

THE PAST SESSION OF PARLIAMENT.

The Session which has just closed can scarcely be classed among the remarkable events of the time, still it may afford matter for reflection and comment. It is only by noting the past that we can gather wisdom for future action. Each Session marks, or should mark, a stage in the development of our country. Each Session tells us who and what our politicians are, bringing to light any statesman whom it may have pleased Providence to grant unto us.

Parliament, of course, assembled to do the work of the country, and quite naturally we turn back to see what has been accomplished. The list of Acts passed is not a long one, and there is not a single measure among them that could be considered as of first-rate importance. They deal mostly with private companies and such like things of small consequence. There is not much ground for complaint in this, for the House did that which came to its hand, wisely abstaining from the search for anything of higher concern.

The work of examining and voting on the thirty-three Acts which have been passed might have been got through in a fortnight by a dozen men who knew their business; but our two hundred and sixty representatives required nearly four months. This is largely owing to the fact that while the House is not blessed with the presence of any, if any, great speakers, it is cursed with the presence of a large number of small talkers. Their speechifications are like the measles—not very dangerous, but very tiresome, and they consume a lot of precious time. There has not been a really able and brilliant speech, that we can call to mind, during the whole Session. Sir John Macdonald's on the dismissal of the Government of Quebec by Lieutenant-Governor Letellier being the best. For the rest the speaking has been below even Colonial par. But what has been lacking in quantity has been more than made up in quality, and the right of free parliamentary speech has been fully asserted. In an assembly where nearly all can talk and but a few can really speak in a way that could be called eloquent, this is inevitable. The only way to heal the disease is for the country to send—if it can find them—men who have power of brilliant speech in them, who could crush the small fry of the House into a more general silence. Then we should have a few refreshing great speeches, and less of wearisome small talk.

Unfortunately not a single new star has heaved above the horizon. Mr. Blake, a really able man, has allowed himself to become a failure. He gave great promise, and many confidently looked to him as the future leader, but indifferent health and a modicum of conscience drove him from the Cabinet. Then our attention was turned to M. Laurier as the coming man. He was taken into the Cabinet, and all men rejoiced. Even the Conservatives spoke well of his abilities, and only mourned that he was not on the other and better side of the House; while the Liberals felt that a new lease of power and place had been granted, and rubbed their hands and smiled and said, "Now then." The country, generally answered back, "Now then," and waited to see what would come of the introduction into the Cabinet of a gentleman who while yet young had earned the reputation of being a more than ordinarily able man, and free and independent enough to wear a Presbyterian-looking waistcoat and collar, not caring for those who glory in appearance and not in heart and brain. But M. Laurier has been a disappointment to all his friends, not having made manifest that he is possessed of the able qualities of a debater or statesman. Mr. Jones, perhaps, of all the Ministerialists, has done the best. He seemed to understand the work allotted to him, and being railed railed back again, coarsely sometimes but effectively always.

The Opposition have developed no particular power of oratory, and it was not needful that they should set their hand to the work of legislation. On the whole the best of the talking has been on the Opposition side of the House. Too much of it; we must complain; too much fault-finding and unnecessary criticism, but perhaps not more than we should expect from gentlemen who honestly believe that they ought to be governing the affairs of the nation for the national good. Still, Sir John has curbed the impatience of his followers, and at times helped the Government very materially in the despatch of business.

The most painful feature in the whole retrospect is the rampant rowdiness that prevailed. The session began with a most unseemly brawl; violent altercations and personal abuse succeeded each other in rapid succession. Our parliamentarians set themselves to blacken each other's character and prospered in the disgraceful undertaking in a way most appalling. Reputations were played with as boys play at shuttlecock—beard-pulling and fisticuffs came into the game—the whole winding up with a scene so disgraceful that had it occurred in a tavern the keeper of it would have stood a chance to lose his license. Not many people will be found to take pride in a Parliament that left the House at its last sitting to the cries of "coward," "liar," and "d—d scoundrel." The man who brought on that scene should have no chance to repeat it.

The conclusion is forced upon us that the country can only hope for a better state of things,—first, by curbing in every possible way this

violent party spirit which now prevails, and which degrades politics, hinders the progress of the country, and makes the press a mere vehicle for the dissemination of falsehoods and slanders; politicians do not reflect the people, but only the party at Ottawa. The daily papers do not set themselves to give information, but only to further the interests of the party. Reports are one-sided, garbled, falsified, all for the party. That spirit should be repressed by the voters, who can deal with the parliamentary representatives; and by the general reading people who support the press. And then, the people should begin to consider the wisdom of continuing to pay their politicians. The policy is a bad one, it has led to a pernicious multiplication of governments, to prolonged sessions, caused by mere talk, to an expenditure which is unnecessary, extravagant and ruinous, and the introduction of men into Parliament who would more creditably get their living in some other way.

