

they exploit their fellow men, who would buy the votes of legislators? Who would lubricate the wheels of such potent, but vile political machines as Tammany Hall? Suppose the smile, the personal good will, the individual favor of the great in public office could have no capitalizable value; who would pay for them, directly or indirectly?

The wickedness is not with Tammany nor the weakness with Sulzer.

ROBERT S. DOUBLEDAY.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

HEARING ON HERRICK-SCHAAP BILL.

New York, February 21.

There was a hearing in the City Hall yesterday, before the Board of Estimate, on the merits and demerits of the Herrick-Schaap bill. This is the measure in which it is proposed to take a referendum of the voters of New York relative to the matter of gradually reducing the tax rate on buildings to half that on land. The Lower Rents Society had claimed the fulfillment of a promise made by Mayor Mitchell to have the matter discussed before the Board, although it is rather unusual to ask that the Board of Estimate take action on a bill which has not yet been passed by the Legislature. The large Council chamber of the City Hall was crowded with an audience vitally interested in the proceedings. In favor of the measure, the Lower Rents Society and the Business Men's Society to Untax Industry were represented by Messrs. F. C. Leubuscher, Charles T. Root, W. C. Cranford, Benjamin C. Marsh. The opponents of the measure had thought to play a strong card by introducing Professor E. A. Seligman of Columbia University to speak for them. The hush that immediately followed the announcement showed the respect with which the head of the economic department in our greatest institution of learning was held in his own city. But Professor Seligman sadly disappointed those who listened to him with this decided mark of respect. Whatever his abilities, and they are not disputed, as a teacher of college economics, he does not shine as a political speaker. He contradicted himself several times, stating at one point that the passage of the bill would result in an over-production and therefore a forced boom in buildings, and again at another time asserting that it would keep back building and keep land out of use. In this, however, to the credit of Professor Seligman, be it said that he was not alone. Messrs. Robert E. Dowling, Cyrus C. Miller and others who spoke against the bill were equally emphatic in both assertions, i. e., that the bill would do both of two things, bring about too much building and keep back building. One gentleman who spoke for five minutes at the last of the hearing stated that of course a tax on land values would keep land out of use. "It stands to reason," he remarked emphatically, "that if a man has four lots and is heavily taxed on them, he will only build on one"

Now, to a mere woman, who does not attempt to

understand the workings of the superior masculine mind, this last remark was a faze!

The Mayor stated that he did not believe it would be fair or expedient to have any such legislation adopted until the matter had been carefully studied. He had authorized various committees to make a thorough investigation of the taxation on land and buildings, both in New York and other cities. At the close of the hearing Comptroller Prendergast offered a resolution deprecating any such legislation as proposed by the Herrick-Schapp bill until the matter had been thoroughly studied. This sounded rather good than otherwise, for there is nothing those favoring the bill could wish for that would be better for them than an honest investigation of this question of raising city revenues. However, as Comptroller Prendergast himself came out with an open assertion that he himself was distinctly opposed to the bill and the majority of the Board seemed to agree with him, the prospects for this honest investigation do not look very favorable. The hall was closely packed with large delegates, recognizable through their blue badges, from the Allied Real Estate Owners' Association. They expressed great jubilation over the result of the hearing. Some outspoken remarks by Mr. Marsh led to what almost amounted to a hand-to-hand fight, after the Mayor and the members of the Board had retired. The extreme bitterness felt by those who are fighting this bill showed their determination to defeat it by whatever methods they can. Some remarks made in the heated argument—it became so heated that several policemen took a part in it—were amusing and at the same time instructive to a calm observer. One thing, repeated several times, was the peculiar suggestion that Mr. Marsh and the other backers of the bill were being paid by "Philadelphia capital to get business away from New York." This suggestion is certainly a novel one.

Throughout all that was said by the opponents of the bill, both during the hearing and after it, it was noticeable that they did not any one of them seem to grasp for a moment the fact that those backing the bill were doing so out of conviction that had little to do with self-interest. It did not seem to them to be in any way a comprehensible matter that a political fight should be fought on any other ground but those of the immediate money-interests of the fighters. From this conclusion, however, we must naturally exempt Professor Seligman who, however confused his arguments may have been, did not degenerate in any way into personalities. It was a very interesting occasion and it was certainly a lesson to the upholders of this bill that they are fighting against, not only the acute self-interests of their opponents but against an utter lack of understanding on the part of these opponents that there is anything else to fight about except self-interest.

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.



THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING.

Modesto, California, February, 20.—The secretary of the Modesto Chamber of Commerce took me over the Modesto and Turlock Irrigation District yesterday. We covered about 35 miles of roads in each district, so that I got a fair insight into conditions

in each of them. The Modesto district exempts buildings and other improvements from taxation for irrigation purposes. The Turlock district taxes improvements.

