

ling character and high ideals, fired with a quenchless passion for justice, who refuse to keep silence while powerful and "respectable" thieves ply their vocation of public plunder.

The assumption that in "this great country opportunities for advancement are open to all, and every one has his rights fully safeguarded," is a mossback philosophy, an echo of a long past plausibility, and a plump contradiction of the glaring facts of current economic and political history.

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A cruel injustice it is indeed to seek to array the poor against the rich; but if the editors of great newspapers and popular magazines lack the capacity to discriminate between the rich, as such, and the promoters and beneficiaries of nefarious schemes for wanton exploitation of the public, then what wonder that the mass of their readers fall into the same ditch with them?

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And, pray, what does it signify that "the rich man of today was the poor man of a few years ago"? Is not that very circumstance a symptom of the disease complained of? Is the rapid amassing of individual fortunes an indication of universal equality of opportunity, to take advantage of which will make millionaires of us all? He who imagines it, belongs in the kindergarten department of the economics school.

And here is a kindergarten lesson: By how much would it be possible for the employers of the country to advance the wages of their workmen, with safety to the stability of business? Would it be sufficient to enable the most productive laborer or mechanic of today to become thereby the rich man of a few years hence?

Employers engaged in competitive business will aver that no considerable advance can be made in wages without a corresponding increase in the prices of product—the commodities for possession of which the wages must be expended. At that rate will the mechanic of today become, by his mechanical industry, the rich man of a few years hence? Nonsense!

There are two ways, by either of which men may secure great wealth, namely: either by honest, socially beneficial, lawful and exceptionally able enterprise; or, by dishonorable, socially baneful, unlawful and exceptionally shrewd, cruel and masterful exploitation of the public. The former is welcome to his wealth; but, like poor dog Tray, he will doubtless be made to suffer occasionally at the hands of ignorant "demagogues" and eke ignorant newspaper writers, who, neither of them,

have the intelligence, or the sincerity, to distinguish between him and the vicious dogs whose "rich" company he is surprised in.

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Loose to society the opportunities that those vicious dogs have wrongfully cornered, and not all the demagogues on earth would be able to array one class against another. There would be no "poor," for the reason that the billions now wrung from industry by special privilege and private monopoly, would then be, quite naturally, distributed competitively among the producers thereof. There would still be many rich men; but opportunity being equally open to all—"every one's rights fully safeguarded"—what ground of adverse criticism would remain? None whatever.

EDWARD HOWELL PUTNAM.

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## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

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### THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN GREAT BRITAIN.

London, April 3, 1909.

Since the last letter on the British political situation (vol. xi, p. 344), there have been several notable movements. At that time the Liberal government had just been partly reconstructed owing to the death of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and the retirement of a few members of the Cabinet and the consequent appointment of new men to the vacant positions. It is difficult to say what effect this change in the composition of the government has had on its policy. Even after a lapse of twelve months one does not feel justified in saying that the party have withdrawn their support from any of the distinctively Liberal measures which formed the programme of the government when they came into power in 1906. But this period has been remarkable for the restraint which has been placed on the more radical sections of the party and especially on those who regard a strong and clear measure of land reform as the central part of Liberal policy.

The large and increasing number of people who support the taxation of land values have lived and worked in an undefined hope for almost a year. In this matter it will be admitted that their experience would have been different if Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had lived. The work of governments under a system of party politics is twofold in its nature. First of all they formulate their policy, and then, in seeking to carry out this policy, they expound and recommend it to the electors in order to get their support. This latter part of the government's work, since Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's death, has been less perfectly done. The campaign of the Ministers in the country has been weak and ineffectual.

During last year the House of Lords rejected the licensing bill, and the Scottish land bill for the extension of small holdings in that country, while they fatally amended the Scottish land values bill; and it cannot be said that the Liberal party have proved

to the people that these actions of the Lords have deprived them of several great and beneficial measures of reform. Indeed, if we judge by the results of the by-elections which have taken place during the fifteen months, we must confess that in the majority of cases there has been a very pronounced change of opinion in favor of the Conservative party and policy. The fact that the Lords had rejected an education bill and an electoral reform bill in addition to those mentioned above does not seem to rouse the people in favor of the government whose policy these bills embodied. On the contrary, the unprecedented activity of the Conservatives and Protectionists has swayed the people strongly in their direction. Their forced agitation on the question of the navy has undoubtedly done much to discredit the government.

