

# The Public

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A Maine court is reported to have decided that a buried body is the property not of the surviving husband, wife, parent, child or other relative, but of the owner of the burial lot. This is a legitimate application of landlord law. The buried body, like a fixture, becomes part of the realty.

"Politics is business," said Senator Hanna, at the Lincoln birthday banquet in New York city, where Lincoln's name was celebrated and his principles ignored. "Very serious business at that," he added. From Mr. Hanna's point of view, and that of all other monopolists, he was right: politics, truly enough, is serious business. And he and they make the business profitable in many devious but businesslike ways.

When Lyman Abbott again declares in his lectures that "there is no right to vote save as society confers it," he might render a service by explaining how the will of society as to conferring the voting right is to be ascertained except by voting, and if in that way then how those who vote on that question acquire their voting right. In other words, does the right to vote originate in the power of one supreme man here and there, or in the assumption of oligarchies, or in the simple natural right of manhood?—which includes womanhood.

The report of the city electrician of Chicago is another contribution to the fast accumulating mass of testimony in favor of municipal owner-

ship of municipal monopolies. Since 1888 the city has expended \$2,786,100.12 for the construction, maintenance and operation of its electric lighting plant. Had the lights been rented, they would have cost \$2,507,110.50, or only \$278,989.62 less than they have cost in fact, and there would have been nothing besides that difference but monthly bills to show for it. As it is, though the city has no collection of light bills and has expended \$278,989.62 more than the lighting might have been rented for, it has an elaborate electric lighting plant of its own.

The Washington report that the administration has notified Venezuela that this country reserves the right to review the decision of the Venezuelan courts in the contest between two American grantees of asphalt privileges is hardly believable. The reason given for asserting that right is wretchedly inadequate. It is this, that as both the parties to the litigation are American corporations, the American government may review Venezuelan judicial decisions affecting their property interests in that country. That this government might object if its citizens were outraged in their rights by the government of a foreign country in manifest disregard of the laws of that country, is true enough; but it has not the shadow of a right to revise the regular decisions of foreign tribunals respecting their own laws. When American citizens or corporations go into business in a foreign country they engage thereby to submit to the regular administration of the laws of that country. Nor would our government presume to dispute that principle with any nation of its own military size.

At a banquet given by the Mer-

chants' club of Chicago last week, Prof. Jenks, of Cornell university, spoke on the subject of "Commercial High Schools," a subject which is just now prominent in the business and educational circles of Chicago. In the course of his address Prof. Jenks said, as the newspapers report him, that in his opinion only a few are born to be leaders, and that Providence intended the many to be mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. We should hesitate, without better authority than a newspaper report, to characterize this sentiment. Prof. Jenks's language may not have warranted the repulsive inference that the report would justify. But there is no doubt that the comfortable classes do very largely entertain the self-gratifying notion that their success in amassing wealth is attributable to their superior talents and virtues, and that they hold some sort of authority from Providence to set the rest of mankind at work hewing wood and drawing water for them. It is the slave masters' theory, and college professors might be at worse business than in exposing its falsities and fallacies and pointing out its immorality.

The work of the constitutional convention of Cuba in drafting an organic law for that new-fledged nation, is now practically complete. In a few days the document will be in the hands of President McKinley. It is understood that he will transmit it to congress for the action of that body, accompanied by a message setting forth his own views regarding it. What his recommendations will be is as yet unknown. They are foreshadowed by Washington correspondence, apparently inspired, but that is no guarantee that when made they will not be entirely different. It would be premature, therefore, to dis-

cuss them now. In so far, however, as they may assume to suggest any conditions whatever, they will deserve and can honorably receive no consideration at the hands of congress. For the United States is under an irrevocable obligation—to the Cuban people, to the American people, to the civilized world—which in honor demands that congress make no attempt to dictate terms to Cuba. This obligation was deliberately expressed by congress in the resolutions of April 18, 1898, signed by the president two days later, which authorized the war with Spain. The first of those resolutions declared—

That the people of the island of Cuba are, and of right ought to be, free and independent—

and the fourth—

That the United States hereby disclaims any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over said island except for the pacification thereof, and asserts its determination, when that is accomplished, to leave the government and control of the island to its people.

