

to the people that these actions of the Lords have deprived them of several great and beneficial measures of reform. Indeed, if we judge by the results of the by-elections which have taken place during the fifteen months, we must confess that in the majority of cases there has been a very pronounced change of opinion in favor of the Conservative party and policy. The fact that the Lords had rejected an education bill and an electoral reform bill in addition to those mentioned above does not seem to rouse the people in favor of the government whose policy these bills embodied. On the contrary, the unprecedented activity of the Conservatives and Protectionists has swayed the people strongly in their direction. Their forced agitation on the question of the navy has undoubtedly done much to discredit the government.

While Mr. Asquith differs from Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in the fact that he seldom speaks out, seldom gives utterance to democratic thoughts that appeal to the mass of the people and rouse their enthusiasm, the radical members of his party still regard him as a sound and strong leader. They still believe that he is determined to obtain the object of some of his rejected measures by the more direct means of the Budget or finance bill of this year. There is a strong sentiment in many quarters in favor of increasing the duties on liquor licenses. Members of the temperance party who believe that temperance will be promoted by handicapping the liquor trade strongly advocate heavier taxes on spirits and beer. There is little that is novel in this proposal, as the principle is already applied to a certain extent, and it is generally admitted to be unpopular with the people of England.

More interest centers in the proposed tax on land values in the Budget, and those who believe that the future of the Liberal party is bound up with the genuine reform of economic conditions, hope and believe that the government will retrieve their fortunes, and win back a large measure of their lost popularity by a substantial measure of this kind. Nothing certain will be divulged until the Budget is produced. At the present moment the semi-official statement is that this will take place on April 22d. Meantime certain departmental arrangements are being made which suggest that the permanent officials are preparing to carry out some sweeping alterations in connection with valuation and collection of revenue. The Conservative papers are devoting much more space to attacks on what they call socialistic legislation. At the same time, the landowners, through the different organizations which they control, are stirring up a strong agitation against the proposed tax. This agitation is much more widespread and varied than anything which has yet appeared. The agricultural landowners appeal to the farmers to oppose what they describe as a new burden on agriculture. They do not define what they mean by agriculture and of course the majority of the farmers do not press their inquiries far enough to see that a tax on land value is nothing but a tax on the value of a monopoly which in every case militates against the industry of agriculture. These activities on the part of the Conservatives and the landowners show that they now really believe that a practical step is to be taken in the direction of breaking up their privileges.

Whatever happens in the political world we can congratulate ourselves on the fact that the people of this country have been interested and educated in single tax principles during the last year more than they have been within a much longer period in our history. It is possible that the Lords may venture to reject the Budget—a very serious step, and one which is almost without precedent. Referring to this possibility in a speech at Hyde, Lancashire, on April 1st, the Earl of Derby said: "There are no steps which the House of Lords will not take—and I will never refuse to vote—to force the government to appeal to the country. It will come before long." Such a decision on the part of the House of Lords would make the taxation of land values the supreme issue at the next election, and there is little doubt that the country would declare for it by a large majority.

JOHN ORR.

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PARIS IN TIME OF STRIKE.*

Etaples sur Mer, France, March 20, 1909.

Three days, and no letters from Paris! The fourth day, and the carrier hardly thinks it worth his while to stop with one small letter from England. The fifth day, and the box on the inside of our door is empty. We have begun to cease to think of letters, or to wonder if the American mail, due days ago at Cherbourg, is still lying undistributed in some of the big receiving rooms. All interest centers now around the great strike—the first of its kind in the world. How appropriate that it should take place at Paris! At the brilliant capital of the great country that kindly, not arrogantly, calls itself the "Surs-patrie," or the Over-country, and that loves to hear a foreigner say, "I have two countries—my own and France."

Those of us who are not in vital need of funds from home, overlook the need of letters and watch for the Paris papers that reach us at midday. Then, as we read, we wish that we were there to see the posters freshly pasted on the walls before the break of day. Paris loves her "affiches." Since the time of the "Commune" it has been her manner of appealing to the public. Many are the amusing and interesting things you can find there as you stroll about the city.

And just now it is the strike. Never, they say, was a "Mi-carême" more welcome, for most people did not know whether it was the strike or the holiday that was responsible for the cessation of business. Therefore they ceased to be vexed until the next day. But even now the great majority, though greatly inconvenienced, take things calmly because they seem to believe in the justice of the strikers' cause.

A sense of dissatisfaction, growing for two years, and repeatedly demonstrated to the authorities, finally culminates in a determination on the part of the government's postal, telegraph and telephone em-

*This letter is dated six days earlier than the letter which appeared in *The Public* of April 9, entitled "The End of the Strike," (p. 345), but it has come by a slower steamer or been delayed on the way. Though out of sequence we think it too good to be lost.—Editors of *The Public*.

ployes to work no more until their wrongs are righted.

