

# The Public

First Year.

CHICAGO, SATURDAY, JULY 30, 1898.

Number 17.

**LOUIS F. POST, Editor.**

Entered at the Chicago, Ill., Post-office as second-class matter.

For terms and all other particulars of publication, see last column of last page.

The indignation which some very good people of reputed intelligence express over the way in which corporations are shifting war taxes from themselves to their customers is amusing. Telegraph companies are required by law to pay a stamp tax on their messages, but they simply refuse to take messages from any person who does not first affix the stamp. Express companies are required to place a stamp upon their shipping receipts. They can't imitate the telegraph companies and compel their customers to do this for them, so they calmly raise express rates high enough to cover the tax. This is as we said it would be. It is as congress and the administration expected it to be. Everybody who ever gave a thought to taxation knew it would be so. If the public learns from this experience that it is the customer who pays indirect taxes, no matter who is ordered to pay them, some very valuable information will have been very cheaply purchased.

We are gravely told that the devotion of the Spanish queen regent to her son appeals to every mother in the world. So does the devotion of any other mother to her son. But there are too many devoted mothers for the world to be especially interested in one of them merely because her son has a claim to a tottering throne. When such interest appears it is likely to be mawkish sentiment. It is as queen, not as mother, that the regent of Spain differs from the lowliest woman in her realm; and what the sensible world cares most to know about her is not as to her devotion to her son but as to her devotion to the

country that has placed itself under her magisterial care. Is she serving that devotedly? or is she sacrificing its people lest her son may lose a throne?

The Illinois supreme court has made a decision which, though on the surface in the interest of steam railroads as against suburban trolleys, is in the right direction. According to this decision, street car systems cannot condemn private property for the purpose of making short cuts across country. They must go along streets and roads. The privilege of condemnation is restricted to steam roads. Of right it never ought to have been granted at all. Eminent domain is a sovereign power, and sovereign power should be exercised exclusively by sovereign authority—the people themselves.

Gov. Pingree, of Michigan, is a republican of the Abraham Lincoln type. His is republicanism with the imperialistic notions of colonization, semi-slavery, and taxation without representation, left out. To use his own language, "we are not in the colonizing business." Colonies, he sensibly says, "are not a great benefit to the working people of the country, but simply open up a field for the capitalists and monopolists who obtain from the government grants for the building of public works, to be paid for by a system of taxation upon the masses. He adds significantly: "And it is the monopolists who desire this extension of our territory." That is a fact; monopoly and imperialism go hand in hand. Gov. Pingree represents in all this matter the highest type of American sentiment. Instead of annexing the Spanish colonies, he would "demand that Spain grant to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines perfect and absolute freedom."

Beyond that he would not have this country go, except to protect the new republics against disorder within and oppression from without, until the world comes to recognize their independence. Naturally, Gov. Pingree is not persona grata with with the Mark Hanna end of his party.

Studied efforts to belittle the Cuban cause and excite American hostility toward the Cuban patriots have been apparent ever since the American army was safely landed in eastern Cuba. Until that time, all the reports that reached this country told of the suffering, the bravery, the devotion, and the great usefulness to the American army of the insurgent troops. It was under their protection that the American army landed; and without their services then a bloodless landing could not have been effected. This was the tenor of the reports immediately following the landing. And they were doubtless true reports. But soon afterwards, when a foothold had been gained, and the insurgents were apparently no longer needed, as if by inspiration the imperialists began to abuse the Cuban patriots, denouncing them as unfit for self-government, and kept it up until Garcia withdrew his troops from further cooperation with the American army, and moved against the Spaniards on his own account, when, with a unanimity which again suggests inspiration, the imperialists changed their tone.

The slandering of the Cuban patriots was of the most baseless kind. They refused to make roads, it was said. Why shouldn't they refuse to make roads under the orders of officers to whom they owe no allegiance—as menial servants and not as soldiers. Our own soldiers also would have refused to make roads under like circumstances. They picked up the

impedimenta which our soldiers threw away, and appropriated them to themselves, was the burden of another complaint. But who was to warn them that our soldiers would want their impedimenta again? Did honor and honesty demand that the Cubans allow the impedimenta to rot upon the ground when they needed them? And then it was said that the Cuban soldiers gorged themselves with food. Well, are we quite sure that the best of our Yankee soldiers would not gorge themselves with food if they got the chance, after three years of fighting and starving? Whether any of the charges against the Cubans, were true or not, we have no means of knowing. But if they were true, what of it? What is the connection between such conduct and incapacity for self government?

