

# The Public

First Year.

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**LOUIS F. POST, Editor.**

THE PUBLIC is a weekly paper which prints in concise and plain terms, with lucid explanations and without editorial bias, all the really valuable news of the world. It is also an editorial paper. Though it abstains from mingling editorial opinions with its news accounts, it has opinions of a pronounced character, which, in the columns reserved for editorial comment, it expresses fully and freely, without favor or prejudice, without fear of consequences, and without hope of discreditable reward. Yet it makes no pretensions to infallibility, either in opinions or in statements of fact; it simply aspires to a deserved reputation for intelligence and honesty in both. Besides its editorial and news features, the paper contains a department of original and selected miscellany, in which appear articles and extracts upon various subjects, verse as well as prose, chosen alike for their literary merit and their wholesome human interest. Familiarity with THE PUBLIC will commend it as a paper that is not only worth reading, but also worth filing.

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## EDITORIALS

No apologies are necessary for launching a paper like The Public. Though a wearisome superfluity of periodicals burdens the market, none satisfies the desire, widespread and strong, for a paper in which the news reports are not distorted by editorial bias nor discolored with impertinent opinions, but are simple, direct, compact, lucid and veracious; a paper which aims to be right rather than sensational; which is not padded; which clearly relates to their appropriate place in general history those events that have historical value; and which, in its editorial policy, unflinchingly puts public questions to the supreme test of obvious moral principles and stands by the result. For the paper which shall satisfy that desire, there is yet ample room. Whether The Public will do this or not, only experience can show; but it will make a faithful effort.

Some one has noted the resemblance of most modern newspapers, in their news departments to old-time gossips swapping scandal across the fence, and in their editorial departments to the gossips' husbands talking politics and "jawing" one another down at the tavern. Perhaps the resemblance is remote; but it is close enough to suggest to the imagination of an evolutionist the possibility of kinship.

Yet the newspaper is unquestionably a useful institution. Although editorial writers are too often mere literary machines, who, by tossing aside their self-respect with their intellectual honesty, and obediently writing at the dictation of unscrupulous bosses, now one way and now another, have taught the public to distrust the sincerity of editorial articles not verified by the signatures of writers whose eccentric sense of honor may have won them public confidence; although sensational news is padded to the bursting point with frivolous details, while other important though comparatively common place matter is robbed of the space necessary to make it intelligible; although both perspicuity and truth are often sacrificed to "hustle;" although many papers are not above catering to the prejudices of rich and poor alike, playing the demagogue now to the galleries and again to the boxes—notwithstanding all these weaknesses, the daily press, as an institution, is nevertheless indispensable. It sweeps the world for news. What if it does, as a rule, pour out its news upon the reader in an inflated daily volume of unassorted, undigested, unrelated facts, semi-facts and fiction, good, bad, scandalous, trivial and bewildering, and introduced with shrieking headlines? Most of these faults are inseparable from daily journalism. Good editing, though a few daily papers are notable for approximating to it, is not possible under the pressure of gathering news by lightning and printing it as fast as it comes in, and often faster.

But just here the weekly paper may be made to supplement the daily. Having the benefit of the great news collections which the dailies make, and

being under no constant pressure for time, the editors of weekly papers may discard frivolous details and idle gossip, may separate truth from misrepresentation and fiction, and, garnering the really valuable news of the world, may report it at leisure in compact form, and point out its relation to the news of the week before, the year before, the century before, or the age before.

Thus may the weekly paper enable ordinary men, whether they attempt to read daily papers or not, to understand the history of their own time as it develops. To him who reads daily papers, it may be a newspaper interpreter; to him who does not read them—and the number who have found regular newspaper reading an unbearable burden is not small—it may be a newspaper reader, a species of private secretary who saves his time and energy by reading and sifting the newspapers for him.

Some weekly papers have undertaken this work. So have some monthlies. And their service has been warmly welcomed. But, unfortunately, from a mistaken notion of what makes news interesting, most of them inject into their news reports a flavor of editorial opinion which not only offends readers holding adverse opinions, but breeds among all scrupulous readers a suspicion of the trustworthiness of the reports themselves. Useful, therefore, as their news reporting is, they do not satisfy the desire as to news reports to which we have referred.

And most if not all of them fall still further short of satisfying that desire in respect to editorial policy. They, like the daily newspapers, are often offensive not only to the democratic public in general, which knows of them but does not often read them, but also to many of their regular readers, on account of their abject submission to plutocratic influences.

By "plutocratic," let us stop to explain, we do not allude to the rich. Rich men are not necessarily plutocrats. Very often they are on the contrary genuine democrats. Very often, too, the most pronounced plutocrats are poor. He is a plutocrat

who, be he rich or poor, sets up wealth as the test of respectability and the insignia of industrial or political authority—that is to say, who favors government by or for the rich. Goldsmith hit off plutocracy when he wrote:

Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the law.

