

tion of the Australasian land value tax.

Another notable banquet has been added by the single tax men of Massachusetts to the several they have given at Boston during the past three years in aid of their movement. On this occasion the special guests were the Catholic clergy, of whom a score were present, including Vicar General Byrne. The proceedings were published in full by the Boston Herald of the 4th. The address of the evening, delivered by Father Johnston, rector of the Gate of Heaven church, was upon the single tax in its relations to the teaching of the Catholic church. It was a thoughtful and eloquent argument in support of the conclusion that there is nothing in the single tax method or principle at variance with the teachings of the Catholic church.

On the whole, the minority report of the ways and means committee of the lower house of congress, which advocates a reduction of not less than \$70,000,000, instead of only \$40,000,000 as the republican majority proposes, is a well-considered document. It is true there are flaws in it. For instance, it advocates taxes on production instead of consumption as a sound fiscal principle; whereas taxes should fall upon neither consumption nor production, but upon such property as their expenditure enhances in value. The report takes fair ground, however, in declaring that the minority will not oppose the reductions contemplated by the majority, but will seek only to enlarge them. It is wise also in suggesting that further reductions in taxation should be made by abolishing some of the tariff duties that foster trusts and enable them to sell goods abroad for lower prices than they get at home for the same kind of goods out of the same factories.

Good luck is one of the elements of success in lawsuits. This piece of

worldly wisdom has been again exemplified by the Standard Oil trust. In 1892 that organization was ordered to dissolve. The order issued from the supreme court of Ohio pursuant to the Ohio anti-trust law. But the company paid no attention to it. So the republican attorney general, Mr. Monett, began proceedings in 1897 to punish the trust for contempt in disobeying the order of dissolution. Attempts were made to bribe him. But he was proof against that, and the republican state convention consequently refused to renominate him. It also refused to renominate one of the judges of the supreme court who was known to be friendly to the anti-trust law. A new attorney general and one new supreme court judge were accordingly elected a year ago. And now the supreme court makes a decision. Or rather it fails to make one. It stands 3 to 3 on the question of punishing for contempt, which is the same thing to the trust as a favorable decision. The trust goes free. By a curious coincidence the new judge is one of the three who favors the Standard Oil trust. Was there ever such luck?

Wu Ting Fang, the talented diplomat who represents the Chinese empire at Washington, lectured last week before a large audience in New York on the five relations of man—sovereign and subject, parent and child, elder and younger, husband and wife, friend and friend—as taught by Confucius. In the course of his lecture Mr. Wu took occasion to compare the golden rule of the Christian with that of the Confucian. Since Christ taught men to do to others as they would have others do to them, while Confucius taught them not to do to others what they would not wish others to do to them, Mr. Wu inferred that the two precepts are identical. He considered as "hair-splitters" those who find in them different ideas. It is hardly hair-splitting, however, to say that

Christ's golden rule is positive, whereas that of Confucius is only negative, and to maintain that therein there is a substantial difference. But this aside, we may readily agree with Mr. Wu in his pointed rebuke that conventional Christians do not even try to live up to Christian precepts. Referring to Christ's command: "Love your enemies," Mr. Wu said:

Love your enemies! At this very moment Christian missionaries are crying for vengeance and bloodshed. Christian armies are hastening, sparing neither age nor sex, in their indiscriminate slaughter, and carrying away everything upon which they can lay their hands. What a vast difference between profession and practice!

In this connection it may be well to explain that the most numerous and vehement of the demands upon the president for vengeance against the Chinese are reported from the white house to have come from Christian ministers.

#### THE WASHINGTON CENTENNIAL.

At the city of Washington, as we write, there is in progress the first centennial celebration of the occupation of the District of Columbia as the seat of the American government.

By the constitution, which became operative in 1789, congress is empowered "to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever over such district (not exceeding ten miles square) as may, by cession of particular states and the acceptance of congress, become the seat of the government of the United States." At first the new government sat at New York and then at Philadelphia, but at the first session of the first congress steps were taken to secure a permanent place where the power of exclusive legislation thus conferred by the constitution might be freely exercised. This was not a simple matter. The sectional ill-feeling between the north and the south, which grew in intensity until it culminated in 1861 in the civil war, played an irritating part in the selection of a site.

That the site should be upon a navigable river was taken as matter

of course, in those days before the advent of railroads. The Susquehanna was a favorite with northern congressmen, but the matter settled down to an issue between the Potomac and the Delaware. Southern statesmen opposed the Delaware because they feared that if the capital were located above Mason and Dixon's line it would tend to give the northern states an undue influence in the general government. For corresponding reasons northern statesmen opposed the Potomac. The dispute was adjusted by a compromise.

