

Exit the Sensational Triflers.

Mr. S. S. McClure's prediction that we have reached the end of the "sex problem" stories, and that the "cave man" and "cave woman" in fiction will make way for normal human beings, expresses a welcomed opinion of a shrewd observer of affairs. And in hazarding the opinion that the public is turning to a more wholesome style of fiction, Mr. McClure has noted but one of the symptoms that indicate a general state of mind. One critic notes a reviving interest in poetry; another, saner art; another, wholesome fiction; another, cleaner politics; another, loftier statesmanship; another, closer fellowship; another, broader religion; and so on in the various fields of thought. There is a turning from the hopeless, stifling pessimism of the past two decades to a confident and inspiring optimism. There is less denunciation of persons and more recognition of conditions; less questioning of motives and greater appreciation of human nature. When Lincoln Steffens, in his search for "the man higher up," traced the stream of political corruption to its source he found, instead of a human monster of unspeakable depravity, merely men very much like other men, who were the victims of conditions that make for evil. Punishing the men does little toward purifying politics, for the reason that the same institutions tend to produce the same kind of men. This is not to eliminate personal responsibility, but rather to extend the responsibility to those who support and maintain the institutions that make for evil, instead of confining it to the victims of the institutions.



There is a most decided awakening of the people to the new duties and opportunities of citizenship. Party politics, in the old sense, never made less appeal to the voter than today. Turning the rascals out has ceased to be our chief national diversion. The average voter is coming to feel less concern about the personality of the candidate and the party to which he belongs, than what the candidate will do when he has been elected, which leads to a keener interest in fundamentals and a better tone in speeches and editorials. This is not to imply that the millennium is about to set in, for the people are groping, and the politicians are as blind leaders of the blind. The first thing toward seeing the light, however, is the wish to see it; and there were never before so many earnest men and women honestly seeking the truth, nor such rare opportunities for those who have already seen it.

s. o.

England's Crisis.

That a government's policy that jailed a labor leader for asking soldiers not to fire on strikers, while permitting members of Parliament to drill soldiers for the avowed purpose of resisting the lawful action of the government, was certain to bring trouble to that government, has long been apparent. That it should have taken the dramatic form of the present crisis few anticipated. Yet, when the known factors are taken into consideration, what else could have been expected? The officering of the British army has been as much a perquisite of the landed aristocracy as the House of Lords itself. Consequently, when the hereditary chamber had been deprived of its veto power, it was but natural that the landed interests should have turned to tampering with the loyalty of the army. And it was inevitable that a body of officers who owe allegiance to their class first, and then to their country, should have betrayed their trust.



The vigor with which Premier Asquith acted when the storm broke may be taken as evidence that he did not suppose earlier in the movement that the opposition would go to such lengths. But had he, and those associated with him, realized the far-reaching effect of the Lloyd George Budget, had they appreciated the fact that in that Budget lay the germ of a new economic state, they would have been prepared for the Tory rebellion. The landed interests of Great Britain know what the Budget means; and they know from the popular enthusiasm that greets Lloyd George's speeches on the land question that the principle in the Budget will be extended year after year until it eats the marrow out of their holdings. It is not Irish Home Rule that they are opposing; nor is it to protect Ulster that they have tampered with the army; it is simply and solely a mad effort to preserve the land system of Great Britain.



The land system of Great Britain can be saved only by reversing the course of history. The Liberal party must be thrown out, the Lords' veto must be restored, and, most of all, means must be found to stop the mouth of the pestiferous little Welsh democrat who has fired the Briton's imagination with the idea that God made the land for all his children, instead of for a few. And far as Lloyd George falls short of the desires of the Land Values group in his present plans, his proposals strike terror to the heart of the English

landlord. If Premier Asquith remains firm in the face of Tory machinations, Ulster bluster, and army mutiny, he may weather the storm; but should he fail, should his government go down now, rest assured that no future Liberal government will offer as mild a program as the present.

s. c.



NATURAL LAW IN THE ECONOMIC WORLD.

Part Three.

Limitation of competition in industries not specifically endowed by privilege has been the favorite device of despotic governments which have thus sought to retain for specially favored interests benefits which would otherwise be distributed among the masses of producers. Protective tariffs, and the privileges allowed mediæval guilds, are among those devices of government which have sought to restrain competition.

It has been remarked by one of the most searching writers on political economy (Max Hirsch, "Democracy versus Socialism") that no inquiry into the nature and function of competition has ever been instituted by socialists (and he might have included the orthodox school as well) who have contented themselves with asserting its inherent wickedness. Such an investigation rigorously pursued would show that in those instances where competition has seemed to produce evil results it was really because of an interruption of its free operation; and that such competition was one-sided, and therefore not free.

The true office of competition is to establish the relation between efficiency and reward. Nothing will do this save unhindered competition. Let us pause to reflect upon the importance of this for a minute. The naturally inefficient must be eliminated from social production. This does not imply any harsh fiat of the law; the extent of the penalty is the relegation of the competitors to their appropriate places as producing or distributing factors, according to their degrees of efficiency. "From all according to their abilities, to all according to their needs" (Louis Blanc) is a counsel of private philanthropy, not a law of social progress, nor of social continuity. The law of competition, which alone of all means determines the just balance of reward and efficiency, works in the end to the highest satisfaction of the race. To treat this law with contempt, or to attempt to replace it with the altruism of Louis Blanc, is to invite disaster and ultimate social decay.

It is assumed by such writers as Herbert Croly ("The Promise of American Life") that the present congestion of wealth in a few hands is due to "the freedom which the American tradition and organization have granted to the individual." Viewing the problem in this way—and it is the popular way—Mr. Croly urges that freedom has been beneficial up to a certain point, but beyond that it is fatal, or in danger of becoming fatal. He therefore declares for regulation, which is only the adoption of the same remedy which the Socialists, with a program more drastic, and therefore more consistent, urges as the sole panacea. This is the popular economic theory of the day in which the vast majority of Americans share with varying degrees of difference. It is time that these were all properly and distinctly categorized as belonging to the same school of thought. They have too long, to the bewilderment of true principles of logic, occupied the arena as antagonists, and their attacks and riposte on the socialistic position have been mistaken for genuine opposition. It has proved an engaging but not sanguinary encounter, since no false principles have been laid low and the issue of battle has never been clearly defined. It has all the characteristics of a mock tournament, and the false champions of individualism can be shown with their masks torn off as the sorriest of pretenders.



If competition is beneficial why should limits be set to its free operation? If it is a natural law *how can* such limits be set? It is evident that the law of co-operation has itself determined the limits. It ought to be clear that if in certain lines of industry competition reduces earnings temporarily below the normal return to capital, the principle of combination will restrain competition within limits. But so long as special privilege of legal creation is absent from the control of such combinations they cannot raise earnings or profits beyond the normal return to capital. And the reason again is clear—potential competition remains though actual competition is absent. Capital itself is fluid and answers every call; privilege only is solid, and on it, and not on combinations per se, must all monopolies finally rest.

What the forces of competition are doing does not impress itself upon us at all times as it should. Let us assume that the problem of feeding, clothing and housing the population of New York or London had to depend upon a single intelligent directing head. We will fail to appreciate the magnitude of the task, but an active imagination will aid us somewhat. There are few who