What we mean, therefore, by plutocratic influences, is influences which make for the elevation of the rich to industrial or political mastership. To these influences the general press—daily, weekly, monthly—is submissive to the extent of servility. There are few exceptions outside the organs of social reform movements. Even the democratic papers, most of them, and those republican papers which still feel the democratic impulse of abolition days, are safely relied upon by our plutocracy to turn in their tracks whenever plutocratic privileges are seriously menaced.

These considerations justify the advent of a weekly paper like *The Public*, and we repeat that it makes no apology for appearing. Whatever else may be said of it, no one can assert that there is not a field for the kind of paper it aims to be. Such an assertion would imply what is evidently untrue. It would imply that a paper which prints in intelligible form the really valuable news, winnowed from the trash that goes by the name of news, and divested of partisan bias and color, a paper which, moreover, consistently and persistently, not as an organ of some reform movement but solely with reference to fundamental moral principles, is editorially hostile to plutocracy in all its phases and throughout all its ramifications,—it would imply that a paper of that character is not wanted. We believe that in fact such a paper is wanted, and that the paper which shall realize this ideal will enjoy abundant success, not merely as a business enterprise but also as a trusted teacher and leader. Conscious, however, of the difficulties of the undertaking, we make no promise for *The Public* except that it will be held as closely as we can hold it to the ideal here indicated.

The time for urging peace between the United States and Spain seems now to have passed. A stage has been reached where war, or a humiliating backdown by one or the other of the two countries, appears to be inevitable. Neither country can be expected to back down, not even with a dip-

lomatic assumption of having carried its point; and within a few weeks, probably within a few days, possibly before these words come under the reader's eye, Spain and the United States may be in deadly conflict, and the daily newspapers full of accounts of military pomp and misery. At this time, then, and in these circumstances, however strong one's inclinations for peace may be, the most important consideration is not how peace may be secured, but whether the inevitable war shall, on the part of our country, be a sincere struggle for the extension of liberty and the inalienable right of self-government, or an excuse for giving the Cubans new fetters for their old ones.

War is, indeed, terrible. Not only is this sentiment true, but we believe it to be at bottom the sentiment of the American people. But the American people regard some things as worse even than war. In that also they are right. One of these things is tyranny. Though they patiently submit to tyranny of most exasperating kinds, when it is clothed in familiar garb or touches them in subtle ways the nature of which they do not comprehend, their blood boils at tyranny in forms that they have renounced, or which for other reasons is clear to their understanding. It is this characteristic, part of our English inheritance, which has long made the common people of the United States anxious to fight Spain for the liberation of Cuba.

That the common people are in fact anxious to do that, admits of little doubt; that their reason for it is sympathy with a people subjugated as we ourselves once were, admits of less. This war, though it must be a poor man's fight as all wars are, will not be a rich man's war. We have been driven to the very verge of it not by the classes, but by the masses. The classes, except for hot-headed youths among them, who don't know what war means, and ambitious army and navy fledglings, have thrown the whole weight of their influence against a conflict. That fact has been confusing to most of us who distrust the classes and yet have a horror of war. We have found it exceedingly difficult to burnish up our peace principles under the patronage of men of whom Mark Hanna is a fit type, who don't know what principle is except when spelt with an "a," and who would be for war as sturdily as in this

case they have been for peace, if they thought it would yield them an honest dollar or two. Their partisanship for peace has probably been as effective in fanning the war flame as any other one thing except the blowing up of the Maine. And now, convinced that war is probably unavoidable, and with the president apparently in their tow, they have set about diverting the war from the only channel in which it can be justified upon democratic principles. It is this that makes imperative the necessity for insisting that the war, since war there must be, shall be no war of conquest, no war for revenge even, no war for the establishment of a Yankee protectorate, but a war for securing to the people of Cuba—not to a class, but to all of them—the right to govern themselves. If we are to have a war with Spain about Cuba, let it be a war for Jeffersonian liberty.

But liberty for the Cubans as a whole can be secured only by recognizing the independence of the Cuban republic. That would throw the burden of making war upon Spain, and at the same time put the Cuban republic in position to expel the Spanish troops. We should thereby aid a new republic which, in the field and in its civil administration, has earned a right to our warmest sympathy and bloodiest support, if we are to expose ourselves to the horrors of war at all.

To the classes, however, our recognition of the Cuban republic is objectionable. The reason has been expressed by Attorney General Griggs, of New Jersey, the young man who advised the president that if we were to recognize Cuba, and hereafter discontented Californians, aided by filibustering Mexicans, were to resist the United States and lead her armies a chase through the mountains, Mexico might recognize them as an independent nation upon the authority of our own precedent. Attorney General Griggs objected to recognizing the independence of the Cuban republic because it does not represent the "taxpayers," and "property owners," of Cuba; and that is one, at least, of the reasons why Mark Hanna objects. That this in turn is one of the president's reasons for objecting, may be fairly inferred from the way in which Hanna has flitted in and out of the war consultations at the white house. In a word, this objection to recognizing Cuban independence is a class objection. It is an objection to government by all