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**CIVIC CLUB LETTER.**

(Continued from Page 1.)

another company can seldom compete with it profitably. Having exercised all the privileges and improved all the opportunities which such a grant carries with it, the grantee holds, in addition to this particle of sovereignty, called a franchise, (1) a territorial or strategic position from which others are necessarily excluded for the purpose of furnishing, providing or selling a commodity of common necessity, and (2) the power to charge for the commodity, or service, "all the traffic will bear" to arbitrarily enforce payment. These, when carefully analyzed, are two additional elements of sovereignty, namely, the use and occupation of public property, and the power to tax.

The proposition is not new. In the earliest days of our history permits were given to construct turnpikes on public highways. The right thus given to collect tolls for vehicles and other travel over the pike was recognized as a prerogative right and the subject of license. The privilege now enjoyed by gas, electric lighting, telegraph, telephone, and street railway companies is the same in a different form. The latter are mere extensions and new applications of the old principle, and the best informed disinterested political economists of the present day so consider them. But those in places of power, those who control and use most of the organs of publicity read by the people, assume in ten thousand forms of language that the present use and enjoyment of these valuable privileges is the exercise of private right, and that the conventional theory is in keeping with true democratic principle.

The common sense and literally correct view of a franchise first above given has been entirely lost sight of in all recent discussions, and only the property value, the mere incident, has been made the subject of discussion and confounded with the principal thing, the franchise. It is true that when we see a private corporation realizing profits amounting to millions a year from the collection of fares we witness the results of financial favor to a small class in the community, but we seldom call to mind, the more important thing back of it, namely, that the corporation is also exercising governmental powers that should never have been farmed out at all, or if at all, only temporarily, pending preparation for their exercise by all the people in a collective capacity.

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