

The Public

A National Journal of Fundamental Democracy &
A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making

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EDITORIAL

On the Way.

Back from Elba, lo, the conquering hero comes!
To an early Waterloo?

+ +

Henry George, Jr., and the Lewis Debate.

We published last week (p. 240) an advertisement of a debate between Arthur M. Lewis and Henry George, Jr., to take place at Chicago on the 20th. The advertisement was prepared and tendered us for publication by Mr. Lewis in person, and although his form of question for the debate seemed to us one which should not, under the circumstances, have been suggested by him, we were unaware of its not having been submitted to and accepted by Mr. George. From Mr. George's letter in this issue (p. 264), however, it appears that he had neither approved nor heard of Mr. Lewis' title. This being the case, we are sure that fair-minded persons, whether socialists or not, will approve Mr. George's decision as he announces it in that letter, after they shall have read his reasons. We hope also that the opinion Mr. George expresses with reference to debates over questions that divide those who oppose privilege, may likewise command approval. His views in this respect have always been held and followed by The Public in its editorial columns, and for many years by its editor on the platform. Such debates were well enough in the academic period; they may be useful in the radically constructive period when

CONTENTS.

EDITORIAL:

On the Way.....	241
Henry George, Jr., and the Lewis Debate.....	241
Mothers and Their Citizenship.....	242
Unemployment in the United States.....	242
British "Rates" and "Taxes".....	242
Self-Reformation in the House of Lords.....	243
The Growing Army of the Poor.....	243
Social Wealth for Social Use.....	243
Conservation of Natural Resources.....	243
The Single Tax in Vancouver.....	243
The Cleveland Traction Question.....	244
Ballingerism.....	244
Business Men and Labor Weapons.....	244
Police Censorship of Plays.....	244
Russian Barbarism and American Civilization.....	245
The Philippine Sugar Land Fraud.....	245
"Unearned Increment".....	245

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE:

The Recall Vindicated (Jas. P. Cadman).....	251
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INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS:

The Returning Elbaite (J. Howard Moore).....	251
--	-----

NEWS NARRATIVE:

The Single Tax in Vancouver.....	252
Tax Revision in Illinois.....	253
The Strike in Philadelphia.....	253
Some Other Strikes.....	253
The British Parliament.....	254
The Democratic Movement in Prussia.....	254
A Graft Scandal in France.....	254
Russian Political Trials.....	255
News Notes.....	255
Press Opinions.....	256

RELATED THINGS:

Song to England (Alban Gordon).....	257
The Ultimate Lie (G. K. Chesterton).....	257
Josiah C. Wedgwood, M. P. (with portrait).....	258
A Candid Millionaire.....	259
On the Road to Jericho (H. S. Bigelow).....	259
The White Man Came.....	262

BOOKS:

The People's Law.....	260
Education Democratized.....	260
Periodicals.....	261

that time comes; but the intermediate period through which we are now passing is one in which the democratic movement is to be hindered rather than helped by rough and tumble debates within its own lines. They only afford diversion for an idle hour or two, at the best; and they easily excite bitterness where there should be co-operation.

* *

Mothers and Their Citizenship.

One of the arguments before the New York legislative committee last week in behalf of the association for opposing women's suffrage, was altogether too robust. It would rule women out of all public activities, and even out of the sphere of public intelligence. To say that women are too frail to be burdened with the vote is sheer nonsense, unless it means much more than the burden of going to the polls and dropping a ballot into the box, for that would be no burden at all—not as much as going to prayer meeting or playing bridge. Unless it means that the voting right would impose a duty to take a vital interest in public affairs, the argument falls flat. But if this is the gist of the argument, then it is a plea for exemption of women from taking any vital interest in public affairs; and the woman who in fact takes no vital interest in public affairs is unfit for mothering citizens in a democratic republic. What kind of citizens could we expect from mothers who took no vital interest in citizenship?

* *

Unemployment in the United States.

It will come as news to our British friends of "tariff reform" (protection) proclivities, that in this highly protected country of ours there is any unemployment. But it is not news to our workmen. They all know it, and sometimes it gets into our statistics. Here, for instance, is the Bulletin of the Committee on Congestion of Population in New York, which, in the issue of March 7, reports a very considerable lack of employment. "In September, 1908," it says, "out of 288,181 wage earners in various lines of industry, 22.5 per cent. were unemployed; out of 88,009 in the building trade, 33.5 per cent. were unemployed; out of 22,829 (reporting) in the clothing trade, 30.4 per cent. were unemployed; out of 21,547 in the printing trade, 12.7 per cent. were unemployed; out of 8,250 tobacco workers, 14.2 per cent. were unemployed; out of 7,843 wood workers, 21.1 per cent. were unemployed." And from reports of the State department of labor, this issue of the Bulletin shows that in 1909 the average unemploy-

ment due to trade conditions and not to strikes during the last six months of that year in the State of New York, was 18.9 per cent.

* *

British "Rates" and "Taxes."

A correspondent who is bothered by the confusing use of such terms as "rates" and "taxes" in Great Britain, asks for information which may be in demand by others besides himself. He observes that "there seem to be 'rates' and 'taxes' which may be alike except in their purposes and disposition," and ventures the supposition that "there is a tariff on several things." By way of explanation of his difficulties, he says that sometimes he sees "statements in *The Public* from which it appears that there is no tax on agricultural lands, and then again as though there was a tax on a nominal appraisal of lands and also that the government pays half of that." Our correspondent is wrong in his inference that "rates" and "taxes" are alike except in purpose and disposition. "Taxes" is the term applied to exactions made by the Imperial Government through Parliament, whereas "rates" is the term for local taxation. In the main, "taxes" are imposed upon real estate hardly at all; whereas, in the main, "rates" are hardly imposed upon anything else. On incomes, for instance, "taxes" are paid to the general government, but on occupied real estate, "rates" are paid to the local authorities on a percentage of the rental. In some circumstances the general government makes expenditures out of the Imperial treasury "in aid of rates," which slightly resembles the custom of Congress in paying half the expenses of the District of Columbia, and it is probably from this that our correspondent infers that the Imperial Government pays half the tax on land. His confusion about there seeming to be no tax on agricultural lands, and yet a tax on a nominal appraisal of land, doubtless arises from a condition which we have tried often to explain. At the beginning of William and Mary's reign, a tax of 20 per cent. on the rental value of land was imposed, and a remnant of this exaction remains; but through fixing the rental values on the basis of 200 years ago, and through subsequent commutations in respect of numerous holdings, the income from this source is now inconsiderable. The "unearned increment" tax of Lloyd George's Budget would be essentially but a partial restoration of this tax to its original vigor, by estimating it upon capital instead of rental value. Land "rates" are as a rule imposed upon tenants, being about one-third of the rent they pay to their landlords. The