

REFLECTIONS

BY THE EDITOR

Quibbling, Not Reasoning.

BOTH Mr. Bourassa and Mr. Lavergne quibble in a decidedly unblushing way when they condemn the Canadian navy because it may be sent to the assistance of Great Britain in time of war by the Cabinet instead of by the House of Commons. They say what will occur is this. A war is declared in which Britain is concerned. The Governor-General of Canada calls the Cabinet together and asks for the Canadian fleet to be sent to Britain. The Cabinet refuse, because they feel that it is a war in which Canada has no concern. The Governor-General is determined and demands their resignations, parliament not being in session. The resignations are handed in. Colonel Sam. Hughes, or Dr. Sproule, or Hon. Robert Rogers is called upon to take the premiership. He takes it, forms a cabinet, and sends the fleet abroad without calling parliament. Then parliament is called, the new premier is defeated, the old premier and his cabinet return to office, and they recall the fleet. But in the meantime the fleet has reached Britain and has been shot to pieces.

Isn't that a magnificent piece of quibbling? Does any sane Canadian think that Mr. Bourassa and Mr. Lavergne are worth considering after such arguments? And neither of them will deny that they have used this argument in print, on the platform, and in private conversation.

What they advocate is that the fleet shall not be sent to Britain's assistance, nor on any foreign mission without the consent of the House of Commons. They fear the Cabinet, because of the influence of the Governor-General. In other words, they fear the Governor-General. The whole thing is so absurd that it is really not worth considering. The history of constitutional government in Canada and Great Britain contains absolutely nothing to justify any person in harbouring such an impossible opinion. Bourassa and Lavergne can hope to impress such an opinion only on those who are ignorant of the principles and practices of constitutional government.

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Parliament Has Opened.

CANADA'S legislative body met once more on Parliament Hill on Thursday of last week and proceeded to consider the national progress and national needs. The previous session was held under the aegis of His Majesty, King Edward VII.; this session is under that of His Majesty, King George. At the previous session, Earl Grey, Governor-General, said adieu; the exigencies of state-craft have kept him here, and he again had the honour of reading the Speech from the Throne. These two incidents alone made the event somewhat unusual to the student of political history.

The session promises to be a notable one. The actions of certain high officials of the government in connection with the Eucharistic Congress are likely to give rise to a discussion, which, if not elevating, will at least be lively. Reciprocity will be argued forwards and backwards, and the sparring for position will be intensely interesting. Just what new alignment may be effected among the parties and the voters generally, it would be difficult to forecast. The Canadian Navy will be considered again to the extent of several hundred pages of Hansard, but probably without an appreciative result. However, it will be interesting to find out whether the ultra-imperialists and the ultra-nationalists can find a common platform in connection with this discussion.

Among the minor questions is that of the Hudson's Bay Railway, whether it shall be a government owned and operated road, or whether it shall be handed over to one of the transcontinental systems. Another is Mr. Fisher's Copyright Bill, giving Canada, for the first time, complete control of her own literary markets. Mr. Fisher has been extremely fortunate in securing permission from the British Government to put through legislation of this kind. It will go on record as one of his greatest accomplishments. Another minor bill of considerable importance will be that on banking, the ten-year period being almost up. One of the questions to be raised here is that of government inspection.

Altogether the session should be full of important discussions. If this is not the last session of the present parliament, it is certain to be second to the last, and hence party feeling is likely to run fairly strong.

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Sir Wilfrid's Birthday.

ON Sunday last, Sir Wilfrid Laurier celebrated his sixty-ninth birthday. Political friends and foes agree that he is physically and mentally a wonderful man for his age. His health is much better than it was five years ago, and he seems destined for many further years of service. To say that he is at the height of his political power might not be wholly accurate, but he is certainly at the high point in personal popularity. His many acts of unusual courtesy towards friend and opponent, his urbane ways with all who sit upon the doorstep of the man-of-power, his manifest attempt to treat all Canadians, regardless of party adherence, race or creed, in a fair

and just manner, have brought him the respect of all classes, even where it has not brought him votes for his political policies.

