

# The Independent.

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## THE REFERENDUM IN ENGLAND

How the Voters of Manchester, England Control Its Business and Direct Its Policies.

### THERE THE PEOPLE RULE

A City Government Run by the People, for the People, and the Boodler Is Unknown

In all save outer form the cities of Great Britain are much more democratic in their methods of government than are ours. With them the citizen exercises a direct interest in public affairs. The city council is truly the representative of the mass of the electorate. It is impossible for the members of a council to go far astray even if they were so disposed. The manner in which they do these things on the other side may best be illustrated by an instance which came under my personal observation.

The city of Manchester owns and operates its street railways, and it is also a large stockholder in the Manchester Ship Canal company. For some time it has been deemed necessary to raise more money for the enlargement and improvement of both of these great enterprises, and for months prior to my visit to Manchester special committees of the council had been working on ways and means to authorize and complete these improvements. A bill was finally drawn petitioning parliament for power to issue bonds amounting to a total of about \$7,500,000 to raise funds for these purposes. The council adopted the measure. My attention was first directed to the matter by reading huge posters displayed in various parts of the city announcing a town meeting of the free voters of Manchester for the purpose of taking final action in the matter of the proposed bond issue.

It was then that I learned that in this, as in all other important matters, the voters had the right of a referendum. Williams Henry Talbot, for a generation the town clerk of Manchester, invited me to a seat on the platform, and I had opportunity to witness the workings of a democracy in a country classed as a monarchy.

The huge gothic hall in which the Manchester assembled to pass on the free and independent burghesses of recommendations of their common council is capable of seating four or five thousand persons, but it was not half filled when we entered. To the right of the platform was a large map of Manchester and Salford showing the plan of the proposed street railway extensions and the enlargement of the docking facilities.

"Suppose," I asked Town Clerk Talbot, "that a majority of those present vote against this measure. Does that defeat all chance of its passage?"

"It would for the time being," responded Mr. Talbot. "The council would hesitate to broach the matter again, for a long while at least."

"Is there any decided opposition to the bill?" I asked. "Are there no private interests whose profits will be imperiled by the passage of this act?"

"Certainly there are," was the reply. "It authorizes the construction of tenement houses and cottages which will compete with those owned by members of the landlords' association, and some of them are here, and others are represented by their attorneys. Then many rate payers are opposed to the building of more trams or improving the ship canal. They are here and will be heard."

There are more than 100,000 voters in Manchester, and not more than 3,000 of them were in the hall when Lord Mayor Shann took his chair and adjusted the official chain which was suspended around his neck. I was mystified by the lack of attendance on the part of the electorate of Manchester.

"What is there to prevent the opposing interests to this bill from packing the hall with their partisans?" I asked, my mind wandering back to Chicago, New York and other centers of civilization with which I was familiar.

"No one would dare attempt such a thing," said the astounded and doubtful town clerk.

"But suppose they dared do it and succeeded," I insisted. "What would happen then?"

"There would be a bloody riot, don't you know," said Mr. Talbot, with a

bland smile, and before I could question him further the lord mayor motioned him to open the meeting. From other sources equally reliable I have learned that Mr. Talbot's prediction of violence in the event of a packed meeting was entirely justifiable.

The town clerk read the proposed bill, and it was voted to take it up and discuss it by sections. The lord mayor moved the passage of each section and called on some member of the council to second his motion. The question was then open to general debate, and any citizen of Manchester could speak for or against it. Many speeches were made, and as a result some unimportant amendments were agreed to, and when every one had had his say the motion to indorse the action of the council was put and passed without a dissenting vote.

What struck me as extraordinary was this: Here was a measure which combined in itself all that is radical in the movement for public ownership. It committed the city to a closer partnership with a private business corporation. It authorized a large expenditure for houses which would compete with those owned by landlords. It proposed an extension of municipal tramways beyond the corporate limits of Manchester, thereby establishing a new precedent which may gridiron Great Britain with steel railways owned and operated by municipalities. It bestowed other powers of a constructive nature on the officers of the council, and yet not a citizen of Manchester nor an accredited attorney of any vested interest uttered one sentence or expressed one sentiment against the general principle of the establishment and extension of municipal enterprises.

