

has been perpetrated upon his court to lay the matter before the grand jury, with a judicial suggestion that perjury indictments against certain railroad officials would be in order under the law.

ANNIVERSARY REFLECTIONS.

By way of celebrating the close of its fifth year, which occurs with the present issue, *The Public* may perhaps be permitted the unusual indulgence of saying something about itself.

It has no intention of boasting of its future. Having had the benefit of a great deal of experience, both of its own and of that second hand kind which comes much cheaper yet is quite as useful when assimilated, it realizes that the future is no man's oyster. Perhaps a vague superstition also affects it. It has learned that the sixth year (there or thereabouts) of a paper that survives its first, is a dangerous and not infrequently a fatal period.

Neither will *The Public* boast of its past. It leaves its completed record, as all along it has left its record in the making, to speak for it.

But there are things about *The Public* and in its experience which may be worth the telling; and although this will necessitate some talk about itself, by itself, that may perhaps be excused on the score of an anniversary retrospect.

When *The Public* was projected, now five full years ago, it was designed to be what its management has tried to make it, a radical democratic review.

Inasmuch, however, as radical democracy was at that time absorbed in economic discussion, *The Public* aimed to be for the most part, if not exclusively, an economic publication. But at once it was confronted with the problem of the Cuban war, which for the moment threw economic subjects into the background. As a review of public affairs *The Public* was consequently obliged to subordinate economic to military subjects.

The cry of "Remember the Maine," it held in contempt, as it did and does hold every other shibboleth of the hateful types of patriotism. It realized, too, that cunning men would play upon war passions to serve selfish

ends by carrying the results of the war beyond the original purpose. Yet it saw no other reason for not approving the war than the Quaker doctrine of absolute non-resistance, in which it did not and does not believe. Nor are we able to see at this time any other reason, upon the basis of the facts that were then publicly known. It is only in the light of recently disclosed diplomatic correspondence, showing that although the legitimate objects of the war could have been secured by our minister to Spain he was forbidden by his superiors to negotiate for peace and commanded to plot for war, that we are able to denounce the war from its inception.

When this war began it was believed very generally that economic problems had been relegated to the rear permanently in the popular mind. In that belief *The Public* did not share. It held that the time had gone by when public sentiment could be long diverted by martial excitement from the spectacle of impoverished industry in the midst of luxurious leisure. And that is demonstrated now to have been true. Instead of silencing economic discussion, the war has intensified it; while the elemental issues growing out of the war have pressed all public questions closer down to the primary tests of human rights and public duties.

The course of *The Public* with reference to the Cuban war, and subsequent related issues, drew out lesson after lesson in the domain of independent journalism.

In consequence of its approval of the war some absolute peace men who had become subscribers because they agreed with its economic views, peremptorily stopped it. A little later, when the war for the independence of Cuba had degenerated into one for the subjugation of the Philippines, and *The Public* had taken the only course that a democratic review consistently could take, others of its subscribers dropped it because of its "treason" in denouncing the Philippine conquest. But this defection was quickly offset by democrats who hungered for a paper so truly democratic that it dared criticize even its own government for entering upon a war of subjugation.

Some of those democrats were Britons, and some of these, alas, were more patriotic than democratic. The British government having set about

making a conquest of the two little Dutch republics of South Africa, *The Public* applied the same democratic principles to Great Britain that it had applied to the United States, and suffered in consequence for its pro-Boer policy a loss of some of the friends whom it had made by its pro-Philippine policy. But this also was in turn more than made up by the friends it gained among Hollanders and sympathizing Americans. Yes, and Britons, too.

So it has gone throughout the whole list of the problems which *The Public* has been obliged to subject to the test of democratic principles. Its experience with the race question has been similar. So has its experience with the question of free press and free speech, of suffrage and of civil rights in general. Even in the economic field it has gained and lost friends who regard themselves as democratic, because on some specific question or other *The Public's* democracy does not lead it to their particular conclusions. But in all instances of this kind it has invariably gained more than it has lost.

The first lesson of all this seems to be that many who think they want an independent democratic paper—one that is really and truly such at all times and under all circumstances—really want something else. What they in fact desire is a paper that teaches exactly as they believe—not upon principle alone but upon particular points, and not upon one point but upon all.

This is natural. None of us like to believe in the independence of a paper whose independence does not lead it to our way of thinking in all respects. We are apt to prefer a detested organ which once in awhile agrees with us, to an independent paper which once in awhile disagrees with us. We expect an organ to be against us most of the time; but an independent paper has no business ever to be against us. By that token, if we are independent it ceases to be so.

