

L. P. CUSTER.

(See Portrait)

L. P. Custer was born at Dublin, Wayne County, Indiana, August 20, 1854. He didn't receive a college education or much of any technical education, having been permitted by his father, at the age of fourteen, to quit school and enter the local railway station as an all-around hustler and general utility boy, with the promise of being taught telegraphy. He was taught by doing nearly all that was to be learned of telegraphy, and in due time emerged as a full fledged operator, with more or less knowledge of the art, and soon started on his career in the service of the "Panhandle" railroad, at Cambridge City, Ind., in the fall of 1869.

As with the average man who has not had an elongated, parted-in-the middle name and a coat-of-arms from a cabbage patch ancestry conferred upon him, by which he might secure entry into the first families of aristocracy and graft, his life passed without particular incident until one day in the summer of 1885, while he and half a dozen other Knights of Labor were sitting in the office of the *Labor Signal*, in Indianapolis, discussing politics and political economy, one Gilbert Seibert, who subsequently moved to Seattle, gave utterance to this sentence: "Prof. Ridpath, (then Principal of what is now known as Depauw University) says Henry George is the Moses of the nineteenth century." There was nothing startling in the statement, but it served to bring into the field a working disciple, who has remained constantly on guard, doing what he could, to spread the gospel of truth. Theretofore, although he had frequently been a listener to Seibert and others on the land question, no impression had been made, but this utterance seemed to have touched the right chord, and when the party broke up, Custer sought a book store, purchased a copy of "Progress and Poverty," and that night read "The Problem." From that time dates his conversion. He was one of the six who organized the first Single Tax organization in Indianapolis, and he served as an officer of the League for the greater portion of its existence, previous to his departure from that city in 1890. In 1891 he joined the St. Louis Single Tax League, and has served at one time or another as president, recording secretary or financial secretary, which latter position he now holds. Mr. Custer is an employee of the Western Union Telegraph Co., holding a subordinate official position. The superior officers know of his "crankiness" and seem to think he is a pretty good fellow and entirely harmless.

We can all turn a nice phrase about the nobleness of honest toil. Yet, when a man fails as a merchant and becomes a street-car conductor, we commiserate his fall.

Rev. HERBERT S. BIGELOW.

LAND VALUES OF NEW YORK.

A STUDY OF THE LATEST REAL ESTATE ASSESSMENT LISTS.

(For the REVIEW.)

The real estate assessment lists for the city of New York have been issued, showing the assessed value of each parcel of real estate, with the land value stated separately, also the size of lots, height of building, owner's name and location. These lists can be bought at the City Hall separately for 25 cents each, one for each section or ward; for Manhattan the total cost is \$2.00, and for the entire city \$10.50. Every resident interested in taxation should have at least the list for his section.

As the land values are stated only as a basis of comparison and do not affect the tax, the figures have not always been changed when a reduction has been allowed. Nor are all the volumes added up, while some totals include exempt land. It is impossible to give the exact assessment of land value, without examining the tax books and adding the entire roll. However, the total can be computed within \$20,000,000, and the following table gives in round figures the taxable land value at the lowest estimate, (which is probably within \$5,000,000 of the exact amount) and the percentage to the total assessment of taxable ordinary real estate.

Manhattan Boro.	\$2,410,000,000	69 percent.
Bronx	150,000,000	67 "
Brooklyn	400,000,000	47 "
Queens	70,000,000	57 "
Richmond	20,000,000	48 "
New York City	\$3,050,000,000	62 "
Improvements, estimated,	\$1,681,000,000.	

(The value of improvements is not officially stated, but is computed here by deducting the land value from the total realty.)

The most valuable sites are in Manhattan, as is also most of the high value land, and the assessments for that borough correspond to those for the central portion of a large city, while Brooklyn is largely a residential and manufacturing section. In Brooklyn, were it not for the vacant land, the percentage of land value would probably be only 85 percent.)

Besides the above sum there are about \$100,000,000 of improvement values included in the special franchise assessment. If all improvements were exempted from taxation, the present total assessment of all taxable property for 1904 of \$5,640,542,-657 would be reduced to \$3,858,762,963.

To raise the same amount as at present the tax rate would have to be changed as follows (omitting decimals):