

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