Sir Wilfrid is not the only Canadian statesman who has won a similar place in the minds of the Canadian people. Sir John Macdonald, a man not without serious faults, had it; Sir John Thompson, though he had turned from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism, won it; and several others might be mentioned, even though their opportunities were not so great. It is creditable to the Canadian people that neither party allegiance, accident of racial birth, nor the question of religious adherence has prevented them from saying, "the man's a man for a' that and a' that."

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Huge City Debts.

EVERY person seems proud of the growth of Canadian cities, and rightly so. Yet there is danger that our enthusiasm and pride shall carry us into excesses. Montreal proposes to increase its civic debt next year by ten million of dollars, and bring it up to a total of fifty-eight million. That city has grown greatly in size by annexing new districts, and these new districts have added largely to the cost of administration, the need for new expenditures, and to the general civic indebtedness. So in Toronto, there have been numerous annexations and tremendous growth in current expenses. Toronto's City Hall is now five miles distant from the city's eastern boundary and the same distance from the western boundary. New Toronto, to the north, is being asked to come in, at the instigation of real estate men, and the City Hall will then be five miles from the northern boundary. This will mean a tremendous increase in the city's debt and annual expenditures.

No one in this growing country desires to be known as an opponent of progress, but it would seem as if Canada's two largest cities were making a fetish of increased area and increased population. The citizens of these cities seem willing to increase their taxes and to enlarge the civic problems without taking any thought of the troublous to-morrow. Even now, apartment houses in the city of Toronto bring higher rents than in the city of New York, and general living is nearly as expensive. This is almost entirely due to a period of rapid development, for which, in the end, the people must pay rather dearly.

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Enlarged Immigration Policy.

WOULD it not be possible to enlarge the policy of the Immigration Department so that the benefits would flow to all the provinces? This is a question which seems worth serious consideration. At present the immigration branch of the Dominion service is concerned only with bringing new settlers into the three new provinces and territories. The reason for this restriction or its policy is that in none of the other six provinces has the Dominion Government control of the ungranted lands. This may have been a good reason some years ago, but it has greatly lost its force. The Great Middle West has been given a start which will carry it a long distance. To some extent that progress has been at the expense of the other provinces. Why should there not be a re-adjustment of policy, and an enlargement of the immigration policy along national lines?

Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia desire new settlers, and none of them may secure them for itself with the ease and small expense with which the Dominion Government does such work. Many rural sections of the older provinces need re-peopling, and this is a national work. British Columbia needs population just as much as Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. If necessary, the immigration branch might be divided into two sections under one superintendent, each with a distinct chief. The increased expense would not be great; the increased national efficiency of the department would be tremendous.

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A Brighter Day Dawns.

FOR years a few people have been agitating for the teaching of Canadian history in Canadian universities. Like the high schools, the universities have been burdened with worn-out ideas as to a curriculum. In the early days, when the Canadian college was built on the model of Oxford and Cambridge, nobody thought of introducing Canadian history. They did not study it at Oxford; why study it here?

When Professor Ashley came to Toronto he introduced Canadian constitutional history, but the general history of our country was still neglected. Professor Shortt did something at Queen's, Professor Colby at McGill, and probably other professors made similar efforts, but still the history of Canada failed to find a place in any course of study. Probably in all the universities there were not six lectures on Canadian history last year.

Now comes the announcement that the University of Toronto will give special attention to this subject. They will still remember Babylon, and Assyria, and ancient Greece, and ancient Carthage, and all the civilisations that are past and gone, but they hope to be able to squeeze in a few lectures on the subject of which Parkman made a romance. If the idea grows in favour it may be that some day Canadians will know something of the history of their own country, a history full of lessons of supreme importance to the national welfare. Let us hope that a better day has dawned.