

THE PASSING HOUR.

BY THE EDITOR.

It would not be fitting to let this occasion go by without some reference to the passing away of the man who has so often appeared upon single tax platforms (though not as a single taxer) and whom Henry George called the "Giant of the Northwest"—John Peter Altgeld.

The man whose dramatic death recalls the passing away of our own great leader, both called at the very moment when their voices were upraised in behalf of liberty, typified in the minds of many the evil genius of our political and social life. To thousands of minds he appeared as a distinctly dangerous man, and this view of him, if mistaken, was sincerely held by vast numbers of persons. Time will, however, do him full justice. Under that calm and somewhat unprepossessing exterior burned a passionate love of liberty. His hatred of the tyrannous elements in our national life found vent in a savage directness of speech that his enemies were fond of distorting. Yet his personality is said by those who knew him to have been greatly lovable.

For mere political success he cared nothing. One of his last public utterances contained a statement to the effect that it was not worth while to strive for democratic victory simply for the sake of victory. And this was always the attitude of the man whose sincerity few ever ventured to question.

His powers of analysis were singularly keen. No more startling diagnosis of social conditions has ever been made than in the speech he delivered at Ulmer Park at the last celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Henry George. But the latter part of that speech was singularly disappointing. His suggested remedies were always pitifully inadequate. His intellect was not constructive, and he lacked, too, that splendid optimism which our own great leader had, without which no reformer can long impress his influence upon the masses of men, and to which the reform of the single tax to-day owes so much. But in spite of these limitations a distinctly healthy influence has departed, and our political life is poorer by his death.

The lower house of the Colorado State Legislature has just passed a bill assessing mines for taxation at their full cash value. The *Mining Investor* of Colorado Springs naturally antagonizes the proposed measure. "There are several good reasons, it says, "why mining property should not be taxed in the same way as other property of the State." There are indeed; but the *Investor* does not state them. Its own reasons are that the value of mining property is very difficult to determine and varies enormously from year to year. It is true that the land values of mines are not so easily arrived at as those of agricultural or urban land, but the difficulty is not insuperable.

The *Investor* thinks that the plan that has been pursued in Colorado of taxing the output of a mine instead of trying to put a value upon the property itself, is "the wise and sensible course to pursue." It may do the *Investor* some good to point out that such a policy is not in the interest of legitimate mining, but redounds to the advantage of the mere speculator in mining lands. The very difficulty that the *Investor* indicates as confronting the problem of mining—*viz.*, the outlay required of the actual producer in the purchase of land, the mineral resources of which are an uncertain quantity,—is increased by the policy which taxing the output and exempting the land values from taxation gives an enhanced and speculative value to the land. This must be paid for out of the expenses of legitimate mining. To add to this a tax on the output is to subject the business of mining to two taxes—one for the State and the other for the benefit of the mere land owner. Let the *Investor* think this over.