

A VIGOROUS PLEA FOR CANADIAN COPYRIGHT.

MR. ROBERTSON, M.P., ON THE HERSCHELL BILL.

A THOROUGH EXPOSITION OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN COPYRIGHT—THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE PROPOSED ENGLISH LAW RATHER BENEFICIAL TO CANADA—THE PREMIER THINKS THE HALL CAINE AGREEMENT CAN BE PUSHED THROUGH.

ONCE more the interests of Canadian copyright have been ably and vigorously put forward in Parliament by Mr. John Ross Robertson, M.P., for East Toronto, who raised the question on a motion to go into supply in the House of Commons on Wednesday, June 1. Mr. Robertson began by referring to the bill introduced a few weeks ago in the House of Lords by Lord Herschell, and read a second time since. This bill, he pointed out, was intended to remove all doubts as to the legality of simultaneous publication in Great Britain and the United States securing copyright throughout the entire British Empire. Mr. Robertson continued: "This provision gives a direct and important advantage to the American publisher. Under this clause the American publisher need no longer send his stock of books across the sea to London and issue them on the same day as he issues his stock in New York and Boston in order to secure British copyright throughout the British Empire. Oh, no, the American publisher has, under this new regulation, merely to send his book to any Canadian point across the international boundary line between Canada and the United States in order to secure copyright throughout the entire British Empire. At the present time I am advised that there is considerable doubt whether an American author can obtain copyright in Great Britain without manufacturing in Great Britain. On this point I am also informed that the British law is not very clear. A British subject may secure copyright in Great Britain, but the British law is not at all clear that an alien may secure such copyright in Great Britain. At the present time, the United Kingdom is most liberal in its terms for copyright arrangements with foreign countries. Great Britain, with France, Germany, and other countries, is a member of the Berne Copyright Convention, an international convention which this country unwittingly joined through the profound—I might almost say criminal—ignorance of the Canadian politicians of that period. The United States was asked to enter this Berne Convention, but the American Government, more mindful of the interests of its workingmen than was the Canadian Government, refused to enter. Despite this refusal on the part of

the United States, Lord Herschell, in his bill, proposes to be still more liberal. He actually proposes to grant copyright throughout Her Majesty's dominions to any person, whether he is or is not a British subject, and without any conditions as to manufacture."

"The second part of Lord Herschell's bill," Mr. Robertson went on to state, "which provided that the new law might be modified by Canadian legislation (if British authors were protected). If this clause gave power to allow the Canadian Copyright Act now in suspense, no fault could be found with it. If not, the Canadian Government should protest against this section of the Herschell bill, which prohibits the importation of foreign reprints of British copyright books unless the Canadian Government undertakes to collect a royalty, and to stamp every imported copy with the words 'foreign reprint.' This royalty had not been collected since 1895."

"The third part of Lord Herschell's bill," said the honorable gentleman, "is also very important. By the present Act, Her Majesty-in-Council is permitted to make an order granting copyright to a foreign country, in case that foreign country grants copyright to authors whose works are first produced in the United Kingdom. Lord Herschell, in his new bill, however, substitutes the word 'published' for the word 'produced.' This substitution of a word, in ordinary conversation, is, as a rule, a trivial matter, but it may make a most material difference in the reading of an Act of Parliament. The word 'produced,' in the present Act, means that the book must be manufactured, if not written, in the United Kingdom; but, if Lord Herschell substitutes the word 'published' for the word 'produced,' he leaves wide open the gate to the American publisher, and wipes out a very definite term to replace it by a very indefinite term. If, in the future, Her Majesty's advisers should include the United States of America in any order in regard to copyright, this House can see that it would give a decided advantage to the American publisher. In fact, the Dominion publisher would not be in the race at all."

Mr. Robertson concluded with a clear statement of the Canadian agitation for a just law, and made a stirring appeal to the Government to legislate next session on the subject.

Mr. Fisher (Minister of Agriculture), admitted the Herschell bill would affect the Canadian copyright position. While everyone desired to maintain our rights in this matter, he was afraid the Privy Council would decide against us if we enacted a law. This would

result in lawsuits. Mr. Newcombe, Deputy Minister of Justice, who thoroughly understood the copyright question, believed that confirmatory Imperial legislation would be necessary. It was doubtful if this could be obtained. He (Mr. Fisher), thought that "under the circumstances we shall have to go easy and try to obtain our ends by careful negotiation and conciliatory methods." As to Mr. Robertsons's fear that the Herschell bill would give United States publishers privileges, within the British Empire, they had not now, he (Mr. Fisher), thought not. The cause contemplated reciprocal privileges and it was not likely the United States would grant copyrights on British books not printed there. Mr. Newcombe thought the Herschell bill would improve Canada's position, and a draft bill, now in the deputy's hands, was acceptable in a general way, and also, it was hoped, to the Imperial authorities. The Government had not yet concluded what it would do.

Sir C. H. Tupper (late Minister of Justice), thought the obstacles to Canadian legislation were not Imperial interests, but an influential and selfish interest.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier thought this was true. He regretted that the United States had not joined the Berne Convention as this had resulted in Canada's difficulty. He thought the Government could give effect to Mr. Hall Caine's agreement. The copyright question was of more importance to one class than to the people generally. We have not been able to enlist very strongly the sympathy of public opinion.

TEACHER WANTED A TICKLER.

Mr. J. K. Cranston, of Galt, lately received the following order from a teacher in a small village in Ontario: "Enclosed you will please find 25c., for which send me as soon as possible one of your best regulation straps. I am in a very rough and heavy school, where the pupils chased the teacher with the poker, but they don't 'run' me if I can help it; and I wish you to send me one of your best ticklers, as it might come in useful in the case of an eruption."

MR. PIRIE ON ENVELOPES.

Mr. A. G. Pirie, of the well-known paper manufacturing firm, has been telling, at Aberdeen, the history of the envelope. It seems that the first envelopes were made by hand about sixty years ago. They were sold in London in packets of a dozen, and in shape they resembled a bag. A lady brought a packet home and her friends liked the idea. A neighbor went a step farther, cut out an envelope with a pair of scissors, and, going to a ladies' academy, persuaded some of the girls to make envelopes of a variety of shapes. Shortly afterward, in 1847, machinery for making envelopes was introduced, and now the machinery is almost perfect. Mr. Pirie puts the number of envelopes made every year by his firm at 500 millions.