Worst of all the accusations against the Cubans, however, was the pretense that they are brigands. This was dribbled out with here an incident and there another, intended to show that the Cubans murdered prisoners. What if they did? That was the kind of war to which the Spanish had accustomed them. If it was brigandage for the Cubans to murder Spanish prisoners, was it civilized for the Spanish to murder Cuban prisoners?

In the same connection a horrible tale was told of how the Cubans fired upon Spaniards escaping from Cervera's wrecks. Commenting upon this that eminent representative of plutocratic civilization, Harper's Weekly, voiced the general anti-Cuban sentiment. This conduct, said Harper's, of the Cubans, "puts them outside of the pale of civilization." Think of it! Weyler had murdered Cuban prisoners, but Harper's did not therefore expel the Spanish government from the pale of civilization. And even at the battle of Santiago, only one day before the Cubans fired upon escaping Spanish sailors, Spanish sharpshooters deliberately picked out wounded American soldiers and surgeons at the operating table as targets

for their marksmanship. This wasn't just right, you know, but it was not enough to put the Spanish outside of the pale of civilization. That penalty is reserved for Cubans, who fire upon escaping Spaniards—and whose island home, which is the important consideration, excites the cupidity of their detractors. How were these Cubans, educated by their enemy in a style of warfare which made Spanish prisoners fear death at the hands of the United States—how were they to know that it is uncivilized to fire at an escaping enemy? Even the American soldiers, only two days before, had fired upon the Spanish as they ran from San Juan hill. How could the untutored Cubans draw such fine distinctions in civilized warfare as that enemies escaping from a hill may be fired upon, while enemies escaping from war vessels must not be?

That the disposition to "lay pipes" for appropriating Cuba, by minimizing the strength and character of the Cuban patriots, has reached high up in the American government—even into the white house—is indicated by the circumstances of Garcia's withdrawal. Of the authenticity of Garcia's dignified letter to Shafter there may be room for doubt, though it bears many indications of genuineness. But Shafter's letter to Garcia in reply is authentic enough, and that in itself shows that Garcia had ample reason for withdrawing his cooperation. Gen. Shafter appears to have invited Garcia "to witness the surrender" of Santiago. But he invited reporters of newspapers to do that. Had he been accompanied in his camp by a civilian friend he might have invited him "to witness the surrender." Unquestionably Shafter did not confer with Garcia as to the surrender while negotiations were in progress, nor did he invite Garcia to participate in the ceremony of surrender in his official capacity. Shafter himself admits this by saying to Garcia: "It was out of the question for me to take any action in regard to your forces in connection with the surrender, which

was made solely to the American army." After having his forces treated in this way as a band of brigands, whom the American commander employs for their rations for scouting and bushwhacking, but ignores in all other respects, Garcia would have exhibited little respect for his cause, for his troops or for himself, had he remained within the American lines. The contemptuous treatment of the American imperialists had been repeated by the American commander, and could not be atoned for by the personal courtesy to Garcia himself of an invitation "to witness the surrender." But Gen. Shafter is not to be blamed for this. For all the public knows to the contrary, his treatment of the Cubans may have been as distasteful to him as it was to them. He was carrying out a policy which had been formulated at the white house.

That Shafter, in his officially contemptuous treatment of the Cubans was acting in obedience to a white house policy may be gathered from the president's instructions regarding the government of Santiago. The same contemptuous ignoring of the Cubans which had characterized the surrender also characterized these instructions. It is not likely that the presidential instructions were a reflection of Shafter's policy; it is much more probable that their scope and spirit had been conveyed to Shafter from his superiors before the surrender took place, and that in negotiating for and accepting the surrender he acted accordingly. In those instructions from the president, not only are the Cubans contemptuously ignored as friends and allies, from address to signature, but in one place they are pointedly alluded to as a local "party or faction." Shafter may have been untactful in carrying out the white house policy, as it is reported the administration complains, but tactful or not, that was the policy he faithfully carried out.

