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### Initiative and Referendum.

The following argument against the principle of the initiative and referendum is published in order to show the line of logic followed by those who oppose this reform:

To begin with it is proposed to give 10 per cent of the voters power to demand a vote upon any question—the percentage must be small so that the plan may be executed with as little trouble as possible, for upon simple and speedy management depends the success of the project. What will be the result? The people will be called upon, heaven only knows how often, to vote upon questions which oft-times do not concern them at all, for any individual, or small group of individuals, may, by having a petition filled out, which is an easy matter, demand an election upon some pet scheme involving their personal interests only. Would this not result in an intolerable nuisance, growing to such an extent as to in time seriously menace our institutions of government, not to mention the peace of society? Do the people wish to be continually called upon, which they will be if this theory is put into practice, to concern themselves with matters of public policy, most of which they have neither the time nor inclination to investigate? I think not.

Consider for a moment this vast nation, with its intricate machinery of government, its tremendous industrial activities, and its vast army of toilers, who are forced by conditions to expend their thought and energy year in and year out in the struggle for existence; think of the cosmopolitan character of its people, with their widely differing ideas of morals and social institutions, to say nothing of

two other great factors, ability and education—in the face of these few facts, is it reasonable to assume that the placing upon the masses this great responsibility of making or selecting laws is logical or safe?

The making of laws is a science calling for the highest talent, and woe be unto the people of that nation or community where laws are recklessly created, or unwisely applied. Laws must be made for the future as well as for the present, and only those men whose mental qualities are developed to a point where they can see the future consequences of their acts are qualified for such work. What made our constitution such a wonderful document? Not because it served to relieve existing conditions only, but because it was drawn with an eye to the future that it merits the respect and admiration of every nation today. The laws of a country are too precious to be juggled with—hastily enacted, and perhaps as hastily repealed, as the whims and constantly changing sentiments of the people may dictate.

One of the advantages claimed for the initiative and referendum is the speedy and simple enactment of relief measures, and the same speedy and simple repeal of obnoxious measures. At first thought this may appear very reasonable, but the proposition presents itself as to what will determine whether a law is good or bad—I mean, are there any rules by which people may be governed in forming their decisions? If not, and time for investigation and discussion is necessary, then (assuming that an intelligent opinion is rendered) this advantage is lost, and the same complaint will arise that now exists among those that favor this project respecting the delay encountered in securing reforms.

Some writer, James Bryce, I believe, has stated that the people enjoy as good government as they deserve. In other words, the quality of legislation depends upon the quality of the people. If this is true, then certainly no benefit would result were the people given control of affairs which were not properly managed under our present system. If the will of the people is being ignored, it is not because the people have not power to correct the evil, but because they do not properly use the power in their hands; namely, the power of selecting broad-minded, honest and courageous representatives, whose ambition it is to legislate in the interests of the whole people, and who will not allow themselves to be bribed and coerced into legislating in the interests of the few. When the common people learn to select men according to their ability and moral character to govern them, they need have no fear that any harm will befall their interests.

This is an age of specialization, and from the very nature of things it seems to me inevitable that the theory of direct legislation, when put to a test, would fall far short of the expected. Its advocates place altogether too high an estimate upon human power; they seem to forget that there is a limit, and that the finite mind is capable of grasping but few of the questions engaging the attention of mankind in the various lines of endeavor. The merchant, the lawyer, the physician, the mechanic and all must each specialize in his respective branch, and the average man is as incapable of rendering intelligent judgment on the many political questions that arise as the physician is to interpret laws from the bench, or the lawyer to diagnose a disease.

I mention this in support of my contention that the theory of the people being able to intelligently and wisely direct legislative affairs among themselves is false, and that they must depend upon the specialist for information and guidance; in other words, that our present system is the only one from which we can expect reason-

ably good results. Place upon the masses this burden of legislating for themselves, and see how quickly they will become listless and indifferent; then the political bosses and corporations will again assume command, which will be tendered them without protest, and you will be as bad off as before, if not worse.

We live under a republican form of government; under a republican form only can this nation thrive. Pure democracy as existed in olden times can never be established under modern conditions; some power must be delegated in order that society may enjoy the fruits of civilization and not be hampered by overburdening responsibilities.

It is well that the people retain a strong hold on legislation, and that they enjoy as much liberty and independence as is consistent; but "liberty" and "independence" are words that admit of many interpretations, and may be so construed as to mean tyranny in its worse form. I have but to point to the French revolution and America under the articles of confederation as distressing examples of liberty and independence stretched to a point where a man hardly dared call his soul his own.

The placing of those men in power, who, with justice, wisdom and foresight, will legislate for the welfare of the whole people, is, in my humble opinion, far better and safer than putting into practice what seems to me this more than doubtful reform—the initiative and referendum.

### Books Received.

Soltaire, by George Franklyn Willey, New Hampshire Publishing Corporation, Manchester. Speaking of this book the New York World says:

"A strong, fresh romance of the White Mountain region, told by an author whose love of the great New Hampshire hills is self-evident. It is a story in two parts. The first part deals with the old legend of the 'Willey Slide,' the tale of an avalanche which swept to awful death all of a household save one little girl. The fortunate child is saved by Soltaire, the hermit-hunter, and is brought up by him in his snug cave. Attaining the years of young womanhood, she meets in the mountains, by chance, one who draws her out into the great world by the power of love. The second part brings the story up to date. Its hero and heroine develop unexpected relations to the characters in the preceding chapters and another romance without tragedy is happily worked out. Mr. Willey's story is direct, simple and completely interesting. It is illustrated in half-tones and is attractively bound in red and gold."

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