction. And in periodical literature, to the limited extent to which it discusses the temperance subject at all, which is not very much, it discusses it far more judiciously and effectively than in the days when professional writers regarded it as good form to pour out sentimental stuff in glorification of temperance, and bad form to abstain from pouring in liquid stuff in promotion of intemperance.

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We have never felt it necessary to discuss the temperance subject in The Public, although often importuned to do so. Sometimes the call comes to us from prohibitionists, who apparently suppose that if we did discuss the subject we should stand for prohibition. Sometimes it comes from liberty folks, who assume that we would stand as firmly for free trade in whiskey as for free trade in any other article of commerce. As a rule the call has never come from drinking men, although an occasional letter forces upon us the thought that prohibition, however wrong it may be in general principle, would not come amiss in that particular case as a personal benefit.

None of those general importunities, however, have influenced us to write upon the subject. But Mr. Bryan's recent editorial evokes demands in both directions which seem to be emphatic enough for a response, and now we offer one.

What we offer, however, is simply our own opinion, and we offer this to stimulate thought and not to convert—which is the spirit, let us say, in which everything in The Public is offered. In so far as we are regarded as "thinking for" our readers, we recoil with a little touch of shame; but in so far as we are regarded as stimulating them to think for themselves, we feel that The Public has a mission.

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On the question of temperance, then, we may summarize our opinions as follows:

In the abstract, we regard total abstinence as a personal question—not open and disturbing drunkenness, but abstinence; yes, and moderation too. If a man chooses to drink or not to drink, to get drunk or to keep sober, it is—as an abstract question—his own individual affair. For the consequences he should be answerable to society, as if he becomes a nuisance or dangerous or neglectful of duties.

Likewise—in the abstract—of commerce in liquor. We believe that, other conditions being right, this would regulate itself better than organized society could regulate it.

Consequently, if it were not for the conditions of degrading luxury at one extreme of society and degrading poverty at the other, with their degrading influences mingling throughout the whole—all caused by economic conditions which do not originate either in destructive rum-drinking nor in destructive rum-selling, but are promotive of both—we should consider the question of temperance at a matter of individual conduct with which the law could not meddle to any advantage.

So, also, if there were reasonable prospects of an early adjustment of economic conditions on the basis of a square deal. We should in that case still consider the temperance question as outside the sphere of justifiable legislation.

But under the existing circumstances of economic maladjustment, which will persist while a large majority of the good people are socially blind enough to prefer sumptuary legislation to square deal legislation, we are obliged to recognize the temporary usefulness of liquor traffic regulations, even to the extent of prohibition. Although not disposed to agitate for this, except under special

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