Alexander Hamilton's scheme for cementing the American union and strengthening its credit by having the federal government assume the then existing state debts and pay them in full along with those incurred by its predecessor, the colonial confederation, had become one of the issues between Hamilton and Jefferson. As Hamilton was a northern and Jefferson a southern leader of opinion, this issue of assumption and the issue of a capital site possessed compromise possibilities. An agreement was consequently made, pursuant to which Jefferson yielded to Hamilton with reference to the federal assumption of the state debts, and with reference to the capital site the north in return yielded to the south. The Potomac was accordingly chosen by act of congress of July 16, 1790, for the seat of government; and in 1791 President Washington proclaimed that a site upon its banks had been selected and secured.

Originally this site comprised territory on both sides of the river—in Virginia as well as in Maryland. But in 1846 the Virginian part, about one-third of the whole, was permitted by congress to be withdrawn and restored to Virginia, the inhabitants voting, as they did by a large majority, in favor of the change.

Before that change the district was in shape a perfect ten-mile square, its four corners pointing respectively north, east, south and west. Except the villages of Georgetown on the Maryland side and Alexandria on the Virginian, it was an open farming country. On the Maryland side the land was hilly and

swampy. One of the hills was selected for the capitol and another for the executive mansion, the two to be connected by a wide street, the now famous Pennsylvania avenue, running through the intervening swamp. The corner stone of the capitol was laid by President Washington, with masonic ceremonies, in September, 1793. Streets and lots for a capital city were mapped out in the region of the public buildings, and June 15, 1800, was settled on as the date for the establishment of the federal government at this new city of Washington.

When that time came, however, the city was scarcely habitable. There was but "one good tavern"; and only a few houses, and they little better than huts, had been built. To know where members of congress were to find lodgings was a problem. But congress met there in special session in November, 1800, and in regular session in December of the same year, during the presidency of John Adams. It is in commemoration of that event that on this 12th day of the present month the centenary of the establishment of the government at Washington is celebrated.

Americans may well be proud of the century's achievement in raising up this magnificent capital city. By successive additions but with a gain rather than a loss in dignity, the capitol building has grown to be a massive and symmetrical structure. The white house, or executive mansion, also a survival from the foundation of the city, is a delight to all observers who appreciate grand simplicity in architecture. Most of the other public buildings also, are impressive models of good taste. While the parks, the monuments, the thoroughfares, all testify in the most gratifying manner to the possibilities of democracy in respect of technical and artistic development.

It is not, however, to the beauties of our capital city that we care most especially to call attention. Whoever is interested in these may get all the satisfaction he craves by reading the daily newspapers and magazines. None of the beauties of Washington are in danger of neglect.

None of its glories will be ignored in this its centennial year. What is in danger of neglect is not a beauty, not a glory. It is something so ugly that it would not be tolerated if it were architecture, so repugnant to every natural concept of justice that it would make all the outward beauty of Washington fade by comparison if it were in the same sense tangible and visible. It is an old evil, upon which there has been no improvement since the corner stone of the capitol was laid. Had the material development of Washington been as slow as reform in this particular, its hills would still be bare and its beautiful avenue a swamp.

We refer to this subject not because we prefer invisible ugliness to visible beauty, but because there is a superabundance of guides to the external beauty of Washington, and only a few if any at all, to this intangible ugliness. And we do it the more readily because the evil to which we allude is not peculiar to Washington. That city simply serves, now that it celebrates its centennial year, as a prominent example of a common species of neglect; regarding which, however, the general government, in exercising exclusive authority over Washington, has been specially derelict. Our allusion is to the fact that the pecuniary value of all the costly public improvements which have turned the hills and swamps of Washington into one of the beautiful cities of the world, is given almost without compensation, to a small class of Washington property owners.

It has often been charged that the selection of the site of Washington was a gigantic land speculation, and that President Washington was a party to it. Into that charge we need not inquire. Whether or not the selection was influenced by a speculative conspiracy makes no difference now. What does concern us now is the fact that, conspiracy or no conspiracy, land speculation not only was but still is fostered by the action of the general government. Instead of conserving for common uses those values which its magnificent development of Washington has created and continues to create and maintain, the govern-

ment confiscates them to the uses of Washington lot owners.

