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## The Journal of Commerce

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### Book Reviews.

By HOWARD S. ROSS.

### Conditions in the West.

By E. CORA HIND.

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## The Debacle

THE blessing of peace has not come, but it cannot now be far away. As was anticipated, Germany's partners, willing enough to serve her ends while they supposed she would win the war, awakened to the fact that fighting on meant greater disaster, and they have hurriedly abandoned her. Bulgaria first gave up the fight. Turkey has followed the example. Austria-Hungary, distracted by internal strife which has broken up the dual monarchy, has signed an armistice which will mean an unconditional surrender. Germany remains alone, begging for peace, but perhaps not yet ready to accept the only kind of peace that the Allies should offer. Of course, there can be no question of what the end will be. Germany is beaten everywhere, and must submit. She may, however, fight on for a little while longer, in the hope that, in some unknown way, she may be able to obtain better terms. For the present, then, we must not regard the war as over. It is still on, and every effort of the Allies in men and money must be continued until a just peace is reached.

## War and Politics in the United States

THERE is a rigidity in parts of the American constitution which at times proves embarrassing. The Congressional elections—corresponding to our elections for the House of Commons—are required to be held at fixed times. In the British system, both in the mother country and the colonies, there is a convenient elasticity. The representative body has a limited term, but it may be dissolved at any time, and the exact time of holding the elections is left to the judgment of the Executive. There is a weakness in this, it must be admitted. It gives the Executive a power over the Legislature that may be dangerous. The threat of dissolution, whether direct or implied, may serve to make the body more submissive to the Executive than is good for the country. The liberty of choosing the day of election may give the party supporting the Executive some advantage. The Americans avoid these possible evils by having fixed terms for their legislative bodies, and fixed times for the holding of elections.

In case of emergency the British Parliament can, by its own Act, extend its term, as it has done during the war. The term of the Canadian House of Commons can be extended by an Act of the Imperial Parliament, as was done a couple of years ago. A curious feature of our system is that our Provincial Legislatures are, in one respect, more powerful than the Parliament of the Dominion. Provincial Legislatures are endowed with power to control

their own constitutions, and thus could by an Act of their own extend the legislative term. But an Act to serve the same purpose in the case of the Dominion Parliament would have to be passed by the Imperial Parliament in London.

If the American constitution had permitted such a thing, probably some effort would have been made to avoid war-time elections. But the amending of the constitution of the United States was purposely made a slow process. It is not possible to make any quick change, even for a war-time purpose. So the political machine has to be kept in motion in war time, as well as in peace time. To-day—the first Tuesday in November—the citizens of the Great Republic are called on to elect a new Congress.

A few weeks ago there were signs of a disposition to conduct the election with the least possible party spirit. Republicans and Democrats seemed to be heartily united in the promotion of all measures for the prosecution of the war. President Wilson was the leader of the nation, and the nation seemed content that he should be. But in the last ten days the pent-up partizanship of both sides broke out. The last days of the campaign have been marked by much bitterness.

It may be claimed, with some reason, that President Wilson is chiefly responsible for this. To the surprise and regret of many of his admirers, he issued a personal appeal to the people to elect a Democratic congress. He urged that a Congress in sympathy with him was necessary to enable him to carry on his work effectively, and that the election of a Republican majority would be regarded by other nations, and particularly by Germany, as a repudiation of his war policy. In reply to this appeal we have had the remarkable spectacle of two Republican ex-Presidents—Mr. Taft and Mr. Roosevelt—not suspected of loving one another, uniting in a campaign address, telling the people that the Democratic Congress was too much under Mr. Wilson's thumb, and that the election of a Republican Congress was necessary. "It is not safe," said the ex-Presidents, "to entrust to one man such unlimited power. It is not in accord with the traditions of the Republic." As for the war policy, Messrs. Taft and Roosevelt said Mr. Wilson had been writing lengthy notes when he should have demanded unconditional surrender, and that his fourteen points laid down as a basis of peace were vague and mischievous.

This sudden outburst of partyism, much to be regretted, was perhaps unavoidable in the American situation. The President, while he is the representative of the nation, is never allowed to forget that he is the leader of his party, and must look to them for support. Our belief is that Mr. Wilson, patriotically endea-