

Review

The British Elections.

When these lines come before the reader, the verdict will have been given and for that reason, if for no other, we do not propose to set ourselves up as prophets.

Before commenting on the issue it might be well to give the figures relative to the present strength of parties in the British House of Commons, with the changes since the Conservatives have come into power less than a year ago.

	1922	1923
Conservatives	347.	346.
Labor	142.	144.
Liberals	64.	67.
National Liberals	53.	50.
Sin Feiners	1.	1.
Irish Nationalists	2.	2.
Other Parties	6.	5.
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If we should permit ourselves to hazard an opinion as to the strength of the Government after the election, we should feel inclined to reduce the number of Conservatives to three hundred or three hundred and ten, while leaving Labor pretty much as at present, and we rather count on at least one hundred and fifty Liberals, if not one hundred and sixty-five.

Mr. Baldwin has shown great courage in grasping the issue as he has done, and to our minds he is a skilful leader as well as an honest man. There are many other cries which are better electioneering ones than the cry of Protection. We are inclined to think that Mr. Baldwin has seized the right moment to strike. "Now is the acceptable time;" Disraeli missed his hour in 1878 after the Berlin Congress; the Gladstonians in the autumn of 1893; the Unionist failure to dissolve in November, 1903, just twenty years ago, was the hugest error of its kind in political annals; while even Mr. Lloyd George, once surest in plan and promptitude held fortune in his grasp in January, 1922 and threw it away. It is a given array of precedents and Mr. Baldwin has profited. A great English news-

paper, commenting on the fact that the election is likely to be bitter and as such, best soon over, said, "The great Liberal Party is about to reduce the Imperial Issue to a question of "tinned salmon" though their own arguments of this kind are such ancient preserved meats as might threaten any electorate with political botulism.

There have been so far about fifty elections by acclamation, the bulk of which have returned Conservatives. Among others thus returned is the well beloved veteran and father of the House of Commons, T. P. O'Connor, member for the Scotland Division of Liverpool.

Whatever may happen at this election, England is face to face with a crisis. In the fourth winter of unemployment, the Motherland cannot afford to be hide-bound by the tenets or dogmas of any party. We believe that the Unionist party has a policy which is a remedy for the unparalleled financial, fiscal and political conditions, if not of Europe, at least of England—a policy which is the logical outcome of the Imperial Conference, a policy to draw closer the bonds that unite the Empire. The Labor Party have a policy as distinct as that of the Unionists, the plank of which is the Capital Levy, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald does not say that he will maintain *free imports*. But the Liberal policy is undiscoverable to us, unless it be merely to praise free imports, the product of foreign employment to the 2,000,000 of English unemployed, which seems a recommendation to them to fill their bellies with the East wind. As yet, neither Asquith nor Lloyd George have answered that decisive question: What is your remedy? Mr. Lloyd George allows himself to be carried away by doubtful metaphors; he says, "This is a tinker's policy," and "The ministers are endeavoring to bind the Empire together with dead crabs."

It is not our intention to enter into a defence of Protectionist policy, although we may think it to be the only logical one. We make only a passing reference to some Protectionist countries.

Mr. Frank Hodges, well known to readers of the "Daily Herald," and remembered as a man of some reason at the time of the threatened Transport Union strike, in sympathy with the miners during March, 1921, has returned to England from the United States with a tale of El Dorado. But some say that the United States is unique. Well, then, what of France? At the present

moment, according to the "Manchester Guardian," a most orthodox free trade paper, she is making more money than at any time in her history. There is practically no unemployment in her industrial areas; her foreign trade is much better relative footing than that of England; she is full of commercial enterprise and spirit, and she has been Protectionist for the last two hundred and fifty years. According to the *Doctrinaire*, Liberals, France ought to have been bankrupt generations ago. Examples may be multiplied: Italy forty years ago with Italy now; Germany in 1879 and Germany in 1914; but we have neither the space nor the time to speak of them. Good Luck! Mr. Baldwin.

The Imperial Conference.

The opening of the Imperial Conference was attended with all formality. So should it be, since it marked the assemblage of a real league of nations. An actual working model for the league at Geneva, and for the Empire, at least, the issues were as numerous and grave as any that came before the International Assembly.

For the first time, Ireland, that great Mother State, has taken her proper place in the *polity* of the Empire—a confederate and full partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Two questions of International import come before the Conference; namely, the future Mediterranean policy and a recognition of Soviet Russia.

The freedom of the Mediterranean is of vital importance to Australia, South Africa, India, and New Zealand.

It must be free, from end to end for the passage of all maritime peoples and that position must be maintained at whatever cost, or the British system cease to be. Since the Risorgiments, this maintenance of free passage has been the joint interest of the two countries. Unhappily our politicians at the Foreign Office have rather put "the fat in the fire" on account of the part played by one of our ministers during the Italo-Greek Embroglio. Feeling, for a time, ran high against England in Italy, but fortunately things have changed for the better. There has long been a spiritual affinity between Great Britain and Italy, and it would be an evil day, indeed, if that were destroyed. We fail to see where we owe the Greeks anything, and though we must stand for the rights of Humanity, yet our

interference was unfortunate in virtue of what we have already tolerated in other places.

