

Current Topics

Bernhardi and the Invasion of Canada

Last week's cables conveyed a hint that Germany's next move would be a raid on Canada, or rather they contained a definite statement that such an operation was actually in progress. 'A message from Portland (Maine, United States),' says a London cable, 'states that Captain Branch, of the interned German barque Dolbeck, says that a German squadron of 15 vessels is heading for the coast of Canada, intending to destroy coastal cities and fortifications. This information was contained in a letter from an officer of the Germany navy. Captain Branch believes that the squadron is making its way along the coast of Norway, and will thence make a dash for Canada.'

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In view of the present naval situation, the story is on the face of it somewhat wildly improbable; and it happens that it has been denied and repudiated in advance even by the truculent and aggressive Bernhardi, who clearly sets forth very good grounds for regarding any such attempt as out of the question and impracticable. The author of *Germany and the Next War* has been contributing a series of articles to the *New York American*, and in one of the latest of these he thus discusses and dismisses the suggestion that Germany would attempt any aggression against Canada, or any part of the American continent. 'It is just as certain, also,' he says, 'that we should never think of assuming an antagonistic attitude toward America, much less dream of questioning the Monroe Doctrine. What advantages could we possibly expect from such behavior? Visionaries talk of the conquest of Canada by the Germans and of the acquisition of other colonies upon the continent! How could such dreams, even if they were for a moment cherished, possibly be carried out, even if we are so happy as to achieve an outlook for enduring peace at home on the advantages of victory, by a policy of wild adventure abroad? Whence would come the enormous fleets necessary in order to carry out an attack necessary against the enormous resources of the United States, or to maintain across the broad Atlantic a contact of combination between an attacking army and the home country? From the United States we expect neither direct nor indirect help in this gigantic struggle for existence. Long ago we understood that only the victories attained through its own strength count in the history of a nation. We shall therefore fight our battle to a finish alone, with German iron and with German blood.'

Municipal Elections

Owing, doubtless, to the dominating influence of the war upon men's thoughts and attention, the municipal elections passed off throughout the Dominion without the close interest and keen excitement which attached to last year's contests. Where the sitting members again presented themselves, they were in the vast majority of cases re-elected; and everywhere the citizens appear to have shown a general disposition to leave things, as far as possible, as they were. In Dunedin, the only remarkable feature of the polling was the failure of the Labor Party to secure the return of a single one of their nominees on any of the four bodies for which elections were held. The Labor organisations and their following are numerically sufficiently strong easily to secure effective representation on any of the local bodies if they were really in earnest in the matter. In the present instance it is not suggested that the Labor electors voted for other than Labor candidates, but simply that they did not take the trouble to vote at all.

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It is probable that their apathy was not without its effect on the result of the mayoral election. The three candidates, Messrs. Clark, Myers, and Marlow, were all good citizens and competent men, and so far as that aspect of the contest is concerned it may be freely ad-

mitted that any one of the three would prove himself quite capable of discharging the duties of chief magistrate. It must, however, we think, be recognised, if the merits of the candidates are viewed fairly and dispassionately, that Mr. Marlow had an exceptionally strong claim on the support of the citizens. There is a sort of unwritten rule that there should be a certain amount of rotation in the mayoral office; and under this head, at least in regard to length of public service, Mr. Marlow had undoubted priority. His personal merits were beyond all question; and his fellow councillors have again and again borne willing tribute to his outstanding and commanding ability, and to the signal value of the services which as councillor and chairman of various important committees he has rendered to the city. Had the choice rested with them, as it does in great cities in other countries, there would have been absolute unanimity in the selection. But kissing, it is said, goes by favor; and so nowadays, it would seem, does election to our higher civic offices. In Dunedin, at least, there is a growing and dangerous tendency to let the religion of the candidates determine the direction in which favor shall be bestowed; and the fact that Mr. Marlow is a staunch and sterling Catholic did not, to put it mildly, help his candidature. He may rest assured that at this moment his co-religionists are as proud of him as they have ever been; and they look back upon his splendid public record with unalloyed satisfaction and gratification. Throughout his long and strenuous public career he has been the very model of all that a Catholic layman ought to be; and higher praise than that we cannot give. Good work is never lost; and Mr. Marlow's influence as an example to the Catholic young men of his adopted city will be felt for many a day. He retires temporarily from active public life with an unsmirched record, and with the good wishes and good will of all with whom he has come in contact.

How the Neutrals Failed

Some months ago we expressed the opinion that if at the outset of the war President Wilson had put on record a protest against the violation of Belgium—which it was America's duty to do as a signatory to the Hague agreement guaranteeing the inviolability of neutral territories—the war would have been much less savage and sanguinary than it has been, and might even have been considerably shortened. The same thing is now being said more strongly, and with more emphasis and weight than could ever attach to our humble utterance, by American citizens themselves, and by some who are specially qualified to speak with authority on the subject. Mr. Richard Harding Davis, the well-known war correspondent, who was in Belgium when the first early havoc was wrought there and has since returned to America, declares in all seriousness and with the utmost earnestness that the neutral nations, by protesting against the invasion of Belgium, might have ended the war; and because they failed to do so future historians will not hold them guiltless. Mr. Davis says: 'No individual, no matter how just may be his indignation, can communicate that indignation to the German Emperor. His Government must do that for him, and as no Government had the courage to protest, to speak sharply, to brandish the big stick, Germany exclaimed, "We have a free hand." And from bad she has hastened to worse. From the moment she broke her word and entered the neutral territory of Belgium the rights of every neutral were in jeopardy. A man who is false to one will be false to another, but the neutral Powers could not see that. Belgium seemed so far away, and in the United States we were so entirely surrounded by water and so comfortably safe. So, although as joint signatories of the agreement made at The Hague, it was our privilege and duty to protest, we said nothing. Nor did any other neutral. And, emboldened by the silence, Germany, one after another, broke all the rules of war. If at the start of this war our Government and those of South America, Italy, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland had jointly protested to Germany against the