Upon the faith of that pledge, congress cannot, without tarnishing the American name, exact a single condition as the price of its acknowledgment of the Cuban constitution.

There is another consideration, in the light of which the inspired correspondence from Washington and the profound editorials in the administration press upon the importance of reserving authority in the United States to protect the Cubans from themselves and foreigners, appear to be extremely ridiculous. We refer to the recent decision of the supreme court in the Neely extradition case. That decision rests, in principle and in the express terms of the court's opinion, upon the fact that Cuba is a "foreign country." Upon what theory can our government assert a right or appeal to a necessity of setting up a protectorate over a foreign country? The only explanation that possesses the slightest flavor of plausibility is the danger we might incur by leaving Cuba a possible prey to Eu-

ropean powers, which, with Cuba for a base, might attack the United States. But the flavor in that explanation is hardly distinguishable. One European power did have possession of Cuba for hundreds of years, until we drove it out; but it never occurred to Spain to make Cuba a base of operations against the United States nor to turn it over to a greater power for that purpose. Besides that, this slightly favorable explanation applies no better to Cuba than to Mexico. If we need a protectorate over Cuba for our own protection, we need one over Mexico, too; for Mexico would make a better base than Cuba for European operations against the United States. And after all is said and done, we may, if the necessity ever arises, rely upon Cuba's voluntarily giving us an opportunity to head off European invaders. It will be as much to her interest as ours. Some other and less altruistic reason, it is to be feared, exists for the anxiety of the imperialists to meddle with the internal affairs of this "foreign country" near our coast, a country which we ourselves have declared to be free and independent and have solemnly promised to pacify and then restore to its people. Some hint at what that reason is has been given in an administration paper quoted by the Chicago Chronicle. It asserts the necessity of requiring the new republic to recognize and respect the "vested rights acquired during the time of the military government." It is considerations of that character, doubtless, that raise all these questions with which the atmosphere at Washington is alive, about imposing conditions upon the acceptance by our government of the constitution of the "foreign country" called Cuba. Right and left, we are told, American syndicates have grabbed Cuban franchises during the American military regime. Neely was only a vulgar thief. Instead of pillaging the post office in the old-fashioned ways of crime, he should have got him a franchise. Then he would have been a highly respected and influential own-

er of vested interests instead of a prisoner. Whoever it was that said "the imperialists are not jingoes, they are only thieves," was not far wrong.

There are brighter prospects of peace in the Philippines. So the country is assured by an Associated Press dispatch from Manila, which has earmarks of military influence in dictating its composition. These reports of early peace are now an old story. They began to come in early in the spring of 1899. One of them was personally vouched for by President McKinley in the early summer of that year. They preceded every battle and followed every victory. In the presidential campaign they punctuated all the public documents, with the reservation, however, that their verification would depend upon the result of the election. Just before that event the period was fixed at 60 days, provided Bryan were defeated. All these reports have given some reason for expecting the peace they predicted. The latest one is based upon the rigor with which the campaign of arrests has been made. The Manila "prisons are daily becoming more crowded," says the Associated Press report, "and an additional one is being built on Subig bay." Gen. MacArthur probably expects to produce peace by putting the whole native population into jail. Even that is a better mode of "benevolent assimilation" than the earlier one of putting them into graves:

Inasmuch as Gen. MacArthur has banished an American citizen from the Philippines and sent him home as a prisoner, it is interesting to know the breadth and depth of this man's offending; and we are indebted to Senator Teller for information upon the subject. The facts furnished by Mr. Teller will be found in the Congressional Record of February 5, at page 2,132. The offender is George T. Rice. He was editor of the Daily Bulletin, a maritime trade paper. In