

In the first place, the inquirer must free his mind from the influence of two false issues raised by many of the Liberal rank and file during the contest. They were perhaps good enough for electioneering purposes, but they do not give any clue to the meaning of this result. The first is the grievance of the old register. Now, whether or not it was, as has been alleged, a crime against the Constitution to go to the country in the circumstances complained of, it is, at any rate, evident that the probabilities are all against the Government having gained anything by their action in the matter. Not only is it almost a mathematical certainty that a minority only of the disfranchised voters would have been found on the Liberal side, but Liberals have practically given the point away by another complaint—the second of the misleading cries of which we spoke. The word “khaki” has been freely used to convey the innuendo that the Englishman’s natural patriotism—always more instinctive than reasoning—was being exploited in the interest of one party. We do not doubt that this is true to some extent, and such tactics cannot be too strongly condemned. But if the country was, in fact, as the accusation ran both at home and abroad, “drunk with new khaki wine,” it is hardly reasonable to suppose that the voters added by a new register would have been less subject to this form of intoxication than their more experienced companions. For ourselves, we doubt whether war-fever can be said to have had any great influence on the elector, and we are confirmed in this by the recollection of another Liberal hustings cry—that relating to the “mismanagement of the war.” Politically speaking, this South African struggle has not been of an intoxicating kind; our feelings of relief over Ladysmith and Mafeking, and of pride in our returning volunteers, have been totally unconnected with our estimate of the services of the Government, except when, rightly or wrongly, they have been actually heightened by a sense of contrast.

But we cannot dismiss the word “khaki” so soon: there is, we believe, a sense in which it may yet prove to be the