When the site of Washington was chosen, it had only a low acreage value. But as soon as Maryland had contributed \$72,000 and Virginia \$120,000 toward the erection of the capitol and the executive mansion, and the corner stone of the former had been laid, speculators began to buy building lots for a rise in value. This was the beginning of the evil to which we have referred as a moral blot upon the material beauty of our capital city. The effect in obstructing private improvement was soon obvious. In 1899, says Prof. McMaster (vol. ii., p. 489), "one could look over an area nearly as great as the city of New York, yet not see a fence, nor a house, nor anything save a few brick kilns and a few temporary huts for laborers." Land was held at so high a price as to discourage building. It had gone up from farm acreage values to 25 cents a square foot—equal to more than \$10,000 an acre; and nothing had caused this but the public improvements, actual and contemplated. The pecuniary benefits resulting and to result from the expenditure of public moneys in improving the capital city were thus diverted from the common treasury, where they belonged, to private pockets.

It is not necessary to suspect that this was pursuant to any conspiracy. So far as the result is concerned, it makes no difference whether it was so or not. We may just as well assume, what was not improbably the fact, that it was an innocent enough application of prevailing notions regarding land tenure and taxation. But that is why the continuance of this policy mars the otherwise splendid development of Washington. It is not occasional crimes against the public conscience that testify to civic stagnation; it is continued torpidity of the public conscience itself. A land speculation conspiracy, therefore, in connection with the location of the capital city, might be only an interesting historical episode; whereas a perpetual public policy of encouragement to land speculation by secur-

ing to the lot owners of Washington the pecuniary benefits of common improvements, testifies to a stagnant civic morality. It indicates, unhappily, that the development and beautification of Washington have been only external.

And precisely that policy has been perpetuated. It is exactly to-day what it was a century ago, when a price of 25 cents a square foot for building lots obstructed private improvement and diverted the pecuniary benefits of public improvement to the private pockets of a class. It is just the same, that is, except that now congress not only erects and maintains federal buildings but also pays 50 per cent. of all the expenses of the local government, and that the price of lots has risen enormously. And there is the same obvious relation as of old between what congress thus does and the enhanced price of lots. If these congressional expenditures were withdrawn and the public buildings permanently removed the lot values would collapse. It is the expenditures of congress, then, in the improvement of the District of Columbia—the expenditures, that is, of public money,—that constitute the basis for nearly the entire value of Washington lots. That value, therefore, ought in justice and good sense to be a public fund. From it the people should be reimbursed for their expenditures that produce it. But it is still confiscated from them.

This subject underwent a searching inquiry in 1892. The attention of congress was called by petition to the fact that lot values in the District of Columbia were assessed at only \$76,000,000, and that a new assessment about to be made would increase the old one to \$95,000,000, whereas it should be more than \$300,000,000. This petition complained also of gross inequalities of assessment as between individual lot owners, showing that the very desirable lots were assessed at less than 14 per cent. of their true value, while the lots of small home owners were put down at 70 and 80 per cent. of theirs. A special congressional committee was accordingly appointed, and it made the in-

quiry in question. Its report is a document of the house of representatives, and is distinguished as "Report No. 1469 of the 52d congress, 1st session."

The committee found that the facts complained of in the petition were substantially true, and reported that in consequence of their investigation the assessment of land in the district had been raised \$125,000,000. But still, as they further reported, "more than half the value of land in the district escapes taxation." They also found, and this is a remarkable showing in corroboration of the point we have been trying to make, that in the District of Columbia—

land values are increasing at an enormous rate—on a conservative estimate to the amount of \$40,000,000 annually, enough to pay off the entire bonded debt of the district in six months; that the assessment of buildings and the under assessment of land is operating to discourage greatly the growth and improvement of the capital; . . . . and that on a fair assessment of land alone it would be easy to obtain, by a tax rate less than one-half of the present, all the revenue required for the needs of the district. This would make the tax rate of the city of Washington 60 cents on the dollar—a lower rate than that of any large city in the country. . . . . While your committee do not deem the question of how far the national treasury should be called on to defray the expenses of the district government to be within the scope of the resolution submitted to them, they would report that their examination shows that the collection of only 12½ per cent. of the annual rental value of the land of the district—estimated at \$24,000,000—would suffice to raise the district's proportion of the increased sum of \$6,000,000 annual revenue which the district commissioners ask; that the collecting of 25 per cent. would suffice to raise the whole \$6,000,000 without taking one penny from the national treasury; that the collection of 50 per cent. would give, without any tax upon improvement or any contribution whatever from the national government, \$12,000,000 of revenue a year, or more than twice the amount the commissioners ask for—a sum which properly used would soon make the national capital the most beautiful and delightful city in the world. And this could be done without the slightest tendency to decrease the comfort or increase the cost of living of any resident or visitor. On the contrary, the very weight of the tax thus levied on land values would check speculation and make land needed for buildings much easier to be had by those who wanted

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to improve it—an effect which in its turn would so increase population and prosperity as to greatly increase legitimate land values, and thus increase the fund that could in this manner be drawn on for all district needs. . . . At ten per cent. annual increase, the minimum rate testified to by witnesses before the committee, there would be an increment to land values of \$42,300,000 each year. This [now] represents the annual profit of land owners.

