

and civilization depend largely on opening all the avenues of expression, to the minority as well as the majority, to the poor as well as the rich, to the radical as well as the conservative. The one thing which a nation cannot afford to do is to curtail free speech. No pretext, however plausible, is capable of justifying an attempt to undermine this main stronghold of liberty. If the legislative and judicial functions are to be usurped by executive officials, power is dangerously concentrated; and abuses are inevitable under even the most honest administration. If corruption be superadded, as is too often the case, in spite of all safeguards, no man's rights are secure. The specious plea of economy being admitted, and little publicity being possible, it is fatally easy for an official clique to juggle with the second-class matter in such a way as practically to strangle the expression of unpopular or independent opinion. What more simple method could be devised by a self-perpetuating political ring, in order to make truckling sycophancy the price of admission to the mails, and exposure of rascality an offence visited with speedy vengeance? These lines do not charge Mr. Madden with any such criminality. It is sufficient to point out that the policy of which he is the conspicuous exponent is pregnant with the deadliest peril to American institutions, and that the petty peculations of Beavers and Machens sink into insignificance in comparison with the gigantic evils certain to flow from a postal autocracy. May the good judgment of all the people avert the disaster.

JAMES F. MORTON, JR.

NEWS NARRATIVE

Week ending Thursday, Aug. 24.

The Norwegian referendum.

Complete revised returns from the referendum in Norway on the question of separating from Sweden (p. 308) were reported from Christiania on the 17th, as follows:

For separation	368,200
Against separation	184
Majority for separation.....	368,016

As the total vote at the elections of 1903 was 457,551, the majority for separation noted above is approximately 80 per cent of the entire voting population.

When the Storthing met on the 21st, the Ministry offered a proposal to communicate the result of the referendum to the Swedish government and ask it to accept the abrogation of the act of union and to cooperate in negotiations for a pacific settlement of the questions connected with the separation. The proposal was resisted by the Socialist members, though upon what ground does not clearly appear in the dispatches; but it was adopted on the 22d by the vote of 104 to 11, and the Ministry was empowered to appoint delegates to conduct the negotiations.

The Russian national assembly.

The long expected call by the Czar of Russia of a national assembly (p. 308) was promulgated on the 19th. The assembly is distinguished as the Douma. It is to be composed of 412 delegates from all the 50 departments of Russia and the military province of the Don, and is to meet by the middle of January next. Finland, Poland and the Caucasus are excluded. So are cities in which Jews are in the majority; and as Jews are not allowed to live in the country, where the peasants are to be represented indirectly through local bodies, the Jews get no representation at all. The popular suffrage for delegates is based upon property qualifications which extensively disfranchise the working classes. Five years is the term of the Douma, subject however to prior dissolution in the discretion of the Czar. It is designed to be only a consultative body, the powers of the Czar remaining absolute, and is to constitute the lower house of a legislature of which the present Council of the Empire is to be the upper house. Legislative measures within the scope of the Douma's consideration are limited to the following subjects:

Questions relating to new laws or to the modification, amplification, or temporary suspension or repeal of existing laws, and also relating to appointments made on the staff of ministers and the expenditures thereby involved; departmental, ministerial, and national budgets, and expenditures not provided

therein; the financial report of the controller of the Empire; the expropriation of any portion of the public revenues or property; the construction of railways by the government; questions regarding the organization of stock companies, involving exceptions from existing legislation; and matters submitted by Imperial decree.

Bills passing the Douma must also pass the Council and be approved by the Czar. The only check upon the absolutism of the Czar that appears from the dispatches is a provision that any legislative decree shall be inoperative if rejected by a two-thirds vote of the Douma and also a two-thirds vote of the Council.

In his manifesto proclaiming the constitution of this national assembly the Czar announces that the time has come—

to summon elected representatives from the whole of Russia to take constant and active part in the elaboration of the laws, thereby attaching to the higher state institutions a special consultative body intrusted with the preliminary elaboration and discussion of measures and with the examination of the state budget. It is for this reason that, while preserving the fundamental law regarding the autocratic power, we have deemed it well to form a gosudarstvennaia douma [lower house of the assembly] and to approve the regulations for elections to this douma, extending the validity of these laws to the whole territory of the Empire, with such exceptions only as may be considered necessary in the case of some regions in which special conditions obtain. . . . We reserve to ourselves entirely the care of perfecting the organization of the gosudarstvennaia douma; and when the course of events shall have shown the necessity for changes corresponding completely to the needs of the times and the welfare of the Empire we shall not fail to give it at the proper moment the necessary directions.

Subsequent dispatches indicate that the proposed Douma has not met with any popular enthusiasm.

Progress of the Russian-Japanese peace negotiations.

Contrary to the expectations of last week (p. 309) the Russian and Japanese envoys failed to come to a complete understanding on the 17th. From the beginning of their meeting on that day until the present hour, they have been at a deadlock.

The American reciprocity conference.

At the second day's meeting of