

the news was confirmed by a kindly letter from the Acting Prime Minister, there seemed no choice save to discharge the obligation with such modicum of ability as in me lay.

Lest, Sir, that expression should be criticised as an ungracious or, at least, lukewarm acknowledgement of the honour thus conferred upon me, let me hasten to add that the predominating feeling in my mind is one of utter unworthiness adequately to carry out the task which devolves upon me on this occasion; to do honour to our new parliamentary home; to depict in mere words what the artist has so well fashioned in stone; to be the first, in a sense to address my fellow members in this impressive Chamber, and in that address I humbly hope to counsel, to encourage, to inspire my fellow countrymen. Indeed, the task seemed to be so far beyond my powers that I was flung into a veritable slough of despond. You will appreciate my relief, Sir, when on Thursday last I was elevated out of that mire by the eloquence of the right hon. Acting Prime Minister (Sir George Foster), the hon. leader of the Opposition (Mr. Mackenzie King), and the member for Beauce (Mr. Béland); because after their tribute to the new parliament building I felt that part of the burden was lifted from any shoulders. My I add a further explanatory note. My ignorance of the usual technique employed was abyssmal, nor did consultation with those of experience and wisdom bring much assistance. A recent political biography described the speakers in the English House of Commons on a similar occasion as "purring ceremonious optimism." This phrase of itself was enough to confirm the repugnance, innate perhaps in one whose forebears hailed from Kilkenny, against adopting that particular feline mode of expression. "Purring optimism," forsooth, may I ask you, Sir, whether you ever heard an Irishman purr, where a government was concerned?

It would not have been a difficult, though perhaps a lengthy performance, to pass in review what Union Government, with or without the help of this Parliament, has accomplished. Such a subject might well arouse the enthusiasm of the speaker, if not of his immediate audience, who must, unless their understanding be wholly warped, be equally aware with him of its extent and importance.

But, in the first place, this task has already been undertaken by members of the Government, perhaps not so frequently or widely as might be desired, but with an

[Mr. Cronyn.]

ability and eloquence which easily surpass any effort of which I am capable.

Then too, and more important still, the speech from the Throne contains the Government's programme for the present session, and it is but reasonable to suppose that this House and the country at large will be more interested in a discussion of what lies before us than in even a memorable and fecund past.

Having arrived at this view, my first endeavour was to secure an outline of those measures which it was contemplated should be submitted for your consideration, but in this I was unsuccessful and it was intimated there might be some delay before any information would be forthcoming. In the interim, which was a considerable one, my mind naturally ranged over the possible field to be covered. Recalling the comedy produced some years ago under the title "If I were King," I set myself to draft what, as a representative of His Majesty, I should desire brought to the attention of the Canadian Parliament. In this I was in imagination not so much usurping the prerogative of royalty as combining in my unworthy person, like the survivor of the ill fated Nancy Bell, the "Cook and the Captain bold, and the crew of the Captain's gig." In so far, therefore, as my remarks—the product of a single and irresponsible individual—fail to concur in the actual pronouncement, they are made without the sanction of authority, and will doubtless be treated accordingly.

Canada, as has oft been proclaimed, enters this year into a new era. Formal peace—a peace, as the unreconciled irreverent have it, which passeth understanding—has been declared with our arch-enemy and the League of Nations duly incorporated. True it is, one of the chief belligerents—or if you quarrel with my phraseology, one of the largest nations—still remains outside, repeating the famous soliloquy "To be or not to be;" while her leading man has altered his lines to read: "My League is out of joint: Oh, curses long That Lodge was ever born to set it wrong."

But we live in hope that this is but a temporary check and that before the year is out a fair and united start will have been made in that noblest of efforts—to banish war from a weary world.

But this new era brings to Canada, in common with other nations, problems and difficulties more pressing and more acute than those which confronted her in pre-war days. Material problems connected with her financial status, her future popu-