

# The Public

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President McKinley has made the repulsive Spanish garrote an American mode of administering capital punishment. During the current week, this deadly instrument of torture was used in Puerto Rico, to kill five men convicted of murder. It was therefore used by American authority, upon American soil, under the sanction of an American president and the shadow of the American flag.

There is one military bill before congress which can be approved. It is a bill to provide for assigning retired commissioned and non-commissioned military officers to the public schools as military instructors. It would be an excellent thing to give all the public school boys a practical military education. This would not stimulate the military spirit especially. That spirit is apt to be strongest in those to whom military experience is a novelty. But it would qualify the great masses of the American people to fight effectively in defense when militarism shall have made revolution necessary.

If the reports from London have fairly described public demonstrations there, the British jingo is a comical brute. He goes into ecstasies of self-praise and patriotic declamation when 40,000 British troops capture 4,000 South African Dutchmen; and he tumbles into the depths of gloom when 10,000 Dutchmen begin to worry 40,000 British. If the British jingo would commune conscientiously a little more with his own soul about the wretched spirit of

conquest which has plunged his country into this totally useless and unjustifiable war, and plume himself less upon the valor of his representatives on the firing line, he might not be so comically picturesque, but he would be a wiser man and a better Briton.

A set of New Jersey officials prove their utter lack of any sense of responsibility by leasing to private parties a piece of riparian land, which is public property, for a period of 999 years at a fixed rental. As the land is to be improved at a cost of some \$3,000,000, it would be entirely proper to grant a long lease. But a lease for about the life of the perishable improvements would be long enough for all equitable purposes. No officials, no government, no people, has the right to tie up the affairs of succeeding generations further than may be necessary to preserve rights which the present generation justly acquires in the products of its own toil. A government lease of land for 999 years, like a government grant "while grass grows and water runs," is a usurpation.

Marshall Field & Co., one of the great mercantile concerns of Chicago, has listed its personal property at \$6,400,000. One-fifth of that amount, the basis of taxation under the Illinois law, would be \$1,280,000; and at the rate of 5 per cent. the tax would be \$64,000. Now does anyone suppose that Marshall Field & Co. will pay this handsome sum of \$64,000 and bear the brunt of the loss? Could any firm afford to take \$64,000 out of its profits for taxes? And whether it could afford it or not would it do it if there were any possible way of recouping? Evidently not. And as there is a way of recouping, Marshall Field & Co. will not lose this money. They will get it back in higher prices

for goods. So Marshall Field & Co.'s customers will pay that tax in the end. And what is more, they will pay Marshall Field & Co.'s profit on the tax. Yet many of these same people will speak of Field as a great tax payer and of themselves as non-tax payers.

In the Puerto Rican government bill, just passed by congress under tremendous party pressure, and which the president will certainly sign if he has not done so already, there is one exceedingly significant provision. Doubtless there are others as suggestive of loot, but this stands out prominently in that respect. The bill empowers the president of the United States to appoint the upper house of the Puerto Rican legislature. That is a scandalous provision in itself, for a republican congress to adopt. But the scandal does not stop there. This upper house, the mere creature of the president, is authorized in its own discretion, without any check upon its action, to grant franchises in the island. Reduced to its real meaning, that provision gives to William McKinley the power to distribute special privileges, thereby creating embryonic trusts, in the island of Puerto Rico. And he who doesn't believe that William McKinley will "stand by his friends" in making the distribution, little knows the true inwardness of the present occupant of the white house. Puerto Rico franchises will doubtless contribute in no small way to the \$6,000,000 campaign fund that Hanna is preparing to get together.

If the imperialists were sincere in their expressed anxiety to have the crown colony question passed upon by the supreme court they would not have prevented legal proceedings in the Jeorg Cruz case, which we reported last week. Jeorg Cruz came to