

## NEWS NARRATIVE

To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article, on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date.

Week ending Monday, December 27, 1909.

### The English Peers versus the English People.

The opening of the parliamentary campaign in Great Britain now on, was made on the part of the Liberals with the memorable speech at Albert Hall, on the 10th, from the Prime Minister Mr. H. H. Asquith, already briefly summarized in The Public from the cable reports (p. 1208). Mail reports now at hand give additional interesting informa-

tion. The hall was filled to overflowing. The London Chronicle describes it as "an immense meeting, vast, wonderful, overpowering like the sea." Every wing of the Liberal party was represented on the platform, where the front row of seats was occupied by cabinet ministers. The editorial reporter of the Chronicle says: "I have never listened to such a demonstration as that which acclaimed Mr. Asquith's ringing sentence in which he said: 'Neither I nor any other Liberal Minister, supported by a majority of the House of Commons, are going to submit again to the rebuffs and humiliations of the last four years.' The meeting was literally swept off its feet. Over 10,000 men up-standing, waving handkerchiefs and programmes, cheered and cheered and cheered again. It was a moving spectacle and stirred the very depths of feeling. . . . The speech, which occupied an hour in delivery, ended, amid another outburst of enthusiasm. Much of the speech was read from manuscript—an unusual thing for Mr. Asquith."



Mr. Asquith making his Great Appeal to the Country at the Albert Hall, London, December 10, 1909. From the London Chronicle of December 11.

Portions of the speech, as reported by the Chronicle, follow:

I tell you in the name and on behalf of the Liberal party that we have at this moment laid upon us a single task—(hear, hear)—a task which dominates and fences in, because it embraces and involves every great and beneficent social and political change upon which our hearts are set. That task is to vindicate and to establish upon an unshakable foundation the principle of representative Government. (Loud and continued cheers). . . .

Our franchise law is still encumbered by artificial distinctions and impediments, for which there is no justification in principle or in policy. (Cheers). Some of the most crying of them we have in this Parliament attempted to set right by the Plural Voting and the London Election Bills. You know what happened and how it was brought about. Let me say a word here upon the relevant and much-vexed topic of woman's suffrage. (Hear, hear). My own views on that matter are tolerably well known. (Hear, hear). I have seen nothing in the course of the past four years, which has induced me to modify them. (Cheers). This is a question upon which there has been, and I suppose there always will be, a diversity of opinion in both parties, with which it is peculiarly difficult for any Government to deal. Nearly two years ago I declared on behalf of the present Government that, in the event of our bringing in a Reform Bill we should make suffrage of women an open question for the House of Commons to decide. It was no fault of the Government that the opportunity for raising the matter had been taken away. Our friends of the Women's Liberal Federation have asked me to say that my declaration survives the expiring Parliament, and that their cause so far as the Government are concerned shall be no worse off in the new Parliament than it would have been in the old. I have no hesitation in acceding to that request. The Government—notwithstanding the deplorable and suicidal excesses—(cheers)—of a small section of the advocates of change—have no disposition or desire to burke this question. It is clearly one upon which the new House of Commons ought to be given the opportunity of expressing its view. . . .

The Budget of this year is described, and rightly described, as a Budget which looked beyond the 31st of next March, and which sought to raise revenue from sources of a growingly productive character. We admit the charge, if charge it be. Yes! It was a Budget which sought to place taxes upon the accumulations of the rich and the luxuries of the well-to-do, and put a moderate toll on monopoly values which the community itself has either actively or passively created, to provide the sinews of war for the initiation and the prosecution of what must be a long and costly social campaign. That was the Budget put forward on the authority of a united Cabinet—(loud cheers)—passed after months of by no means fruitless discussion by the House of Commons; rejected in a week and at a single blow by the House of Lords. ("Shame!" and "Down with them!") And that, gentlemen, is primarily why we are here tonight. (Cheers). The immediate, the acutely provoking cause of what is rightly called a constitutional crisis is the entirely new claim put forward by the House of Lords, not only to meddle with, but in effect to con-

trol and to mould our national finance. Only once within living memory has the Upper House attempted to touch a single tax imposed or repealed by the House of Commons. That attempt recoiled at once upon their heads, and the claim has never since been renewed.

This year by one stroke they have taken upon themselves to shatter the whole fabric of the year's taxation. This is a new and entirely unexpected danger to popular liberties. (Cheers). Two years ago it was as undreamt of as would have been and as is today the revival by an arbitrary Minister of the veto of the Crown. . . .

We are indeed—and I say it in all seriousness—we are in this matter suddenly confronted with no less than three constitutional innovations. In the first place we have the claim of the Upper House not as an archaic legal survival but as a living and effective right to control the levying of taxation. (Voices: "Never"). In the second place we have the claim of the same House—a body which cannot itself be dissolved—to compel a dissolution of the popular Chamber. ("Shame.") And lastly, as a consequence and a corollary of the other two, we have the assertion of its power to make or to unmake the executive Government of the Crown. Every one of these revolutionary pretensions we shall withstand for all we are worth. (Loud cheers) . . .

