

# The Public

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A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making

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## EDITORIAL

### The Elections Over Seas.

At the time of writing the English elections are not yet over, but enough is known to warrant the statement that the ardent hopes of neither party have been fully realized. The Liberal party will come back into power, but very probably without the majority necessary to render the present Government independent of the Irish Nationalist and the Labor members. If it is not, there is of course some slight danger of coalition and trades between the Tory members and these groups, especially the Nationalists, which may defeat the most cherished hopes of the advanced Liberals. But we do not anticipate such a result. The Government has pledged itself to Home Rule for Ireland, and the Tories, who have been for years campaigning under the name of "Unionists" to emphasize their opposition to home rule, can scarcely outbid them; and, despite constant friction and difference between the Labor party leaders and the Government, these leaders can hardly be so blind to their own interests as to lend aid to reactionary Conservatives. The Conservative gains and the absence of the decisive majority hoped for by the Liberals, may grant a reprieve to the House of Lords from any drastic reform. Time alone can show this, and the disposition of the King in the crisis may after all prove that a vestige of "ruling" remains with an English sovereign.

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But in the matter of the Budget, which is for

the progressives in this country the chief cause of their interest in the situation, disappointment can hardly be reasonably anticipated. The Lords, whether their privileges are or are not curtailed, have shot their bolt. They claimed only that the country must be appealed to. It has been appealed to, and they have lost. To further oppose the financial legislation enacted by the Commons would be too dangerous even for them to attempt. The House of Commons will certainly re-pass the bill. Their mandate to that effect is undeniable, for Nationalists and Laborites equally with Liberals were elected with the understanding that they would do so. The land taxation clauses in the Budget—the crux and gist of the whole contest—were besides always enthusiastically supported by both Nationalist and Labor members. Landlordism in Great Britain, may we hope, has seen the beginning of the end!

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### The Appeal to Justice.

It was commonly told in New York a generation ago, of Fernando Wood, Congressman and Mayor in the 40's, 50's and 60's when politics were more visibly corrupt than now, that he had said he was convinced that the politicians did not "sufficiently pander to the moral sense of the community." And Canon S. A. Barnett, in a letter addressed to a Liberal meeting held at Queen's hall in London on December 31st, speaking from a standpoint morally antithetical to that of the old New York Mayor, urged a like appeal. "It is not indeed fitting," he said, "that one in my position should appeal to party passions or to class selfishness, but I should have liked to appeal to the quality of justice which is always present in the British mind. It would, I believe, be more active if politicians trusted it more and appealed to it more frequently. 'I hate the Budget,' said to me a city magistrate, 'it is a beastly Budget, but it is just.'"

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### Monopoly's Vulnerable Spots.

Thoroughly alarmed by the agitation over the increased cost of meats, the Administration is planning, we are told, a new coup against the packers by criminal prosecutions under the Sherman Act. At the same time we are told that the Government intends to show, by way of proof, that there is an illegal combination or conspiracy in restraint of trade. It presents an interesting question to a layman. Smith, Brown and Jones, we will say, are respectively directors of competing corporations 1, 2 and 3, engaged in meat pack-

ing. Corporation No. 4 is formed for the apparent purpose of further competing in the same business. Smith, Brown and Jones all buy stock in it and get themselves elected directors of it. Corporation No. 4 has a directors' meeting, and legitimately decides what it will pay for live animals and for what it will sell their flesh after they are slaughtered. When corporations 1, 2 and 3 have their directors' meetings respectively, Smith, Brown or Jones, as the case may be, without informing any one else of any especial reason therefor or revealing what Corporation 4 has resolved on, suggests purchasing and selling prices for that corporation which happen to be the identical prices which Corporation 4 has set. But they are adopted apparently only because of the fellow directors' confidence in his business judgment. Has a crime been committed, for which men can be sent to jail? If so, is it a crime to be a director in each of two corporations which are ostensibly competing? Perhaps to make it so will be considered the next necessary step. But we wish that instead of insisting on this kind of legislation, so continuously proposed and when enacted so continually evaded and made futile, our legislators would turn their attention to the effects in aiding monopoly, of unwise tariffs and patent and land laws, establishing and fortifying privilege and plutocracy!

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### Corrupt State—Corrupt Nation.

There is an amusing side to the controversy raging between the proponents of State control of water rights and of water rights of way, and the opponents of that policy. Representative Smith of California demands State control and ownership, and that the rights be leased to private corporations; but the San Francisco Call, a Republican paper, opposes that policy on the ground that the State government can't be trusted! Well, it is true that the State government of California is merely an agent of the Southern Pacific Railroad and allied interests, but then it is also true that the Government at Washington is in large part a combination of all the railroads and their allied interests. The illogical may make the deduction that unless the profits of monopoly are taxed into the public treasuries, it will make no difference to the people whether the private monopoly be licensed by the Nation or a State government.

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### Bryanism Still Lives.

A man of straw which took the shape of an unauthorized announcement of Mr. Bryan's candidacy for the Presidency in 1912, was banded