

ance. There have been four world's conferences held in said building within the last thirteen years, the first conference being held in 1888, second in 1887, the third in 1891, and the fourth in 1896.

#### ASSESSMENT AND MORTGAGES.

There are some statements in the remarks of Assessor William J. Lynch, which appear in our local columns, that are difficult to understand, and others that place a certain class of people in an unenviable position. As to the latter proposition, the common experience of many people will cause them to realize the correctness of Mr. Lynch's assertions. Not a few property owners look upon taxes as an evil to be escaped if possible, even at the expense of somewhat dishonorable evasions; and it may be expected that some mortgage holders who reside in the State will avoid paying taxes thereon if they can do so. A good many argue this way: the non-resident holder of mortgages is not taxed, and it is not fair to impose a heavier burden on the resident holder; also, the property itself is taxed, and the taxation of the mortgage is doubling, hence it is justifiable to evade it. Then some of them perhaps do so, as suggested by the assessor. At the same time it will not do to say that all persons who have assigned mortgages to non-residents have done so fraudulently, for the reverse is the case. Many residents have loaned the money of non-residents, and the assignment of the mortgage received as security has been to the actual owner of the cash, which is perfectly proper.

As to those who would evade the tax by bogus assignments, if there cannot be reached because of an inability to prove the fraud, we might suggest that if the assessors of various counties, with the former experience referred to in this regard, had been as keenly alive to the situation as the tax collector is usually considered to be, they might have caught a good many before the property could have been got out of the way. Remembering that the time of assessment is the first Monday in March, and that mortgages are personal property, the assessors could have acted (and it was their duty in a case like that stated) as authorized by section 151 of the revenue law, which provides that:

At the time of making the assessment, or at any time thereafter, the assessor may collect the taxes by seizure and sale of any personal property owned by the person against whom the tax is assessed in case he has cause to believe that the owner of such personal property is likely to avoid payment of the tax by disposing of the property or by removal thereof from the county, unless such person give security to pay the same when due.

This process might have caught "on the wing" at least some of the flying mortgages; and if there had been discovered too great a rush to get that kind of taxable credits out of reach of the assessor, then an intention to defraud might have been apparent.

The part of the assessor's statement that is not exactly clear is that the assessment of the county will be \$8,000,000 higher than last year, but the actual taxable property that can be reached will be no more, because of

mortgages being put out of the way. If that is the case, then on the face of the showing made we have a county assessment which does not represent the fact. This hardly can be the case. The assessment is on the "taxable property" in the county. If the mortgages are assigned or owned so that they are not taxable, then they are not assessable, hence there cannot be the discrepancy referred to; there is no such thing contemplated in the law as a nominal assessment and an actual taxable valuation at a lower figure. If the assessed valuation of property in the county is \$8,000,000 more than last year, then the taxable value is that much more. The assessor might, and properly so under certain circumstances which may exist at present, list the property referred to in the names of holders who are residents of the State, and leave the burden on them to prove to the board of equalization that the mortgages are owned by non-residents. But if they establish the latter as a fact, then the assessment must be reduced, and in the county the actual assessment and the value of taxable property, for purposes of revenue, are at the same figure, whether that is an increase or decrease from the previous year. What is probably meant is that the assessor's valuation, including his figuring on the abstract of mortgages furnished by the recorder, will be up to \$46,000,000, but that the board of equalization will have to drop it down to \$40,000,000—near the same as last year.

#### IS THE PROBLEM SOLVED?

Once more it is announced that the flying machine is an accomplished fact, and if it is not premature the announcement is of about equal importance to that which years ago apprised the world of the fact that steam could be used for the propulsion of vessels at sea and across land. An airship under the perfect control of its navigators is sure to inaugurate a perfect revolution in the traffic of the world and mark a new stage in man's civilization. Prof. Samuel P. Langley of the Smithsonian Institute is the constructor of the new airship, and it is stated that on the sixth of May he sent up a model driven by a small steam engine. It rose about one hundred feet and proceeded on its flight half a mile. Then the coal was exhausted and the machine slowly descended to the ground. A second flight was made with equal success.

The New York World publishes an account of the flying machine, or aerodrome, as it is called, said to be furnished by Prof. Bell of telephone fame. He says it is constructed of a steel framework, between which are extended horizontally three sheets of canvas, one above the other. The entire length is fifteen feet and the total weight twenty-five pounds. It is only a model for experimental purposes, but its correct construction being demonstrated, the next question will be to give it the required size for practical purposes and the right kind of an engine. The difficulties will be less as the dimensions are enlarged, and the speed that can be attained is one hundred miles an hour or more.

The principle on which the aerodrome is constructed is explained

as entirely different from that governing the balloon. The latter floats because its total volume is lighter than the air; the former rises by means of the resistance of the planes to the air-current, in the same way as a kite, or a card thrown edge-wise. It may be, the World adds, that the aerodrome of the future will for greater safety be attached to a trolley wire, doing away with the necessity of carrying any engine at all. "Who can say that ten years hence we may not see such a time as this running across the continent with a continuous flight of aerodromes departing and arriving at thirty-minute intervals?"

Well, man is steadily advancing. Flammarion suggested the idea that the air is really the ideal medium of communication between the different parts of the globe, and that but for the fact that gravitation is so strong on this earth that brain matter is comparatively heavy, the highest forms of life would have been found among the beings that soar the air instead of among those that crawl in the dust. Certain it is that there has always been a longing among men to imitate the birds in their majestic flight, and the realization of this ambition is now generally looked upon as one of the probabilities of the near future. We are likely to hear more about Prof. Langley's aerodrome before long.

#### THE FETES AT MOSCOW.

Russia's young emperor and empress have entered the ancient capital of the country in triumph. The scenes of brilliant splendor attending the fetes, according to all accounts, defy description. America, Europe, Asia and Africa are represented at Moscow at this time, and it is probably no exaggeration to say that never before in the history of nations has there been a gathering of equal magnificence—perhaps not of greater political significance either.

Conditions have changed considerably in Russia since Alexander III placed the imperial crown on his head in 1883. Then the ceremony took place in fear and trembling, as it was known that nihilistic plots hung like a dark cloud over him. In fact the coronation was postponed one year because of the discovery of a mine under the cathedral, so placed that the whole structure might have been blown up. The exact date of the great ceremony had to be kept a secret from the public until a few days before it took place, and finally it was witnessed principally by police officers, guards and soldiers. Extraordinary precautions have been taken also at this time. Thousands all over the country are languishing in jails and will be held incarcerated until everything is over, simply because they are "suspected." But on the whole, the fear that marred the pleasure thirteen years ago has been allayed, and there will be comparative freedom and publicity to all that is going on.

The fetes are of course principally of a social nature, but they will nevertheless result in placing Russia before the world as an empire of the first magnitude. The millions of Russians who naturally believe their "little father," the czar, the greatest of earthly monarchs and his empire the