

That the necessity for work done under such circumstances will be carefully considered; the fact of and the amount, if any, of the alleged benefit justly ascertained; the contract carefully let and rigidly supervised, so that the owner who pays shall at least have the so-called improvement honestly done at the least possible cost to him, is, in the nature of things, under such system, impossible.

The imposition of a special assessment for a supposed benefit compels the owner to engage in a speculation which may not only be unwise, but one which he often cannot afford.

He is told that the opening of a street or the creation of a park will specially increase the value of his property; that therefore he and others thus benefited, and not the general public, must pay for the improvement. His opinion and his remonstrance that the work will not only be of no benefit, but a damage to him, is of no consequence.

The fact that he cannot obtain the money with which to pay the assessment unless he mortgages his property is disregarded. The public decide that he must somehow get the money and enter upon a speculation which it declares will improve his property.

If he be correct in his forecast, and the work proves to be to him a damage instead of a benefit, he has no remedy.

It is not likely that the irregular, uncontrolled and illimitable taxation by means of special assessments can be done away with. Some, perhaps much, of the injustice, profligacy and waste so attendant upon the system would be eliminated if in all instances the municipality paid one-fourth of the cost of the work. City and town authorities would then not be free to order improvements that work might be found for useful voters and places for handy politicians.

Contractors would not be given so free a rein, and the making of improvements at the least cost consistent with good work would be thought to be a necessity. The public authorities would have a real interest in securing honest service.

Assessments for such things as the opening of streets, creation of parks, erection of fountains, arches, statuary, etc., the special benefit of which to particular property is a speculative question, should never be allowed; assessments for paving, sidewalks, sewers, water pipe, lamp posts, grading, curbing, etc., should be placed only upon the property abutting on the proposed work—the practice of spreading the assessment around so as to reach property not abutting on the improvement, but in its vicinity, is fruitful of injustice and iniquity.

No law regulates the distance to which the spreading shall go nor requires such action in each case. The opportunity for favoritism is thus complete. He who has influence and he who understands devious ways can be favored, without one chance in a hundred that the injured will ever know of it.

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#### BOOK NOTICES.

Prof. Ernst Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* which created such a stir on its appearance in Germany, and at once ran through many editions, has been well translated by Joseph McCabe and published by Harper and Brothers, New York and London. Professor Haeckel's views on "the conflict of science and religion" have been frequently discussed in *The Open Court* and *The Monist*, and our readers are familiar with their main trend. They will find, however, in the present work, an admirable and systematic *résumé* of Professor Haeckel's thought, in its genesis, historical development, and final form. We have also to note in this connection a

pamphlet published by Heinrich Schmidt, of Jena, entitled: *A Struggle for "The Riddle of the Universe"* (Bonn: Emil Strauss). Mr. Schmidt's little book is essentially a synopsis of the many controversies which Professor Haeckel's book raised in Germany.

Among the sociological and economic works recently published by the Macmillan Company, may be mentioned: (1) *Experimental Sociology, Descriptive and Analytical*, by Frances A. Kellor, graduate student of the University of Chicago, which is "a study of the methods of investigation of delinquents and their treatment, together with such suggestions for the prevention of criminology as have resulted from it." (Price, \$2.00); and (2) *The Theory of Prosperity*, by Simon N. Patten, Ph. D., professor of political economy in the University of Philadelphia, being an analytical study of the various economic and cultural aspects of incomes. (Price, \$1.25.)

The University of Chicago Press has issued a work which will claim attention from many historical readers and students of politics. It is a new book on Russia, by Maxime Kovalevsky, formerly professor of Public Law in the University of Moscow, and now lecturer on Russian institutions in the University of Chicago. Its title is: *Russian Political Institutions, Their Growth and Development from the Beginning of Russian History to the Present Time*. Professor Kovalevsky's aim differs from that of Mackenzie Wallace's book, which has hitherto been the standard work on Russia. His book is the story of the political *evolution* and internal development of the Russian nation, and treats of the making of Russia, its complex ethnology and early political vicissitudes, the development of Muscovite institutions, the reforms of Peter the Great and Catherine II., the reforms of Alexander II., etc. (Crown 8vo, \$1.50 net; postpaid, \$1.60.)

#### NOTES.

Before going to press, Judge Waterman added the following comment to his taxation article: A man who owns one million dollars worth of Chicago city bonds at three per cent. derives from them an income of \$30,000 in round numbers, of which he is requested in Chicago to pay between \$12,000 and \$13,000 taxes, leaving him \$17,000 about to live on. If the same man goes to England, he would have to pay \$1,500, leaving him in round figures a net income of \$28,500.

Now the question arises, What do we expect a capitalist to do, stay in this country or go to England? What should we do if we were capitalists? And can it be our intention to drive capital out of the country?

The aim of the Indian National Social Congress is to improve the social conditions of India, and, as we learn from the *Indian Mirror*, that it has just held its fifteenth meeting, it seems fairly to have passed the period of probation. The leading members are prominent natives, who have come to recognise the importance of introducing reforms that are forced upon them by their contact with Western civilisation. And the Congress can look back upon its work with satisfaction, for many evils, if they have not altogether disappeared, have yet been reduced. The speakers, however, were fairly unanimous in recognising the necessity of a wider spread of female education, and of bringing about a further decline of polygamy. The great masses of Hindus still keep aloof, because they suspect the Congress as being too much under foreign influence, but the leaders are anxious to preserve the ancient Hindu civilisation as the foundation of India's future.