All this conduct is regarded by the Cubans, it is said, as

a tacit avowal on the part of the United States of its intention to annex the island instead of securing its independence; and so significant is it regarded by the Spanish that they are freely predicting an early union of the Cuban forces with their own to expel the American invaders. Of course their prediction is baseless. It is what the Spanish would like rather than what they expect, and is important only because it goes to show the impression which the conduct of this government toward the Cuban republic makes upon its enemies as well as its friends. But the Cubans are too level-headed to carry even just resentment so far. They know, too, that the administration is not the American people; and that however persistently the administration, backed by imperialistic and plutocratic sympathizers with the Havana autonomists, may try to repudiate with an appearance of honor, the pledge this country has given to Cuba, the people of the United States will see to it that that pledge is redeemed.

As late as the 20th, the war department had not received a complete report of the casualties at the battle of Santiago, fought three weeks before, and none was given out until the 26th. This is evidence of extreme incapacity or inexcusable neglect, and there is little difficulty in placing the responsibility where it belongs. It is inconceivable that the military officers at Santiago who hold their places legitimately should have been so grossly negligent. With a roll call every day, it is not probable that they omitted promptly to report the names of the killed, wounded and missing. But somewhere among the incompetent civilians whom the McKinley administration has been thrusting into places of military responsibility, these reports caught fast. It was all of a piece with the incompetency that characterized the shipment of arms and supplies to Santiago, for which shoulder-strapped white house favorites

were responsible. Nor was the delay of reports of casualties a minor matter. More than three score men of the American army had been reported as missing since the battle of Santiago, and as their names were not given, every family in the States which was represented by a father, son or brother at the front, from whom nothing had been heard since the battle, was kept in suspense lest he might be one of the missing. And this suspense continued for nearly a month. The neglect to publish the names of all the injured long before they were published was a piece of unpardonable cruelty, for which McKinley's partiality for senators' sons was doubtless accountable.

"Freedom of the port" is a device for enabling the rich to escape custom house snares which they lay for the poor. In plain English it is a license to smuggle, which is issued by the administration to wealthy friends thereof. When working men complained that under McKinleyism poor men were taxed for clothes which they might send for from abroad, while rich men who could afford to go to Europe were allowed to bring in all the clothes they wanted without paying a penny of duty, the complaint was silenced with a provision in the Dingley law forbidding the importation by travelers of more than \$100 worth of personal effects. This clause, it appears, was for the benefit of workingmen—to hoodwink them; for now it comes out that the administration assumes to exempt rich friends from having their baggage examined upon arriving from a foreign country. This exemption is called "the freedom of the port."

Not long ago, it seems, the "freedom of the port" of New York was extended to W. D. Sloane and his party, upon their return from a Vanderbilt wedding abroad. They offered to pay \$600 duties upon their baggage, but that was not satisfactory to the agents of the board of trade,

who, acting under special authority to search baggage, and arbitrarily disregarding the privileges of "freedom of the port" which the Sloane-Vanderbilt party had received, examined their baggage mercilessly. As a result, it appeared that the baggage, instead of being covered by \$600 duties, was lawfully subject to \$2,500. It will be seen, therefore, that the "freedom of the port," if frequently extended, would be well worth an occasional campaign contribution.

Landlords are pretty much the same everywhere. Living as they do upon the labor of other people, they can never quite bring themselves to feel that they ought to pay anything for the pecuniary benefits the public confers upon them. Their disposition thus to shirk just obligations is most frequently manifested in connection with street improvements. The number of instances in which landlords have tried to shift the expenses of street improvements from themselves, who are enriched by the improvements, to the masses of the community, whom the improvements do not enrich a penny's worth, since all their advantages are offset by the higher rent they pay to landlords, would fill a doomsday book. And the success of landlords in this is astonishing.

London landlords are no exception. For years the people of London have been agitating for a wide street from the Strand to Holborn. Justly enough, the London county council proposed that the expense be born by the landlords whom the great improvement would enrich. But characteristically, the landlords opposed that proposition with all their might. They wanted the thoroughfare. They knew it would enable them to charge higher ground rents. They were not at all ignorant of the fact that it would pour gold into their pockets from the pockets of other people, without their having done a thing to earn it. But all the same, they wanted other people to pay the expense. And,