While Mr. Asquith differs from Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in the fact that he seldom speaks out, seldom gives utterance to democratic thoughts that appeal to the mass of the people and rouse their enthusiasm, the radical members of his party still regard him as a sound and strong leader. They still believe that he is determined to obtain the object of some of his rejected measures by the more direct means of the Budget or finance bill of this year. There is a strong sentiment in many quarters in favor of increasing the duties on liquor licenses. Members of the temperance party who believe that temperance will be promoted by handicapping the liquor trade strongly advocate heavier taxes on spirits and beer. There is little that is novel in this proposal, as the principle is already applied to a certain extent, and it is generally admitted to be unpopular with the people of England.

More interest centers in the proposed tax on land values in the Budget, and those who believe that the future of the Liberal party is bound up with the genuine reform of economic conditions, hope and believe that the government will retrieve their fortunes, and win back a large measure of their lost popularity by a substantial measure of this kind. Nothing certain will be divulged until the Budget is produced. At the present moment the semi-official statement is that this will take place on April 22d. Meantime certain departmental arrangements are being made which suggest that the permanent officials are preparing to carry out some sweeping alterations in connection with valuation and collection of revenue. The Conservative papers are devoting much more space to attacks on what they call socialistic legislation. At the same time, the landowners, through the different organizations which they control, are stirring up a strong agitation against the proposed tax. This agitation is much more widespread and varied than anything which has yet appeared. The agricultural landowners appeal to the farmers to oppose what they describe as a new burden on agriculture. They do not define what they mean by agriculture and of course the majority of the farmers do not press their inquiries far enough to see that a tax on land value is nothing but a tax on the value of a monopoly which in every case militates against the industry of agriculture. These activities on the part of the Conservatives and the landowners show that they now really believe that a practical step is to be taken in the direction of breaking up their privileges.

Whatever happens in the political world we can congratulate ourselves on the fact that the people of this country have been interested and educated in single tax principles during the last year more than they have been within a much longer period in our history. It is possible that the Lords may venture to reject the Budget—a very serious step, and one which is almost without precedent. Referring to this possibility in a speech at Hyde, Lancashire, on April 1st, the Earl of Derby said: "There are no steps which the House of Lords will not take—and I will never refuse to vote—to force the government to appeal to the country. It will come before long." Such a decision on the part of the House of Lords would make the taxation of land values the supreme issue at the next election, and there is little doubt that the country would declare for it by a large majority.

JOHN ORR.

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### PARIS IN TIME OF STRIKE.\*

Etaples sur Mer, France, March 20, 1909.

Three days, and no letters from Paris! The fourth day, and the carrier hardly thinks it worth his while to stop with one small letter from England. The fifth day, and the box on the inside of our door is empty. We have begun to cease to think of letters, or to wonder if the American mail, due days ago at Cherbourg, is still lying undistributed in some of the big receiving rooms. All interest centers now around the great strike—the first of its kind in the world. How appropriate that it should take place at Paris! At the brilliant capital of the great country that kindly, not arrogantly, calls itself the "Surs-patrie," or the Over-country, and that loves to hear a foreigner say, "I have two countries—my own and France."

Those of us who are not in vital need of funds from home, overlook the need of letters and watch for the Paris papers that reach us at midday. Then, as we read, we wish that we were there to see the posters freshly pasted on the walls before the break of day. Paris loves her "affiches." Since the time of the "Commune" it has been her manner of appealing to the public. Many are the amusing and interesting things you can find there as you stroll about the city.

And just now it is the strike. Never, they say, was a "Mi-carême" more welcome, for most people did not know whether it was the strike or the holiday that was responsible for the cessation of business. Therefore they ceased to be vexed until the next day. But even now the great majority, though greatly inconvenienced, take things calmly because they seem to believe in the justice of the strikers' cause.

A sense of dissatisfaction, growing for two years, and repeatedly demonstrated to the authorities, finally culminates in a determination on the part of the government's postal, telegraph and telephone em-

\*This letter is dated six days earlier than the letter which appeared in *The Public* of April 9, entitled "The End of the Strike," (p. 345), but it has come by a slower steamer or been delayed on the way. Though out of sequence we think it too good to be lost.—Editors of *The Public*.