Then what do we see? More than ten thousand organized State employes go in regular order to their work, relieve the several "brigades"—there were four—at the usual stated times; but daily doing less of their regular work, till finally among the piled up dispatches, the ticking implements, the wagons laden with their burden of mail, they sit and stand—these calm and orderly work men and women—with folded arms. The Paris papers are full of their pictures. If you do any kind of work in Paris you wear a long linen blouse, or apron. And there they sit or stand, in their blouses, beside their instruments, and among the heaped up sacks.

But what is the cause of the trouble? One might almost better ask, who? For all is peace until Simyan, the official head, appears. Then are cries of "Conspuez Simyan! Démission!" The despised and spit-upon Simyan—he must resign. The few cries and the absolute refusal to work, are followed by a few arrests. More cries and more arrests! Then trials in the police court.

"You are accused of crying, 'Conspuez Simyan.'"

"Yes," replies the first prisoner; "I left my work. I turned around. I not only cried, 'Conspuez Simyan'; I added, 'Démission.'"

The second prisoner, similarly accused, replies: "I have cried 'Conspuez Simyan! Démission.' I was on the stairway. I had finished my work. The policemen prevented me from going out. I remounted the stairs and cried it again."

So through the long list of prisoners, till Mr. Thibaut, lawyer for the Association, says: "My clients admit the facts. They have cried, 'Conspuez Simyan! Démission!' It was the cry of the heart of all the postal employes, little or great."

What has he done, this man, so hated and despised by his subordinates? They are said to have loved his predecessor.

When Mr. Simyan succeeded to the administration he journeyed first to the four corners of France; and on his return to Paris he began to institute what he was pleased to call "reforms," chief among them being a system of promotion based on merit, instead of the one in operation for fifteen years, which was purely automatic, and based on length of service, and the consequent experience and loyalty which are considered to increase the value of any service. A system of promotion based on merit, in France as elsewhere, could not but lead to favoritism and abuse. The people with "pull" are the people who "merit" things. Dissatisfaction grew apace. Further, in place of adding to the number of employes from time to time as the work increased, from one and another class an extra hour of work for which there was no extra pay, was demanded. Briefly, there was no co-operation between the head and even his immediate subordinates. Mr. Simyan aimed to be an autocrat. He took the personnel of his staff not at all into account. And even now he announces his intention of being "very severe" with the offenders.

Last Sunday there were many meetings among the different unions of the postal, telegraph and telephone employes, but very little excitement and not much sign of action, till suddenly, near one of the doors some one entered quickly and with one jump

was upon a table. It was Mr. Subra, a former president of the General Association of the R. T. T. In a few trenchant remarks he made the situation clear to all. "Our salaries are insufficient; our advancement has been retarded and there are many minor grievances, chief among them the fact that our complaints are unheard, our cry is disregarded." "As for you," he continued, addressing his hearers, "act as it seems to you good. If you do not wish to go to the battle, we will go without you. But if we are conquered you will know for what to reproach yourselves, and you will remember that you have betrayed the cause of the proletariat."

Applause resounded on all sides. The right note had been struck, and the keenly sensitive Parisian was quick to respond. The calm of the previous moment had become a noisy demonstration of eagerness to enter the fray.

The next morning it began at the central office, and spread to one and another, till days have passed and Paris is cut off from normal communication with the outside world. The service has gradually grown less. First the foreign letters were disregarded; then those from the provinces; finally you could not even buy a stamp in the main postoffices of Paris. Without any convulsion of nature, without any interference of foreign powers or any war in the usual sense of the term, Paris is to-day almost in the condition of a besieged city. Even shipments from producers in the country are ceasing. Business to-day depends on correspondence. Yours depends on whole armies of employes that you yourself do not employ.

And now the soldiers are called out. To protect an army of strike breakers? Not at all. To break the strike; to operate the telegraphs and the telephones, to despatch the mails, to run all the complex machinery of the postal and telegraph and telephone systems of a great city. How does it work? You know how it works. How would it work in America? Just the same as it does in France.

A handsome young soldier was leaving the central office in Paris when he was asked how it worked. He answered gaily that it worked exceedingly well; that he had a pretty little blonde girl to teach him how to use the instruments, and that he would soon learn under such gentle instruction; to which his crusty old interlocutor replied: "Instead of business, it will be: To the devil with business, and long live love."

IDA FURSMAN.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

SECOND ELECTIONS.

Lonsdale, R. I.

To Rhode Islanders it seems rather curious that reformers anywhere are asking for second elections. In this State until the year 1894, a majority of all the votes cast for officials was required to elect. Consequently second elections for Congressmen, members of the legislature, city and town officials, were very common. They were usually settled at the second trial. After a long continued agitation, resisted year after year by the State boss, an amendment of the Constitution was submitted to the people in 1903,