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EDITORIAL

THE HOUSE RULES.

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TO the tune of “Down with Cannonism!” a word that is being used as synonymous with “despotism,” a conflict has raged for over a year in the Federal House of Representatives, between the “Insurgents” against the “Regulars.” On the 15th of the current month, a head-on collision took place between the two forces. The result seems to have been a “telescoping.”

What does all this rumpus mean? It means a good deal, well worth a little scrutiny.

All the facts alleged with regard to and against the old rules were true. The old rules, so-called, they are comparatively new, placed in the hands of the Speaker the power to say what bills should be considered, what bills should be pigeon-holed, the amount of consideration each should receive, and which should pass and how and when. In short, the old rules placed legislation under the control of the Speaker. Was this despotism? It was that—if the essence of despotism is lost sight of. Inversely, the agitation of the “Insurgents” was an agitation for democracy—if the essence of a democratic purpose is of no consequence in the name.

We brand and justly brand the Czar’s regime despotic. The despotism does not lie in the cruelty exercised, or in the autocratic method of its exercise. The despotism lies in that the Czar’s autocracy is unnecessary, superannuated and, therefore, a harmful regime that retards Russian progress. It is a fact, one that sits crosswise the crawl of the liberal ranter, that Freedom is strained, not through the loins of Chaos, but through those of Order, and that Order is the slowly developed offspring of Despotism. Chaos begets Despotism; Despotism Order; Order Freedom. The line dividing each may not always be sharply marked.

Before determining whether a certain thing is despotic or not we must ascertain whether it retards progress, or is a waiting-stage for order to take shape. A great

aid in arriving at the right conclusion will ever be furnished in the principles of those in arms against “despotism” and proclaiming “democracy.”

The old rules were the only rules applicable to the exigencies of our capitalist parliament. Our Political State has reached the point when it demonstrates its own absurdity. The law of its existence makes it a law-grinding machine. The larger, the more powerful the Political State grows all the more laws does it need. A time arrives when it is a matter of physical impossibility to satisfy the machine’s voracity for laws. Then the crisis is reached, with the alternative—either to yield to the Juggernaut’s craving, which would choke him to death, and bring about an immediate breakdown; or, from the premises that the Juggernaut must be saved, to put him on short rations, under diet, so to speak. This was the alternative our Political State reached, about twenty year ago, when, under Speaker Reed, the now “old rules” were introduced. The cause of the crisis continuing, the alternative continued also: the “old rules” were further elaborated.

The “Insurgents,” with their cry of “democracy,” do not represent Progress; neither do the “Regulars” represent reaction, or Despotism. The former are a reversal to the ancestral type in the state of Chaos, the feature of which is blindness to the relation that exists between a goal and the means to reach it; the latter are a manifestation that ever recurs in the interstices between one social stage and the next higher—a manifestation that superficial observation mistakes for Reaction, and that unquestionably bears some semblance to Despotism—a manifestation, nevertheless, that is pre-eminently a hand-maid to Progress, and which, carefully observed, is Conservatism, the policy that, consciously or unconsciously matters not, “marks time” as the then only policy of safety.

It is no accident that the backbone and body of the “Insurgents” is furnished by the Democratic party, an aggregation that neither learns nor forgets, and is, consequently, fatuously devoted to the trimming of the mustachios of the Capitalist Tiger. It is likewise no accident that, on the other hand, the incarnation of the “Regulars,” Speaker Cannon, has for his device the principle that “Congress should meet, and adjourn, and do as little as possible.” Finally, it is no accident that the long prepared battle for the overthrow of the “old rules,” for despite all the *furore* of liberal declamation, resulted in a substantial victory for the old—a victory that

further time will confirm and improve.

The “old rules” implies the existence of the Political or present Capitalist State. So long as that exists the “old rules” will remain in force—conservatively preserving the Order in parliament that Social Evolution requires, until the Socialist or Industrial State is ripe to take and hold, when the multiplicity of laws, bred of conflict and needed by the Political State, will be cast off along with the Political State itself.

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