

into certain fundamental wrongs, it has been seen to veer off as if steered by an unseen hand away from this dangerous brink. For a blind horse is not in it with public opinion when it comes to the possibility of being guided, unknown to itself. Quite innocently doubtless, and believing it to be the expression of their own opinion, a number of well-known and well-intentioned people connected with welfare work, began to dispute the published reports of wages and their effect in driving girls deliberately into prostitution. Commercialism took the cue quickly and guided popular indignation away from the essential to the unessential, from the fundamental to the superficial. The toiler who preferred prostitution to industrialism no longer held the center of the stage. Our attention was called to the other girl, the unwilling victim of some individual procurer or "cadet." It is really so much more interesting, and so much simpler, to vilify and arrest a few of these vermin than to question into the sort of thing that is considered the established order in our business life.

It's the fashion to hammer politics—represented by the petty politician; but it's a dangerous thing to inquire too much into Big Business, represented by our Pillars of Society. What has happened in this question of the White Slave agitation has happened so many times already that those who are working for more fundamental reforms are sometimes saddened at the difficulty in focusing public opinion—the only medium through which lasting reforms can ever be brought about—in focusing it on the fundamental causes, and preventing it from flying off at a tangent, into a fight with superficial effects by which so little can be gained.

•And yet the world does move! Here and there the public clamor may have awakened some one soul possessing the ability to think clearly and to strike to the heart of things.

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

### PROGRESS IN PARAGUAY.

Buenos Aires, December 11.\*

I send the translation of a cable that has just come in from Asuncion, dated December 6, announcing the approval by the Assembly of a new Land Tax bill:

A modification of the law with reference to Land Taxation is being debated in the Chamber of Deputies. Deputy Ayala, a member of the joint commission of Estimates and Finance, delivered a speech going fully into the ideas embodied in the bill under discussion, recommending that leave be given to study the bill clause

by clause. After being introduced as above indicated leave was immediately given on a big majority vote.

Clauses 1 and 2 were approved without discussion. When clause 3 came up, establishing progressive taxation, the Minister of Finance delivered a speech in support of the clause that was applauded by the Deputies. Deputy Gonzalez said that he considered the maximum under the graduation system, involving a 1% tax excessive. He put forward a number of reasons—among them being one that touched on the injustice of such a tax when civil war was in progress. The Minister of Finance replied, pointing out that the taxation through the customs was excessive when compared with the Direct Taxation levied in the country. Deputy Goiburú recommended a reduction of the taxes proposed and affirmed that those who held small blocks which they worked for their living should not be handicapped unduly. To these recommendations the Minister in charge of the bill replied and the House adjourned to give the committee time to prepare their further recommendations to the House.

On resuming, Deputy Sugiari remarked that the House should feel pleased to have a Minister of Finance who had presented a bill of this class to the Chamber, and congratulated the committee on the detailed report attached to the bill—a report so clear and detailed as to obviate much useless discussion. He proposed a modification of subsection A, clause 3, wherein it was proposed to establish a tax of \$2 per thousand on all these properties where the value was between \$2,000 and \$5,000. He recommended that the scale be altered to read \$2 per \$1,000 on all properties between the value of \$5,000 and \$10,000. On a vote being taken this was approved.

The following scale was then approved:

	Per \$1,000.
\$10,000 to \$ 20,000.....	\$2.50
\$20,000 to 30,000.....	3.00
\$30,000 to 70,000.....	3.50
\$70,000 to 200,000.....	4.00

The other clauses were approved as presented up to those exceeding \$2,000,000 which was fixed at \$9 per \$1,000.

When discussing article 4 Dr. Chaves took the stand that it was unfair and unjust to levy a surtax on uncultivated land over and above the land taxes just approved. He stigmatized the surtax system as a most hateful way of penalizing those who did not feel inclined to work their property. He argued that the Government should make a big rebate to those who worked their land property—this rebate to take the form of a rebate of the land tax in such cases. He asked that the clause imposing a 40% surtax on uncultivated land be thrown out. To this the Minister replied that there was no reason why this clause should not stand, for if it were true—and he admitted it was so—that there were some lands far out that the Government wanted to force into cultivation, no owner would suffer unduly. For if land was far out its value would be low and consequently the penalty would be proportional; but its effects would be most beneficial in forcing into use lands close in and held idle through the indolence or obstinacy of monopolists. Deputy Ayala followed, and emphasized the necessity of maintaining the penalty of a fine on indolence, comparing it trenchantly with the present system which he affirmed was a direct tax on industry so levied as to frighten those who wished to do something for Paraguay, until the agriculture and the industries of the country died out. Deputy Chaves returned to the attack, vehemently insisting that to strike at a man simply because he owned more land than he could work was wicked and unjust and that instead of penalizing with a surtax, the Government should give rebates according to the areas and values of the land cultivated.

