

ENGLISH COPYRIGHT.

FAULTS THAT ARE BEING FOUND WITH
THE PRESENT LAW.

A BILL was before the House of Lords the other day proposing to make some changes in the present copyright law. In moving the second reading Lord Monkswell said its object was to amend some of the most serious defects in the present law of copyright. It was mainly founded on the report of the Royal Commission on Copyright of 1878. It dealt in the first place with magazine copyright, and proposed to repeal the 18th Section of the Act of 1842, and to enact that the copyright should be vested in the author, subject to certain qualifications, one of which was that the author was not to publish separately until after the expiration of three years from publication. The bill also proposed to repeal the Lectures Copyright Act, 1835, and to give the lecturer copyright without any useless formalities, but permitting a newspaper report unless expressly prohibited by the lecturer. Copyright in a book would carry with it the right to abridge, and no abridgment should be issued without the author's consent in cases where the author retained an interest in the sale, though not in the copyright. With reference to the dramatisation of novels, at present it was easy for any person to take the whole plot of a novel and practically reproduce the novel itself in a dramatic form without any legal infringement of copyright. The bill proposed to convert these moral into legal infringements. It was further provided that the British Museum authorities should combine with the publisher of every book in certifying the date of first publication, and that a certified copy of the entry of the date of publication should be prima facie evidence of that date in all courts. The provisions of the bill had been most carefully thrashed out, not only by the Society of Authors, but by the Publishers' Association and the Copyright Association. He asked their lordships to give the bill a second reading, and refer it to a select committee. (Hear, hear.)

The Earl of Dudley said the Government were prepared to assent to the second reading of the bill on the condition that the noble lord would not proceed further with it during the present session. The whole question of copyright at the present moment was in a very unsettled state, and negotiations were now being carried on between this country and the colonies and foreign countries. If a question of this kind was to be dealt with at all, it should be dealt with as a whole, and not in the piecemeal manner proposed in the bill. When the negotiations of which he had spoken were completed the Board of Trade would be ready to introduce a bill dealing not only

with the amendment of the copyright law, but also with consolidation.

Lord Thring supported the bill.

Lord Herschell said if the bill was referred to a select committee, it could not interfere with the negotiations which were taking place, and might afterwards greatly assist the Government in framing a bill.

The Lord Chancellor thought that the subject was one which might be assisted by the deliberations of a select committee. He therefore thought their lordships would do well to read the bill a second time and refer it to a select committee, though he did not believe that it would result in actual legislation this year.

The bill was read a second time and referred to a select committee.

PROPOSED CANADIAN COPYRIGHT.

From the English Bookman.

THERE seems to be a very general feeling in Canada that before long a copyright law will be passed on the following lines: As soon as a book is published in England it shall be open to any one to make application to Ottawa for the right of issuing a special Canadian edition. The Government will then write to the English publisher, asking whether any arrangements have been made with a Canadian firm, and giving a definite time for reply. Should there be no response, or the reply be in the negative, the applicant will receive permission to issue the book at whatever price he chooses, providing he pays to the Government a royalty of 10 per cent. on the published price of all copies sold. This royalty the Government will then forward to the English author or publisher. Under these circumstances, naturally, no American or English edition will be admitted into Canada.

The question which is still in dispute is whether the Canadian publisher shall enter into negotiations with the English publisher or shall deal directly with the English author. Some Canadian printers do not seem willing to recognize the right of the English publisher to interfere in the matter; but the majority, who for years have had pleasant business relations with England, are anxious to continue on the old footing. They say to the English publisher: "When you have a book coming out by some popular author you should write to us suggesting terms for the Canadian edition. The best thing you can do is to supply us with a set of stereotype plates, and we would print an edition from them, and would thus save all the expense of composition. Instead of the ten per cent. which would be forwarded you by Government if you have made no such arrangement, we might very well be able to pay you a royalty of fifteen or even

twenty per cent., which you could divide with the author." This plan seems feasible enough, as the English publisher would still be able to control the price of the Canadian edition, and he would, of course, only make arrangements with firms whose commercial standing and capabilities were well known to him; in fact, the Canadian publisher would to all intents and purposes act as his agent.

"Two points," according to 'The Bookman,' "must, however, be remembered by the Canadian publisher. The new law must on no account be retroactive, or the general confusion that will inevitably ensue is awful to contemplate. And then it must not be forgotten that the reading public of Canada is not large, and that only in the case of a few very popular writers will a Canadian edition have the least chance of success. A few Canadian publishers hope for great things when the new law comes into force. Unless they are very careful they will burn their fingers badly."

MR. M'BETH'S CAREER.

Rev. R. G. McBeth, of Augustine Church, Winnipeg, the author of the new work "The Selkirk Settlers in Real Life," has had a distinguished and remarkable career. He was born at Kildonan, his father being one of the original settlers. At the parish school he was Hester prizeman, a prize contested for by the common schools of Manitoba. At Manitoba college he took the Lord Dufferin silver medal and also graduated from the university with a medal. He then studied law, being articulated to Hugh J. Macdonald, of Macdonald & Tupper. During his law course he volunteered for service in the suppression of the '85 rebellion, serving through it as lieutenant in No. 1 Kildonan Company, being present in the action at Frenchman's Butte, for which he has the Northwest medal and clasp. After practising law one and a half years he turned his attention to theology. He is at present pastor of a congregation situated in one of the most picturesque suburban districts of Winnipeg, which bears the historic name of Fort Rouge, after one of the famous forts of La Verandrye. His literary tastes are of a high order, as is evidenced by his ably written articles in *The Westminster Magazine, Toronto*. His work just published will be read with great interest.

Prof. Sully has revised his monograph on children — "Studies in Childhood" — to bring it more within the popular grasp. He has re-written some chapters, added others, and introduced many new stories. The result, to be called "Children's Ways," will virtually be a new work.