You will be told—you have been told already—that the issue lies between government by two chambers and government by a single chamber. That is not the case. I myself, and I believe the large majority of the Liberal party, am in favor of what is called a bi-cameral system, under which there would be a second chamber side by side with the House of Commons—not, indeed, of co-ordinate authority but by its position exercising impartially in regard to our ordinary legislation the powers of revision, subject to proper safeguards of delay. Those are both useful and dignified functions. . . . Our present condition gives us all the drawbacks, with few, if any, of the advantages of a Second Chamber. For what is our actual Second Chamber? (Laughter.) It is a body which has no pretensions or qualifications to be the organ or the interpreter of the popular will. (Cheers). It is a body in which one party in the State is in possession of a permanent and an overwhelming majority. It is a body which, as experience shows, in temper and in action, is frankly and nakedly partisan. It is a body which does not attempt to exercise any kind of effective control over the legislation of the other House when its own party is in a majority there. It is a body which, when the conditions are reversed, however clear and emphatic the verdict of the country may have been, sets itself to work to mutilate and to obstruct democratic legislation, and even in these last days, to usurp the control of the democratic finance. That is a plain, literal unvarnished picture of what everyone knows to be the fact. We are going to ask the country to give us authority to apply an effective remedy to these intolerable conditions. (Cheers). Here again what is to be done will have to be done by Act of Parliament. The time for unwritten conventions has unhappily gone by. We are not, as I say, proposing the abolition of the House of Lords or the setting up of a single Chamber, but we do ask, and we are going to ask the electors to

say that the House of Lords should be confined within the authority of a Second Chamber, as I stated it to you a few moments ago. The absolute veto which it at present possesses must go. (Loud and continued cheers). The power which it claims from time to time, of, in effect, compelling us to choose between a dissolution and—so far as legislative projects are concerned—legislative sterility—that power must go also. The people in future when they elect a new House of Commons must be able to feel what they cannot feel now, that they are sending to Westminster men who will have the power, not merely of proposing and debating, but of making laws. (Cheers). The will of the people as deliberately expressed by their elected representatives, must within the limits of the lifetime of a single Parliament be made effective. . . .

And how do we stand ourselves? United, I hope and trust, for I cannot believe that, with such causes at stake, there will be found any room for sectional divisions or local differences or personal rivalry. (Hear, hear). All these will, I am convinced, be fused and combined in a common campaign against a common enemy. For, gentlemen, in the three capital issues which I have endeavored to lay before you—the control of the Commons over finance, the maintenance of Free Trade—(loud cheers)—and the effective limitation and curtailment of the legislative powers of the House of Lords—(hear, hear)—these three issues we are following are based on the surest lines of Liberal tradition and Liberal policy. We have behind us authorities whose teaching and example we must revere, the founders and fathers of our Constitution, the economists and administrators who rescued our industries from the fetters—(cheers)—the greatest apostles of democracy of our time—Gladstone and Bright. (Loud cheers). We have to support us the memories of the past, the needs of the present, and the hopes of the future. Show yourselves worthy of the task, and quit yourselves like men. (Loud and prolonged cheers). . .

+ +

#### **New King of the Belgians.**

Albert, nephew of the late King Leopold II (p. 1234), took the oath of office before the Belgian parliament on the 23d, and became King of the Belgians under the style of Albert II. His wife, Elizabeth, now Queen of Belgium, is a daughter of the late Duke Karl Theodor of Bavaria, physician and oculist (p. 1189). Queen Elizabeth has her father's scientific tastes and she began the study of medicine at the age of sixteen under her father's guidance. Shortly before her marriage she took her M. D. degree at Leipzig, and since then she has continued her medical studies at Brussels, where also she has founded the Albert-Elizabeth dispensary for poor, tuberculosis patients.

+ +

#### **A New Regime in Nicaragua.**

Dr. José Madris, elected on the 20th President of Nicaragua in place of José Santos Zelaya (p. 1233), was inaugurated as President on the 21st. On the same day and the following the

revolutionists on the east coast, under General Estrada, won a decisive and important victory over the Zelayan troops in a battle that will probably be known as the battle of Rama, said to be the fiercest ever fought in Central America. Of the Zelayan army of 3,000 men but 500 escaped. The killed and wounded of both sides numbered 600, and 1,900 of the Zelayan troops, sick and starved, surrendered. After Zelaya's trenches had been shelled they were taken by assault. By order of Secretary Knox the American Red Cross funds were to be expended in caring for the sick and wounded of both armies. The ex-President, Mr. Zelaya, left Managua before daylight on the 24th with an armed escort, and fled to Corinto where he took refuge on a Mexican gunboat, the General Guerrero, which took him to Salina Cruz, a Mexican seaport. Pending the threatened invasion of the revolutionists from the east, President Madriz has taken up the reins of government with a strong hand, and is establishing reforms. The treasury is empty, and Joaquin Passos, Zelaya's son-in-law, and Ernesto Martinez, Zelaya's last finance minister, have been arrested, charged with misappropriation of funds, failure to register government bonds and the circulation of unsigned paper money. Francisco Baca, who has replaced Dr. Julian Irias as Minister General, is preparing a decree establishing a commission for the purpose of revoking the franchises under which a score of monopolies, given to individuals by Zelaya, have been operated. These monopolies are said to have poured into Zelaya's purse vast sums of money, for, while they were ostensibly in the hands of others, it was to the former President that the greater portion of the returns are asserted to have been transferred. Passos is looked upon as the creator of these monopolies and the "dummy" utilized by Zelaya to cover his large stock interests. His arrest was enthusiastically received.

+ +

#### **Local Option in Rhode Island.**

The special committee of the Rhode Island legislature appointed at its last session to consider questions of taxation (p. 590) has entered upon a series of public hearings, the first having been held on the 16th to consider the subject of local option in taxation. There was some opposition, but the demand is strongly supported. The following platform is signed by 483 persons, firms and corporations of Rhode Island engaged in competitive business—principally manufacturing—

Local self-government is that system of government under which the greatest number of minds, knowing the most and having the fullest opportunities of knowing it, about the special matter in hand and having the greatest interest in its well working, have the management of it. Local self-government is the right of a free people, and every community is entitled thereto in all matters affecting itself alone.