One of the distinctive features of the modern British city is its system of public baths and laundries. The latter are termed "washhouses." Liverpool and Manchester are especially progressive in these institutions. Liverpool has expended or appropriated more than a million dollars on its public baths.

The Cornwallis street baths of Liverpool compare favorably with any public or private establishment, no matter where located, save perhaps in the matter of useless adornments. Liverpool has a comprehensive system of public bathhouses, and it is its proud boast that no citizen is more than a few minutes' walk from a public bathing establishment.

The Cornwallis street baths cost about \$125,000, and Liverpool has begun the construction of buildings at Pier Head which will demand an expenditure of \$375,000. I made a careful inspection of some of these establishments. The swimming pools are large, and the temperature of the water is automatically regulated. There are several classes of baths with varying prices, and one can have a plain tub bath with hot and cold water, soap, sponge and towels, all for the sum of 2 cents in our money or a penny in theirs. Two days in the week this price is cut in half. You could not get as good a bath in the best hotel in Liverpool or London for fifty times the money.

"The average price of a plunge bath, with the use of the pool as long as desired, is less than 6 cents. But the free open baths of Liverpool are more interesting and hardly less attractive. Whenever it is possible to secure an open space the baths department constructs a pool, provides warm water and erects shelters for the little ones. One day last summer 5,500 lads used one of these open baths.

While the receipts from Liverpool's baths are large, there is, of course, an annual deficit. Last year's receipts were about \$40,000, and the deficit was not far from the same amount. But this is one of the enterprises conducted without hope of financial gain. The city is fortunate in its baths engineer and chief superintendent, W. R. Court, a man who has been connected with bathing establishments for years and to whose energy and forethought is due the planning and success of the "slum baths."

"We believe," said Mr. Court in the course of a thorough inspection of these baths, "that it is as important to teach the children to bathe as it is to teach them to read and write. The boy who acquires an ambition to have a clean body will find a way to an education. If I have any criticism to make concerning our system as it stands to-

day it is that we have paid too much attention to first class baths and not enough to those within absolute touch of the mass of our working classes. We shall accomplish that in a very few years from now."

A picturesque and practical adjunct to many of these bathing establishments is the system of washhouses, or public laundries. The average tenement house dweller in Liverpool and in other large cities has no adequate means of doing the regular week's washing. Hot water is expensive, and even the most primitive tools are beyond the means of many of these women toilers. Again the municipality comes to the rescue. Scattered all over Great Britain are hundreds of public washhouses. To these the housewife takes her bundle of soiled clothes. There are placed at her disposal the machinery and appliances of a modern steam laundry.

Instead of spending hours over a tub in the cramped living quarters of her tenement she is privileged to wash her clothes by means of hot water and steam, rinse them in a flood of pure running water, dry them in a hydro-extractor by centrifugal force and complete the process by hanging them for a few minutes in a steam heated room where they are exposed to superheated air in motion. She then takes them to the mangling and ironing room and by the aid of the best of appliances speedily completes the task of washing and ironing.

Two hours is the usual time consumed by a woman in washing, drying and ironing the clothes for the average family. The rate in most of the washhouses is a penny an hour, though in some of them an extra halfpenny is charged after the first or second hour. At the most it costs the average patron of these remarkable establishments 5 cents to do a week's washing and ironing, and the work which once took the best part of two weary days is now ended in two hours or less. And all this is in practical operation and has been tested for years, with the result that the washhouses are not only self-sustaining, but actually yield a revenue to the city of Liverpool.

### Home and the State

Editor Independent: We often hear it said by the opponents of woman suffrage that the place of woman is at home taking care of their children. I agree to this. Women's interests are, for the most part, closely connected with their homes, and because the protection and safety of the home are so vital to most women, because the maternal and housekeeping instincts are stronger in them than any other, I plead for the power of the ballot to effectually guard that home.

It is said that the state belongs to men, and the home to women, but where will you draw the line? What touches the state and leaves the home exempt? The state exists for the safety, the well-being of the homes, and to whom is a voice in the councils of the state more vitally necessary than to those whose very lives are bound up in the safe and continued existence of the home.

