

Mr. Herdman has displayed consistency in bringing in and sticking to his Bill for the reform of the Civil Service. His best friends, however, must admit that the fact of his bringing down some forty amendments while the Bill was actually in Committee gives colour to the idea held in certain quarters that the measure has not been adequately thought out by its consistent framer. Moreover, he has asked what use would be the Bill without the inclusion of the post and telegraph department, and in order to get the consent of that department he has prevented the interchange with other departments which is one of the main objects of the Bill.

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Proportional representation, it is agreed on all sides, will give this country the representation of as many minorities as is possibly compatible with the rule of the majority. But single-seated constituencies will not do it. There must be, most authorities agree, constituencies returning five members at least. Take Taranaki as an instance. The five members now in the House since the Egmont seat went to the Government side, are all Government seats. But if the whole five districts were one returning five members, it is certain the Opposition would have some Taranaki representation in the House and so might Labour have. The general result would be very much more correct as a thing representative. Three volumes would not better show the superiority of the proportional system over the present.

Another good thing would come. The representation commissioners of the future would not have to alter district boundaries according to the changes of population revealed by the census. They would simply adjust matters by altering the numbers of the district representatives. There would be here an additional advantage in the matter of licenses. The decision of the Commissioners would not alter districts and therefore would not throw ends of Continuance districts into No-License districts. Local Option would then always be Local Option, whereas now in some cases it is an accident and a gamble.

The United Kingdom supplies late instances in the same direction. There is the Midlothian election, which thus resulted the other day:—

Major Hope (Unionist)	...	6021
Mr. A. Shaw (Liberal)	...	5989
Mr. R. Brown (Labour)	...	2413

At the end of July the Crewe election gave the same lesson, with:—

Craig (Unionist)	...	6261
Murphy (Liberal)	...	5294
Holmes (Labour)	...	2485

Both these elections gave great joy to the Unionists. But the plain fact is that they did not have a majority in either, though they got the victory in both. The reason was the unreasonableness of Labour, which, without a hope of winning, went in on a sort of blind adherence to some vicious principle and split the vote for minority representation. There was great fear some time since lest such a thing might happen, and the controversy raged bitterly in the party journals. Labour insisted with its eyes open, and the result is loss to its only possible ally, with no advantage to Labour.

The general result of similar tactics here was shown last December by the aggregate of the vot-

ing, when, with the two main parties at 100,000 and 102,000 respectively, and the Labour and Independents at 97,000 in between, the consequence of the split was the return to party of one of the other parties without the constitutionally necessary concomitant of a majority.

The present state of parties in the House of Commons is worth considering just now, because we hear much of the solid losses to the Liberals of the by-elections, and a great deal more of the chances of civil war over the passing of Home Rule. In its edition of August 2, "The Times" gives the numbers:—

Unionists	...	...	270
Liberals	...	...	265
Labour	...	...	42
Nationalists	...	...	76
Independent Nationalists	...	...	8
			391

Ministerial majority ... 121

Since these figures were published the Midlothian election has given another seat to the Unionists, 271; Ministerial, 390; Ministerial majority, 119. Since the election the Unionists have won six seats.

But the question of civil war does not depend on the votes of by-elections. At the end of July the Unionist party had a representative meeting at the Duke of Marlborough's place, Blenheim, and there Mr. Bonar Law declared that as the votes of the United Kingdom, without Ireland, had not pronounced for Home Rule, Ulster would be justified in going "to any length, even force," and that he and the Unionist party would support them to whatever lengths they might choose to go. In Parliament, the Opposition leader being challenged by Mr. Redmond for an explanation, reiterated his words, and explained that they had been carefully written down before they were uttered, with a due sense of responsibility as attaching to the leader of a great party in the State, and wound up by insisting that the whole Unionist party, comprising more than half the population of the United Kingdom, would support Ulster. The Prime Minister thereupon remarked with great severity that Mr. Law's statement was a "declaration of war," adding that if the doctrine were to be laid down that minorities might resist legislation by force there would be an end of Parliamentary government. That is the condition of the atmosphere in which the Home Rule problem is involved. How much of this is bluff and how much meant for action remains to be seen. In the meantime, one can only wonder at the state of mind to which the Unionists are reduced which enables them to actually hold out inducements to a minority to take up arms against Parliament. They do not mean it as high treason no doubt. But if there is civil war they will discover to their heavy cost that it is, and nothing less.

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It is somewhat surprising to learn that a good many Americans, not only deny the soundness of British claims for equal treatment in the matter of the Panama Canal dues, but seem to suppose that British protests against the proposal discrimination are not made in earnest. That supposition, we need hardly say, is quite unfounded.