"SCALING" OF WAGES IN CANADA.

Not a few newspaper men in Canada have been of late piously exercised over a "scaling" of debts which has had no existence except in their own brains. But here in Canada, in our depreciated silver, is a veritable scaling, not of the debts of the rich, but of the wages of the poor throughout all Canada. Suppose we invite these indignant men now to look nearer home. The so-called "fall" of silver in London must have affected our already degraded half and quarter dollar pieces, just as it is said to have affected United States silver. This "token" money, the officers of the British Mint will at once tell you, is robbed of a considerable portion of its silver—to be exact, when silver is at 5s. per ounce in London, it is within a fraction of 10 per cent. Add to that the 10 per cent. of loss which the gold standard men so strenuously urge has recently overtaken silver bullion, and we have the people of Canada being paid for their labor in a coinage debased 20 per cent. Perhaps these newspaper men will satisfy themselves with the reflection that this silver is only "subsidiary," that it buys a joint of mutton for the poor man as well as could be done by a bit of gold (that may prove a puzzle for them), that it is for "small transactions" and for small people, and can therefore at the worst be but a small fraud; that it is good enough for the retail trade of the country, vast though that trade be, and where producers really meet consumers, but that gold is more dignified for that wholesale trade and for those large "transactions" around which gamblers and speculators most do congregate; that it is limited in amount, and therefore not an unlimited debasement; that even if 50 per cent. of silver were surreptitiously abstracted from the coins, they would be quite the thing for workingmen; in short, that though hardly respectable enough to be tendered to bondholders, they are good enough for paying the wages and the debts of all who produce our wealth. But I know whereof I write, and let me say to the people of Canada that their earnings are "scaled" 10 per cent. by this combined falsehood and fraud of subsidiary silver, and that where the workingmen across the lines are paid a dollar a day in the silver dollar now being coined, they are paid 13 per cent. better wages than the workingman of Canada when paid a dollar a day in this degraded English coinage. The Press of Canada has rivalled certain newspapers on a portion of the eastern seaboard of the Union in its denunciation of all "scaling" processes. Here is an opportunity, and within its own borders, not of wasting its virtues on a shadow, but of exposing a "scaling" as gross as was ever perpetrated on poor and unsuspecting industry. I will not prostitute the pages of the SPECTATOR by a defence of the subsidiary coins of the United States, but this much I will say, that the Americans have never robbed or clipped their coins to the extent done by England and Canada. It would be well for those who have held up an entire nation to infamy and scorn, simply because that nation is recoinng its silver on the ratio agreed upon with its bondholders—written on its bonds, embodied in its laws—to take these facts home with them, and learn, if they can, to what extent even a "Queen's Head" may conceal a multitude of sins.

When Canada erects her own Mint—as she certainly will one day do—and prepare her own gold and silver, minting her coins from the largest to the smallest, full weight and full standard, and lets these coins out amongst her people, not shutting them up in vaults and subterranean places, then, and not till then, will this young nation know the meaning of steady commercial progress and of general prosperity within all her borders. Then, and not till then, will she crown herself with that word which ought even to stand as the brightest and best in all our commercial vocabulary—*righteousness*.

WILLIAM BROWN.

CLASSES OF MANKIND.—I have divided mankind into classes. There is the Noodle,—very numerous, but well known. The Affliction-woman,—a valuable member of society, generally an ancient spinster, or distant relation of the family, in small circumstances: the moment she hears of any accident or distress in the family, she sets off, packs up her little bag, and is immediately established there, to comfort, flatter, fetch, and carry. The Up-takers,—a class of people who only see through their fingers' ends, and go through a room taking up and touching everything, however visible and however tender. The Clearers,—who begin at the small the supply, and rare the contents. The Sleep-walkers,—those who never deviate from the beaten track, who think as their fathers have thought since the Flood, who start from a new idea as they would from guilt. The Lemon-squeezers of society,—people who act on you as a wet blanket, who see a cloud in the sunshine, the nails of the coffin in the ribbons of the bride, predictors of evil, extinguishers of hope; who, where there are two sides, see only the worst,—people whose very look curdles the milk, and sets your teeth on edge. The Let-well-aloners,—cousins-german to the Noodle, yet a variety; people who have begun to think and to act, but are timid, and afraid to try their wings, and tremble at the sound of their own footsteps as they advance, and think it safer to stand still. Then the Washerwomen,—very numerous, who exclaim, "Well! as sure as ever I put on my best bonnet, it is certain to rain." &c. There are many more, but I forget them.

Once there is another class, as you say: people who are always treading on your gaiter, or talking in your deaf ear, or asking you to give them something with your lame hand, stirring up your weak point, rubbing your sore, &c.—*Sydney Smith*.