The Minister replied that the Land Taxes were not penalties. With reference to rebates for those who cultivated, the Minister affirmed that owners put such values on the areas cultivated that in the past all such rebates

\*See Public of January 9 at page 32.

became converted into exceptions from land taxes; and that the Government were convinced that the surtax should stand. Owners would have a chance of dodging that by cultivating their lands; but nothing should be enacted that would enable a man to evade his just contribution to the national revenue in proportion to the value of the area he held. Deputy Monte insisted that the surtax was unjust, that it would involve endless litigation. Deputy Gonzalez put forward a number of considerations with the object of showing the wisdom of the Chamber's rejecting the surtax. To these Deputy Gaona replied advocating that the clause be retained as presented. The clause on being put to the vote was approved as follows: "Properties valued at over \$100,000 shall pay a surtax of 5% for the first year, 25% the second year, 35% the third year and 40% the fourth year, should it be proved that 20% of the value of the land has not been invested in development.

Article 5 was approved without discussion. Article 6 was altered to read that the values assigned shall stand for 5 years (five). It was specially approved that in making any valuation, the value of the land only shall be taken into account and that taxes levied on improvements shall be considered illegal.

The discussion of this law by the Congress is the Question of the Moment. Wherever one goes one hears nothing but the Land Tax being discussed, and of course opinions are greatly divided. Argentina is deeply interested in this matter, as many proprietors of land in Paraguay live in Buenos Aires, many being Argentines by birth.

C. N. MACINTOSH.

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## NEWS NARRATIVE

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The figures in brackets at the ends of paragraphs refer to volumes and pages of *The Public* for earlier information on the same subject.

Week ending Tuesday, February 17, 1914.

### Mexico and the United States.

President Huerta's offer to pay the expenses of a number of press correspondents who might be sent to Mexico to write uncensored reports of the situation has been accepted by a number of important newspapers in different countries. The President promises free access to all parts of the country, and freedom to write what they wish. [See current volume, page 155.]

It is announced that the government will issue 500,000,000 pesos fiat money in the form of fractional currency. Its circulation is to be made compulsory. It is denied that the government will cease coining half pesos. The tax to be levied on all investments will be one-eighth of one per cent. Charge O'Shaughnessy made a second protest to General Huerta against the severe attacks of the Mexican press on President Wilson. General Huerta promised the offense would not be repeated.

General Villa has found time to talk politics

and to announce some of the things that will be done by the Constitutionals when they come into power. "After the revolution," he says, "this is our pledge to the Mexican people: That every Mexican shall have a piece of land, so that he may live; that all the world shall work; that there shall be a school for every child in the republic. The schools are nearest to my heart." There is to be no standing army, for that makes the opportunity of the dictator—and Mexico wants no more dictators. Schools, factories, and great agricultural enterprises will be established. "We must give the soldiers work," he says. "I do not believe in pensioning them. The mind of the idle soldier runs to war." But after setting forth policies that would enlighten more advanced countries than Mexico, General Villa declares he would not accept the presidency if offered to him, as he is a soldier and not a statesman.

Military operations amounted to little, beyond the investment of Tampico by the Constitutionals. But the Federals are still able to hold the city itself. General Villa announces an early attack on Torreón, which is now completely invested. He expects to capture the place without difficulty and thinks Monterey will offer little resistance.

### The Labor War.

Congressional investigation of the Michigan copper mine strike continues. Witnesses for the strikers have told stories of bad treatment. On February 10 Sidney Thomas told how he had once been compelled during the winter to go to work in wet clothes on the surface to cut up timber for use below. On February 11 Daniel Waati said he had worked twenty-six years for the Calumet & Hecla and that working conditions had become worse during the past five years. Another witness said he had made as much in one month as \$100 and as little in another as \$16 for sixteen days' work, but his monthly average for sixteen months was \$45 or \$50. Another witness had made as high as \$160 for one month, and again as low as \$12, and said further that the average was low. On February 12 two witnesses told of having worked for months under the contract system and had been informed at the end of that time that they owed the company money after balancing their account for supplies, benefits, rents and other things. On February 13 Mr. Allan F. Rees, counsel for the mining companies, asked a witness if he was a Socialist. Objection to the question was raised and sustained, although Mr. Rees explained that he wished to show the Western Federation of Miners to be a Socialist organization, and that this had an important bearing on the refusal of the companies to recognize it. Mr. Hilton, attorney for the strikers,