

working in the constitution. The Commons ought to be careful in dealing with the question, because it was an enormous one, full of importance and seriousness. They must be careful not to be led into a labyrinth of constitutional fallacies, pedantries, and niceties. The clew to which everybody must hold in order to avoid them is the recollection of the essential inherent nature of the country's constitution in that it must be representative. He was not sure he would not rather have a constitution where the representative body was much under the control of the sovereign than under the control of another chamber. The question of the House of Lords must be settled. The present situation was discreditable, dangerous, and demoralizing, but he was not sure that when they got to closer quarters with the question it might not prove easier of solution than it now appeared to be. There must be, he said, a readjustment of the relations between the two Houses, so as to enable them to carry out in reasonable harmony the wishes of the people.

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The English papers and periodicals are full of discussions of this question of Lords and Commons. The Speaker reports a proposal made by Mr. John A. Hobson which is based upon the referendum principle (p. 776):

To meet cases where the House of Lords rejects or mutilates a measure passed by the Commons, Mr. Hobson wishes to obtain a constitutional power (a) enabling the Government to take a direct vote of the electors on the single question whether they wish the measure to become law, and (b) dispensing with the assent of the Lords where a majority of the votes so taken are in favor of the measure.

But The Speaker does not regard this proposal as sufficiently radical for so aggravating a situation. It says:

In the abstract there is much to be said both for and against the proposal. But we are inclined to think that on its merits, supposing that we were in search of an ideal constitution without reference to our own and its history, we should find ourselves in opposition. In the first place, this proposal seems to put the House of Lords in regard to legislation almost on an equal footing with the House of Commons. They are to be allowed to challenge any measure passed by the House of Commons and to compel the representatives of the people, who have spent we may assume an enormous amount of time, thought, and energy upon a complicated reform, to refer its fate to a vote en masse. It seems to us, therefore, that the referendum, if it were made a regular feature of the constitution, would tend to perpetuate the powers of a hopelessly obsolete body and at the same time to weaken representative institutions.

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#### France.

The approach to an understanding between the French Republic and the Catholic church reported last week (p. 1065) moves on toward a probable final adjustment of differences. The eighteen-year contracts proposed by Mr. Briand, the Minister of Education and Worship, give satisfaction to the church authorities, who feel that they can take advantage of them without impairment to the church's dignity, and that by taking advantage of them they virtually reacquire the church edifices which they have regarded themselves as despoiled of.

The Government created a sensation by introducing into the Chamber of Deputies on the 7th, a bill for the taxation of incomes. According to the bill the tax upon incomes of more than \$1,000 a year is made progressive up to 4 per cent. of the total. Burdens placed upon foreign securities, both private and governmental, constitute a particularly heavy blow to Russian securities. The adoption of the bill would mean a complete readjustment of the fiscal system of France.

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#### Russia.

The results of the elections (p. 1065) to the new Douma are everywhere indicating unexpected strength for the Constitutional Democrats and other radical parties. Premier Stolypin is reported as conceding in an interview with an American that the opposition had carried the elections by a considerable majority.

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It was reported from Washington on the 9th that an appeal to America to aid in furnishing relief for the starving millions in Russia had been made through the Russian embassy. The Russian Secretary of State has said that a serious situation must be faced this year, arising out of the total failure of the crops in more than nine provinces. It is requested that contributions be forwarded directly to Galkine Vrasskol, Secretary of State, Shukowski street, St. Petersburg, or to the chancery of the famine relief organization in the same city. Receipts will be acknowledged in the Official Messenger and in all other newspapers which have opened subscriptions for the relief fund.

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The Governor of Penza, S. A. Alexandrovsky, was fatally shot as he was leaving the theater on the evening of the 7th, by a young man, who also killed the assistant chief of police and a policeman, and wounded the manager of the theater. Before he could be captured he fatally shot himself (p. 995). Mr. Alexandrovsky was a commissioner to the St. Louis Exposition, and was at the head of the Red Cross service in the field in the war between Russia and Japan.

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## NEWS NOTES

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—Ridgeway's weekly magazine (p. 671) has been discontinued.

—"Tax the billboards out of existence," is to be the cry of the American Civic Federation for the next year.

—Frank W. Higgins, recently the Governor of New York, died at Olean, N. Y., on the 12th, at the age of 50 years.

—Frank H. Bode (p. 373) has opened headquarters as an independent candidate for Mayor of Springfield, Illinois.

—It is reported from London that the Hague peace conference (p. 996) will probably be called for June 15.

—At the Socialist party primaries of