

ing a favourable occasion. So strong and determined was his policy that Mr. Mercier found himself at the end of his first session in a more powerful position than ever.

The Quebec Premier has been called the "Man of Providence," and looking at the remarkable series of subsequent victories, it would almost appear as if he were befriended by Providence. Since his return in 1886 by a rather restricted majority, victory after victory has attended his course, by-election after by-election have resulted in the return of his supporters. Much needed reforms have been inaugurated in the civil service, energy and activity have been infused into the various public departments, and special attention has been paid to the important work of colonization and agriculture. A new loan of three and a half millions was also negotiated in a manner that showed that Mr. Mercier was not only a skilful party leader but also a sound financier.

Other reforms are in contemplation: many outstanding difficulties are to be regulated; the Provincial debt is to be consolidated, and thus a large amount of money saved to the people of the Province; further attention is to be paid to colonization and education, and the Province placed in a sound and prosperous situation.

But great as these labours of Mr. Mercier have been, it was perhaps more than anything else his connection with an event of the greatest public importance to every section of the Dominion that drew the attention of the whole country to him, and at once marked him out as one of the most distinguished figures and far-seeing statesmen in Canadian politics. The Interprovincial Conference, conceived and successfully inaugurated by Quebec's Premier, was undoubtedly, both in its *personnel* and the far-reaching nature of its results, one of the most important gatherings that ever assembled in Canada. Mr. Mercier saw clearly on arriving in power that if Confederation was to be saved from the dangers which threatened it, means must be taken to get rid of the rotten timbers in the structure, and to put the Constitution on a sound and precise basis. Calling to his side the distinguished leaders of the other Provinces, without distinction of party, he sought their co-operation in a work that was fraught with importance to the whole Dominion. The results of the Conference are fresh in the minds of all. After a long and careful consideration of the various questions at issue, the heads of the different Provinces came to an agreement embodied in a series of resolutions, the carrying out of which it is hoped will tend to allay the many difficulties that have arisen in the past.

Mr. Mercier's versatile genius again showed itself conspicuously in connection with the work of the Conference. Though the youngest Premier in attendance, he was the guiding spirit of the Conference, and during its progress displayed a marvellous knowledge of the Constitution in all its aspects. His erudition, his deep research, and the breadth and strength of his mind were the admiration of all present. At the close of the Conference there was no doubt of Mr. Mercier's position in Canadian politics. He at once took a place in the front rank of statesmanship, and though his opponents have misrepresented his object, and sought to belittle the work of this important body, impartial men on both sides of politics have conceded that changes in the Constitution are in several cases urgently required, and that the work of the Conference will ultimately result in great good. There are many more points in Mr. Mercier's brilliant and varied career that might be dwelt upon did time permit. Viewed as a great party leader, a brilliant orator, and a wise ruler, he has been one of the most successful men of his day.

As a party leader, and the head of a Government, his distinguishing characteristics have already been referred to. As an orator, he is equally distinguished. Mr. Mercier's eloquence is peculiar to himself, and one requires to hear him to appreciate the force and vigour of his speech. There may be in Canadian parliamentary life more fervid orators, men endowed with a quicker and more subtle magnetism, whose words flow in a running torrent of eloquence. Very few possess in an equal degree the gift of impressing themselves on an audience. Mr. Mercier may not possess the voice or the elegant diction of Mr. Laurier, nor the large rhythmic periods with which Mr. Chapleau delights to cover up much that is commonplace, giving his audience the delusion of a grand eloquence. Mr. Mercier's eloquence, on the contrary, is a continual and powerful stream of tenacious and convincing logic. His eloquence recalls that of the old Roman Senate, in its days of sturdy republicanism. It is that of a Cato rather than a Cicero. The orator must be heard to be appreciated.

Addressing an audience of his countrymen on the great questions of the day, Mr. Mercier is seen at his best. Force and sincerity are the distinguishing elements of his speech. He speaks from the heart with a devotion to his cause that carries conviction to the minds of his auditors, overthrows the argument of his adversaries, and gains complete mastery over his hearers. It is as an orator that Mr. Mercier has won some of his greatest triumphs. As a skilful debater and a keen reasoner on the floor of Parliament, he has few equals and hardly any superior. He is a hard hitter and has made many enemies. He has been one of the best hated men in Canadian politics, and his enemies have spared no pains to overthrow him. He has been accused of vast and ambitious designs, and of many things that existed only in the minds of his traducers.

