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EDITORIAL

THE SUGAR TRUST “SETTLEMENT.”

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WASHINGTON despatches announce the Government has accepted the compromise offer of \$700,000 in full for the settlement of the drawback cases it had instituted against the Sugar Trust.

Such a despatch looks innocent enough—on its face. The ending of litigation is praiseworthy. It is the part of rational litigants to exchange receipts. This principle holds not, however, good in all cases. Suits against Tweeds, for instance, suits against criminals are not suits the settlement of which is an act of civic virtue. With such suits exactly the opposite principle holds. The anxiety of a criminal to “settle,” so far from denoting virtue denotes vice; the readiness of a Government to “settle” such suits, so far from denoting purity, denotes impurity—or weakness. Of such a nature were the cases against the Sugar Trust; and such, not favorable, but unfavorable conclusions does the “settlement” point to.

The cases against the Sugar Trust were for fraud; the moneys sued for were moneys that the Government was cheated out of at the port of New York; the amount rose into the tens of millions. That the criminal should have been anxious to “settle” may be readily believed; still more readily may be believed that the criminal was anxious to “settle” for a paltry fraction of its huge thefts. In point of money, a few hundred thousand dollars, disgorged out of millions stolen, is felt by no thief; in point of principle, the “settlement” is a bill of health officially delivered to the criminal. The part played by the Sugar Trust in pushing for a “settlement” is clear enough. Is the part played by the Government equally clear?

In these days of Depews, Lorimers, Stephensons, Ballingers and rafts of other officials—not to mention the breed of the deadheading Roosevelts—, the mind naturally turns to suspicions of official corruption. Nevertheless, and without dismissing such suspicions entirely, there is another theory by which to account for

the Government’s conduct. As stated above, such conduct denotes either purity, or weakness. The probabilities are the Government’s conduct was dictated by weakness.

The capitalist State—once a body which the political and the economic power of the Ruling Class held combined sway—has, like a ripe pod, split in twain. To-day the Capitalist Political State has to deal with a Capitalist Economic State. No longer the power it once was, the capitalist Political state now has to “compromise” with its capitalist Economic twin—a body now powerful enough to rob and then bully it into “settlements.”

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