

Questions of the Day.

THE CLERGY AND REFORM

The clergy of the United States who entered the recent campaign to an unprecedented extent, did that which it is their privilege to do. Every issue involves not only the right but the duty of expression to their views.

The workmen, the wealth producers of the United States, went wrong in advocating currency debasement. It was the duty of the clergy to tell them so, to show the right course. For such purpose the clerical office exists.

Let those who assume its duties always condemn the wrong while leading to the right. But if the workmen instead of going wrong in the advocacy of currency debasement had gone right in advocating the appropriation of the rental value of land instead of all other taxation, would the clergy have been as ready to come out on their side? Let every clergyman ask himself that question, when such occasions have arisen in the past it has been easy for the clergy to discover that their duty lay in the direction of preaching the Gospel and not interference in political questions,—of course there are many noble exceptions, clergymen willing to endure the poverty which must necessarily follow a course likely to offend the "gods of the lower world." They have spoken out for the right on all occasions regardless of consequences. But it cannot be denied that they are less numerous than their brethren who have freely shown the American workmen the error of his ways. Let the workman claim that which is his own, a share in the value that his labor imparts day after day to the land of his city, town or other municipality and the cause of the stagnation which now deprives him of leave to toll, will be removed. While it is profitable to hold land idle or comparatively idle it will be done and the result will be idle or comparatively idle men.

The Star tries to make capital out of the fact that when a large number of laborers were wanted recently to do some excavating in connection with the Metropolitan Street Railway, only a few men applied or were anxious for the jobs. Then it begins to minimize the frequent statement that much destitution prevails in the city, and sarcastically remarks that the idle men don't want work. The wage offered for the services of the white slaves was from \$1 to \$1.25 a day, out of which they were expected to support their families. Board, such as it is, the taskmasters were willing to provide at \$3 a week for a single person; not in a furnished room, but under a canvas tent. The work is of an arduous nature, and only the strong could hope to succeed at it. Unskilled it may be, but let a skilled editor, a preacher or university professor of political economy try to handle a pick and shovel for one day. It's safe to venture the statement that five times the remuneration wouldn't tempt him to continue the job. It's all very well for a well-fed critic whose labors are easy and pleasant to chide his humbler fellows because they won't undertake certain manual labor offering such splendid inducements as a dollar a day, even though in need of food and shelter, but there is a limit to which men will consent to be ground down to starvation wages; nature rebels against it. It's galling to be told you must accept a certain wage or you must starve, and if you don't accept it to be classed as a loafer and an agitator. It is not at all unlikely that if the wage offered for laborers' services was but fifty cents a day The Star writer would make the same charge against those who refused to toll at—think of it—fifty cents a day, with free air and water thrown in. The Star report of this incident needs to be taken with a grain of credulity.

The rather slim election reports from Delaware, as to the outcome of the single tax campaign on November 3, provide few particulars upon which to comment.

Justice, the Delaware S. T. organ, intimates in its last issue, that the returns, which are somewhat incomplete, show at least three legislators elected for New Castle county to the State Assembly. Besides a crushing defeat was administered to the Democratic machine of the same county. Senator Pyle, who ran on the single tax ticket, was elected by a good majority. From all that can be learned much brilliancy prevailed throughout the State and it worked havoc with the independent tickets. The election returns, whether favoring one or other of the old parties, though it seems the Democrats succeeded, can hardly be said to attest the best judgment of the people, in view of the corrupt methods so generally adopted by the

party machine to retain power. The poverty of the masses easily made ready dupes for the scheming politicians, who used freely the money lever to coerce the weak and wretched creatures of bad social conditions. The writer knows something of the conditions in Delaware. It is no idle statement to say that a good proportion of Delawareans have been for years utterly debauched by the grimy politicians, who make the boast that they could elect whomsoever they choose. The expectancy of cash for votes upon the part of the electorate prevails from one end of the State to the other; it requires time to eradicate, and it is to the credit of the single tax party that this feeling is gradually being displaced by other and nobler impulses. The result of less than two years of earnest and persistent campaigning, teaching the single tax philosophy, is, and must be, gratifying to all lovers of good government. The campaign began with enthusiasm; it ends for the first election period of the State with still greater enthusiasm, and will continue incessantly until a majority of the people of Delaware decide to accept the doctrine—the land for the people.

G. J. B.

In a work by Prof. Goldwin Smith, entitled "Questions of the Day," published a few years ago, the author undertook to calculate the Single Tax method of taxation by stating that it was not feasible, and as proof of it, instanced the City of Venice, which was built in the water, and he asked, How would it be possible to apply the Single Tax in this case? If I have not stated correctly the full meaning Mr. Smith intended to imply in substance, I think my version of it is not far astray.