One of the favourite devices of his adversaries is to charge him with being the enemy of the English speaking people, claiming that the rights of the minority of this Province are not safe in his hands. Nothing could be further from the truth, and it is only proper that the English-speaking Province of Ontario should have a true conception of Mr. Mercier's position in this respect. Far from being an enemy of the English, Mr. Mercier has always been a zealous defender of the rights of the minority. His course as Leader of the Opposition was marked by many instances of zealous devotion to their cause, and when he was placed in the chief seat of power, notwithstanding the fact that, blinded by the

prejudices of the moment, the great bulk of the English-speaking electors had refused him their support, with a fairness and impartiality that showed him worthy of his high position, he forgot everything in his desire to do justice to all sections of the community. Since his advent to power the Protestant minority has had many signal proofs of his readiness to do them justice on all occasions. His course in regard to the Protestant Insane Asylum showed him to be fully alive to their interests. The members of the Protestant clergy were given respectful consideration, and so prompt and unexpected was the action of the Government in giving the required grant, that so eminent an authority as the Anglican Bishop Bond was constrained to publicly thank the Provincial Premier. In other Protestant works of a charitable and moral nature he has shown a deep interest, and is always ready to help a good cause. These facts, which are known to all, should be sufficient guarantee that Quebec's Premier is imbued with a spirit of fair play towards every one, without distinction of creed or origin.

The writer has endeavoured in a cursory way to trace a few of the salient features of Mr. Mercier's notable career. Much more might be said as the political situation opens up a broad field for speculation and research. But enough has been outlined to show that the present Premier of Quebec is destined to play no small part in Canadian politics of the future. Mr. Mercier is still young, and with a physique that can stand a great deal if he will only take proper care of himself, and not allow his devotion to run away with his health. In personal appearance he is the type of one born to command. His face is suggestive of great mental power and force of character. In private life he exhibits a fund of geniality that has gained him a host of friends. Only forty-eight years of age, he should have many years of usefulness before him. What the future may hold in store for him is uncertain; but that Mr. Mercier will be equal to all emergencies, that he will be guided by a sincere and earnest patriotism in all his public actions, and that his future career will be marked by the same energy, courage, and determination that have marked his past, there can be no doubt. The political horizon is full of shadows presaging momentous events that may tax the energy and patriotism of our public men to the utmost; but whatever the future may hold in store for the young Confederation, we may look to find standing in the front rank, amongst the patriotic phalanx of our public men, the figure of Honoré Mercier, Premier of Quebec.

H. BEAUGRAND.

IN RETURN.

GIVE me your love, I give to you
Fresh heart-flowers, blooming, sweet, profuse,
Cut with a reckless hand. They grew
Beneath your smile, for your dear use.

GIVE me your joy, my joy will leap
To meet and greet it on its way;
Give me your graver thoughts; they keep
Their place beside me all the day.

GIVE me your grief—still would it shun
Regret, sighs, pity, phrase that cheers;
These hurt the wounded heart. Dear one,
I bring you naught but inward tears.

A. ETHELWYN WETHERALD.

WITH NATURE IN MAY.

II.
(Concluded.)

BUT what do you see? do you still ask? I see the graceful trillium, the most simply graceful of Canadian wood flowers. Did you never notice its stem? Wherein lies its beauty? In gradations, I think, gradations both of form and colour. It is not a straight line nor yet a curve, but rather a series of curves imperceptibly gliding one into the other. Its colours, too, shade off from a red-brown where the stem springs from the ground to a shining green at the calyx. I see the dandelion, a glorious flower despite its commonness. Why should commonness destroy beauty? I deny that it does, any more than repetition destroys wonderfulness. But I can see hundreds of dandelions without leaving home, you say. Yes; but do you ever examine or admire them when they grow in your back yard? I trow not. Only when you are in love with Nature do you love her most insignificant manifestations. Not until a maiden is loved are her fingertips worshipped. Have you ever looked carefully at a dandelion? It will repay you. Botanists tell us it is many flowers compounded into one. From its beauty I can well believe it. What a blaze of yellow those many petals enkindle, and how superbly that yellow is variegated by the shadows of those petals and stamens,—simply by the shadows. It is a flower of one single colour, and that not a delicate one, and of no peculiar beauty of form, and yet by its miraculous manipulation of the light it receives it becomes beautiful. I see the birds' nests. Not fifty yards from my tent is a dear little ground-bird sitting on three eggs. A more exquisite picture, a picture perfect to repletion in its feeling, pathos, tenderness, and, yes, thought, to say nothing of composition and tone, than that little hen sitting on that nest I know not. The combination of helplessness, trustfulness, and hopefulness in the expression of the bird, and reflected in every part of the picture it is useless to attempt to describe. I see the woods just bursting into leaf, one of the most glorious sights in the country in May,