That report thus furnishes a definite official statement in support of the correctness of our contention that the pecuniary values which congressional appropriations produce in the District of Columbia are confiscated by the millions of dollars from the public treasury, where they belong, for the enrichment of local land owners. The same absurdly iniquitous condition, therefore, that existed when the century was young and Washington was little more than a governmental experiment, exists essentially now when a new century is about to open and Washington is one of the great capitals of the world. In this respect there has been no advance, no growth, no improvement.

That is the blot upon the century's development of the capital city of the great western republic. Nor is it any less a blot because so few now think of it as one. There were but few who thought slavery a blot upon the good name of the republic when it flourished in the District of Columbia. Less than half a century ago the public jail of the district was used as a slave pen and the sheriff as a slave keeper. Worse than that, men and women slaves were marched by slave dealers from the jail to their destination, openly upon the public streets, chained in gangs. Americans do not like to speak of this now. We are ashamed of it. That it was a blot upon all that was good and beautiful in what our growing capital represented has become all too plain. But it did not seem so then. Congress when appealed to to stop it as shocking to moral sensibilities and patriotic instincts, saw no reason for interfering. So is it with all institutional iniquities. But the greatest glory of a country consists in its discovery

of the true character of its iniquitous institutions and putting them behind it.

Greater is that than symmetrical architecture and fine statuary. While we should not be insensible to this external beauty, while we should enjoy it to the full in so far as it is expressive of exalted sentiment, no true American will ever forget that the noblest monument in Washington is the record of the abolition of slavery there. We could better spare all the beautiful art of the capital city, along with its magnificent growth, than that one act of national justice.

Feeling so, one cannot admire the external beauties of the city with the same unruffled emotions that one might experience if the common wealth they bring there were not still confiscated, through land monopoly, for the enrichment of a local class. May it not reasonably be hoped that the second century of our capital city will witness the end of this iniquitous policy in its government as the first did that of slavery? May we not think of our descendants a century hence as celebrating the beauties of civic righteousness which our capital city then displays, as well as its beauties of boulevard and monument and architecture?

## NEWS

Business in congress has been pushed with unusual activity. Although the session is less than two weeks old, two important bills have already been rushed through the lower house, and another is well along upon its passage. One of the two bills that have passed the lower house is known as the "Grout oleomargarine" bill. It increases the present tax of 2 cents a pound on oleomargarine to 10 cents, when the article is colored to resemble butter; and it reduces the tax from 2 cents to a quarter of a cent when the article is uncolored. A substitute intended to recognize the value of oleomargarine as a wholesome and nutritious article of food, but to prevent its fraudulent sale, was defeated by a vote of 113 to 178, and the Grout bill passed on the 7th by 198 to 92. The other measure to

pass the lower house is the army reorganization bill. It increases the standing army, in round numbers, to a minimum of 58,000 and a maximum of 96,000, in the discretion of the president. There is a clause in the bill as passed which abolishes the army canteen by forbidding the sale of liquor of every kind upon any premises used for military purposes. The bill was passed on the 6th after two days' debate, by a vote of 166 to 133. The third bill to which we refer above, that which is well along upon its passage, is the bill for the reduction of war taxes. The debate upon it in the lower house, as it came from the committee on ways and means, began on the 11th.

In the senate the Hay-Pauncefote treaty for the abrogation of so much of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty as relates to the Nicaraguan canal (see *The Public*, first year, No. 43, page 8; second year, No. 97, page 9) was discussed in executive session on the 6th; and on the 12th a batch of reciprocity treaties was received from the president, together with certain extradition treaties and a supplementary treaty with Spain. The latter provides for the cession by Spain to the United States, for \$100,000, of four or five small islands of the Philippine archipelago which were accidentally omitted from the peace treaty signed at Paris.

Across the Atlantic another great legislature is in session—the British parliament. It listened on the 6th to the queen's speech, which was so brief that it may be reproduced here in full:

My Lords and Gentlemen: It has become necessary to make further provision for the expenses incurred by the operations of my armies in South Africa and China. I have summoned you to hold a special session in order that you may give your sanction to the enactments required for this purpose. You will not enter into other public matters requiring your attention until the ordinary meeting of parliament in the spring.

The customary address in reply having been moved on the same day, a bitter debate followed in which Secretary Chamberlain was made the center of attack. He responded with a fierce reply. Lord Salisbury participated in the debate, and referring to the Transvaal war declared that the conflict would not cease