The condition of each of these irrigation districts verifies every theory of singletaxers as to the effect of the taxation of improvements. In the Modesto district the houses, barns and outhouses are substantially built, well kept, and the houses are generally neat architectural structures, some of them very fine, and nearly all of them have nice gardens with flowers, ferns, palms, and other trees, and grass lawns. Their average condition is superior to most of the moderate sized homes in the large cities.

In one part of the district where five years ago there was a large wheat ranch of 1,660 acres with one house on it, that was occupied only during the harvest season, and on which three years ago there were but three children, today there are a multitude of small farms from 3 to 40 acres in area, a very fine large school house that would do credit to any town, with an attendance of 75 children. Close by them is a large, handsome structure about 100x100, built by the Women's Improvement Club of the neighborhood, with a nice garden about it. This building is used for meetings of all kinds in this section of the district. Mind you, these buildings are out in the country among the ranches! There are other fine schools and Women's Improvement Club buildings in other parts of the Modesto Irrigation District.

In my trip through the Turlock Irrigation District I went south on the west side about 14 miles, thence east to the city of Turlock and returned on the state highway via Ceres, covering about 35 miles. In all that journey I saw only three very good houses, and but one that might be called very fine. The rest of the houses would not average above a shack, very few of them had gardens, the barns did not average one-half the size of those in the Modesto district, and the outhouses were smaller and fewer in number. The buildings were not well maintained or painted, some of them were tumbling down. Many of the barns had large advertising signs painted on the roofs. (I did not see a single barn in the Modesto district so disfigured.) The houses were scattered and not near so close together as in the Modesto district. Large sections of open country without a house upon it were to be seen. One absentee owner was growing grain on a 640-acre section, which can easily suggest 35 families if properly cultivated.

These two irrigation districts immediately adjoin each other, the soil is admitted by everyone to be practically the same in each of them. They get their water for irrigation purposes out of the Tuolumne at the La Grange dam, the ditch of one being on the north side of the river and of the other on the south side. The climate in each district is exactly the same. The people throughout the country are of the same nationalities and descent. There is nothing to distinguish one district from the other except that Turlock district taxes improvements while Modesto does not. (Personal property is not taxed for irrigation purposes in any irrigation district in California.)

The best answer to the question, What is the cause of the excellence of the conditions in Modesto

district and the contrary in Turlock district? is to be found in my experience with the Stanislaus County Board of Trade. A few days ago I appeared before that body and asked them to adopt a statement showing the effect of the exemption of improvements from this irrigation tax on the city and county in the Modesto Irrigation District.

While some of the members seemed inclined to comply with my request, one member of the board, Mr. E. P. Mains, of the firm of Cadwaller, Mains & McCart of Turlock, objected. He said the board was a county body and that "We do not have that system of taxation in Turlock."

EDWARD P. E. TROY.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

TREATMENT OF AN ENLISTED MAN.*

Seattle, February 13.

I want to call attention to the case of Kosti Leo Aryan, formerly a private soldier at Fort Flagler, Washington.

He was born in Roumania of Greek-Austrian parents. He became an engineer on Anglo-Persian irrigation projects and later landed at Baltimore, aged about 26 years. He had rather difficult work in the United States, culminating in difficult straits in Colorado, where he sought to rest his weariness by enlisting in the army.

After being in the army about a year and getting the perspective of his environment, he concluded that the business of war in general, and his enlistment in particular, were entirely bad, especially in view of the necessity which he found himself under to obey the orders of his superiors, irrespective of their character. He sought a way out by addressing a letter to the Secretary of War, asking to be discharged, stating his surprise at finding that his oath to uphold the Constitution and to defend the country against its enemies was construed to mean that he had to obey officers who might themselves be the enemies of the country and its people. He sought to have the letter forwarded to the Secretary through proper military channels, but it landed in the hands of his commanding officer who ordered a summary court-martial charging him with writing the letter "to the detriment of the service," etc. Asked to plead and he plead "not guilty" to writing the letter "to the detriment of the service," etc. Then he was cross-questioned as to the act of writing the letter which he admitted, so he was marked as having plead "guilty" and given a guard-house sentence of three months.

At this point the case came to my attention and on inquiry the officers told me he had been paroled as being "probably insane," and was working in the hospital. There he was ordered to kill and dress chickens, which he refused to do on the ground that his religious scruples forbade, being a vegetarian of 12 years' standing; again he was ordered to haul meat, and to haul coal in a heavy rain while he was partly ill. The chicken case brought another summary court-martial with a sen-

*See the Public of January 23, at page 76.