Is it nothing to women whether the laws against saloons and gambling houses are enforced? If the husband spends all his earnings at pool or on the race track, is it nothing to the wife? If there is a saloon at every corner to tempt the weak man who can not resist, is the home untouched? Is it sufficient consolation for the mother who sees the son of her hopes, her prayers, her tears, slowly but surely descending the downward road, is it consolation for her to feel that she has never transcended her sphere—the home? You will say, perhaps, that the mother's influence should be brought to bear. But we know how utterly ineffectual that influence often is against the strong forces which work against it. The son should be taught to resist temptation? Undoubtedly, but human nature is weak. Temptations surround the growing boy on all sides and the mother can not lift her hand to lessen the number.

ELIZABETH BURRILL CURTIS.

Mr. E. Olds, Winside, Neb., was on Monday's market in South Omaha, with a car of cows that sold for 4 cents. Mr. Olds expressed himself as extremely well pleased with the sale. Nye & Buchanan Co. handled them.

## MUMMIES AND MUMMERY

Republican Mummy Is Protection to American Labor by Leaving an Open Door for Pauper Labor

### DEMOCRAT TARIFF FOR REVENUE

The Socialists Have a Job Lot of Mummies always and Constantly on Exhibition

Mark Twain relates an amusing incident in his "A Tramp Abroad," if memory serves aright, of how he and Harris made sport with a guide at Genoa by refusing to be interested in anything he might show them. They sneered at the handwriting of "ze great Christopher Colombo," averring that any American schoolboy of ten years could do better. They scouted the story that Christopher had discovered America, because they had just come from there and had heard no such rumor. The guide held in reserve his trump card—"a 'gyptian mummy"—feeling sure that this, at least, must bring forth applause from the thick-skulled Americans. Imagine his consternation when Mark and Harris not only refused to believe that the mummy was 3,000 years old, but indignantly demanded that if he had on hand any "nice fresh corpses," he should "trot them out!"

One of the crying evils of today is too much mummy showing and mummy worship. Each teacher of politics, economics, or religion has his favorite mummy which he proudly exhibits to the gaping multitude; and the multitude, afflicted with what Dr. Girdner calls "Newyorkitis," promptly go into ecstasies and worship it. What we really need today is a Mark Twain to demand a "nice, fresh corpse," occasionally.

Other writers perhaps would treat what follows under some such high-sounding title as "Symbols and Symbolism"—but the substance will be just as clearly understood if we use the terms, "Mummies and Mummery." Let us cite a few examples:

The republican mummy, "Protection to American Labor"—building a Chinese wall around the manufacturer in such a way that the goods of foreign competitors are either kept out entirely, or are burdened by a heavy tax; yet leaving "an open door" for the "pauper labor" of foreign countries to enter and become competitors of American labor; with the result that the manufacturer becomes a multi-millionaire, while his employes eke out a bare subsistence from year to year and are compelled to organize unions for self-protection. All the "protection" there is to American labor comes not through republican tariff laws, but through trade unionism. And curiously enough the greatest public applause for this republican mummy comes from the agriculturists, who receive no direct benefits whatever.

The democratic mummy, "Tariff for Revenue Only"—making an open door for such products as we can produce at home and strengthening the Chinese wall against those necessities of life which can not be produced here, profitably, at least. The net effect of this policy is to increase relatively the tax paid by the workingman by making him pay more for his tea, coffee and other commodities of that nature. Yet it seems clear that much of the loudest cheering for the democratic mummy comes from the laboring men, who have most of the tax to bear.

The socialists have a job lot of assorted mummies constantly on exhibition: "Labor produces all wealth;" "Value is crystallized labor;" Exploitation of the laborer is accomplished by the "surplus value" trick; "Collective ownership of all the means of production and distribution" alone will free the down-trodden laborer, etc. The admixture of truth and error in the socialist doctrine is worthy of, and shall have later on, special attention, which the limits of this article will not permit.

The single taxers, too, have an imposing array of mummies on exhibition: "Take land value for public revenues"—the "natural tax"—"equal access to the land," etc.

Even the populists fall into the error of showing a grisly old mummy called "The Money Power"—a sort of bogey to frighten the children; or a kind of