

Through a Monocle

AN exasperating sort of mental exercise is that of counting the mistakes and the accidents by which battles are lost. How many times we have all gone over the familiar ground of the Waterloo campaign, and noted how the French blundered here and the Allies blundered there; and come to the conclusion that if this campaign had been fought without glaring blunders, we should now hardly recognise it as the same. The Allies might have done much better with less risk and cost; and there are many who think that a more alert Napoleon might have won. And so it is with politics. If, on the eve of a general election, the losing party had been told that it would win the seats which it actually does win, it would feel certain of victory; but it does not calculate upon the seats which it thought safe but which it loses by "accident." It is these unexpected losses which change the face of the returns. It is by its own blunders that a party is beaten.

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These reflections are suggested to me by a couple of recent blunders into which the embattled hosts at Ottawa have fallen. Surely no one will doubt that the Government blundered in attempting to prevent the Opposition from seeing the original documents in the case of the timber leases. Never did a misled army find itself in a more untenable position. To deny access to these documents was to arouse and foster the very suspicion which the Opposition would have sought to set on foot if they had got the documents to begin with, and which they are now fanning with the documents they could not help but finally get. To say that the Opposition cannot obtain the right to see such a public document if it really wants to see it, is to assert that Parliamentary government is at an end and that the despotism of an oligarchy composed of the Cabinet has taken its place. But equally stupid was the position which the Opposition assumed on the Japanese treaty question. Are we to tell Japan, our ally and a nation which has never broken faith with us, that we will not accept its promises to do what we know it is very desirous of doing for its own sake?

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The policy of the Opposition on this question would be impossible if that party were in office. No one can doubt that for a moment. A Borden Government would never deliberately make bad blood between Britain and her solitary ally by offering the latter the insult of a refusal to rely upon its good faith when that good faith in this connection had just been established by the Mackenzie King investigation. A Borden Government would have done precisely what the Laurier Government did. It would have tried to persuade Japan to agree to restrict its own emigration, and would have readily accepted any such promise to restrict it as Mr. Lemieux brought back with him. And if the Liberal Opposition, which would face such a Borden Government, had tried to angle for the British Columbia delegation by scouting this settlement of the case as insecure, can't you imagine how the loyal pro-British Conservatives would have hounded the Liberals as "disloyal", as failing to appreciate the responsibilities of the Imperial relation, and as betraying again the spirit which led them to advocate Unrestricted Reciprocity with the United States?

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I am not a political prophet, but I am of the opinion that if the Conservatives never made any mistakes, they would get into power very soon; and that if the Liberals were equally immune from blunders, we would make their mandate unanimous. There will be those who will think that this is the assertion of the obvious, for they regard the proceedings of both parties as largely composed of "mistakes". But that is a pessimistic view. Sometimes a party does not do what we think it should, and we call it a mistake; whereas in reality the party is so hampered by conditions and crippled by "entangling alliances" that it could do nothing else. Its course was not a mistake but a disaster. In the cases to which I have referred, however, the parties were both free to choose their line of conduct;

and, in my humble opinion, they both chose wrongly. But such wanton mistakes are not so common as people usually imagine; and yet I fancy that they are frequent and important enough to make the difference between victory and defeat.

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The significant point about these two mistakes I have noted is that Mr. Borden made one of them and Sir Wilfrid Laurier did not make the other. Sir Wilfrid, indeed, unmade the other. There is little doubt that if Sir Wilfrid had been consulted to begin with, he would have ordered that Mr. Ames be given access to any original documents he might want to see. On the other hand, Mr. Borden seems to have walked open-eyed into his mistake. It was not made for him; he made it very ably for himself. The interesting question arises for Conservatives in this connection—well, perhaps I had better let it do its own "arising". There are domestic affairs into which the Monocle of the cold outsider should not peer. Just incidentally I notice that Senator George W. Ross has been carrying his rare ability to make mistakes to Ottawa with him, and has been proving his continued possession of it by identifying himself with the stupid and flagrantly unpopular proposal to saddle this long-suffering country with a system of Under-Secretaries. Secretary Scott is against it, and so is Leader Lougheed. But it is just like Your Uncle Ross to get tied up to it. If this country with six millions of people, governed by ten Parliaments and Provincial Legislatures, cannot get along without Under-Secretaries, what must we think of Britain which asks nothing more to govern with a solitary Parliament forty millions of people at home and an Empire abroad?

A Shrewd Princess.

PERHAPS the most businesslike younger member of our Royal Family is the Princess of Wales. Her Royal Highness received an admirable business training apropos of the work which she did even as a very young girl in connection with her mother's many philanthropic schemes. This was further increased by the fact, never concealed for a moment by the late Duchess of Teck, that the future Queen of England and her brothers had to be very careful with regard to their personal expenditure. This early training has stood the wife of the Heir Apparent in good stead, and so highly is her opinion valued concerning money matters, that even her private friends often venture to ask her advice concerning such important questions as marriage settlements and the granting of dowries. This business ability makes Her Royal Highness far more than a figure-head or kindly advisory consultant to the many important philanthropic societies with which she is in constant touch, for she is quick to detect any foolish extravagance, or equally foolish economy.—M. A. P.



The angry Pacific—The surf breaking on Dallas Road, Victoria, B.C., on Sunday, January 5th. A portion of the new cement sea wall, seen at the bottom of the high bank, was badly damaged.