

Confederation. And as the trembling old man recited the details of the great event and reminded the House that the only one besides himself present upon that occasion and now present in the House was Sir Hector Langevin, it entered the minds of all that it was eminently fitting that one of the Fathers of Confederation should bring before Parliament this important measure.

He dwelt upon the unity that should prevail, and spoke warmly of the helping hand that should reach out to the warring minority. His followers were appreciative but not broadly enthusiastic. The land has lain in strange furrows of late. The complexities of opinion in the various ridings, the "will" and the "won't" of the votes behind the men on the benches, have caused some on both sides to do and say unexpected things these few weeks past.

But talk is so plainly one thing, and votes are so decidedly another, that it is quite useless to prophesy. The Government has so much to promise; it has in past times so well deserved support from the men who follow it faithfully, that scarcely could its weak ones be wholly dissuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Mr. Laurier followed Sir Charles Tupper and he carried the House and the hearts of his people with him. "I am a Liberal," he said, "a Liberal of the English school," and the roars and hand-claps and desk-slappings drowned his voice.

He made it very plain that, while he stood the acknowledged head of a great party, comprising both Roman Catholics and Protestants, he would not betray the trust of the one by letting his race and creed draw him to the other. The corridors rang with his praises, the Ontario members wore joy on their faces, Quebec Liberals were firm at his back, and the Chamber at six o'clock was one great buzz of admiration and congratulation as the genial, manly orator stood in the centre of a group receiving the delighted encomiums of praise which were heaped upon him. A manly speech, a noble speech, liberty through and through it. This is what was said as the great throng melted away and talked one to the other in the going.

To-night Mr. Clarke Wallace is speaking. He is one of those who are not with the Government in this matter, but who yet would scarcely of choice support Mr. Laurier's amendment.

It has been freely stated in the streets this evening that the six months' hoist, which Mr. Laurier's amendment comprised, was a genuine surprise to the Government. The probable thing for him to do was to move for a commission. That would not satisfy the bolters of the Government party, but the amendment as it is seems to leave them nothing to do but to hold their breath and jump clean across the carpet. But that is not likely. Some way out of it will be found. The most sanguine among the Opposition cannot find it in their hearts to believe that the Bill will be lost on division. The Government is so well established. Its followers are so dearly fond of the old flag, the old party, and the old men.

Social festivities are at a standstill. There are little dinners and little teas, quiet At-Homes, and any number of cozy card parties, but the gauge of Lent is over it all, tones it down and reduces the fever-heat. Many a gay little belle is getting more sleep now in one night than she had in a week before Lent began—that awful week of rehearsals for the ball dances, big dinners, imposing receptions, and the great ball itself. It is still "the" ball, and the photographs to commemorate its fearfully and wonderfully made costumes are being finished by the hundred as souvenirs which will be dear, and rightly so, to the participants.

The probability is that all the week will be occupied with the debate on the Remedial Bill. There will be French and English speeches, and many of them, and then the session will jog along until the end of April. Most men say there will be a summer session, but those are the Liberals, who may fairly be called Obstructionists. If they will obstruct, if they will not let the estimates pass through, whose fault will it be if there is a summer session to portion out the great house-keeping expenses of this great country?

Ottawa, March 3rd, 1896.

Crude Criticism.

THE March Bookman, in its article on "Some Recent Volumes of Verse," is neither just nor discriminating. The critic, if such he can be called, reviews in all some half-dozen books, and with the facile discernment of an undergraduate condemns the majority of them to oblivion, but assures us that at least two of them will be heard of again.

To Mr. Bliss Carman's "Behind the Arras," the reviewer gives one sentence of praise about his wonderful effectiveness "at giving one a thrill of springtime buoyancy," and his "weirdness," and then devotes half a column to trivial condemnation criticism. Mr. Carman is not always at his best; and, in the poem from which the critic quotes, is certainly at his worst, when he gives us as a monologue such a passage as that descriptive of the mysterious lodger:

"So reticent and tall
With eyes of flame."

But this is after all the weakness of his strength. Such language when dealing with the supernatural or weird would be appropriate, and Mr. Carman has failed by allowing himself to use expressions in a poem of the commonplace that are only suited for highly idealized work and characters. The criticism of this "seventeen page poem" is no doubt just, but is it the part of a true critic to dwell only upon the spots on the sun, the knots on the oak?

The reviewer is even more severe on "The Night Express," and to hold it up to ridicule quotes the following "remarkable stanza":

"We pant up the climbing grade,
And coast on the tangent mile,
While the Driver toys with the throttle-bar
And gathers the track with a smile."

If the reader who has either watched an engine climb a grade or sat by the driver as he "toiled with the throttle-bar" will read this stanza carefully, he will find that Mr. Carman has in his lines something of the motion of the mighty engine, and has given us glimpses of the controlling soul of the iron horse. The critic, no doubt, writes without experience, but if he would only take a drive of fifty or sixty miles along the Metapedia valley, for instance, on our Intercolonial line, he would find that the expression which he sneers at as making us "gather the whole poem with a smile," is fairly descriptive. As the engine takes the difficult curves the engineer, fully cognizant of the danger that lies round each, has his eye ever on the front, and literally gathers in the long miles of track. Nothing escapes him, and his hand works with his eye, now easing up his engine as she touches a soft spot, now letting her out when the road bed is firm and sure. The smile is ever on his face, the smile that the skipper on the bridge has in a gale, or a soldier as he leads his troops to the charge.

In contrast with this review is that of Mr. McGaffey's volume of poems. He has "an eye as keen as Mr. Kipling's for whatever is vivid and striking and picturesque." He has a "splendid lyrical quality," and there is, moreover, "something true and wholesome about his work that takes us out of the fetid atmosphere of eroticism and the perfumed oppressiveness of the triolet-trillers, into the fresh, strong air of the sea, the mountains, and the illimitable prairie." After this we expect a Browning, or at least a Watson. But the critic's appreciation seems sadly divorced from his vocabulary. If such poetry is in the volume he refrains from quoting it, and gives us instead a specimen of Mr. McGaffey's pathetic work, telling us at the close that the author of this is "no mere facile rhymers, no mere elaborator of commonplace ideas." The first stanza will serve as an indication of the worth of the fine phrases made use of above:

"Dear heart, sweet heart, your baby hands
Have touched and passed this floating world,
Have loosed their hold on life's frail strands
And now upon your breast lie furled
Twin blossoms of eternal peace,
Like lilies on untroubled lilies,
When the rude winds have made surcease,
And summer's glory drifts and dreams."

This stanza is lacking in masculinity—a sin Mr. Carman never commits. The expressions "Dear heart," "sweet heart," are not quite suitable to the object of the poet's sorrow; the mixed or, at best, strained metaphor that runs through the whole stanza, and the evident insincerity of the closing part,