

## THROUGH A MONOCLE

I SHOULD like to hear one good sensible reason why we should not have fixed dates for our elections in Canada. The only thing which saves us this year from suffering a staggering blow to our still delicate, though rapidly recovering, business situation, from the prolonged uncertainty as to whether we are going to have elections or not, is the fact that it does not make much difference, commercially or industrially, when we have them or how they go. We have lived all spring under the threat of three elections in the central part of Canada—the Federal, the Ontario and the Quebec. This menace has not disturbed us; for there is not a great deal at stake. No party in any one of the three fields is talking of revolutionary measures if it should get in. In the United States, however, business is visibly waiting for the situation to settle down after the Presidential elections of the autumn. What would they say over there if it were to be proposed now to put off their Presidential election until next year, and so extend the uncertainty for another six or twelve months?

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SOME time we are going to approach an election in this country with an important stake on the table; and then we are going to see business tied up here for possibly two years while the party leaders manœuvre for a start. An unsettling election is bad enough when we know exactly the date of its arrival; but when it may descend upon us at any time during two or even three years, it becomes a positive curse. Should the Tariff Reformers show signs of winning the next British elections, you will see business in the British Isles suffering severely from the time that the elections are pending until they actually happen. The longer that period lasts, the greater will be the suffering. In Canada, we have chloroformed politics and gently removed every issue which matters, with the result that only the men who make the almanacs and the chaps who want jobs on the Civil Service would know that there had been a change in the parties at either of our Capitals, Federal or Provincial; but it will not always be so. The spell of unconsciousness will pass from the public mind some day.

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THE reasons given for the perpetuation of this system of uncertainty think more of the constitution than of the constituencies, and place precedent above practice. One is that it enables the Crown to dissolve Parliament at will. When has "the Crown"—apart from the Cabinet—dissolved the Canadian Parliament? When has it dissolved a Provincial Legislature? Under what conceivable circumstances is it likely to do either? Let us be sensible. Then we are told that it gives more elasticity to our system—that Parliament can get rid of a Government it does not like at a moment's notice. I can hardly keep my monocle in place for a desire to grin. Can't you imagine the sort of Parliaments we have voting the Government composed of the leaders of its majority out of office—out of reach of the loaves and fishes? Why, in our day, Parliaments no longer govern Cabinets; Cabinets govern Parliaments—and make them walk a pretty straight mark at times, too. Again, we are informed that this hoary system enables a Government to appeal from an obdurate Parliament to the people without delay. Let us see!—how often has this been done since Confederation?

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THE bald truth is that this power of arbitrary dissolution is now nothing more than a loaded set of dice in the possession of the Government. They have one weapon for the party fight—to change the figure—which they can use most unfairly against their opponents, if they are so inclined. They can prepare in secret for a contest whose date they know, and then surprise the Opposition with a challenge when there is no time for the Opposition to get ready. This is neither fair party "sport" nor in the public interest. The public are always best served when both parties have an equal chance to put their cases before them; and this power of dissolution can be employed to prevent this even balance of preparations. It may be that we should not swing quite over to the fixed system of our American neighbours; but we should certainly have settled dates for our elections, and then compel a Government to give an exceedingly good reason for calling the contest at another time.

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A NEW BRUNSWICK correspondent curiously misunderstands the reference which I made some time ago to the absence of the Federal party system from provincial affairs in his province. I did

not mean to infer that I thought they had no local alignment when they went to the polls to elect a Legislature; but only that they did not follow the Federal alignment, as we do in most of the other provinces. This crossing of the Federal party lines has had the effect in the past of making "deals" after an election much easier in New Brunswick than they are with us, and thus introducing evils from which we are free. They have most, if not all, of the evils of partyism—as my correspondent insists—and they have in addition these special evils caused by a loose party division, from which I deduced—and still deduce—the inference that the partial weakening of the "party system," as we understand it in the West, had not benefited but rather injured the province. To this state of affairs, I ventured to call the attention of Mr. Goldwin Smith, who favours the dissolution of the parties without enquiring too closely what would take their places.

N'IMPORTE



COURAGE DEFERRED

Mr. Asquith: "That's right, my beauty, have a look at it. But we're not taking it just now. We're going round by the gate to-day."—Punch.

## AN ENGLISH-CANADIAN CRITIC

IN the Nineteenth Century for April, Mr. Arthur Hawkes writes of "The British Trader in Canada" and makes some pointed remarks. In speaking of the attitude of British manufacturers towards their colonial agents (when they have any), Mr. Hawkes says: "It seems a part of the English make-up to act towards our countrymen who have widened their English experience by experience over-seas, as though they had contracted their wisdom when they had expanded their knowledge." He asserts that the English manufacturer talks to the Colonial in the tone of voice which is characteristic of the official in Downing Street. It must be because Mr. Hawkes lives in Toronto that he is so bold; when he revisits Manchester he may find it necessary to apologise for stating these simple truths.

He affirms Mr. Grigg's position, that the British manufacturer who would hold Canadian trade for ever must establish branch factories here. Trade independence must come to Canada as it came to Great Britain, to Germany and to the United States. Canada will grow up. "The most affectionate preference could never suppress an ambition to become a manufacturing nation." He pokes fun at the Britisher who sends a bright young son or nephew, not long from school, on a trip to Canada for pleasure, education and business. These young chaps may mean well, and they may learn something, but they make the British business methods seem a little ridiculous. He commends Mr. Bryce for being "the first British ambassador at Washington to take the trouble to gather on the spot his own impressions of Canadian sentiment."