But there is a second lesson to be drawn from the circumstances indicated above. If some persons are driven away from an independent paper when its independence goes their favorite ox, many more are attracted to it because that particular ox is their especial detestation. And out of this new accession may be winnowed in time those who care less for

the conclusions of a paper on particular subjects than for the principles to which it yields allegiance—people to whom even just conclusions mistakenly made from vicious principles are not attractive, while mistaken conclusions from sound principles are not offensive.

Such are the men and women all over this country and from other English speaking lands, who gladden the heart and strengthen the elbow of *The Public* with their assurances that they read it from title page to cartoon, and, though not agreeing with all it says, recognize its loyalty to principle and swear by its sincerity.

These five years of *The Public's* life have been momentous years in the history of the world. To look over its indexes is to pass in review a succession of events that are big with possibilities. It is a period upon which the philosophical historian of the future will be forced to dwell. To some the evil portent of this period is overshadowing. To others it is ablaze with gold and glory. But to us all it is what we as a whole decide to make it. Its evils have no power over us unless we adopt them. They may even be turned to good use as bad examples to be rejected.

The fight between public right and wrong is still on, and *The Public* will be in the fight so long as its service is in demand. Neither an optimist of the happy-go-lucky variety, nor a pessimist of the hopeless type, but a thorough believer in tearing down the bad in order to build up the good, yet with no malice toward persons, it will continue to fight wicked institutions and tendencies and to stimulate righteous possibilities with all the vigor it can command.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

New Orleans, March 30.—Lincoln's greatest strength in his famous debates with Douglas lay in his insistence that the real issue was whether slavery was right or wrong. "That is the issue," he said, "that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are the two principles which have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of

humanity, and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same principle, in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, 'You work and toil and earn bread, and I'll eat it.' No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle." It was this boiling down of the question to the eternal struggle between right and wrong which gave his speeches strength to withstand all the fiery darts of his keen adversary.

Underlying the best speeches in the recent woman suffrage meeting in New Orleans—and there were many very able speeches during that meeting—there was the same insistence that the reform proposed is at bottom a question of right and wrong. This appeal to ultimate principles gave to these speeches, as it always does in any cause, an earnestness, an elevation of tone, a spirit of unselfishness and of devotion to humanity such as are rarely found in similar gatherings. Even opponents of the doctrine of woman suffrage could not fail to feel the fine enthusiasm that pervaded the meetings. No one could leave without having received new impulses to stand up and do something in this or in some other good cause, "in honor of the helpers of mankind."

We do not mean to say that there were lacking speeches which met definite arguments with definite arguments. There were old, familiar arguments in old familiar words and old arguments in new words and some new thoughts infused into old words; but, as I have said, back of all special arguments and back of all the details of facts there was the assurance of faith that the cause was right and just. I do not believe I should be wrong in saying that the keynote of the convention was the right of each human soul to self-government and self-development, and that this right depends upon equal rights.

J. H. DILLARD.

NEWS

An extraordinary vote in favor of land values taxation was cast on the 27th in the British House of Commons, upon the second reading of a bill empowering municipalities to

adopt the single tax method of raising local revenues.

The bill in question had been introduced by Dr. Macnamara, the Liberal member for North Camberwell. It was backed also by the influence of such members as John Dillon, Mr. Burns, Dr. Douglas, Mr. Fenwick, Mr. Lloyd-George, Mr. Robson, J. H. Whitley and Mr. Trevelyan, who, more than a month ago, assisted Dr. Macnamara in having his bill made a special order for March 27th. In an explanatory interview, published at that time in the *New Age of London*, Dr. Macnamara said:

Nothing is more urgent than the taxation of land values. At present the burden of communal expenditure is grievously heavy upon the occupying tenant; and it is bound to grow heavier and heavier. Meantime the ground landlord is the residuary legatee of the value of our rate-expenditure [local, as distinguished from imperial, expenditures]. We must tax him to find new revenues for our housing and other schemes. . . . Every municipal council, whether it be Tory or Liberal, is keen on the problem. It daily sees the glaring injustices of the present system. If social reformers on every municipal Council would put down a resolution for their next Council meeting in favor of the principle of my bill, the result would surprise many people. Then there are two or three associations for the reform of the land system. They too ought to lend a strong hand. We have a month. Wonders can be worked in that time.

Wonders were worked. When Dr. Macnamara's bill came forward on the 27th, pursuant to the order made by the House a month before, the leader of the Liberal party, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and all his lieutenants in parliament, supported it; the solicitor general for Scotland in the last Liberal ministry, making a radical speech in its favor, while many Tories and Liberal-Unionists abandoned their party to vote for it. In the Liberal party, not only did the leaders support the bill, but it was treated rather pointedly as a party measure. It came within only 13 votes of passage.

Regarding the importance of this vote the London correspondent of the *Chicago Daily News* cables the following which appeared in that paper on the 28th:

Political specialists regard the vote in the House of Commons last night by