Russia is rapidly stabilising her conditions. The transition is much a parallel to that of France under the Directory, which succeeded Robespierre's welter of blood. Private trading is being restored in towns, and Russian concessions to Capital are among the largest commercial opportunities of the world today. Russia has 130,000,000 of people and she covers nearly 8,000,000 square miles of territory. That vast sphere of incalculable potential wealth would do business with the Empire. England has 2,000,000 of idle workers, and we have one exodus. Until England's unemployed are largely back at work, the old land cannot become as good a customer as she was. In this case her gain would be our gain as well. Let us hope that the aristocrats, Lord Curzon and Mr. Chicherin will come to an agreement.

The Imperial Economic Conference has justified itself. Identity of standpoint was, of course, neither possible nor desirable, and we may see the contrast in such speeches as those of Mr. Bruce and Sir Philip Lloyd Graeme, in which one will find a fund of instruction. Mr. Bruce is naturally an enthusiast as one would expect. England's conservatism and caution were manifested in the orderly arrangement of Sir Philip's lucid statement. The proposals of the British Government accept the principle of Preference, within the traditional tariff, laid down by Mr. Austin Chamberlain in the Budget of 1919. But the new proposals are a distinct outgrowth. The plans set forth are correlated with definite schemes of Empire development.

Just a word about our statesmen who took part in that historic gathering. Mr. Baldwin is a sound and practical business man, and we believe very strongly in his vision and ability. Lord Curzon has intellect and writes delightfully, but is rather inclined to dogmatism, and, if we may be pardoned for so saying, obstinacy. Mr. Kelvin O'Higgins, the brilliant young Free Stater from Dublin, upheld the very best traditions of Ireland by his insight, quickness and sympathetic understanding. Newfoundland was not forgotten in Mr. Warren, while Mr. Massey who is an old hand at the Imperial Conferences was as magnetic as ever before. Mr. MacKenzie King who seems to have the faculty non-committal oratory proved quite popular, and was

a worthy representative of Canada on the social side at least. Sir Tej Sapru is one of the most brilliant of India's statesmen. The Indians of Kenya could not have had a better advocate. Mr. Bruce, young and enthusiastic, lately down from Cambridge, impresses, and General J. C. Smuts, to our mind, for breadth of vision and knowledge of affairs remains the master of them all.

Conditions in the Balkins.

There is a parallel today, in the Balkans of the conditions which prevailed there during the early summer of 1914. The same passions smoulder, race feuds are as bitter as ever before, and the trade and armaments goes on briskly. The Balkans are no longer Europe's powder barrel; they have become Europe's ammunition dump, and the explosion, when it comes, will be correspondingly more destructive.

How this conflagration will spread, no one can foresee, but we need not be told its consequences. Whether or not we become involved, the repercussion from such a calamity will be felt heavily in Britain, and America will suffer with the rest of the world.

We are worse than fools when we imagine that we have no interests or business in the happenings of the Balkans. Let us review in detail the present conditions of the Balkan States.

Bulgaria is the keystone of the Balkan arch. Her geographical position and her associations make her a factor out of proportion to her area and population. Today she stands mutilated territorially and burdened with indemnities, yet possessing the most valuable asset in a homogeneous population of reserved, industrious, unsentimental, and efficient peasants.

Bulgaria, today, has a government of amateurs, and its slogan is "Down with Bolshevism," and thus partakes something of the nature of Fascism. Theoretically, Bulgaria as a Peasant State, should have a peasant government. They did experiment, but the Coup d'état terminated a system which was rapidly ruining the towns, and ending all cultural growth in the community. Stamboliski had lost his grip on the people, or his government would not have disappeared like a mist before the morning sun. For the present, Bulgaria has sufficient to do at home without indulging in any aggressive foreign policy and furthermore,

should she have the wish for aggression, she lacks the power. Bulgaria's penalties under the treaty of Neuilly have been enforced, but there seems to be little hurry in the carrying out of the remedial legislation with regard to the Bulgarian inhabitants of Western Thrace, Macedonia, and the Dobrudja.

Hence a growing resentment in frontier districts and the increase in the numbers and size of Comitadji bands. Relations with Roumania have remained fairly good, but there is *ominous* friction with Jugo Slavia who is playing the old game of the vanished Dual Monarchy. Bulgaria is blamed for the disturbances incident upon the Serb attempt to absorb an alien population. The spirit of nationality will survive, and sooner or later, there will come another Serajevo.

