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EDITORIAL

Opening of Congress.

The assembling for a three months' session of the old Congress a month after the election of the new one, recalls the absurdity of this antiquated system. Its menace to popular government is not so obvious now, for the new Congress happens to be under the same partisan control as the old one. But when a new Congress of different political responsibility from the old one is elected in November, it is plain that the old Congress, with its continuance in power until the following March, may completely frustrate the popular purpose at the elections. The other parliamentary countries of the world are setting us a valuable political example in putting the old parliaments out and the new ones in immediately after elections.

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The President's Message.

On every important issue save one, which is raised by President Roosevelt in his message, it is evident that he writes under the consciousness of tremendous pressure from opposite directions. With that single exception, the message teeters now to this side and totters now to the other, as its author goes circumspectly up and down in his efforts to balance hostile and fundamentally irreconcilable interests.

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The exception is that part of his message in which the President gives reasons for his proposed method of dealing with the Japanese question in California. Here his words ring strong and clear and true. Here he strikes a high moral key and utters a true democratic note without discord. This part of his message goes far to show the kind of democratic leader Mr. Roosevelt might be, if he were in truth a man of courage. But the reader whose enthusiasm is evoked by Mr. Roosevelt's splendid sentiments regarding the Japanese, can hardly overlook the fact that Japan is powerful, nor the other fact that American sentiment against the Japanese is so local and of such recent origin as to be easily stamped out. It requires no courage for Mr. Roosevelt to defy the local anti-Japanese sentiment of San Francisco in the interest of one of the most powerful nations on earth. Such a criticism would not hold, of course, if other outraged races, with no powerful nations behind them, were treated in the message as this document treats the Japanese. But that is not the fact.

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The Chinese of the Pacific Coast will find no such eloquent plea in the message for their rights as appears there in behalf of the Japanese. Is it because no powerful government comes forth, as Japan does for the Japanese, to demand fair treatment for the Chinese? Is it because the anti-Chinese sentiment is older and more widespread and deeply rooted and consequently too dangerous for politicians to cope with? Or is Mr. Roosevelt concentrating his attack upon the point of least resistance for tactical reasons? We can hope for the latter interpretation,—but it is only a hope.

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Let us also contrast the President's splendid sentiments regarding the Japanese with his Bunsbyisms regarding the Negro. In his handling of this race question, with here a kindly phrase for the Negro and there an extenuating concession to white prejudices against him, all so suggestive of a keen appreciation of the value of the white vote at the South and of the Negro vote at the North, Mr. Roosevelt reminds one of the complacency of the dying man who said he had no fears of death because throughout his life he had kept on "pretty good terms with God and on pretty good terms with the Devil, too." For all that he says in behalf of the Negro, Mr. Roosevelt is apologetic to the Negro's white persecutors; and in the end the Negro is advised to be good, in a tone and spirit which implies that if he has any rights that white men are bound to respect he must prove his merit gradually and mustn't meanwhile be insolent to his betters.

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The same disposition to put his eloquent plea for human rights back into the pigeon hole from which he drew it for the benefit of the statesmen of Tokio, is exhibited by Mr. Roosevelt when he handles industrial questions in his message. Neither side in this controversy is all-powerful. The division cuts public sentiment in half, and self-seeking politicians dare not take the strong ground either way that Mr. Roosevelt takes on the Japanese question. The result is an agile dancing upon tip-toe, comically suggestive of a live turkey on a hot floor.

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Mr. Roosevelt insists upon describing the industrial issue as a conflict between the rich and the poor. That is not the industrial issue at all, and by this time a President of the United States ought to know it. The issue is between earning without getting and getting without earning. It is the possibilities of getting without earning that make the greed and the swollen fortunes which Mr. Roosevelt deplores in guarded terms and assails with feathery reforms. It is earning without getting that makes the discontent which no "preachers of discontent," as he calls them, could arouse if the sting of injustice were not there. Let Mr. Roosevelt take positive and intelligible ground for the earner who gets not, and against the getter who earns not, turning neither to the left hand to defend the latter nor to the right to patronize and scold the former, and he may cease worrying over "preachers of discontent" and the envy of riches. Mr. Roosevelt shows base ingratitude, let us say in conclusion, by attacking the "preachers of discontent." When he was shouting, "Prosperity! Prosperity!" though there was no prosperity for the masses, these "preachers of discontent" were giving voice to a popular sense of injustice which Mr. Roosevelt, feeling it not, saw not; and now, in response to the self-sacrificing work of those men who braved the jibes and jeers of such as Mr. Roosevelt, to perform a kind of public duty that moral cowards always shirk, Mr. Roosevelt himself devotes a large share of one of the longest Presidential messages on record, to proposing ways and means for remedying the very evils which have caused the discontent that "preachers of discontent" are making articulate.

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President Roosevelt and His Corrupt Campaign Fund.

It is impossible not to sympathize with President Roosevelt in the dilemma in which, according to Washington correspondence, he has been placed by campaign managers through their accepting money embezzled for campaign purposes from the corrupt life insurance companies. Mr. Roosevelt naturally enough does not relish the idea of having his public career forever tarnished with the taint of this money. He therefore wishes to have the money returned. But his campaign managers quite as naturally shrink from making the abject confession of turpitude which their restoration of the money would imply. Mr. Roosevelt is right, however, in demanding that the money be restored regardless of the effect of such an act upon the reputation for good faith of the gentlemen who accepted and used it for his and McKinley's election. It was diverted by its trustees from the purposes for which they held it; the receivers knew this when they received it; and the fact that restitution would be a confession is immaterial. The vital question is not whether restitution would be confession, but whether there ought to be restitution; and that depends upon facts about which there can be no honest controversy.

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Senator La Follette's Tactics.

Senator La Follette has created an enormous