

Current Comment on Leading Topics

JAPAN'S GREAT NAVAL TRIUMPH

Admiral Togo's victory in the Sea of Japan is the subject of exhaustive comment in the press of this country. The future of the war, the effect of the battle on Russia's internal affairs, the relative value of different kinds of warships, the prospects of peace and minor phases of the resultant political situation are discussed. On one point at least the newspapers are unanimous, viz, that Russia should sue for peace. On the subject of peace the New York World says:

No matter what the decision of the Czar and his ministers, the war is over. The center of interest changes now from the Orient to St. Petersburg, where the consequences are likely to be as epoch-making as in Asia. The only wise course open to the Czar is to call a council of the nation to deal with Russia's problems and to reorganize the government in harmony with popular aspirations. But was despotism ever actuated by the dictates of wisdom?

The conference of the president with the Japanese minister, who is supposed to have stated on what terms Russia could obtain peace, and the conference with the Russian minister, which is said to be on the cards, suggest to the Pittsburg Leader the advisability of united action on the part of the powers to end the war:

Obviously considerations of common humanity demand that at this point the slaughter should be checked and that an adjustment by peaceful means of the dispute between the hostile powers should be arranged. Russia, it is true, cannot be forced to agree to such an adjustment, but whether she is willing or unwilling, the duty of the other powers remains the same. A moral obligation rests upon them to use all means that can be used without trespass, to persuade the belligerents to consent to arbitration and the recognition of this obligation by all the neutral powers acting in common surely cannot fail to make a breach even in the stone wall of Russian obstinacy.

The Pioneer Press believes Russia cannot now expect any favorable turn in the tide of war:

The last hope of Russia for a turning of the tide of disaster which has overwhelmed it on sea and land since the war began was lost with the complete destruction of the mighty armada under Rojestvensky. With the complete and assured command of the seas by Japan nothing can now prevent its capture of Vladivostok, the last remaining naval harbor of Russia in its Asiatic dominions, and the complete expulsion of Russia from every part of Manchuria. When the flag of the mikado floats over Vladivostok, as it floats over Port Arthur, the revenge of Japan will be complete. It does not need that last triumph to fill to overflowing the bitter cup of Russia's humiliation. It is not laughing at the little brown men any more.

The most peculiar phase of the historic event from a political point of view, is the fact that in Russia the defeat of Rojestvensky is regarded with satisfaction by a considerable portion of the population, as is pointed out by the Columbus Press-Post:

Late dispatches convey the news that many Russians join the Japanese in their rejoicing of victory over the Russians. When asked why they were jubilant over the defeat of the forces of their own country, they re-

plied that victory for Russia would mean the triumph of the Russian aristocracy, while Russian defeat will mean that she will be obliged to adopt the methods of civilized nations and give to all the people a larger liberty and a regime which is just and humane. Thus even Russian patriotism is the patriotism for individual liberty and not for a victory which means a perpetuation of individual slavery. The whole trouble with Russia is that she has been standing in the way of human progress and that her downfall, because of this, is inevitable.

The Springfield Republican thinks that the horror of the conflict may lead to permanent peace throughout the world:

The sober view which General Nelson A. Miles takes of war is the same which was held by all the great figures who carried the Civil war to success. Not lightly or with hysteria does he view the awful conflict in the far east. His comment and hope is that from this slaughter may be devised a more humane method than war of settling difficulties between nations. "I firmly believe," he said, "that a parliament of reason and justice will be the inevitable result." It is a striking fact that the men who have seen war at its worst are not among the truculent who demand that our country shall spend vast sums of money for the purpose of inviting trouble and wasting the substance of the people. Grant was a peacemaker in word and act after the unhappy civil conflict had been pushed to its relentless conclusion. So was General Sherman. They had had their fill of the barbarism of armed conflict, and were ready to believe and to urge that there was a better way of settling international differences. There is a certain crudeness of inexperience which holds the contrary view. The wise, mature view-point gets the larger look which General Miles has set forth in his Memorial day address at Charlestown.

Discussing the value of torpedo boats as agents of destruction in naval warfare, the New York Tribune says:

If the pending war shall end without any demonstration of the virtues of the submarine boat, craft of that class will doubtless be retained by the leading navies of the world until a satisfactory test has been made. In the opinion of Admiral Dewey and other experts the submarine might prove serviceable in coast and harbor defense. Had Cervera possessed a solitary boat of that description while he was cooped up at Santiago he might possibly have so reduced the strength of Sampson before trying to escape that the attempt would have been successful. Moreover, aside from the physical damage which can thus be wrought, the mere knowledge that the besieged have a submarine boat is sure to exert a demoralizing influence on a blockading fleet. The theoretical value of the new type of war vessel is sufficiently great to justify its existence until its actual value is revealed.

RAILWAY REGULATION

A result of the present agitation for railway regulation and government ownership is the founding of two literary bureaus to carry on a campaign of education in defense of the railways. The New York World thinks that campaigns of education are always to be encouraged, but holds that the distribution of statistics is not the best way to overwhelm the movement in favor of government rate-making:

Instead of establishing bureaus, suppose the railroads were to agree not to violate the

interstate commerce law, not to give rebates, not to tolerate discriminations, to make their rates reasonable on the basis of the actual investment, to remedy the abuses of private terminals and private car lines—in short, to give all shippers and all sections fair treatment. The campaign in behalf of government rate-making would collapse immediately. Then the railroads would be free to undertake another great work of education—the suppression of the socialistic propaganda. This in turn would be a comparatively simple task. About all the railroads need do is to get out of politics, stop bribing legislatures, stop trying to send corporation lawyers to the United States senate and stop trying to put railway attorneys on the bench. The agitation in favor of government ownership of railroads would cease at once.

The World's "if" is the rock on which its reasoning goes to pieces and the conclusion of most thinking people who read the World's comment will be that if the cessation of the agitation for public ownership only awaits the time when the railways turns public benefactors, the agitation will continue unceasingly until public ownership is an assured fact.

The Chicago Record-Herald agrees with Governor Herrick of Ohio that the professional lobbyists "must go:"

Such lobbyists have no honest business in the capitals. They constitute a nuisance which should be abated or suppressed. So careful a newspaper as the New York Tribune showed early in the year by reports from a dozen or more states that "the third house" was everywhere strenuously busy, potent and influential, the exceptions being those states which are so absolutely ruled by bosses and machines that the lobbyist can be dispensed with, a hint or nod to the legislators from the autocrat being more than sufficient.

The Springfield Republican deplors the fact that railway influence is tightening its grip on Connecticut:

Without apology and without shame the Connecticut legislature has again publicly made renewal of its own allegiance and the subserviency of the state to the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroad. This is done in the passage of a bill repealing the general law covering the construction of new steam railroads. If the governor signs the bill, as he presumably will, then every new steam railroad project must secure a special charter from the legislature, or—what is the same thing substantially—from the New Haven railroad company; and as the latter had already succeeded in placing street railway projects in a similar position, it may now be said to be in secure command of the whole state against troublesome efforts of other capital to enter the transportation industry in Connecticut.

EQUITABLE DISCLOSURES

The rejection of the report made by the Frick committee, which investigated the affairs of the Equitable Life Assurance society, by a combination of the Alexander and Hyde forces resulted in the resignation from the board of directors of Frick, Harriman and Bliss. New York dispatches suggest, among other things, that the board of directors was disrupted by the attempt of two antagonistic railway interests to gain control of the society. It is represented in these reports that E. H. Harriman is eager to prevent George J. Gould from completing his trans-continental railway system and tried to make