However, what brings the matter to mind is the recent action of Comptroller Fitch, of New York, who is compelling the ferry companies to pay rentals to the city for lands under water. The New York correspondent of the National Single Taxer, writing to that journal, says, "The rental of the West 42nd street ferry has been raised from \$10,000 to \$11,000. The New York Central & Hudson River railroad has agreed to this, but declined to consider the added \$1,000 as rental for land under water. The board, however, got the better of the railroad company when the Harrison street ferry franchise was taken up. Mr. Van Arsdale, for the railroad company, agreed to pay a rental of twenty-five cents a square foot for the land under water, covered by the ferry bridge and ferry house." Here is a striking illustration of the fact that a tax can be levied. We need not go further than Toronto to demonstrate the entire practicability of taxing land under water, for in numerous cases along the water front the city is receiving rental for the privilege of using water lots.

"Labor stands ready, but finds no work," is the striking headline of a column article in the New York Journal relating to the large number of idle men in that city. Edison G. Jerome, agent of the Charity Organization Society, whose work takes him all over the city, in the course of an interview said that "the men who have applied for assistance this year are all of good appearance and are willing to work, and on examining them I confess that I have been puzzled to understand their cases. They seem to be so intelligent, so capable and so willing that I wonder at their failure to get work." The Journal estimates that from ten to fifty per cent. of the members of organized trades are idle, and with no immediate prospect of anything to do. In addition to these facts, it is stated that hundreds of cases of poverty, suffering and death are never heard of by the public owing to the innate pride of men to hide their true condition from public scrutiny. "The good times that were to be ushered in with the election of Wm. McKinley seem to be as far off as ever. I wish that our temperance friends could be persuaded to look a little deeper into the social discontent that abounds on every side, instead of attributing the cause of poverty to a superficial evil, such as the liquor traffic is. Never before, it is said, have there been so many unemployed men, so much poverty and destitution, so many suicides owing to poverty, as it is recorded for 1895-6 in one city alone, and that in New York, which may be regarded as the wealthiest city in the United States. To attribute this state of affairs because of the existence of the liquor traffic, or that this state of affairs could be very materially benefited by the removal of the alcohol habit would be ridiculous in the extreme. There can be no question about the evils, and they are numerous, that result from intemperance, and there can be no doubt but that if men were freed from the evils of intemperance the community as a whole would be blessed with much more happiness and less misery than now prevails.

The cause which produces so many idle men, intelligent, capable and willing to work, lies much deeper than our temperance friends are ready to acknowledge. The writer for many years was an ardent believer in the doctrine that intemperance was the chief cause of idleness and poverty, and that if only this evil was removed idleness, poverty and crime would

be lessened to a minimum. My vision is much clearer, because of new light received. The best course of study I ever undertook in my life was the political economy of Henry George, and no one who will study his philosophy can come to any other conclusion, that the cause of idle men and involuntary poverty—no voluntary, mind you—is because of land monopoly. While land, the source of life, is made the private property of a few, so long will industrial slavery, poverty and destitution among men continue.

WORK A SCARCITY.



Lady—My man, if you would go to work—

Tramp—It aint work mum, that I want half as much as it is something to eat.

Lady—Why do you dress like this? Tramp—Because I aint got the means, if I could get work to do, why mum I wouldn't be like this.

A very pathetic letter and apparently genuine, appeared in the New York Journal in its issue of the 7th. That such a letter should be penned is a reflection, not upon the writer as it is upon the people of America. Here it is:

"For \$100 I'm willing to sell myself to, anyone who wishes a slave. I am ready to do what the buyer will ask of me; toll as his slave or kill myself, insured in his favor. Do not believe that I am insane, for I am not. I am only tired of walking the streets, entering hotels and cafes to find out work of any kind. I am twenty-eight years old, speaking and writing French and German and understanding double entry bookkeeping. I served in Uncle Sam's army and I have a good discharge. Since then I have been in New York City. I have tried everything to secure any employment, but without avail not even as a dish washer or street cleaner. Therefore I kindly request you to publish these few lines in your paper and authorize you to give my name and address to any person who has got the cash or is willing to help a suffering brother."

On being interviewed by a reporter, the man stated that he was a total abstainer and had no bad habits, and that he was perfectly sincere in writing his letter.

FIGHTING FOR EMPLOYMENT.

The eagerness with which men fight one another for the opportunity to earn a living was well illustrated in Trenton, New Jersey, the other day. The New York Journal, in referring to the fight between some Italians and United States laborers, stated that the cause of the trouble was nothing but poverty among the men. The Italians, it appears, were desperate for jobs that would provide them with means of subsistence. So, also were the native laborers, but the latter objected to the Italians making a proposition to work for less wages, consequently the men began fighting among themselves. The unnatural scramble for leave to toll will cause such results and much worse results so long as it exists.

While we continue a system of taxation that makes it profitable for men to keep land idle, crowding would-be workers into the cities, and keeping them out of work when there. While there are prospects of gain in holding land from use there will be a struggle for the privilege of earning a living. It will cause the meanest of devices among men eager to displace one another. It will cause petty trickery among men capable of better things and ashamed of their own meanness. It will cause the pinch of poverty among men able to provide themselves with a comfortable living, and will force the less fortunate into the ranks of the tramp and the thief. Were the rental value of land taken for public purposes, all inducement toward mere land holding, which is responsible for this condition, would be removed.