

Through a Monocle

MR. BOURASSA'S visit to Belgium is exciting considerable comment in the party press. Belgium is the place of mystery where some one wanted to send a commission of enquiry touching some of the phases of the Baron de l'Epine scandal; but the commission was not sent. Now Mr. Bourassa has been over quietly on his own account, and the party press are either hopeful or apprehensive—as their politics may be—that he has been doing a little enquiring for his own information. Coincident with this comes Mr. Prevost's pious hope that Premier Gouin's political head will last about six months. Thus it is apparent that, whatever may be the state of the Conservative Opposition in the Province of Quebec, the Liberal Opposition is getting ready for some lively politics. But Sir Lomer Gouin has a pretty stiff neck between his political head and his broad political shoulders; and his execution will not be regarded as settled until it has occurred. In any case, Mr. Bourassa is plainly going to liven up the entertainment in Old Quebec when the Legislature meets, and the country will be quite as well aware of him there as if he were at Ottawa.

* * *

THESE possible disturbances in Quebec will make it more than ever improbable that the Federal Liberals will delay their elections until after next autumn. A formidable split in the party in that province would weaken its prestige throughout the Dominion; and no Government is likely to wait around long for that sort of thing. The Opposition clearly expects elections. Mr. Herbert Ames is carrying his magic lantern show all over the country; and Mr. Foster is planning speaking tours in all directions. Mr. George Taylor predicts elections with great confidence; and no one knows better than the Opposition "Whip" that it would be bad tactics to lead his little army to fire off all its not too plentiful ammunition a six months before the real battle began. If savage attack is any indication, the small town Liberal press expects elections; and the word would have to be passed to the skirmish line pretty early to get it into action in time. The nominating conventions are busy; and the country is in for the business uncertainty of a campaign at all events.

* * *

SIR JAMES WHITNEY has taken his new title to England, where they appraise such things better than we do here. There is not the slightest doubt that most people were glad to see "Jim" Whitney

get a title if he wanted it. He is the sort of man to whom success brings a great amount of popularity. If he had failed, we would have called him waspish; but when he succeeds, we regard him as blunt and honest-spoken. People have come to the conclusion in any case that he means to deal frankly with the province and to give it precisely the kind of government he pretends he is giving. And people, sick to death of clever dissimulation, are passionately fond of frankness. They will forgive anything to a public man who will deal openly with them, and not try to be too diplomatic and evasive. I wonder that more politicians who depend upon popular suffrage for their power do not go in for the open style of political diplomacy. Nothing pays like it with an intelligent democracy.

* * *

IN eighteen hundred years people have not learned to love a Pharisee any better. When a man pretends to motives that do not move the majority of his fellows, his fellows simply discredit his honesty. He may be all that he claims, but the people are a cynical lot and entertain their doubts. The fortunate man who actually is better than the rest of us should be exceedingly careful to say nothing about it. He ought to impress upon his lips the absolute necessity of keeping the dark secret. If it is to come out at all, it ought to be revealed through his actions. This is the reason why the people distrust the impeccable man. They often love a man most for his mistakes, his weaknesses, his human foibles. At all events, they like the appearance of impulsiveness, of unconsidered frankness, even of bluntness. This latter "vice" is one of Whitney's sources of popularity.

* * *

SIR HIBBERT TUPPER is another man whom people like because of his ready frankness. And, by the way, they seem to like him too well for the comfort of certain jealous politicians; and the result is that the Conservative party loses his assistance just at the time when it needs him most. Sir Mackenzie Bowell earned some popularity in the same way, though his bluntness was tempered by reticence. Then there is Sir William Mulock, who has always had a weakness for saying what is in his mind. The Liberal party lost a valuable asset in the market of popularity when he retired. So much for the popularity of bluntness. Yet bluntness is not agreeable. It is only that smoothness has become the livery of the liar.

W. J. M. Porter

HOW FERNIE IS FARING



The Mayor's Office and Police Headquarters.



A Barber Shop.



Ruins of Valuable Railway Equipment—View from the Station Platform