And behind the scenes, sit the powers shifting the pawns on the South Eastern chess board. Italy needs an ally to check Greece and Jugo Slavia. Bulgaria is indicated, but first she must be armed. On the other hand, the French are behind Jugo Slavia, because she completes the ring of steel. At the same time, France invites Bulgaria into a defensive alliance against Soviet Russia. Beware, France; "Drang nach Osten" was the downfall of the Hapsburgs.

Jugo Slavia is, to our mind, a recreation of the old ramshackle Empire. The country contains six types of Southern Slav, in addition to Bulgars, Greeks, Italians, Austrians and Hungarians. Cavour said, after the unification of his country, "Now we have an Italy, it remains for us to make Italians." The Jugo Slav problem is much more difficult. Italy had no religious feud to deal with. Jugo Slavia has four main religions, and the country is divided between the Centralists and Federalists.

The Serbs proper are Centralists. They are honest and grateful, but intolerant of the rights and opinions of others. They maintain that the country needs a strong central government to co-ordinate the resources of the nation, and in virtue of their part in the war claim the hegemony of the Triune Kingdom.

The present constitution of the country embraces the Centralists creed, and was drawn up and passed by the Radicals. General Thomson remarks "That they are difficult to rule and dangerous to thwart. Secret societies like the notorious 'Black Hand' take prompt vengeance

and their branches cover the whole land like the Golf Clubs of the British Isles."

The Croates and Slovenes are Federalist. Mr. Raditch, leader of the Croates, would go farther and possibly break away and found a Croatian Republic. They are probably less idealistic than their neighbours, but then, they are a better business people.

The Slovenes, under the leadership of Abbe Korochetz at one time had an "Entente Cordiale" with the Croats, as both are Catholic. The Slovenes are better politicians than their Croatian cousins, and at present are acting independently.

The Bosniaks are autonomists, the Montenegrins Separatists, but it is doubtful whether the Dalmatians are interested one way or another. They regarded the Serbs as poor relations best kept in the distance, and again to quote General Thompson, "The Dalmatians are blest beyond most in their scenery and climate, and are a superior people in a somewhat Curzonian sense."

Jugo Slavia is a great power in embryo. Servia is the heart and right arm of the new Kingdom, but not the brain; the Serbs have not the commercial acumen of the Croats, nor the diplomacy of the Slovenes. Co-operation will be the magic key to their success. If the Serbs continue in their spirit of domination, they will reap the fruit of such a policy some bitter day. When the Southern Slavs have to face Italy on the Adriatic, when Serbian eyes shall, of necessity be turned outward, then, unless internal peace has been accomplished, will Hungary's hour have arrived.

Rumania

Rumania is very often judged, rather rashly perhaps, by the people one meets in the streets of Bucharest. One must remember that the officers and artificially made-up women who parade the "Calea Victorie" represent but a small minority of the population, even of the Capital, and one must bear in mind also the Latin fondness of uniforms. After all, eighty per cent. of the population are peasants, living away behind the hills, to whom Bucharest is only a name associated with politicians, laws, taxes, and other iniquities."

Greater Rumania is to-day a country of importance, containing 17,000,000 of inhabitants, 13,000,000 of which

are Rumanian blood. The remainder are: 1,300,000 Hungarians in Transylvania, 800,000 Saxons also there. Some Ruthenians in Bukowina, Russians in Bessarabia, and Bulgars in the Dobrudja; the Rumanian peasants claim to be the descendants of the Romans, and this belief is largely encouraged by the Latin Powers. The Rumanians of the Old Kingdom are largely Orthodox, the Hungarian and Transylvanian Rumanians are Catholic, while the Saxons are Lutheran.

Agrarian reform is the crying need of the country, and in 1913, M. Bratiano, the present premier, took up the question, but the war caused a postponement. Finally, in 1921 two laws were promulgated, in virtue of which fifteen million acres were expropriated. We reserve any judgment on their practicability, but it seems very much on a par with the Irish Land Purchase Acts, and if enforced without favoritism and graft, will lead to much good.

Sudden expansion has its drawbacks. Crises are the order of the day, Constitutional, Financial, and Industrial. With these are bound up difficulties in foreign policy as old as Rumania itself. Two thousand years ago, Dacia was a Roman Island in a sea of Tartars, Goths and Slavs; today she remains surrounded by the descendants of these wanderers.

The complexity of her politics are beyond our comprehension. The last constitution is said to be in a mixture of Bolshevism and Reaction. The Liberals, under M. Bratiano, are in power today, not without corruption and gerrymandering during the elections, but on the whole they are preferable to the opposition who have had their chance and seemed devoid of even the elements of statesmanship. Under the most brilliant leader, the late M. Take Ionescu, they drifted perilously near anarchy. Rumania's foreign policy is prudent, and she is endeavoring to remain on friendly terms with Hungary and Soviet Russia, although a member of the "Little Entente".

Rumania wants peace, and if she is wise, will go out of her way to preserve it. Her growth was romantic, but her position is, as yet, by no means assured. A general conflagration would be the ruin of her hopes.

